

UC Berkeley

UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

On the Poetry of Baseball

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/82m2z3s3>

Author

Rubman, Lewis

Publication Date

2011

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

On the Poetry of Baseball

By

Lewis Henry Rubman

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Comparative Literature

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Ignacio Navarrete, Chair

Professor Dru Dougherty

Professor Robert Kaufman

Professor Eric Naiman

Fall 2011

© 2011 Lewis H. Rubman

Abstract

On the Poetry of Baseball

by

Lewis Henry Rubman

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Ignacio Navarrete, Chair

There is a growing bibliography of literature about baseball, but very few of the works in it treat baseball poetry as having an important role to play in our understanding the nature of literary creation and experience. It is as if Wordsworth's nature poetry were considered a distinct category of English literature, perhaps of interest to hikers and the few eccentrics who would be willing to give serious attention to poems about walks in the country, but not a subject worth the attention of serious critics. At best, the attitude frequently displayed in the critical treatment of poems and fiction about the sport resembles the belief that the mythic and philosophical elements of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and *Moby-Dick* mitigate those works' original sin of being sea-faring yarns.

I try to remedy this situation by discussing Rolfe Humphries' "Polo Grounds" and Andrés Eloy Blanco's "Romance del campeonato" 'Championship Ballad,' as well as others in English, Spanish, and Japanese, an infrequent combination of subject matter.

I examine the relationship between Humphries and Blanco's two poems and subject both works to extensive close reading. I place the poems in their historical contexts as well as in that of other works in a variety of genres, including fiction, film, journalism, music, oratory, painting, and, of course, poetry.

I test the boundaries between accepted categories by discussing a news article by Damon Runyon's as cubist narrative and treating Babe Ruth as a theorist of economics and cultural anthropology. I treat radio broadcasts of baseball games as factors in Humphries and Blanco's poems and as agents of factual transmission and distortion. I discuss the sexual energy underlying baseball and poetry. Along the way, I point out a few ways in which baseball is, itself, a form of poetry.

My dissertation resembles the radio broadcast of a double-header on a long Sunday afternoon. Although its narrative may seem to meander far from the objects it attempts to describe and understand, it always returns to the two games whose play-by-play description it provides, "Polo Grounds" and "Romance del campeonato."

For Gail

(Who else?)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a pleasure to thank all the people who helped me complete this dissertation. It also is an impossible task to perform adequately. But, here goes.

I thank Gail Rubman, my companion of the past forty-two years, for her unflagging love and support. Not only did Gail encourage me to undertake this project, but, for the last five years, she has shielded me from intrusive phone calls and other visitors from Porlock, avoided speaking above a whisper when I was at work, worn earphones when listening to the radio or television, ceded the use of our computer to me, and postponed the fulfillment of her long standing desire to remodel our home. Her diplomacy has opened the door to press boxes for us in Baja California, Catalonia, and Puerto Rico. Her warmth has initiated innumerable interesting conversations with fans, players, and coaches there as well as in the United States, Canada, and Japan. Her advice always has been spot on.

I also am immensely grateful to the members of my dissertation committee, Professors Dru Dougherty, Robert Kaufman, Eric Naiman, and its chair, Ignacio Navarrete. Their careful reading of the succeeding drafts for this project has helped me see where I was going with it—and where I should have been going. If it weren't for their suggestions, this dissertation would have been a very different product, beginning with its title. Indeed, if Professor Naiman hadn't suggested to me when I was sixty-six years old that I should return to school and get my doctorate, this dissertation never would have been conceived, much less completed. The valuable insights the committee provided me are too many for me to enumerate. To name just a couple: the observations that our eyes go to the right when Billy Jorges goes to *his* right and that the vanishing bleachers at the end of "Polo Grounds" disappear as if they had been bleached out of existence. My son, Aaron Tomás Rubman, repeatedly saved my text from a similar fate by putting his computer expertise at the service of his Luddite of a father.

Staff members of several institutions have been extremely helpful to me. I especially want to thank the workers at the Inter-Library Loan department and the Bancroft Library at Berkeley as well as the workers

at the Archives and Special Collections of Amherst who found and retrieved valuable documents from the Rolfe Humphries papers for me.

I am grateful to many individuals without whose generosity and wisdom my dissertation would have been severely diminished. Bob Bavasi, Wayne Graczyk and Mayumi Smith graciously shared their expertise in Japanese culture, baseball and otherwise. David Lawrence freely shared, in conversation and by e-mail, some of his immense knowledge of Negro Leagues baseball. Kit Krieger spontaneously volunteered to put me in touch with Rogelio Marrero, who served as intermediary between his grandfather, Conrado Marrero, and me. Amaury Pi-González, Richard Jackson, Juan Vené, and Chet Williamson, like Connie Marrero, generously answered my questions about their work. Stephanie Argy and Alec Boehm of Mental Slapstick kindly shared information about the filming of *Gandhi at the Bat* and gave me a prized Mohandas Gandhi rookie card. María Alejandra Rivas B. of the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Washington and Ariadny Sotillo of the Fundación Bigott in Caracas went out of their way to provide me with documentation of their nation's baseball history. Erica Roberts was a sympathetic and efficient guide through Berkeley's bureaucratic maze. Sitting next to Gabriel Schechter for an afternoon at Pacific Bell Park was a great way to learn about Charles Victory Faust. The warmth of *La crónica's* columnist Manuel Ramos tempered the desert winter cold of many a night game in Mexicali, as did his frequent invitations to join him in the press box there. Ethel Fisher, in addition to her customary hospitality, shared familiarity with R.B. Kitaj's work with me. Her advice on where to ask for permission to reprint it was invaluable. Horacio Peña was kind enough to send me a hard to find study of his poem about Roberto Clemente. José Manuel Fernández took time out from his many duties at the Prado to discuss Goya's *Juego de la pelota a pala* with Gail and me and to provide us with documentation about that cartoon. Gerardo Picón M., of San Juan de los Morros, Edo. Guárico, Venezuela, gave Gail and me an close-up view of Venezuelan baseball culture. Gabriel Zerpa selflessly shared with me his knowledge about Venezuelan baseball broadcasting. To all of them and to the many others whom I have inadvertently omitted from this list, my heartfelt thanks.

I also want to thank and acknowledge the following copyright holders who granted me permission to reprint their works:

The Amherst College Library Archives and Special Collections for permission to quote from Rolfe Humphries' MS of "Polo Grounds" and from Jack Schwarz's letter to Humphries.

Stephanie Argy and Alec Boehm of Mental Slapstick for permission to reprint the Gandhi rookie card, which was created for the film *Gandhi at the Bat* and was based on a photograph taken by Kameran Kashani.

Mary Brace of the George Brace Photo Collection for permission to print the photograph of Charles Victory Faust.

David Rosner of Darville Music for permission to print the lyrics to Dave Frishberg's "Van Lingle Mungo" and for insisting that I follow the original format rather than using the standard one-inch indentation.

The Indiana University Press for permission to print Rolfe Humphries' "Polo Grounds" and to quote from his "Night Game," and "Sonnet for a Radio Audience."

Richard Jackson for permission to print his "Center Field."

Haruki Kadokawa for permission to print "lights-out siren" by his father, Genyoshi Kadowka.

Jacqueline Mabey of Marlborough Gallery in New York, who, undaunted by the short notice I gave her with my request, granted me permission to print a copy of R.B. Kitaj's painting *Amerika (Baseball)*.

Metro Data, Inc. for permission to print the photograph of Satchel Paige.

The *New York Times* for permission to print Ernesto Sisto's photograph of participants in the Yankees' old-timers' game of May 13, 1950.

Horacio Peña for permission to quote extensively from his *Poema a un hombre llamado Roberto Clemente* and for his cordiality and help in providing bibliographic material about his poem.

Redux Pictures and the *New York Times* for permission to print Ernest Sisto's photograph of participants at the old-timers' game in Yankee Stadium on May 13, 1950.

Ben S. Sakoguchi for permission to print his painting of a orange crate label showing Eddie Gaedel at the bat.

Cor van den Huevel for permission to quote from his introduction to *Baseball Haiku: American and Japanese Haiku and Senryu on Baseball* and his and Nanae Tamura translations of Genyoshi Kadokawa's "lights-out siren" and Shiki Masaoka's "spring breeze" that appear in that anthology.

If I have reprinted any copyrighted material in this dissertation without the owner's permission it is either because the inclusion clearly constitutes fair use or because, in spite of my best efforts, I could not reach the copyright holder, or both.

CHAPTER 1

BY THE RIVER OF HARLEM, THERE WE SAT DOWN, YEA,
WE WEPT: ROLFE HUMPHRIES' "POLO GROUNDS"

Time is of the essence. This is a highly skilled
 And beautiful mystery. Three or four seconds only
 From the time that Riggs connects till he reaches first,
 And in those seconds Jurges goes to his right,
 Comes up with the ball, tosses to Witek at second
 For the force on Reese, Witek to Mize at first,
In time for the out—a double play.

(Red Barber crescendo. Crowd noises, obbligato;
 Scattered staccatos from the peanut boys,
 Loud in the lull, as the teams are changing sides) . . .

Hubbell takes the sign, nods, pumps, delivers—
 A foul into the stands. Dunn takes a new ball out,
 Hands it to Danning, who throws it down to Werber;
 Werber takes off his glove, rubs the ball briefly,
 Tosses it over to Hub, who goes to the rosin bag,
 Takes the sign from Danning, pumps, delivers—
 Low, outside, ball three. Danning goes to the mound,
 Says something to Hub, Dunn brushes off the plate,
 Adams starts throwing in the Giant bullpen,
 Hub takes the sign from Danning, pumps, delivers,
 Camilli gets hold of it, a *long* fly to the outfield,
 Ott goes back, back, back, against the wall, gets under it,
 Pounds his glove, and takes it for the out.
 That's all for the Dodgers . . .

Time is of the essence. The rhythms break,
 More varied and subtle than any kind of dance;
 Movement speeds up or lags. The ball goes out
 In sharp and angular drives, or long, slow arcs,
 Comes in again controlled and under aim;
 The players wheel or spurt, race, stoop, slide, halt,
 Shift imperceptibly to new positions,

Watching the signs, according to the batter,
The score, the inning. Time is of the essence.

Time is of the essence. Remember Terry?
Remember Stonewall Jackson, Lindstrom, Frisch,
When they were good? Remember Long George Kelly?
Remember John McGraw and Benny Kauff?
Remember Bridwell, Tenney, Merkle, Youngs,
Chief Myers, Big Jeff Tesreau, Shuffin' Phil?
Remember Matthewson, and Ames, and Donlin,
Buck Ewing, Rusie, Smiling Mickey Welch?
Remember a left-handed catcher named Jack Humphries,
Who sometimes played the outfield in '83?

Time is of the essence. The shadow moves
From the plate to the box, from the box to second base,
From second to the outfield, to the bleachers.

Time is of the essence. The crowd and the players
Are the same age always, but the man in the crowd
Is older every season. Come on, play ball!

—Rolfe Humphries, "Polo Grounds" (1942. Ellipses in
orig.)¹

Musings

Rolfe Humphries' "Polo Grounds" is, like a fine diamond, multifaceted. A meditation on time, death, and immortality, a work of filial piety, an accurate description of the details of a baseball game, a work of fiction, and an intricate weaving of art and reality, it is personal and impersonal, original and traditional, told in a voice that is at times intimate, at others conversational, and at yet others ventriloquy.

The poem begins with a philosophical observation, "Time is of the essence," (1) that, with its elegant phrasing and air of profundity, immediately captures our attention. The statement also provokes us because it seems inappropriate in a work whose title refers to a baseball stadium. After all, it is a truth universally acknowledged that

¹ All citations of this poem refer to Humphries' *Collected Poems* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1965. 84-85).

baseball is a game not regulated in principle by the clock, and a stadium is a relatively stable structure, unlikely to engage in a race against time. Of what, then, is time the essence? Is time, paradoxically, the essence of baseball? Does the statement mean that the ballpark is built to withstand time, making that resistance part of its essence? Or is time the essence of a play the poet has just observed on the field, so that his remark is along the lines of Warren Spahn's famous observation that "Hitting is timing. Pitching is upsetting timing" (Qtd. in Kahn 172)? Or is time the essence of this particular baseball game? Of this poem? Of poetry itself? Of life?

Humphries' next comment, "This is a highly skilled / And beautiful mystery," (1-2) has, like the sentence that precedes it, an appearance of clarity that disappears as soon as we think about it. What is this "mystery," and in what ways is it "highly skilled and beautiful"? The possibilities raised by Humphries's opening statement apply to this one as well. Alternatively, the poet's second pronouncement could be a refutation of all those responses. Perhaps the highly skilled and beautiful mystery is the statement "Time is of the essence"—or even the statement "This is a . . . mystery"—themselves. That is, "This is a highly skilled / and beautiful mystery" might be highly skilled and beautiful twist on Magritte's "Ceci n'est pas une pipe."

In what sense does the poet use the word "mystery"? Does it refer to some rite? Does the poem, as well as the game, participate in "a special form of personal religion linking the fate of a god of Frazer's 'dying-rising' type with the individual believer"? (Price and Kearns). Or is this a mystery of the type detectives and scholars try to unravel? Or maybe Humphries is using "mystery" to indicate that whatever "this" is, it is something that confounds logical categories, as in Delmore Schwartz's story "The Track Meet," when the narrator tells us that the English visitor he has taken to a minor league baseball game feels that the double play "would remain . . . a mystery, involving what might even be called antimony . . ." (*Successful Love* 83)²

² Schwartz was a great baseball fan, devoted to the Giants. Lou Reed, the rock guitarist, singer, and songwriter, says in "Sister Reyes," posted April 2, 2007, on the Yard Work site, that "Delmore would go on and on about the Polo Grounds, especially after he'd had a few, which was a lot of the time." In a letter dated July 12, 1938, Humphries asked Louise Bogan, "What did you think of the Social Symbolists in the *New Republic*. [sic] Hail the Sacred Nine: [Malcom] Cowley,

That Humphries' mystery is both skillful and beautiful implies that its beauty has been crafted. That is, the poem, itself a work of art, is dealing, at least to some extent, with a work of art, and is, at least to that extent, self-referential.

The poet's focus narrows to the action of the game, and we see the specific context in which his general statements, which still reverberate, were made:

Three or four seconds only
 From the time that Riggs connects till he reaches first,
 And in those seconds Jurges goes to his right,
 Comes up with the ball, tosses to Witek at second,
 For the force on Reese, Witek to Mize at first,
In time for the out—a double play. (2-7)

So the "highly skilled / And beautiful mystery" would seem to be a 6-4-3 double play, a feat that requires the precise coordination of the physical skills of three men in a period of three to four seconds. The reiteration of Witek, the pivot man's, name breaks the narrative flow of the description and emphasizes the articulation of its constituent parts. This allows Humphries to catalogue the elements of the double play while setting up a parallel between its two parts. It's as if the play had been scored 6-4, 4-3.

But something more subtle and complex also is happening. The tone of the poetic voice changes in the middle of the fourth line. After "In those seconds," the contemplative dissection of what has occurred becomes, with "Jurges goes to his right," an urgent description of what

[Archibald] MacLeish, [Horace] Gregory; [Muriel] Rukeyser, [Kenneth] Fearing, [James] Agee; [Eunice] Clark, Schwartz, and [Selden] Rodman. Only one ballplayer on the whole team." (Gillman and Novak 145) He was asking about Rodman's mini-anthology, "The Social Symbolists," which appeared in the magazine's July 13 issue. In his brief introduction, Rodman refers to the first three as social realists before publishing poems by the remaining six. I assume that Schwartz was the lone ballplayer.

is happening. Our eyes mimic Jorges, going to the right as we read the description. The action speeds up, as in a filmed montage; the sequence is broken down into discrete segments, which are presented in rapid succession. The division of the action into its constituent parts increases the urgency that each of them be completed on time.

The analysis of the double play is fostered by the repetition of the ordinal numbers “first” and “second,” which not only conveys the dazzling precision and urgency of the infielders’ achievement but enables the word play on “second” and “seconds,” merging the elements of the time-space continuum even as it emphasizes them. Humphries then ends his stanza with the neat pronouncement “a double play,” closing out the description as effectively as the double play closes out the inning. Like the pun on “second” and “seconds,” those three words are a double play in themselves, describing the end of an inning and constituting the end of the stanza. They also look back on what has been narrated and, by defining it, put it into the perspective of the game’s development. (As we shall see, this Janus-like quality permeates the structure of “Polo Grounds,” which looks back on the history of the Giants and draws eschatological conclusions from what it sees).

The italicized “*In*,” by changing what in normal speech would have been an iamb to a trochee, de-emphasizes the preposition’s compliment, “time,” which is stressed in the repeated trochee “Time is of the essence.” The shift of emphasis to “in” ironically makes us more aware of time; we feel the urgency of the play and of the narrator’s response to it. In his letter to Richard Gillman of September 8, 1965, Humphries, speaking of another baseball poem, Robert Francis’s “Pitcher,” would compare the arts of pitching and prosody with this advice:

don’t fire every ball over the plate with the same speed, at the same height, over the same corner; take a little off the pitch, move the ball around, change up on ‘em every once in a while. In prosodic terms, this would mean that in a dominantly iambic pentameter poem, you once in a while break the cadence with a trochaic trimeter, or put in a good long rest instead of a foot, or do as Shakespeare did in that opening speech of *Twelfth Night* . . . (Gillman and

Novak 267)

Humphries' metrical shift also calls attention to the poem's orality. The mere physical presence of the italics is a guide to pronunciation, signaling the presence of speech. The change in emphasis makes the reader even more aware of the text's spoken nature. This emphasis neatly conveys the finality of the play and the urgency of its perception. Humphries then performs the quintessential poetic act of naming the object he contemplates: a double play. He achieves this in a way that does not merely lexicalize that object, but incarnates it as well. "We recall," says A. Bartlett Giamatti, writing on the nature of baseball,

that the patterns of rhyme and the rules for pivot and recapitulation in a sonnet compress the energy of language, [sic] and compound significance. But cannot the same be said of turning a double play, where the rhythm and force, pivot and repetition are the whole point? (Take Time 90)

To recite Humphries' description of these actions, which, as he tells us, take three to four seconds on the field, requires about fifteen seconds, from "And in those seconds" to "double play." In this period, a second feat, the description, reproduces the two-part play on the field, creating a new double play, the physical event and its verbal counterpart. In this process, language, in a literary analogue to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, has transformed the temporal nature of its subject.³ The speed at which baseball action occurs

³ Werner Heisenberg's principle, "the more precisely the position of a particle is determined, the less precisely the momentum is known in this instant, and visa versa," leads to the conclusion that observation changes the object observed, the common view of the uncertainty principle. Position and momentum are the two major elements of the double play.

Heisenberg has a less theoretical connection to the world of baseball. Boston Red Sox catcher Moe Berg—a relative of Allen Ginsberg (Dawidoff, *Catcher* 318)—was an OSS agent during World War II.

One evening, Berg timed his departure [from a party in Zurich], to match Heisenberg's, and when the scientist left the house, Berg joined him on the sidewalk [. . .] It

makes discrepancies like these inevitable. As George Will observes, “Even a slow 80-mile-per-hour curveball gets from the pitcher’s hand to the plate faster than you can say ‘curveball.’” (206)

There is yet another dimension to this, the first play narrated in “Polo Grounds”: textual allusion. Franklin P. Adams mournfully celebrated the beautiful mystery of the short-to-second-to-first double play, as executed in the Polo Grounds, no less, in his perfect playful dirge, “Baseball’s Sad Lexicon,” a poem that, along with another ode to failure, Ernest L. Thayer’s “Casey at the Bat,” is one of the two keystones of the popular baseball verse tradition:

These are the saddest of possible words:

“Tinker to Evers to Chance.”

Trio of bear cubs, and fleeter than birds,

Tinker and Evers and Chance.

Ruthlessly pricking our gonfalon bubble,

Making a Giant hit into a double—

Words that are heavy with nothing but trouble:

“Tinker to Evers to Chance.”⁴

was an ideal moment for murder, but [. . .] Berg resisted. He had just heard Heisenberg say that the war was lost for Germany. Were Heisenberg poised to unfurl an atomic bomb, he would probably have spoken differently or not at all. [. . .] It might have made sense to [. . .] shoot Heisenberg in 1942 [. . .] but by December 1944, it was too late. (Dawidoff, *Catcher* 207-208)

Time was of the essence.

⁴ “E is for Evers, / His jaw in advance, / Never afraid / To Tinker with Chance,” wrote Ogden Nash in “Line-Up for Yesterday: An ABC of Baseball Immortals.” The Cubs’ keystone combination’s election to the Hall of Fame led the Chicago sportswriter Warren Brown to quip, “Don’t let anyone tell you the poet’s pen isn’t mightier than the scorer’s pencil.” (Staudohar 114) This example of Nash’s light verse has two points of contact with Humphries’ meditation: both present a litany of players dead and gone, and both exhibit a concern for immortality.

Only this time it is the Giants who execute the twin killing.

Humphries re-enforces the finality of the double play with the silence imposed by the break between stanzas. The new one is entirely parenthetical, which emphasizes the break in the action.

(Red Barber crescendo. Crowd noises, obbligato;
Scattered staccatos from the peanut boys,
Loud in the lull, as the teams are changing sides).
(8-10. Ellipsis in orig.)

It is Red Barber, the radio voice of the Brooklyn Dodgers, who has described the double play and who will provide much of the poem's subsequent narration. The word's mysterious mutual absorption with the act in the play-by-play broadcast is one of the ways in which the Humphries directs our attention back to the poem itself, where we read the game.

The use of musical terms ("crescendo," "obbligato," and the onomatopoeic alliteration "Scattered staccatos") highlights the balletic nature of the double play. That quality would have appealed to Humphries, who collaborated on *Adelante 'Forward'*, a ballet based on poems of the Spanish Civil War and produced in April 1939 by the WPA's Federal Theater Project. In this production, staged three weeks after Franco's triumphal entry into Madrid, which put an end to democracy in Spain for over thirty-five years, Humphries' translations gave new life to the defeated republic's poetry, transformed to dance. The ballet ends, the program notes tell us, as the "dancers go by in a heroic processional sequence which builds and mounts while the voices sing – *Adelante, Adelante, forward over Death*" (qtd. in Cooper 241).

The musical diction of lines 8-9 also prepares us for what happens in the third stanza; the description of the game in terms of ritual, a choreographic rite played out in the green outdoor cathedral beneath Coogan's Bluff. The reference to Red Barber, whose voice is heard on the portable radios fans have brought to the ballpark, resumes its dominant role after the lull between innings and retains that position during the next fifteen lines. Indeed, it is not always clear whether the poem portrays a man watching the game from the stands in the Polo Grounds or listening to it on the radio. "Loud in the lull" is one of the

few indications that another voice is controlling Barber's, since the expression is in sharp contrast to what a sportscaster, even one as literate as Barber, would say in this context. That the question of who is watching the game arises at all suggests that the merging of word and act might be the double play that constitutes the "beautiful mystery."

In another poem from this period, "Sonnet For a Radio Audience," reprinted, like "Polo Grounds," in his *Collected Poems*, Humphries makes the association between that medium (I use the noun with an awareness of its etymology as the conveyor of hidden knowledge) and the communication of mysterious wisdom, a communication in which the voice, the word, is all:

However good your eyes, they serve you here
 Only as men are served who stand before
 The oracles in darkness, or draw near
 The Sybil's cave, the triply-bolted door,
 Or simple seaside wonderers, who fear
 The voice below the wave beside the shore. (9-14)

The crowd noises and the peanut vendors' cries⁵ that replace Red Barber's voice are not all that is loud in the interinning lull, The historian Warren Goldstein has observed that the

⁵ The peanut vendors' cries could be included in the list of Humphries' musical terms. The rumba "El manisero" "The Peanut Vendor" had enjoyed worldwide popularity for over a decade when Humphries wrote "Polo Grounds." In "El espantoso redentor Lazarus Morell" "The Horrendous Redeemer Lazarus Morell" (1935), Jorge Luis Borges lists the consequences of Bartolomé de las Casas' successful advocacy of the importation of African slaves to the Americas in order to relieve the sufferings of the Caribbean Indians, an advocacy Borges calls a "curiosa variación de un filántropo" 'curious variation of a philanthropist.' (17) One of those consequences was "la deplorable rumba *El manisero*" (18) The context of his list makes Borges's choice of this example of the law of unintended consequences less heinous than it might otherwise seem. Still, it is interesting that he calls the song a rumba, the misnomer under which a variety of Caribbean musical genres used to be grouped outside of the Antilles. "El manisero" is a *pregón* 'a vendor's cry,' a variety of the *son*. This imprecision indicates the song's acceptance outside its original audience. The Marx Brothers' tossing of peanuts at the operagoers in *A Night at the Opera* as the orchestra breaks into "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," may have been inspired by the way Antonio Machín opened the Orquesta Casino's act at the RKO Palace in New

stillness, the pauses in the action, invite intellectually inclined spectators to fill in the blanks, to reflect on what they see, . . . to visualize the ghosts on the baseball field. The game does encourage dreaming and dreaminess. (417)

In the stillness, the pause, we hear the written voice of the poet as it names those sounds and their sources. He might even be composing the poem we are reading, since, as Ruth Limmer tells us "Humphries wrote poetry between innings," (Gilman and Novak 20), although she may mean that metaphorically. The act of writing the poem, then, begins when the action it describes starts to fade into memory. Wordsworth tells us that poetry is "emotion recollected in tranquility" (266), and, as in Wordsworth, Humphries' telling mingles the tranquility, the lulls, with the emotion.

The ellipsis that concludes the parenthetical stanza allows the poet to let the Giants' turn at bat go by without comment. Instead, Humphries returns to Red Barber's narration with the Dodgers once more at the plate. The musical interlude gives way to Barber's circumstantial description of baseball's little rituals. It is the unfolding chronicle of minimal details, rhythmically repeated, rising to a climax, as the poem becomes a new Red Barber crescendo.

Hubbell takes the sign, nods, pumps, delivers—
 A foul into the stands. Dunn takes a new ball out,
 Hands it to Danning, who throws it down to Werber;
 Werber takes off his glove, rubs the ball briefly,
 Tosses it over to Hub, who goes to the rosin bag,
 Takes the sign from Danning, pumps, delivers—
 Low, outside, ball three. Danning goes to the mound,
 Says something to Hub. Dunn brushes off the plate,
 Adams starts throwing in the Giant bullpen,
 Hub takes the sign from Danning, pumps, delivers,
 Camilli gets hold of it, a *long* fly to the outfield,

York, "throwing peanuts into the audience, singing '*Maniiii . . . maniiii . . .*'". (Sublette 395, ellipses in orig.)

Ott goes back, back, back, against the wall, gets under it,
Pounds his glove, and takes it for the out.

That's all for the Dodgers (11-24. Ellipsis in original)

Barber's fictionalized narration, complete with the repetitive filler "pumps, delivers," mimics the seemingly senseless acts it describes. The accumulating minutia lead to a moment of rising excitement followed by a sudden let-down whose arc parallels the flight of the ball as it travels to deep right field and then drops into Mel Ott's glove for the final out. Like the flight of the ball, the Giant outfielder's race to catch it, is related with rising excitement until he stops and waits for his prize to fall.

After the dismissive "That's all for the Dodgers," the teams again change sides, embodying baseball's patterned stops and starts and contributing to the theme of death and reincarnation: the Dodgers go down (as does Camilli's fly ball) so that the Giants can come up. We never see this resurrection; indeed, the Giants never come to bat in Humphries' poem. The rebirth, however, is implied, loud in the lull.

The fly out has a long history as a metaphor for death. Shoeless Joe Jackson's glove was known as "the place triples go to die" (Virtual Hall of Fame), an epithet that more recently has been applied to Willie Mays's glove. And before either of those players had been born, the versatile nineteenth-century player Bob Ferguson, whom Humphries likely heard of in his youth (see page 28, below), earned the nickname "Death to Flying Things," which accompanies his entry in the player register of *The Baseball Encyclopedia*. Humphries' connection with Ferguson would have deepened his awareness of the metaphorical possibilities of the fly ball.

Poets, too, have made the connection between the fly ball and mortality. The Venezuelan Carlos Brito plays on the similarity between the caught fly ball and death in his four line poem "Elevado" 'Fly Ball,' told from the ball's perspective.

Triste destino el mío
volar a las casa de los Dioses
y al final morir
en las manos de un simple mortal.

My fate is a sad one, to soar to the home of the
 Gods and in the end to die at the hands of a
 mere mortal. (My translation, as are all the
 uncredited ones in this study).

In Brito's poem, the fly ball is not necessarily a long one. Ramón Luis Acevedo, in his study of Horacio Peña's elegy to Roberto Clemente, examines an example in which both the poem and fly ball are long:

La noción de profundidad, referida a la distancia desde
 el *home plate* y [los bosques], adquiere connotaciones
 trascendentes, referidas al infinito, la eternidad y el ciclo
 eterno de la vida y la muerte.

The notion of depth, referring to the distance between
 home plate and [the outfield], takes on transcendent
 connotations, referring to infinity, eternity, and the
 eternal cycle of life and death. (51)

Acevedo then cites lines 33-38 of Peña's work:

su fotografía trasmitida por los teletipos
 mientras fildeaba en las profundidades
 —ahí donde se muere,
 se nace y se renace una y otra vez—
 en las profundidades del tiempo
 y de la historia que ya tenía un espacio para él . . .

his photo transmitted by teletype while he fielded in
 the depths—out there where things die, are born, and
 are reborn over and over— in the depths of time and
 history, which already had a space for him (52)

Warren Goldstein has written an excellent commentary on the American poet Richard Jackson's "Center Field. The section I quote begins with the text of Jackson's first stanza.⁶

⁶ The full text of "Center Field," printed on pages 62-63 of Dan Johnson's anthology *Hummers, Knucklers, and Slow Curves* reads,

I don't think it will ever come down,
it flew so quickly beyond the small hollow
the field lights make in the approaching dusk,
and I begin to realize how uneven the outfield is—
the small holes that test your ankles, the slight pitch
towards deep center that makes backpedaling so risky
but keeps pulling you as if further into your past.

It must be falling out of another world,
'lint from the stars' we used to say on a sandlot
in Lawrence, Mass.—and I have so much time
to imagine what you will say between innings
about what we try to steal from our darkening pasts,
how age means knowing how many steps we have lost,
remembering that too many friends have died,
and how love is the most important thing,
if only we knew who to love, and when.

The ball is just becoming visible again
and I am trying to remember anyone I have loved,
and it turns out it was usually too late, that we stood
like embarrassed batters caught looking at a third strike.
Yet somehow in this long moment I have slid
past the outstretched arms of twenty years,
and I can see Joey Gile crouched at third base
waiting, as it happened, for the bullet of some sniper
to snap like a line drive into his chest,
for John Kearns to swing and miss everything
from a tree in his back yard and not be found
for two days, for Joe Daly, whom I hardly knew
and who hardly had time to steal away
when the tractor slipped gear and tagged him to a tree,
for Gene Coskren who never understood baseball
and was fooled by a hit and run in Syracuse, N.Y.,
and somehow I am going to tell them all.

And my mother's sister who loved this game
and who complained for years about her stomach,
the family joke, until the cancer struck
and she went down faster than any of them.
And her own aunt, "I don't want to die," she said, and slid
her head to the pillow not out of fear
but embarrassment, stranded, she thought,
with no one to bring her home, no one to love.

I don't think it will ever come down,
 it flew so quickly beyond the small hollow
 the field lights make in the approaching dusk,
 and I begin to realize how uneven the outfield is—
 the small holes that test your ankles, the slight pitch
 towards deep center field that makes backpedaling so
 risky
 but keeps pulling you as if further into your past. [1-7]

The ball seems to hang up there in the dark; the
 centerfielder worries as his eyes try to focus on the tiny
 white sphere; his small well-lit portion of the outfield, the
 world, shrinks in the face of the approaching dusk;
 suddenly the outfield is uneven, dangerous perhaps,
 and the can of corn might be a jack in the box. Maybe
 he will fall prey to the risk of backpedaling and dis-
 appear into deep center, “further into your past,” a larger
 hole than he had planned on dealing with, guided there
 by the “slight pitch” of the ball field. Tenses are cut loose
 (past, present, and future jumble together), and as he
 follows the high fly ball, the lights can no longer ward off
 the dread around the edges. He feels the chill of his own
 and others' mortality:

I have so much time
 to imagine what you will say between innings

But in the meantime, look, this is a poem
 that could go on being about either death or love,
 and we have only the uncertain hang time
 of a fly ball to decide how to position ourselves,
 to find the right words for our love,
 to turn towards home as the night falls, as the ball,
 as the loves, the deaths we grab for our own.

(I have retained Johnson's use of single quotation marks in line 9 rather than the more common double ones).

about what we try to steal from our darkening pasts,
 how age means knowing how many steps we have
 lost
 remembering that too many friends have died
 [10-14] (419-420)

A washed-up semi-pro right fielder disappears into nothingness while chasing a fly ball at the end of the Mexican polygraph Vicente Leñero's one-act play "El filder del destino" 'Destiny's Outfielder.'

Se oye el ruido de un batazo. Él se apresta. La pelota parece volar rumbo a su terreno. Empieza a correrla mirando hacia arriba, midiendo lo que parece un profundísimo elevado. Él se mueve, se mueve . . . Siguiendo el batazo desaparece de la escena.

Oscuro final.

The sound of the bat hitting the ball is heard. He gets ready. The ball seems headed towards his territory. He starts to run after it, looking up, measuring what seems to be a very deep fly ball. He moves, he moves . . . Tracking the hit, he disappears from the scene. Final blackout. (Leñero and De la Torre 53)

The repetitive motions transmitted by Barber's voice have prepared us for an enactment of the cycle of death and rebirth. The metaphor "baseball's ritual acts" takes on a more profound dimension.

All the while, the Giants have been playing for, and with, time. The catcher Danning, throws the new ball to the third baseman Werber instead of directly to Hubbell, the pitcher. He, in turn, waits until the ball has been delivered to him before drying his pitching hand with the rosin bag. Then, the two of them meet on the pitcher's mound before Danning, squatting behind home plate, signals Hubbell what pitch to throw. They are stalling to give the relief pitcher Adams time to start warming up. Barber, too, has been playing for, and with, time, as we will see when we discuss the technical details of his broadcasts from the Polo Grounds.

Even the punctuation contributes to the act of ventriloquism by which the poet, a sibyl once removed, assumes the broadcaster's voice. Ten discrete acts, beginning with the umpire taking a ball out of his bag and ending with his call on Hubbell's pitch, acts which usually would be divided into about seven sentences, are described in one, the clauses separated mainly by commas. This is followed by another series of ten discrete acts, from Danning's conference with Hubbell to the final out of the inning, also reported in a single sentence. Conventional grammar has given way to a pair of monumental run-on sentences, hallmarks of spoken language. The italicized "*long*," telling us to emphasize that adjective, is another sign that this text should be read as a spoken one. This is how baseball sounds on radio. Indeed, just as the double play passage captures Red Barber's sparse, unrelenting style of narrating exciting plays, the call of Ott's catch reproduces the way Barber sounded when narrating deep fly balls.⁷

In referring to the "loud in the lull" stanza's function as a signal that "Polo Grounds" contains, but is not controlled by, Barber's voice, I mentioned the non-sportscaster nature of the phrase. There is another reason why the crowd noises indicate that Barber no longer is speaking.

⁷ Red Barber's description of Al Gionfriddo's catch of Joe DiMaggio's long line drive to left-centerfield in the sixth game of the 1947 World Series is woven into Terry Cashman's recording of the song "Play-By-Play (I Saw it on the Radio)." (Passin' it On) A prominent feature of Barber's call is the rapid quintuple repetition of "back," indicative of the excitement of the play and depth of DiMaggio's drive. (Camilli's long fly would not have generated as much emotion and would have been narrated at a slower tempo). Robert McG. Thomas Jr., in his obituary of Barber in the October 23, 1992 New York Times, calls "back, back, back, back, back, bank" "the trademark staccato Mr. Barber used to place Al Gionfriddo" when he made his historic catch. Barber's dramatic evocation of depth in the outfield takes on a temporal dimension in the title the Times gave Jack Curry's piece of baseball nostalgia in the June 23, 2008 issue, "Going Back, Back, Back to 1939." Other relatively easy to find recordings of Barber's Dodger broadcasts are available on Pat Hughes's *Red Barber: Play-by-Play Pioneer*, part of Hughes's Baseball Voices Hall of Fame series of compact discs and on the discs that accompany Ted Patterson's *The Golden Voices of Radio* and Joe Garner's *And the Fans Roared*.

In 1941, Barber's broadcasts of games played at the Polo Grounds were telegraphic recreations, and he "didn't care for [the] simulated reality" of sound effects in that type of presentation (Barber and Creamer 241). A fan tuned into Barber's broadcast would not have heard the peanut vendors' cries. Although Barber rejected the sound effects that other recreators used to beef up their reality quotient, he still needed to invent details that were not included in the cryptic telegraphic reports on which he based his transmissions. Otherwise, he might as well have read his score sheet. All those convincing details were fictions, plausible but unreliable.

The ellipsis after "That's all for the Dodgers" signals another change of focus. The poet's voice takes over from the radio announcer's and, rather than providing simultaneous descriptions of specific plays, once more contemplates the nature of the game, musing about it in terms of time and space. Humphries and Barber alternate, each taking his turn at bat, imitating baseball's ongoing alternation (and radio's alternating current).

Time is of the essence. The rhythms break,
 More varied and subtle than any kind of dance
 Movement speeds up or lags. The ball goes out
 In sharp and angular drives, or long slow arcs,
 Comes in again controlled and under aim;
 The players wheel or spurt, race, stoop, slide, halt,
 Shift imperceptibly to new positions,
 Watching the signs according to the batter,
 The score, the inning. Time is of the essence. (25-33)

The earlier musical vocabulary ("crescendo," "obbligato," "staccato") gives way to terms describing a phenomenon that, while still musical, is beyond music, a phenomenon whose rhythms are "more varied and subtle than any kind of dance," a phrase that subtly varies the rhythm of the sentence of which it is a part. Movement—time made visible—speeds up and slows down. When the ball is hit, it travels in onomatopoeic "sharp angular drives" or "long slow arcs." In this last phrase a temporal adjective ("slow") is applied to a geometric form ("arcs"); momentum and position are conjoined. These trajectories next are balanced against the ball's return to the infield, "controlled and under aim." Then the players reposition themselves, guided in

part by the score. That word is rich in meaning. It refers, not just to what the batter tries to do and the totals of runs achieved by the two competing teams, but to the rendition of music in written form and to the reduction of the game's events to writing. Its mathematical significance is appropriate to a Pythagorean sport like baseball, where it's three strikes, you're out, three outs end an inning, a normal game lasts nine (i.e., 3x3) innings, with the winning team recording twenty-seven (3x3x3) put outs, and the diamond is composed of two contiguous right triangles, sharp and angular. (To score also is to make a mark, which ties in with the poem's concern with the vanity of fame).

Everything has meaning. The players "watching the signs" aren't just observing their coaches and teammates' signals, but searching for the significance of each new situation. They are oracles who observe and transmit the signs to the initiated "according to the batter, / The score." And, as in Humphries' radio sonnet, the audience receives the oracles' message without fully understanding it. The fans know only that "Hub takes his sign from Danning. " They don't know how many fingers the catcher lays down, what pitch those fingers call for, or what other signs the remaining actors are transmitting and receiving. What is being enacted is, after all, a mystery. ("It's like church," one-time Giants' catcher and manager Wes Westrum, is credited with having said about the game. "Many attend, but few understand") (Baseball Almanac, 1967 New York Mets Roster, inter alia).

The association between the players' signals in "Polo Grounds" and the radio signals in "Sonnet for a Radio Audience" seems all the more legitimate in light of the historical connection between the development of the electric telegraph, radio's parent and the direct source of Barber's narration, and baseball's systems of communication. Paul Dickson points out (I was about to write "signals") this connection in his *The Hidden Language of Baseball: How Signs and Sign-Stealing Have Influenced the Course of Our National Pastime*.

. . . the telegraph was instrumental in both the growth of the American newspaper and the development of baseball as a national sport: It allowed for the instant transmission of scores,

standings, and box scores, which could be published in the next morning's edition. In fact, the first known reference to a catcher using signals to move his team into defensive position used the metaphor of the telegraph. (25)

Most of all, as the phrase's placement at the end of the clause emphasizes, Humphries' players watch "according to . . . the inning," the situation's location on the time-space continuum of the game. Then, the refrain sums up the observer's observations and brackets the stanza.

The refrain also opens the next stanza as the voice of the poet, still musing about the game, repeats, "Time is of the essence." The phrase does more than articulate his *idée fixe*; it also designates who is speaking, the man watching the game from the stands. The poetic voice speaks the parenthesis and every stanza that begins with "Time is of the essence." Red Barber speaks the remainder.

In this new stanza, time has become less the element in which motion occurs than the element in which the past is lost. Almost without pausing, the poet asks "Remember Terry?" (34)

Ubi sunt?

Remember Terry? Bill Terry, the last .400 hitter in the National League, had been the Giants' manager just one year earlier! Only five years before that he was their regular first baseman and played in every game of the World Series. (All major league statistical information comes, unless otherwise indicated, from the Player and Pitcher Registers of Reichler's *Baseball Encyclopedia*).

Humphries allows this question to resonate as he lists three more ex-Giants in a single line: "Remember Stonewall Jackson, Lindstrom, Frisch [?]" (35), an equally strange question. All three eventually were elected, like Terry, to the Hall of Fame. And all of them only recently had ended their major league playing careers, Frankie Frisch in 1937, and the rest in 1936. How poignant that the poet should ask, only a few years later, if anyone remembers them.

It would seem as though, in asking these questions in 1942, Humphries were addressing them, not to himself or a contemporary audience, but to posterity. This brings us to another puzzle contained in “Polo Grounds,” to whom does Humphries’ narrator speak, a seatmate, the reader? It could even be to himself, as in Humphries’ “Night Game,” (Collected Poems) which begins

*Only the bores are bored, --wrote William Saroyan—
And I was a bore, and so I went to the ball game;
But there was a pest who insisted on going with me.
I thought I could shake him if I bought one ticket,
But he must have come in on a pass. I couldn’t see him,
But I knew he was there, back of third, in the row behind
me,
His knees in my back, and his breath coming over my
shoulder
The loud-mouthed fool, the sickly nervous ego,
Repeating his silly questions, like a child
Or a girl at the first game ever. *Shut up*, I told him,
*For Christ’s sweet sake, shut up, and watch the ball
game.* (1-11)*

Indeed, it seems as if “Night Game” is describing the events that take place in the grandstand of “Polo Grounds.”

In any case, no Giants fan of the early 1940s would have had trouble remembering the players whose names Humphries recites. But a twenty first-century fan might not even remember their names. It is as if the poet were using his awareness of time's passing, of mortality, as an intimation of immortality, to be achieved through his own art, as if he didn't trust the memory of “baseball’s immortals” to last, while he expected that future generations would read and respond to his poem.

Once Humphries has named Frankie Frisch, whose fleeting appearance in the poem ironically confirms his nickname, “The Fordham Flash,” the poet throws us a curve. He adds to the players’ names the adverbial clause, “When they were good?” (36) It is the players' skills that have receded to the edges of memory. There was a lapse between the loss of the players’ abilities and the end of their careers, a period of decay, of death in life, in which Terry, Jackson,

Linstrom, and Frisch, ghosts of the players they had been “when they were good,” swelled the rout of Housman’s “Runners whom renown outran / And the name died before the man”, (19-20).

The qualifying clause immediately is followed by a new set of names on the roll call of extinguished glories. With “Remember Long George Kelly?” (36), the narrator’s thoughts now delve further into the past, towards another thirteen men, all of whose major league careers ended before 1926 and five of whom already had died before the poem was written.

Remember John McGraw and Benny Kauff?
Remember Bridwell, Tenney, Merkle, Youngs,
Chief Meyers, Big Jeff Tesreau, Shufflin’ Phil?
Remember Mathewson, Ames, and Donlin,
Buck Ewing, Rusie, Smiling Mickey Welch? (37-41)

This roster of bygone players (although McGraw would have been more familiar to Giants’ fans as a manager) prepares us for the theme of immortality by replacement, of successive generations merging into an eternal archetype, a theme to which we will return at the end of this chapter.

Bill Terry has a line to himself, shared only with the refrain, marking him as the incarnation of the admonition “time is of the essence.” Long George Kelly, the Hall of Fame first baseman whom Terry replaced in the Giants’ infield, shares his line with the qualifying adverbial clause, which contaminates him with its apparent quibbling. The next eighteen players are covered in six verses, one-third of a line per player. As the names roll on, *non averei creduto / che morte tanta n’avesse disfatta*. (Not all of these men were dead when the poem was written, but, for the speaker, they might as well have been). These players, too, belong to baseball’s elite. Like all the retired players mentioned in the first part of the roll call, five of the eighteen, McGraw, Youngs, Mathewson, Ewing, and Welch are, in the frequently used expression, immortals enshrined in the Hall of Fame. These are not people likely to have been forgotten in 1942.

Nor were the remaining thirteen unmemorable. Two of them, Al Bridwell and Chief Meyers, merit chapters in Lawrence Ritter’s groundbreaking oral history, *The Glory of Their Times*. (“Polo

Grounds” provides the epigraph for the chapter on Bridwell). Another three were accomplished players, remembered not just for their achievements, but also for their flaws, off or on the field. Two of these were banished from organized baseball for life, a fate we might expect to live, albeit in infamy. Although the baseball establishment tried to minimize the attention paid to these disgraced players, asking people in 1942 if they remembered those two would be like asking today if anyone remembers Pete Rose.

Benny Kauff was charged with auto theft and, although acquitted, placed by Commissioner Kennesaw Mountain Landis on the permanently ineligible list “for being linked with car thieves” (Voigt II, 144). But Kauff was more than just another victim of Judge Landis’s tyranny. He was known as the “Ty Cobb of the Federal League” (Baseball Page), a short-lived third major league, itself vanished into an almost mythic past and the model for Phillip Roth’s parody *The Great American Novel*, a work that, like “Polo Grounds,” revolves around the fading of reality with time.

Jeff Tesreau was so well known that he was expected to be a shoo-in when he ran for office in Hanover, New Hampshire. Unfortunately, the electorate knew him as Jeff, while the election code required that he be listed on the ballot by his legal name of Charles Monroe Tesreau. (He owed his unlikely nickname to his resemblance to heavyweight boxing champion James J. Jeffries, “The Great White Hope” to defeat Jack Johnson) (Turkin and Thompson 518-519). Although never banned from baseball, Tesreau was an early champion of players’ rights, which led to a shortened career and explains why he ended up in Hanover.

Prior to spring training [in 1918,] McGraw had asked Tesreau to take the pitchers, catchers, and some out-of-condition players down South [sic] for some early work. When the manager arrived later, he asked Jeff to report on the players’ evening activities. The big pitcher refused, claiming that a man’s behavior away from the ballpark was his own business. That touched off a feud between the stubborn manager and his equally stubborn pitcher. Tesreau got off to a tough-luck start, going 4-4 but with a 2.32 ERA in his first

dozen games, and suddenly left the team. He never pitched another game in Organized Baseball. With World War I underway, Tesreau took a job with Bethlehem Steel and went 7-4 in 12 games in the Steel League that year. He struck up an acquaintance with Tom Kendry, the company's recreational executive who had connections at Dartmouth College. Dartmouth was looking for a new baseball coach[,] and Kendry recommended Tesreau for the position. Jeff refused to pitch for the Giants in 1919, and McGraw refused to release or trade him, so the big pitcher spent the year coaching the Dartmouth team. Despite an offer from the Boston Braves, Tesreau ended up spending the rest of his life coaching at Dartmouth. (Lesch)

Shufflin' Phil Douglas, who, like Benny Kauff, was banned from organized baseball, was known for his eccentricities, to which his fondness for alcohol contributed. Although "thanks partly to [the informal press blackout encouraged by the baseball industry after Douglas's punishment] the public had begun to forget [him] soon after he was banished" (John Lardner, 158), he was well enough remembered to be mentioned sixty-six years later on fourteen of the 324 pages of text of Charles C. Alexander's biography of John McGraw. (Of course, some of those references may have been the result of a revival of interest in Douglas spurred by Lardner's article while others are a measure how great a thorn each of the men was in the other's side). More than just a colorful figure, Shufflin' Phil was an extremely talented pitcher. "He was not only a powerful man," John Lardner writes,

but, as far as pitching went, a versatile and intelligent one The spitball . . . was only one of Douglas's assets. He had a fast ball, a curve, and a change-of-pace pitch as well. (142)

He started the opening game of the 1921 World Series for the Giants and pitched in the majors for nine years, recording a lifetime earned run average of 2.80, which ties him for ninety-seventh on *Baseball Almanac's* all-time list as of the end of the 2007 season. His earned run average of 2.63 led the major leagues in 1922, the first year in

which it was an official statistic. His ERA in twenty-seven innings of World Series pitching was only 2.00. Much of this he accomplished while sober.

Humphries seems to have believed that Douglas was well enough remembered by the people who read “Polo Grounds” in 1942 that his nickname would be sufficient identification. The poet crossed out the words “old Phil Douglas” from his manuscript and replaced them with “Shufflin’ Phil.”⁸

Turkey Mike Donlin achieved a kind of immortality by being “the first baseball star to headline a feature film.” (Erickson 14) Will Rogers called him “the Babe Ruth of his time.” (222) Had the Cowboy Philosopher lived another fifteen years or so, he might have referred to Turkey Mike as the Joe DiMaggio of his day because, when the Giants’ outfielder married Mabel Hite, it was, in Rogers’ words, the wedding of “America’s most popular comedienne [and] America’s most popular ball player” (223). Damon Runyon called Turkey Mike “one of the greatest baseball players that ever wore a cleated shoe and one of the most picturesque characters ever produced by the old game” (90). Runyon reports a fund raising dinner held for Donlin in 1927, chaired by John Barrymore, (91) with whom the ball player had appeared in *The Sea Beast*, a silent film adaptation of *Moby-Dick* (Erickson 384). Turkey Mike frequently appeared in vaudeville, and his other film credits include parts in Buster Keaton’s classic *The General* (1927),⁹ *Beggars of Life*, directed by William Wellman in 1928, and John Ford’s 1930 *Born Reckless* (Erickson 384). Ring Lardner expects the readers of *You Know Me Al* to recognize the reference when the semi-literate

⁸ The MS is in the Humphries papers in the Amherst College Library’s Archives and Special Collections, box 5, folder 36.

⁹ *The General*, like “Raid,” a story Faulkner incorporated into *The Unvanquished*, deals with Andrew’s Raid, the first Union incursion into Northern Georgia in the Civil War. It set the stage for the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, for which baseball commissioner Kennesaw Mountain Landis was named. Kennesaw Mountain is in Cobb County.

narrator of that epistolary novel writes, “maybe I will go to Australia with Mike Donlin’s team” (77). One of those readers was Virginia Woolf, who, in 1925, called Lardner’s “the best prose that has come our way,” citing as an example “*You Know Me Al*, a story about baseball, a game which is not played in England, a story written often in a language which is not English.” (Collected Essays 118) Charles Ives even composed a piece called “Mike Donlin—Johnny Evers.” (Zoss and Bowman 375) As if that weren’t a sufficient recognition factor, the fans at San José Municipal Stadium enjoy the food at Turkey Mike’s Barbeque stand, so that, even today, at least in Silicon Valley, Donlin’s name is on the lips of thousands.

In *The Glory of Their Times*, Fred Snodgrass, of the infamous “Snodgrass’ Muff” that cost the Giants the 1912 World Series, recalls his equally unfortunate namesake, Fred Merkle, who

had joined the Giants in the fall of 1907, at the age of eighteen. . . . So in 1908 . . . , when the so-called Merkle “bonehead” occurred, he was a kid of only nineteen years old [sic]. As a result of what happened he took more abuse and vituperation than any other nineteen-year-old I’ve ever heard of (105-106).¹⁰

The blunder cost the Giants a key victory against the Chicago Cubs, leading to a make-up game between the two teams that was, in effect,

¹⁰ Umpire Bob Emslie described what still is known as “Merkle’s bonehead play” in his official report to National League president Harry Pulliam, dated September 23, 1908 and reprinted in its entirety on page 32 of *The Baseball Research Journal* for 1993. I have retained Emslie’s quaint diction, punctuation, and grammar in order to preserve the period atmosphere of his report and to avoid cluttering the page with sics.

In the ninth inning of to-day’s game at the Polo Grounds, with two men out and New York base-runners on first and third bases, Bridwell made a

a sudden death playoff. Christy Mathewson called that game, which was “responsible for the deaths of two spectators who fell from the elevated railroad structure overlooking the grounds,” the one “which made Fred Merkle famous for not touching second, which caused lifelong friends to become bitter enemies, and which, altogether, was the most dramatic and important contest in the history of baseball” (183-184). *Remember?*

These players were unforgettable.¹¹ The incongruity of asking if the implied listener remembers them is the point of the poet’s rhetoric. It reminds us that no amount of fame, infamy, or achievement, no dramatic and important consequences can exempt us from death and oblivion. These men whose names once had been household words, where are they, *ubi sunt?* The “Virgilian melancholy” Limmer finds in “Polo Grounds” (20) is a medieval lament played out in a twentieth-century American ballpark. Yet, if death and forgetfulness are inevitable, so, too, are the evocation, the memorialization in verse of the dead and forgotten, or at least, nearly so.

This list of the famous departed comes to an abrupt halt. After cramming twenty great and near-great players into eight lines, totaling forty-nine words, including a half a dozen uses of the questioning verb “remember,” the poet takes two lines, that is, fourteen words, almost six times as many as he dedicated on average to each of the really significant players he listed, to ask if we remember “a left-handed catcher named Jack Humphries, / Who sometimes played the outfield, in ’83?” (42-43). This name has the honor of being the last on the roll

¹¹ Three of the retired players on Humphries’ list appear in Nash’s “Line-Up:” Frankie Frisch (“F is for Fordham / And Frankie and Frisch; / I wish he were back / With the Giants, I wish.” [21-24]), Christie Mathewson (“M is for Matty, / Who carried a charm / In the form of an extra / Brain in his arm.” [53-56]), and Bill Terry (“T is for Terry / The Giant from Memphis / Whose 400 average you can’t overemphasize.” [81-84]). Two of the active Giants in “Polo Grounds” also crack the “Line-up:” Mel Ott (“O is for Ott / Of the restless right foot. / When he leaned on the pellet, / The pellet stayed put.” [61-64]) and Carl Hubbell (“U would be Ubbell / If Carl were a cockney; / We say Hubbell and baseball / Like football and Rockne.” [85-88]). I suspect that the real reason U is for Ubbell is that “H is for Hornsby.” (29)

call, closing the catalogue of some of the most memorable players in Giants' history.

How explain this placement? The list of Giants dead and gone is not in order of decreasing importance. We could, perhaps, consider the listing of a little known left-handed catcher in this spot an ironic anticlimax. Baseball fans tend to feel about left-handers playing behind the plate much as Samuel Johnson felt about women preaching, that it is "like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to see it done at all." (qtd. in Boswell 1, 328)

To one of the speaker's imaginary listeners, his seat-mate at The Polo Grounds, this placing of the little known receiver at the close of such a distinguished list would, indeed, seem anti-climatic, no matter what position Jack Humphries had played. He was, after all, a distinctly minor figure in the history of baseball. His entire major league career consisted of ninety-eight games, in which he compiled a batting average of only .143. He played half of those games for New York and all of them during the club's first two years of existence, 1883-84, when they were known as the Gothams, a name they changed between the 1884 and 1885 seasons to the less derogatory one of Giants (New York Giants).¹²

¹² The OED defines "Gotham" as a "The name of a village, proverbial for the folly of its inhabitants ('wise men of Gotham')," a sort of English-speaking Chelm. The epithet was applied to Newcastle and New York, for which latter application Washington Irving was responsible. As Jane Boutwell mentions in a "Talk of the Town" column in the August 7, 1965, issue of *The New Yorker*,

The original English Gotham has long been synonymous with a community of fools. In 1807, Washington Irving made a number of references to Gotham in some essays of his that appeared anonymously in a short-lived magazine called "Salamagundi," which took its name from a highly spiced pickled-herring hash popular then. Irving first mentioned Gotham in a review of an unsuccessful City Hall concert. A few months later, Irving applied the term Gotham directly to New York. His readers were apparently so taken with the humorous insult that one of the last issues of

On August 11, 1883, shortly after he joined the Gothams, Jack Humphries played against the Philadelphia Quakers, whose second baseman that afternoon was Bob “Death to Flying Things” Ferguson. The *New York Times*’ correspondent complimented the rookie on his work.

Humphries, the Cornell College player, supported Welsh in a very clever manner. He threw to the bases very accurately, and his difficult stops gained considerable applause. His work behind the bat was fully up to that of Ewing [the Gothams’ catcher, elected to the Hall of Fame in 1939, three years before he was immortalized in “Polo Grounds”], the two double plays in which he took part being worthy of mention. (Base-Ball)

The reporter mentions Humphries’ college education but not his one claim to be remembered by fans in 1942, or today, the characteristic by which he is identified in the poem: he was one of only thirty-three left-handed throwing catchers to play in the major leagues since the founding of the National League in 1876. Over half of these caught in less than ten games, and Humphries’ seventy-five games behind the plate make him seventh on the all-time list (Encyclopedia of Baseball Catchers).¹³ It was Jack Humphries’ status as a college graduate

“Salamagundi” carried his “Chronicles of the Renowned and Antient City of Gotham,” meaning New York. After that, the nickname stuck with us. (August 7, 1965)

The name lived on after the National League team began calling itself the Giants. In 1887, the New York Gothams of the Negro Colored League played its home games at the Polo Grounds (baseball-fever.com).

¹³ A footnote to the history of left-handed catchers: Shiki Masaoka (1867-1902), “last of the four great pillars of Japanese haiku and the first modern haiku poet” was a

playing baseball as a profession that was note-worthy in 1883. Indeed, as we shall see later on, there is some reason to believe that the Cuban revolutionary and poet José Martí was aware—and disapproved—of the professional use to which Humphries put his education.

Another player who figures in the poem appeared that day in the Polo Grounds (or “on the Polo Grounds,” as the Times’ correspondent puts it). The paper’s box score lists Smiling Mickey Welch, the man who precedes Jack Humphries in the roll call, as his battery mate and winning pitcher.

In spite of the historical confluence of the star right-handed pitcher Smiling Mickey, and the left-handed catcher and part-time outfielder, Jack Humphries, who was no more than an historical footnote, the latter seems out of place in the company in which he finds himself in the poem. Even if his presence can be justified, why pay such disproportionate attention to a man who was, after all, not a star, not even an everyday player, but a curiosity whose last big league

lefty who caught for his high school baseball team.” (Huevel and Tamura 143)
Perhaps the best known of his exactly nine baseball haiku is

春風やまりを投げたき草の原

haru kaze ya mari wo nagetaki kusa no hara

spring breeze
this grassy field makes me
want to play catch. (Huevel and Tamura 143, their translation)

Janine Beichman fixes 1888 as the year Masaoka became “enamored of baseball [and] interested in aesthetics.” (Chronology) High school baseball was a major sport during the Meiji restoration (Whiting 28), and even today the National High School Summer Tournament, at Kōshien Stadium, “is one of the biggest amateur sporting events in the world.” (Whiting 36) The poet was inducted into the Japanese Baseball Hall of Fame in 2002 as “a person who has enlightened and guided the Japanese people in the history and through the culture of baseball, and by doing so has contributed a great deal in laying the foundation for the promotion and popularization of baseball.” (Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum 14) His plaque is next to Lefty O’Doul’s.

appearance had occurred before half of the men on the poet's list were born? Because, in addition to having been a left-handed catcher for New York's National League club, he was a classical scholar and Rolfe Humphries' father, from whom the poet's "interest in the classics and baseball was a direct inheritance" (Limmer in Gillman and Novak, 10). Given the themes developing in "Polo Grounds," it would be natural for the poet's thoughts to turn to his father, who had died nine years earlier. It also is easy to imagine the elder Humphries reminiscing about baseball with his son and recalling the game in which, substituting for a Hall of Fame catcher, he faced Death to Flying Things and caught a pitcher who went on to be named to the Hall of Fame. Even without that imagined conversation, the poem has, all of a sudden, become very personal.

Personal, however, in a decidedly impersonal way. The poet does not say, "Jack Humphries, my father" or in any other way indicate his relationship to the ball player. Indeed, no form of the first personal pronoun appears anywhere in "Polo Grounds." The emotional force of the mourning expressed there would not lead any editor to publish the poem under the title "Verses on the Death of his Father," as Jorge Manrique's landmark working of the *ubi sunt* motif is known. Yet Rolfe Humphries, who develops that theme masterfully in his baseball elegy, would have been familiar with "Coplas por la muerte de su padre" since, between his collaboration on . . . *and Spain Sings: Fifty Loyalist Ballads Adapted by American Poets* and the writing of "Polo Grounds," he had published a translation of Lorca's *Poeta en Nueva York*, in the introduction to which José Bergamín, whom Humphries had consulted, (18) refers specifically to the "Coplas" (13). This makes it likely that he had, at the least, an awareness of Manrique's poem, which, with its litany of "¿Qué se hizo . . . ?" 'What's become of . . . ?' and its defining metaphor, as conclusive as the tolling of a funeral bell, "Nuestras vidas son los ríos / que van a dar en la mar que es el morir" 'Our lives are the rivers that empty into the sea that is death' (25-27), is one of the fundamental texts of Spanish literature.

Humphries was well versed in the poetry of loss. On page 27, I quoted Ruth Limmer's reference to the "Virgilian melancholy" of "Polo Grounds." The reference to Dante's guide, the poet of melancholy, shades, and filial piety is not superfluous since Humphries has written an admirable verse translation of the corpse-strewn Aeneid. Not only

do shades haunt the stadium, but, at the end of “Night Game,” the narrator, having enjoyed a “well-played game with no particular features,” (15) becomes part of the crowd leaving the Polo Grounds:

Oh, this is good, I felt, to be part of this movement,
This mood, this music, part of the human race,
Alike and different, after the game is over,
Streaming away to the exit, and underground. (29-32)

This scene point backs, as I have implied, to “Polo Grounds” and its crowd of the dead, which earlier led me to quote Dante’s remark on death undoing so many, a remark that unites Humphries with both Dante (and by implication, Virgil) and Eliot. The latter translates that remark in lines 61-63 of “The Waste Land” in order to describe the “crowd” that, prefiguring the one that enters the subway at the end of “Night Game”, “flowed under London Bridge” (62). (The Polo Grounds subway station was at the foot of the bridge, now a New York City landmark, that crossed the Harlem River to Yankee Stadium).

Four decades after the younger Humphries extended the *ubi sunt* tradition to include his baseball-playing father, the Cuban poet Roberto Fernández Retamar further extended that tradition to include the author of “Polo Grounds” by dedicating “Pío Tai,” his celebration of the past glories of Cuban baseball to two poets. One was the North American catcher’s pious son. (The other was the Nicaraguan poet, priest, and militant Ernesto Cardenal).

Although the Fernández Retamar appends a note explaining that “pío” is an elision of “pido” ‘I ask for’ and “tai” is an Hispanization of “time,” it is hard for readers of “Polo Grounds” to put aside the standard, adjectival, meaning of the word, i.e., “pious” and keep from thinking of *pious Aeneas*.¹⁴ Indeed, the *ubi sunt* motif, so dominant in “Polo

¹⁴ Literary language has its own law of unintended consequences. It would be foolish to believe that Fernández Retamar meant to write a poem about Ty Cobb, *but*

1. Cobb played in Cuba after the 1910 season ended. After seeing how well Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean players did against his Detroit Tigers, “Cobb vowed never again to take the field against blacks. At any rate, he never did.” (Alexander, Cobb 99);

Grounds,” is a variant of the lists of fallen heroes in Homer and Virgil, and “Pío tai” also contains such a list.

Fernández Retamar’s poem begins by asking us to remember a baker’s dozen of twelve Cuban ball players and an umpire. It closes a command,

reciban los saludos
De estos jugadores en cuya ilusión vivieron ustedes
Antes (y no menos profundamente)
Que Joyce, Mayacovski, Strawinski, Picasso o Klee,
Esos bateadores de 400.

accept the greetings of those players you
lived dreaming about before (and no less profoundly)
than Joyce, Mayakovovsky, Stravisky, Picasso, or

2. The Cobb family history resembled a Greek tragedy (or a melodrama, take your pick). Ty’s father suspected his wife, Ty’s mother, of infidelity. One night, she heard her husband at the locked bedroom window, trying to allay or confirm his suspicions. She grabbed a shotgun, aimed at the window, and killed him. (Alexander, Cobb 21)

3. Ty never got over the way his father died. When Al Stump asked him why he was such a fierce competitor, Cobb answered,

I did it for my father, who was an exalted man. They [sic] killed him when he was still young. They [sic] blew his head off the same week I became a major-leaguer. He never got to see me play. Not one game, not an inning. But I know he was watching me . . . and I never let him down. *Never.* (27)

That is filial piety.

Klee, those .400 hitters. (17-22)

With his final line--“Y ahora, pasen la bola” (23)--Fernández Retamar completes the poem’s round-tripper by ending it with an echo of the way his North American dedicatee ends “Polo Grounds.” “Pasen la bola” is a Cuban expression, meaning “pass the buck” (Castañeda and Vega) and comes from the outgoing pitcher handing the ball to the manager, who, in turn, passes it on to the reliever. Here, it means both let’s get back to the game—“come on, play ball”—and hand down the tradition of art and baseball, pass on the torch.

For all its literary antecedents, the poet’s reference to his father is touching, especially since the buildup to it has not prepared us for anything this personal. In spite of our emotional response, we should not allow ourselves to lose sight of the poem’s artificial nature. (The oxymoron indicates the complexity of the issue). *Ubi sunt?* is, after all, not just a nearly universal lament; it is a genre of poetry. It helps, when tempted to attribute the emotions of the poem to the person behind its narrative voice, to remember that “Baseball’s Sad Lexicon,” the lament of a Giants fan at the fielding prowess of the Cubs’ infield, is the work of a Cubs fan (Staudohar 125).

The filial bond between the poet and Jack Humphries makes it unlikely that his appearance at the end of his son’s roll call is ironic or disparaging. Wistful, perhaps, or even desperately hopeful, but not ironic. Rolfe Humphries has given his father a logical and honored place among the Giant players, if not one earned by the merits of his play. His career with the team goes back to before it received its definitive nickname, so that, in a way, he is the father of all the Giants who followed him. But, in spite of Jack Humphries’ honored place in the roll call, his is just one more name on the list of the departed, conspicuous only because his athletic accomplishments don’t really earn him a place among the rest. Indeed, he is the only player about whom the poet needs to give any identifying information beyond his name. Yet none of this information personalizes him. Whatever the son’s personal emotion on remembering his dead father, it has been subsumed into the traditional formula of lamentation for the transitory nature of all lives. This tension between personal emotion and universalizing form contributes, paradoxically, to the pathos of the son’s understated grief. “The personal,” Rolfe Humphries wrote a year

after publishing “Polo Grounds,” “with the great artist, becomes the universal” (Creative Imagination 412).

Like so much else in “Polo Grounds,” the inclusion of Jack Humphries in the list of Giants (with both a capital and lower case G) is ambivalent. On the one hand, it indicates that death and oblivion level the great and the ordinary. On the other, it holds out the hope that filial piety can raise the ordinary to the level of the great.

Humphries’ poem moves from an illustration of time’s essentiality (the double play) to a cliché-ridden fictional transcript of a baseball broadcast (“pumps and delivers,” “gets hold of it,” “that’s all for the Dodgers”), and has as its core a long rhetorical question (Do you remember twenty unforgettable players and the answer to a trivia question?). It ends with considerable emotion.

The balance between feeling and convention is consonant with the stately, quasi-philosophical pronouncement that opens and then haunts the poem. “Time is of the essence” is a phrase that resonates reciprocally with the emotions of the poem and yet is quintessentially formulaic: it is a piece of legal boilerplate, found, among other places, in Garner’s *Dictionary of Modern Legal Usage*, where it is mentioned under the rubric of “Set Phrases.” This synthesis of the philosophic, the poetic, and the commercial also is consistent with Humphries’ attitude towards his craft. In his article on the creative imagination, he asks archly and parenthetically, “What review of literature, what weekly book supplement . . . is not really a trade journal?” (411)

The Fading Light

Once Humphries has added his father to the memorial list, it is completed, and nature, as if on cue, adds another rhetorical trope to the poem, a traditional metaphor for dying. The inexorable progress of the shadow across the field as the sun sets behind the stands is caught in the elegiac cadence of Humphries’ narration, which, by speeding up with the last three words, as if in a hurry to get the required passage over with, emphasizes its conventionality.

The shadow moves
From the plate to the box, from the box to second

base,
From second to the outfield, to the bleachers. (44-46)

While the sun casts its shadow, the bleachers, true to their etymology, fade into the past.¹⁵

¹⁵ The use of shadows to signify life's brevity has long been a cliché, appearing in Job 14:1-5. It is interesting, in the context of this study, that Lorca uses this passage from quatrain 556 of the fourteenth-century Spanish poet Pero López de Ayala's *Rimado de palacio* as an epigraph to the prologue to "En el jardín de las toronjas de luna" 'In the Garden of the the Grapefruits of the Moon': "Así como la sombra nuestra vida se va / que nunca más torna nin de nos tornará." 'Our life passes like a shadow that will never again return or turn from us.'

The text Lorca quotes coincides with the one that appears in the Cervantes Virtual web site. The variant Kenneth Adams offers, which he labels as quatrain 557, "Así como la sombra nuestra vida se va / que nunca más se torna, nin de nos curará" 'Our life passes like a shadow that never will return, or bother with us,' is more logical but less witty.

López de Ayala swiftly moves into an *ubi sunt* passage of his own, complete with the river of life leading to death:

¿Qué fue estonçe del rico e de su poderío,
de su vanagloria e orgulloso brio?

Todo es ya pasado e corrió como río,
e de todo el su pensar fincó él mucho frío.

¿Dó están los muchos años que avemos durado
en este mundo malo, mesquino e lazado?
¿Dó los nobles vestidos de paño muy onrado?
¿Dó las copas y vasos de metal muy preçiado?

¿Dó están heredades e las grandes posadas,
las villas e castillos, las torres almenadas,
las cabañas de ovejas, las vacas muchiguadas,
los cavallos sobervios e las siellas doradas.

¿Los fijos plazenteros e el mucho ganado,
la muger muy amada, el tesoro allegado,
los parientes e hermanos, que l'tenién compañido?
En una cueva mala todos le han dexado.

As if Rolfe Humphries were the catcher, he flashes us the signal to think about the passage of time and about death. And we respond!

This is a profoundly moving poem, “a highly skilled / And beautiful mystery.” The sunset is at once a physical, emotional, and rhetorical event, allowing the trope to rise to the level of the esthetic. The description of that event also further enables us to recognize that the game itself, and not Barber’s narration of it, is the poem’s ostensible topic. (A sportscaster might mention the shadow, but not, in one sentence, its progress from northwest to southeast, across the geography of the field). The trope’s complex effectiveness is a result of the poet’s talent for manipulating the traditions of poetry to fit them within the context of the events on the playing field, which Humphries also manipulates. The dialectic between the formulaic and the convincing display of emotion mirrors the dialectic between the players as team members and as individual stars, between tradition and individual talent, rule and event. The tradition, the cliché even, becomes the agent of genuine emotion, artistically presented.

What became of the rich man and his power, his vainglory and prideful vigor? Everything is gone, and it flowed away like a river, he was left cold and from so much thinking. Where are all the years that we’ve lasted in this evil, despicable, and miserable world? Where, the noble garments of highly esteemed cloth? Where the cups and vessels of precious metal? Where are the estates and the great dwellings, the villas and castles, the towers with their battlements, the herds of sheep, the fertile cows, the proud horses and the golden saddles, the pleasing children and all that cattle, the beloved wife, the accumulated treasure, the relatives and brothers who accompanied him? In an evil cave, [where] all of them have abandoned him. (Adams ed. quatrains 565-568)

López de Ayala, author of the *Libro de la caza de aves* ‘*The Book of Falconry*,’ can be considered, along with don Juan Manuel one of the earliest sportswriters in the Spanish language.

The metaphor of sunset as death is conventional because it is effective. The sun sets when our diurnal rhythms are at an ebb, inducing melancholy. This is re-enforced by the semantic resemblance between the two terms of the metaphor. But the value of Humphries' conventional use of the sunset goes beyond these minimal virtues, applicable to every use of the metaphor. The trope works structurally in the specific case of "Polo Grounds" because it mirrors the winding down of the poem. The progression of the shadows towards darkness also echoes the order in which the players have been presented, from more recent to more distant in time. (Even the meaning of "shade" as "ghost" works here). The setting sun also retrospectively guides our response to the earlier portions of the poem since, without it, the reiterated "Remember?" would have risked becoming an exercise in nostalgia or, as the long passage from the beginning of "Night Game" that I quoted on pages 19-20 allows us to suspect, one of the "silly questions" a child might repeat.

A small, but effective, detail punctuates Humphries' individual use of the conventional metaphor. He uses the archaic (by baseball standards) term, "the box," to refer to the pitching mound. That usage survives in the expression "knocked out of the box," but, by the time Humphries wrote his poem, it existed in baseball parlance principally as a vestigial remnant of a nineteenth century term. (The entry on "box" in the third edition of *Dickson's Baseball Dictionary* distinguishes between the word's old and new uses but doesn't specify when the change occurred. My experience in reading twentieth-century baseball writings suggests that it was about 1930).¹⁶ The poet

¹⁶ The only exceptions of which I am aware occur in Mark Harris's baseball quartet. One of them appears in this dialogue from *It Looked Like Forever* (1979):

"I am leaving my jacket in the box," I replied,
"while strolling out on the field to the box."

"What box?"

"The pitcher's box." (197)

(An earlier dialogue in the same novel succinctly summarizes the *ubi sunt* lament:

"I can not believe," I said, "that by June I will have
fell out of people's mind after 19 years at the top."

has incorporated a lexical victim of time's inexorable march towards death in his description of the emblematic enactment of that very march by the shadows cast by the setting sun. As if this weren't enough, a coffin is a type of box.

At the very end of "Polo Grounds," a remark contrasting the crowd to the individual—"alike and different" Humphries calls them in line 31 of "Night Game"-- deepens the poem's pathos. Just as the individual is hidden in the crowd, the remark is hidden between the two ready-made phrases that bracket the close of the poem:

Time is of the essence. The crowd and the players
Are the same age always, but the man in the crowd
Is older every season. Come on, play ball! (47-49)

The idea of the crowd and the players' persistence by replacement belongs to a tradition old enough to be cited by Plutarch. Later on, I will try to expand this paradoxical to include one of an intermittent type. For the moment, I want to treat the subject *grosso modo*, focusing on the stadium and not the people in it.

Plutarch writes,

The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens
returned had thirty oars, and was preserved by the
Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phal-
ereus, for they took away the old planks as they de-
cayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their
place, insomuch that this ship became a standing

"Do not bank on it," he said. [17])

In the translation of the final stanza of "Polo Grounds" that Noberto Codina uses as the epigraph to his article "El cuento no se acaba, hasta que no se termina," "The Story's Not Over til It's Over" he employs the English word "box" for the pitcher's mound, a usage that, like 1950s vintage American automobiles, still is current in Cuba. See Aquino Abreu's 1989 account of his 1966 no-hitter: "Me enteré de que lo estaba dando en el octavo inning. Oviedo, que me estaba recibiendo, fue hasta el box y me lo dijo." 'I became aware I was pitching one in the eighth inning. Oviedo, who was catching me, went to the mound, and he told me.' (Padura and Arce 75)

example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same.

The Polo Grounds is like Theseus's ship, at least as one band of Plutarch's philosophers would have it. Just as each new crowd and each new set of players always are the same crowd and the same team, each new Polo Grounds always is the Polo Grounds.

No one in New York refers to the place the Giants' games were played as "Polo Grounds," although that is how it appeared on the team's letterhead in 1942 (Schwarz letter). It always was "the Polo Grounds," just as people in Los Angeles speak of the Santa Monica Freeway as "the I-10," and not "I-10." Yet Humphries, when he named his poem, omitted the definite article, indicating that the work refers to many Polo Grounds. This can be explained as a metaphor for the many meanings of the poem, but it also refers to historical facts that fit perfectly with the theme of eternal renewal through replacement.

The *San Francisco Giants Media Guide*, lists four Polo Grounds in which the New York Giants played their home games,

- 1) 1883-1888: 110th Street and Sixth Avenue;
- 2) 1889-1890: 155th Street and Eighth Avenue;
- 3) 1891-1911: 155th Street and Eighth Avenue;
- 4) 1911-1957: 155th Street and Eighth Avenue. (463)¹⁷

¹⁷ The fourth edition of *The Polo Grounds* had been revised many times before Humphries wrote his eponymous poem. When the Giants' tenants, the Yankees, moved into their new stadium across the Harlem River in 1923, the Giants increased the original 34,000-seat capacity of the newest Polo Grounds to 55,000 by replacing part of the bleachers with extensions of the two level grandstands in left and right fields. (Leventhal 30-31) The *Baseball Almanac* website lists changes in the distance between home plate and center field in 1923, 1927, 1930, 1931, 1934, 1938, and 1940; between home plate and left field in 1921, 1923, and 1930; and between home plate and right field in 1921, 1923, 1931, and 1942, as well as changes in the stadium's seating capacity in 1917, 1919, 1923, 1926, 1930, 1937, and 1940.

The original Polo Grounds, the one in which Jack Humphries played, also embodied multiplicity in singularity—the many in the one—but in a physical, rather than a temporal, sense. The man who owned the Gothams in 1882, John B. Day, also owned the New York Metropolitans, who played in the other major league of the day, the American Association. Tom Schott and Nick Peters report in *The Giants Encyclopedia*,

Both squads played on adjoining fields at the Polo Grounds with a piece of canvas separating the two. The N[ational] L[eague] team took up residence on the better field with a fine grandstand for the middle-class citizens who paid half a dollar to gain admittance. Meanwhile, the A.A. team attracted working-class fans for a quarter who enjoyed drinking beer as much as watching baseball, maybe more. The two fields were compared as the penthouse and the outhouse. (427)

Four different ballparks—one of them with a split personality— at two addresses having borne the name of the Polo Grounds was not a recondite bit of trivia to the fans of 1942, but a fact of which many, if not most, were aware, much as fans of the Chicago White Sox know that their stadium, once called New Comisky Park, is across the street from the old Comisky Park.

James P. Dawson’s *New York Times* account of the Giants game on August 2, 1942, from which I am about to quote, mentions that “The fences ordinarily used for football games were planted across the outfield[,] and vantage points in this section, provided for the first time in this history of the *current* Polo Grounds, were taken quickly” (My emphasis).¹⁸ The play between the new and the enduring, exemplified

¹⁸ The final version of the Polo Grounds came to an inglorious end. The structure was demolished after serving as the home of the New York Mets in 1962 and 1963, their first two years in existence. Their combined won and lost record for those seasons in hell was 91-211. As the team stumbled towards its two hundred eleventh defeat, manager Casey Stengel remarked to pitcher Tracy Stallard, “At the end of this season, they’re gonna tear this joint down. They [sic] way you’re pitchin’, the right-field section will be done already” (Berkow and Kaplan 62). Two years earlier,

by the re-incarnations of the Polo Grounds, is as much of an antimony as the one that causes the double play to be a mystery to Delmore Schwartz's English tourist in "The Track Meet."

While the crowd, the players, and the stadium are always renewed and so freed from the inevitability of aging and its sequel, death, the poet, "the man in the crowd," the consciousness at the center of the poem, is not. He "is older every season." The swift shift of focus to this single mortal spectator individualizes Humphries' poem and takes it beyond melancholy to pathos. Yet, even this singling out of one man, this shift from the crowd to the individual in it, is impersonal. Just as Jack Humphries is referred to by name and not as "my father," the man in the stands is referred to, not in the first, but in the third person singular. By having the poetic voice comment on the man who ages, Humphries makes him, the poet's persona, an archetype, The Man Who Ages. And, this, too, confers on him a kind of immortality. Again we see the poem as a contest between act and art; *parole* and *langue*; the unique and the universal; this baseball game and all baseball games; baseball and all forms of art; these baseball stars and all artists and celebrities, gone and forgotten; Rolphe Humphries and the crowd --the dying and the immortal--, each deriving some of its emotional force and meaning from the other. Time no longer is of the essence in the sense that a double play—a twin killing—requires coordinated and rapid execution, but in the sense that the essence of the players is temporal, eternally temporal. The indeterminate "highly skilled / and beautiful mystery" of the poem's first two lines links the players, the gods of the "dying-rising type with the individual believer," the spectator, the reader. The players display their skill to the fans. One of them, the poet, reflects on their skill while reflecting it in his writing.

The dialectic between crowd, individual, and death also appears in the final lines of "Night Game," which I quoted in an attempt to link

Stallard had entered the record books by throwing the pitch with which Roger Maris broke Babe Ruth's single-season record of sixty home runs. Fellow pitcher Ray Sadecki said of Stallard, "I don't want to be him. Everybody knows *who* he is. Nobody knows *where* he is." (Qtd. by Plimpton in "Final Twist")

Humphries' treatment of masses of dead people with Dante and Eliot's.

Eliot was no fan of baseball, but the relationship between the crowd, the individual, and national pastime has an important place in the work of another seminal American poet, one who also liked to juxtapose disparate elements in his work. "Whitman's poetry," writes Ed Folsom,

was precisely the poetry of the crowd; his infamous "catalogues" became the poetic equivalent of a turnstile admitting a diverse group of individuals into one arena, where each detail retained its uniqueness yet all worked together as they focused on one action—a democratic diversity responding to the same sweep of energy. The baseball crowd, then, one of the evolving common aspects of American experience in the nineteenth century, came to be a gauge of the democratic experience, a visible measure of the success of the attempt to meld the individual and the "En-Masse." (45)

We can measure the distance between nineteenth- and twentieth-century America by comparing this attitude towards crowds with Eliot's and Humphries'.

Certainly, the man in the crowd and the game they watch are in the American grain. William Carlos Williams' baffling poem XXVI of *Spring and All* begins by announcing,

The crowd at the baseball game
is moved uniformly
by a spirit of uselessness
which delights them, (1-4)

only to conclude that "So in detail they, the crowd / are beautiful." (10-11) (Note the equivocation on the question of grammatical number and the pun in line two that identifies the crowd with the players).

Ruth Limmer believes that the final lines [of "Polo Grounds"] are the poet at his most recognizable:

the meditative followed by something tough, by a line or phrase that brings the poem, and the reader, to earth. In the case of “Polo Grounds,” the return—Come on, stop all this nonsense! Get back to the job at hand—is exactly right, of course, and poignantly appropriate. (Gillman and Novak, 21)

I, too, find the end poignantly appropriate, but not because it urges us to get back to the job at hand. I see in the ending of the poem the speaker’s recognition that although the players and the crowd participate in the immortality wrought by repeated acts of beauty repeated through generations, he does not. “Come on, play ball!” then, is spoken with resignation, an acceptance of “The Way Things Are,” the title Humphries gave to his translation of Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura*.¹⁹

¹⁹ *De Rerum Natura* urges the resigned acceptance of death, notably in Humphries’s translation of the ending to Book III:

Suppose
 You could contrive to live for centuries,
 As many as you will. Death, even so,
 Will still be waiting for you; he who died
 Early this morning has as many years
 Interminably before him, as the man,
 His predecessor, has, who perished months
 Or years, or even centuries ago. (1087-1094)

That is not the only Lucretian moment in “Polo Grounds.” David Sedley has remarked that

A striking resemblance to the indeterminacy postulated by modern quantum physics — which has also often been invoked in debates about determinism — has helped make [Book 2, lines 216-93 of *De rerum natura*] the subject of particularly intense debate.

Humphries translates the first six lines of passage in question as

I’d have you know
 That while these particles [i.e., atoms] come mostly down,

Keats, to whom Humphries pays tribute in his own “La Belle Dame Sans Merci” --like “Night Game” and perhaps “Polo Grounds” a *doppelgänger* poem-- wrote of a nightingale’s song, “The voice I hear this passing night was heard / In ancient days by emperor and clown” (63-64). The men on the field and the crowd that watches them are the nightingale. The man in the crowd is the emperor, the clown, the poet. He hears the nightingale, but, unlike the bird, his song does not confer a resurgence of life. One last hope remains: inasmuch as the poet appears in his work, he, too may come alive, when someone else reads the poem.²⁰ Thus, “Come on, play ball!” is not “something tough

Straight down of their own weight through void, at times—
No one knows when or where—they swerve a little,
Not much, but just enough for us to say
They change direction.

He also translates them in his description of the Jorges to Witek to Mize double play.

Marianne Moore, who almost certainly read “Polo Grounds” and about whose work I will have more to say, provides Humphries’ resigned acceptance of mortality with a measure of immorality at the end of what is, perhaps, her most famous poem. “Hometown Piece for Messrs. Alston and Reese” (Complete Poems 182-184) consists of twenty-four rhymed couplets before reaching the tercet with which it closes:

You’ve got plenty: Jackie Robinson
and Campy and Big Newk, and Dodgerdom again
watching everything you do. You won last year. Come on.

Readers of “Polo Grounds” will hear “Play ball!” loud in the lull that follows Moore’s exhortation. Those of us who have heard Red Barber’s play-by-play broadcasts will recognize his voice in the title of her poem. Mr. Barber was prone to using the honorific when talking about individual Dodgers. Neither his nor Ms. Moore’s expression of respect and affection is free of humor or affectation

²⁰ In “El ruiseñor de Keats” (“Keats’ Nightingale”), Borges makes a clear distinction between the nightingale as species and as archetype in the poem, coming down strongly on the side of the latter.

that brings the poem, and the reader, to earth.” Nor is it the petulant demand, uttered to a “sickly ego” in “Night Game,” to “*Shut up . . . / For Christ’s sweet sake, shut up, and watch the ball game.*” It is a plaintive cry to the players and to the poet himself to exercise their skillful mysteries. The poet calls on the players to perform their physical art and on himself to transform their always dying, always new *memento mori* into a work verbal art that will join The Man Who Ages to the Men Forever Young in an intimation of immortality that the speaker all the while suspects will fail. The resulting melancholy is similar to that which overwhelms the poet at the end of “Ode To a Nightingale,” when, having achieved a glimpse of immortality through the song repeated by succeeding generations of nightingales who are all, in a sense, one nightingale, he cries, “Adieu! The fancy cannot cheat so well / As she is fam’d to do, deceiving elf” (72-73).

Adam Kirsch has commented on “the paradox of posthumousness, the way that immortality is gained only at the price of mortality” that underlies Keats’ later works. That paradox informs “Polo Grounds.”

CHAPTER 2

LOOKING FOR THE POLO GROUNDS

Passing the Torch

Keats is not the only widely read British poet whose influence we can detect in “Polo Grounds.” The popular “poetic tearjerker” (Guttmann 529) “Vitaï Lampada,” written in 1897 by the much less accomplished Henry John Newbolt, seems to inform Humphries’ poem, albeit in a parodic, or at least dialectic, way. Whether or not Newbolt’s exhortation influenced Humphries, these disparate poems have so much in common that we can look on them as metaphors of each other. In any case, Newbolt’s exaltation of the patriotic virtues of cricket is a precursor of “Polo Grounds” just as cricket is a forerunner of baseball, and the relationship between the two works confirms Borges’s observation that “cada escritor *crea* a sus precursores” ‘each writer *creates* his precursors’. (Kafka y sus precursores 148) After all, without Humphries’ meditations, Newbolt’s harangue would hold little interest for us, at least as students of baseball poetry.¹

Here is the full text of Newbolt’s poem:

There’s a breathless hush in the Close tonight—
 Ten to make and the match to win—
 A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
 An hour to play and the last man in.

¹ In “It’s Just Not Cricket: Cricket as Metaphor in Thomas Pynchon’s *Against the Day*,” Peter Vernon traces the uses to which Pynchon puts “Vitaï Lampada” in that novel.

For an excellent study on the role of cricket in the development of baseball in the Dominican Republic, see Rob Ruck’s article, “Three Kings Day in Consuelo: Cricket, Baseball, and the Cocolos in San Pedro de Macorís, in *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, 13 (1994). reprinted *Sport in Latin America and the Caribbean*. (Joseph L. Arbena and David G. LaFrance. eds.), Wilmington DE: Scholarly Resources – Jaguar, 2002. 75-89.

And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat
 Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
 But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote—
 "Play up! play up! and play the game!"

The sand of the desert is sodden red –
 Red with the wreck of a square that broke;--
 The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead,
 And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.

The river of death has brimmed his banks,
 And England's far, and Honour a name,
 But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:
 "Play up! play up! And play the game!"

This is the word that year by year,
 While in her place the School is set,
 Every one of her sons must hear,
 And none that hears it dare forget.
 This they all with a joyful mind
 Bear through life like a torch in flame,
 And falling fling to the host behind –
 "Play up! play up! And play the game!" (Stallworthy 146)

Although largely forgotten today, at least in the United States, Newbolt was known to at least one major American poet of Humphries' time. Ezra Pound cites him in an *ubi sunt* passage of Canto LXXIV:

Lordly men are to earth o'ergiven
 these the companions:
 Fordie that wrote of giants
 And William who dreamed of nobility
 And Jim the comedian singing
 "Blarrney castle me darlin'
 you're nothing now but a St. Owne"
 and Plarr talking of mathematics
 or Jepson lover of jade
 Maurie who wrote historical novels
 And Newbolt who looked twice bathed

Are to earth o'ergiven. (452-453)²

Ford Maddox Ford, Yeats, and Joyce are pretty distinguished company, even if Newbolt's renown is closer to that of Victor Plarr, Edgar Jepson, and Maurice Hewlett, figures whom I needed to look up on page 372 of Carroll F. Terrell's *Companion to The Cantos of Ezra Pound* before I could identify them.

Newbolt was "an all-round man of letters who helped Conrad [and] also edited the *Monthly Review*." (Pinkerton Trimpi 478) He wrote "Vitaï Lampada" in the context of the Boer War and went on to serve as Minister of Information during World War I, during which his poem was used to rally the troops. Humphries served as a machine-gunner in that conflict, and it is unlikely that he would have been able to avoid exposure to Newbolt's piece. The reference in it to the jammed gatling gun would have been sure to have registered on the American machine-gunner.

Humphries, who admired Pound's poetry but drew the wrath of *il miglior fabbro* for calling him an anti-Semite in a proposed introduction to the *Selected Poems*, (Limmer 25),³ would not have needed to have been part of Pound's coterie in order to have been familiar with "Vitaï Lampada." In 1936, the poem was sufficiently well

² When it is difficult to tell where a new line of Pound's poetry begins and where a previous one has been carried over because the page isn't wide enough to print all of the text, I have cited the page, rather than the line, numbers for his poetry.

³ After reading Humphries' review in *The Nation* for September 25, 1948, of *The Pisan Cantos*, which include LXXIV, Pound suggested to James Laughlin at New Directions that Humphries write the introduction to the *Selected Poems*. Humphries had ended that review by writing,

Old Ez, in my opinion, has never been a traitor to the republic of letters, for wh. (as he would abbreviate) not forgiveness is due him, but honor. I would rather see him saved from death by drowning, or the firing squad, than Bennett Cerf. Or even Clifton Fadiman; and, if that be treason, etc. etc.

known on both sides of the Atlantic to be included in Hazel Felleman's collection of *The Best Loved Poems of the American People*.

The poem's title, which refers to passing of the torch of life from one generation of dying soldier students to the next, comes, as Jon Stallworthy notes in his introduction to *The Oxford Book of War Poetry*, (xxv) from Lucretius, the translation of whose only known work, *De rerum natura*, was a long-standing project for Humphries. The poet had written in a letter of March 1, 1925, "I want to do Lucretius soon." (Gillman and Novak, 75). He still was working on it in the late 1960s, when his health prevented him doing "anything more strenuous than washing the dishes, watering plants, climbing Cardiac Hill from the parking lot to the grandstand [of Candlestick Park, where he watched the San Francisco Giants play baseball], or commuting between sellers and cashiers windows at [the] horse track." (Qtd. by Limmer in Gilman and Novak 30) The translation was published posthumously. Humphries renders the *vitaī lampada* passage as,

The seeds of things cause fading, or cause bloom,
And never linger; so the sum of things
Is constantly renewed, all creatures live
In symbiosis, or, in homlier terms,
On a see-saw up and down, or an infinite relay,
Each generation, like a runner, handing
The torch on to another. (II,73-79)

The closing exhortation of "Pío tai," "Y ahora, pasen la bola,"-- which echos the sounds of "Come on, play ball!," and the meaning of *vitaī lampada*—completes "an infinite relay" from Lucretius to Newbolt to Humphries to Fernández Retamar.

Newbolt's schoolboy chauvinism made him the target so much criticism in the years following the Great War that it was "Vitaī Lampada" that George Orwell chose in 1940 when he wanted an example of the type of patriotic writing he felt had been unjustly maligned by

the left-wing intellectuals who are so "enlightened" that they cannot understand the most ordinary emotions. It is exactly the people whose hearts have *never* leapt at the sight of a Union Jack who will flinch from revolution when the moment comes. Let anyone compare the poem John Cornford wrote not

long before he was killed (“Before the Storming of Huesca”) with Sir Henry John Newbolt’s “There’s a breathless hush in the close tonight.” Put aside the technical differences, which are merely a matter of period, and it will be seen that the emotional content of the two poems is almost exactly the same.⁴ (57)

Independently of the role “Vitaī Lampada” may have played in Humphries’ writing “Polo Grounds,” there are striking similarities between those two very different poems. One such similarity is the use of sports to dramatize the themes of death, the vanity of pride, and, as summed up in Newbolt’s pedantic title, the passing of the torch from one generation to the next. The association of war and play

⁴ The complete title of Cornford’s poem is “Full Moon at Tierz: Before the Storming of Huesca.” To give an idea of what Orwell has in mind, I will quote Cornford’s three closing stanzas. The full text of the piece, which, like that of “Vitaī Lampada,” whose title Orwell also gets wrong, appears in *The Oxford Book of War Poetry*.

Now the same night falls over Germany
And the impartial beauty of the stars
Lights from the unfeeling sky
Oranienburg and freedom’s crooked scars.
We can do nothing to ease that pain
But prove the agony was not in vain.

England is silent under the same moon
From Clydeside to the gutted pits of Wales.
The innocent mask conceals that soon
Here, too, our freedom’s swaying in the scales.
O understand before too late
Freedom was never held without a fight.

Freedom is an easily spoken word
But facts are stubborn things. Here, too, in Spain
Our fight’s not won till the workers of all the world
Stand by our guard on Huesca’s plain
Swear that our dead fought not in vain,
Raise the red flag triumphantly
For Communism and for liberty. (51-69)

would have come easily to an English poet writing in the heyday of The Great Game, the rivalry—often military—between the British and Russian empires that preceded The Great War.

The image of the sun setting over the national game of bat and ball serves as an overarching metaphor in these poems. In both, the light is dying as the game runs its course. The shadows that creep across the Polo Grounds are cast by the sun that, approaching the horizon, blinds the cricketers and the regiment. The day's game is drawing to its close in both poems, and the two of them end with an exhortation to go about the serious business of play. In Newbolt's poem, peacetime memories intrude on scenes of war, urging the troops to fulfill their duty. As we shall see, an awareness of war hovers over Humphries' peaceful game.

For all the similarities between the two poems, no one could confuse them. While the stoicism of "Polo Grounds" is contemplative, "Vitaī Lampada" is filled with a passionate intensity in which stoicism and bravado are mixed with patriotic gore. Even phrases like "the selfish hope of a season's fame" ring with what now seem to us empty heroics. "England's far, and Honour's a name" bears the encrypted command to act as if the opposite were the case, to bring English public school ethics to foreign battlefields. (Pinkerton Trimi sees life imitating art when she observes that "'Play up! Play up! and play the game!' became part of the British ethos [now in decay]." (478)

It is tempting to consider "Polo Grounds" a response to "Vitaī Lampada." Even the harsh light of sunset in the earlier poem-- explicit in the cricket match and implied in the battle by the poem's parallel structure-- and the violent death that awaits the players turned soldiers find their echoes in the shadows and unspecified, but inevitable, death in the later work, one also written in the course of a foreign war. "Come on, play ball!" might well be the sardonic comment a left-leaning, stoic American veteran offers to the upper class British flag waving of Newbolt's "Play up! Play up! And play the game!"⁵ It is

⁵ Playing the game-- this time, of baseball-- found a place in one piece of American propaganda in the Great War. Robert Elias reprints some doggerel by Ford Frick, who went on to become Babe Ruth's ghostwriter and Commissioner of Baseball.

We may not be in the "highbrow" class
Our lessons have been hard knocks,
But we're off to France to take our chance

noteworthy that the latter chose an untranslated Latin tag to name his poem while the former chose to substitute the colloquial *The Way Things Are*-- “simple, forthright, insistent, preemptory,” Humphries calls it in his foreward (7)-- for the well known Latin title of Lucretius’s work.

Yet the sentimentality of Newbolt’s refrain—the paradoxical sentimentality of the stiff upper lip—is not all that far removed from the sentimentality of the dying peasant soldier who conquers death (and presumably fascism) to the strains of “Adelante” under the auspices of the Federal Theater Project. (See p. 8, above) Indeed, that scene from Humphries’ ballet is a fit companion to Cornford’s stirring musings before going into battle, musings that Orwell compared with Newbolt’s propaganda.

The venue of the ball game in “Polo Grounds” is specified in the poem’s title, while the site of the cricket match in “Vitaī Lampada” is more generic. The game could take place in any public school, although the playing fields of Eaton that the Duke of Wellington is said to have credited for his troops’ victory at Waterloo and Newbolt’s own Clifton College are the ones that first come to mind. The battle in which the ideals of cricket are re-enacted could occur in any torrid locale where the blazing sun is setting on a portion of the British Empire.

From the title of Humphries’ poem, we know that the game it narrates takes place at the New York Giants’ home field. The batters’ names and Red Barber’s commentary tell us that the visiting team is the Brooklyn Dodgers. Since Johnny Mize, the Giants’ first baseman, mentioned in the double play sequence, first played for them in 1942, and the poem first was published in the August 22, 1942, issue of *The New Yorker*, we can safely date the action of the poem as occurring no earlier than opening day, April 14, 1942, and no later than August 6 of that year, when, according to the Baseball Almanac, the two teams

With luck in the pitcher’s box.
 We may not star in the game of war,
 Nor win a place with fame,
 But we’ll fight our fight for the cause of right
 For we’ve learned to Play the Game. (Empire Strikes Out 87)

played their last game at the Polo Grounds before the publication of Humphries' poem. That date probably allows too great a chronological window, given the time required to compose, revise, submit, evaluate, print, and distribute the work. Still, if we can determine in which of the games in that generous window Carl Hubbell got Lew Riggs to ground into a double play, Jorges to Witek to Mize, we will have a good chance of identifying the game described in the poem.

The First Season of the Second War

A review of the box scores published in *The New York Times* for the 1942 season reveals, however, that, although Hubbell pitched twice against Brooklyn at The Polo Grounds that year, April 14 and May 24, Riggs did not appear in either game. Nor did Thomas Dunn, a National League umpire from 1939-1946 and the only umpire with that family name in major league history, officiate in any of the games the Dodgers played at that stadium in 1942.

Every Giants and Dodgers player Humphries mentions in the narrative portions of his poem played for those teams in 1942. And it is as close to absolutely certain as possible that every play narrated in the play-by-play section of "Polo Grounds" did occur at one time or another. Lew Riggs must have hit into at least one short to second to first double play, and Carl Hubbell got batters to hit into them innumerable times. It's even highly likely that Riggs was one of those batters. But he never hit into a double play against Hubbell at the Polo Grounds between April 14 and August 6, 1942. Even if Hubbell once got Camilli to fly out to Ott, as he might well have, Humphries' account of that at bat is vitiated by unreality. The game of Humphrey's poem never was played.

Even though the game played in "Polo Grounds" is fictional, that fiction takes place in the year of its composition, 1942. This is significant; the historical facts of that year reinforce the poet's melancholy.

The 1942 baseball season was the first played after the United States' entry into World War II. The thought of the death of young men was in the air, and an exhibition of athletic prowess by young men in their prime would have made this common thought all the more poignant.

The young men who soon would forsake the field of play for the fields of war might never age, not because of any philosophical considerations of generational replacement, but because they might soon be dead. To the normal sadness of death, the youth and physical prowess of the victims added a new dimension of grief, the pathos of the athlete dying young. In this pathos, time—and the times—was of the essence.

There is another, less morbid, way in which the war made time an essential part of the experience of watching baseball, one that had significant consequences for the nature and strategy of the game, especially as played in the Polo Grounds. In order to accommodate working fans, starting times were postponed to shortly after the end of the day shift. This, however, presented a potential conflict with wartime regulations, which forbade the nighttime use of stadium lights in coastal cities. An article, “War and Baseball,” in the July 20, 1942, issue of *Time* magazine pointed out that the “only [major league] night games affected by the sea-coast dimout are those held at Brooklyn’s Ebbets Field and Manhattan’s Polo Grounds, where the Dodgers and Giants now play at twilight instead.” (Yankee Stadium didn’t install field lighting until 1946) (*New York Yankees* 317). A vivid example of what the effects of this compromise could be is the ending of the August 3 Giant-Dodger game. Here is a part of James P. Dawson’s account in the following day’s *New York Times*:

On a note of discord and keen disappointment the Army Emergency Relief game between the Giants and Dodgers at the Polo Grounds last night ended with Brooklyn triumphant by 7 to 4. The contest fell short of nine full innings because of wartime military regulations. Umpire in Chief George Magerkurth signaled an end to the battle in the midst of a Giant rally in the last half of the ninth inning, and from the greatest crowd that ever saw a single game in the Harlem arena there came a storm of boos and jeers that drowned out the opening lines of “The Star-Spangled Banner” in a darkened park.

The Giants’ fans were left to rage, rage against the dying of the light. Until 1942, curfews had prevented, on certain days in certain cities, the start of an inning after a given time. Play also could be interrupted

or stopped due to weather conditions, including, before the introduction of artificial lighting, darkness. Now, play could be stopped on any date in the middle of a team's turn at bat because an arbitrary deadline had been reached. Thus, time became part of the strategy of the game; it was of the essence for the game.

The role of time here is qualitatively different from that of the fading of the light described by Emslie in his report on Merkle's blunder. (See Chapter 1, note 9). In 1908, when natural light was the only type available to baseball, play could not be resumed once an ignorant army of fans had invaded the darkening plain of the field. In 1942, a specific regulation forbade the use of field lighting later than exactly one hour after sundown, enabling baseball players to use the football strategy of "running out the clock." A visiting team could go ahead in the top half of an inning, only to have its lead wiped out by the home team's wasting the fixed amount of time left to play, as the Jersey City Giants did against the Montreal Giants in a game stopped in the bottom half of the ninth inning at precisely 9:24. (Mead 80)

The pre-war restraints imposed by curfews, weather, and the lack of nighttime illumination suggest the metaphorical crux between oncoming darkness and approaching death that is so important to the meaning of "Polo Grounds." Wartime restraints reinforced the awareness of the threat of an arbitrary end to the game, and to life.

Humphries is not alone in uttering a wistful cry to play ball in spite of the alarms of war, those harbingers of approaching death, a cry qualitatively different from Newbolt's hortatory cry to play the game. Another poem set in wartime, although I have not been able to establish its date of composition, a haiku by the Japanese poet Genyoshi Kadokawa, presents baseball as a bright spot in the darkness of war:

消燈サイレン月のナイターなほつづく

shōtō sairen tsuki no naitā nao tsuzuku

lights-out siren

the night game continues

by moonlight. (Heuvel and Tamura 167, their translation)

Humphries' poem moves inexorably towards thoughts of death, and those thoughts, because they lead to an awareness of the passing of life from one generation to the next, are as sadly soothing as the setting of the sun over the home plate grandstand. The war is an implicit historical background. The dim-out is a minor, also unspoken, detail, of that implicit background.

Darkness, the war, and the threat of death they entail are more immediate presences in Kadokawa's haiku. It already is dark outside of the ball park when the night game, played under arc lights, begins, and so the awareness of death does not have time to insinuate itself through nostalgia and encroaching darkness, as it does in Humphries' poem. Rather, the loud herald of the siren announcing mortal danger is the haiku's very first word and commands that the lights go out.

As Heuvel and Tamura tell us in a note to Shuoshi Mizuhara's "Scenes at Jingu Baseball Stadium", "In Japan, a siren signals the start of a baseball game" (154). Thus, Kadokawa, by opening his piece with the siren's blast, subverts its traditional meaning. No longer the signal that the contest is about to begin, this new, ominous noise disturbs the living order of the game already under way, an order the poem tries to reestablish by having play continue under the spectral moonlight.

It is possible, however, that Heuvel and Tamura have overstated the prevalence of sirens at Japanese ballparks. Wayne Graczyk, baseball correspondent for *The Japan Times* and Japan correspondent for *Baseball America*, has told me that a siren is blown at the start of games at the national high school tournament played at Kōshien Stadium and that he is not aware of its use as a starting signal elsewhere in Japanese baseball. (Conversation of 8 September 2009) If Graczyk is right, then the siren heard in Mizuhara's poem is either a relic from the past—Mizuhara was born in 1892--, a sign that the interrupted game was an amateur one, or a poetic trope. In any case, it is clear that being used to signal a military curfew, as it is in Kadokawa's poem, subverts the traditional function of the siren at the ballpark. The eminent cultural anthropologist Babe Ruth commented on the significance of the siren in Japanese baseball of 1934, two years before the founding of the country's first professional league. "Wasn't a game we played," he told Phillip Hamburger in a 1944 *New Yorker* interview,

but some royal uncle or nephew wasn't sitting out there under the canopy, so everybody lined up and saluted the cluck, while a cannon went off and a siren blew to let the neighborhood know the game was starting. Hell of a way to play ball. (23)

Ruth also reports that, during his visit to Japan, a siren also signaled the end of the game (23).

The order that the siren destroys and Kadokawa tries to restore goes to the very heart of his art form. "In Japanese haiku," Huevel writes in the introduction to his and Tamura's anthology,

to ensure nature is present in the poem it must contain what is called a season word or *kigo*. For traditionalists, this is a rule: if there is no *kigo* the poem is not a haiku. The *kigo* is a word that tells a reader in which season the moment evoked in the haiku is taking place. It can be the name of the season or it can be a word like "snow" to indicate winter, or "cherry blossoms" to indicate spring. The word *naita* ("nah-ee-taahh," the Japanese adaptation of the coined English word "nighter," meaning "night game") indicates summer. It and the word "baseball" itself (either *yakyu* or *besuboru*), also suggesting summer, are the only *kigo* directly referring to the game that are listed in Japanese haiku almanacs or *saijiki*. (The word "baseball" is also listed as a seasonal topic or *kidai*.) That may be one reason so many Japanese baseball haiku seem to be about night games. The season words are arranged in such almanacs, along with haiku demonstrating their use, so that poets and readers alike can know which season custom and usage [have] dictated that a particular word will represent. Japanese poets have been using baseball as a subject for their haiku since 1890. (xiv-xv)

Although baseball can be played beneath the moon, it cannot be played by moonlight alone. That is why it was appropriate for William Kinsella to choose Moonlight Graham—a real player who appeared in one game for the 1905 New York Giants but never was credited with a

time at bat—as the inspiration for the building of the ghostly field of dreams in *Shoeless Joe*. Kadokawa’s game, too, is a dream, an image, an unreal game.

Factuality and the Mental Game

We already have seen that the Giant-Dodger game described in “Polo Grounds” is not a real game, but it certainly is not an unreal one. After all, Jack Schwarz, who was knowledgeable enough about baseball to have become the Giants’ director of player development, wrote Humphries a letter on team stationery, in which he told the poet that the club’s front office “felt that [‘Polo Grounds’] was an excellent piece of reporting as well as poetry of the most delightful type.” (Ltr. of 2 Sept 1942) This judgment of the team’s executives, naïve as it may be, indicates that Humphries’ poem has an impressive degree of verisimilitude.

It also suggests an interesting mental experiment. In 1951, the Giants overcame a thirteen and a half game deficit with fifty-three games left to play, to draw even with the Dodgers and force a three-game playoff to decide the pennant winner. The teams split the first two games.

Then, with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning and Brooklyn leading 4-2, the Giants’ Bobby Thomson hit a game-winning home run into the Polo Grounds’ left field second deck.

That home run has come to be known as “The Shot Heard ‘round the World.” Let us assume that someone had written an excellent poem about that event, a poem that contained one glaring factual error, that the poem’s hypothetical author had, like Longfellow in “The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere,” misdated his Shot Heard ‘round the World. Such a gaffe surely would have cost its author the admiration of the Giants’ executives, but would it have affected the work’s value as poetry? It is a question that stout Cortés, staring at the Pacific, which Balboa had discovered, might well have pondered.

It might, at first glance, seem as if Humphries’ shuffling the deck of cards that are the facts of other baseball games is merely an example of what Coleridge called the fantasy, “no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space” (Biographia 160) Yet our own response as readers, not to mention the endorsement of

the New York Giants' management team, tells us that, no matter what the material and what the mode of construction, Humphries has put together something more substantial than a house of cards.

As John Livingston Lowes puts it at the start of *The Road to Xanadu*, his exhaustive study of Coleridge's sources,

one of the most momentous functions of the imagination [is] its sublimation of brute fact. Yet without a knowledge of the crass materials, the profoundly significant process is unintelligible. And if at the moment we are assiduously accumulating raw materials, it is in order to have a clearer understanding of the ways in which, through the operations of the shaping spirit, they are transmuted into elements of beauty. (44-45)

We already have examined some of the “crass materials” Humphries submits to his “shaping spirit.” Let us now examine, however incompletely, the process by which Humphries turns the dead facts of history into the vital organism that is his poem, a creation that is, as Coleridge says of the imagination “essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead.” (Biographia 160) In writing this poem in which the relations between the living and the dead play such a major role, Humphries brings the dead objects of history to life.

“Polo Grounds” is superbly organized, not because it leads logically from point A to point B, but because its various parts continually remit forward and backward within the poem to each other. The resulting entity that is the poem interacts in turn with the world outside it, importing phenomena from and becoming part of the external world we experience. The chronological patterns—the recession into ever deeper recesses of baseball history in the *ubi sunt* section, where the poem advances as the objects of memory retreat into the past, and the sun's westward progress across the playing field as the game, the poem, and life fade into memory—do not impose a strict chronology on the poem. Instead, these patterns are embodied in its flow, enacting the flux and reflux of time as we experience it. The forward movement is enriched, rather than contradicted by its reversal. What I have said in the previous chapter about the effectiveness of the sunset metaphor also applies in this context. Indeed, the seeming contradictions of

Humphries' poem, its multiple paradoxes, help it maintain the tenuous balance between form and chaos that allows the literary simulacrum to maintain a convincing sense of order without losing the vitality inherent in life's disorder. "Polo Grounds" is alive. It grows, an organic creation that has outlived the rigid work of engineering for which it was named.

To understand the role of mundane factuality in Humphries' creation, it might be helpful to examine how some other writers deal with the problem. One poet who has written on the question is his near contemporary (she was nine years his senior) Marianne Moore, who "became something of an ornament in [Brooklyn] and for the [Dodgers] When Moore wasn't at the park, she followed the team via Red Barber on the radio" (Prince 85). Barber was, after all, the verse of the Dodgers.

In the 1921 version of "Poetry," Moore writes that "we / do not admire what / we cannot understand . . . (9-11). That category includes "the base-/ball fan, [and] the statistician . . ." (14-15). She goes on to warn us

nor is it valid
to discriminate against "business documents and
school-books"; all these phenomena are important. One
must make a distinction
however: when dragged into prominence by half poets,
the result is not poetry,
nor till the poets among us can be
"literalists of
the imagination"—above
insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, "imaginary gardens with real toads in
them," shall we have
it. (16-25)

She caps her famous call for a batrachian presence in the garden of verses with a nuanced and puzzling, but powerful, salute to the poetic necessity of fact:

In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,
the raw material of poetry in

all its rawness and
that which is on the other hand,
genuine, you are interested in poetry. (25-29)

Moore's desideratum appealed to Humphries, who, in the introduction to his translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, expressed his admiration for the Roman poet this way:

No stock props of pastoral here, no literary
landscaping, but real food on the tables, and
sometimes real blood on the ground. "im-
aginary gardens with real toads in them." (ix)

Indeed, "Poetry" applies on many levels to Humphries' work. Not only does Moore include baseball among the topics licit for poetry, but she attributes her imagined readers' rejection of the game to its esoteric nature ("what / we cannot understand"), ironically attributing the disdain of the "half poets" for baseball and its fans to an inability to comprehend a difficult subject, the same inability, she implies, that leads the philistine to dislike poetry; the antecedent of the gender-neutral pronoun in her blunt opening declaration "I, too, dislike it" (1) is "Poetry," the title of the piece. (Moore's transition between the first person singular and plural,—"I, too, dislike it;" "we cannot understand"—to seduce her readers into agreeing with her is one of the delights of her poem).

The lines in "Polo Grounds" about signs indicate that, in that poem, the esotericism of baseball's appeal lies not only in its arcane rules, strategy, and history but to the hidden language of signs and signals that forms what Paul Dickson calls "the central nervous system" (Hidden Language 6) of the game, that "highly skilled / And beautiful mystery." Baseball has, in addition to its prose, its tacit poetic diction. Moore, implicitly rejecting Tolstoy's ironic formulation,⁶ adds business documents to the inventory of phenomena worthy of poetry.

⁶ In a note to page 457 of the second edition of *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, Richard Ellman and Robert O'Clair provide the citation from Tolstoy's diary that Moore had included in a note to her poem: "Where the boundary between prose and poetry lies, I shall never be able to understand. . . . Poetry is verse; prose is not verse. Or else poetry is everything with the exception of business documents and school books." By the time Moore included "Poetry" in her *Complete Poems*, she had reduced the text of the entire poem to "I, too dislike it. / Reading it, however,

Humphries goes further, making business documents essential elements of the structure of his piece, building it on the foundation of the contractual phrase “time is of the essence.” (Shakespeare does something similar with legal terminology in Sonnet 30, “When to the sessions of sweet, silent thought”). Like Shakespeare, Humphries does not merely use business documents and the history of baseball in the construction of “Polo Grounds;” he weaves them into the very fabric of his poem. And when, in “On the Creative Imagination,” he calls literary reviews trade journals, (411) he simultaneously deflates the pretensions of the reviews and invests business publications with some of the prestige of literature.⁷

This is a major reason for the success of “Polo Grounds.” The product of the poetic imagination must avoid being, at one extreme, a pastiche and, at the other, a solipsism. That product must bear some relation to what we recognize as real (which includes other works of art) if it is to be comprehensible or at least to convince us that it is worthy of our making the effort necessary to comprehend it. Our suspension of disbelief may be willing, but it must be earned. In other words, for a work of verbal art to be lived by its readers as—or more—fully than they would experience life itself, that work must contain the verbal counterparts of life’s elements; to be significant, signifiers require the signified. The alternative reality that literature provides us is made up inexorably of representations of the reality it replaces. Even the thesis of Moe Berg’s near victim, Werner Heisenberg, “What we observe is not nature itself but nature exposed to our method of questioning,” (58) posits the existence of nature, however much the “very act of observing alters the object being observed.” (24) “De la musique avant toute chose” may be a great line of poetry, but it is a desideratum for musicians, not poets. Even Verlaine’s battle cry,

with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in / it, after all, a place for the genuine.”

⁷ Nor is “time is of the essence” the only expression used in business documents to have literary merit. My father, a CPA, frequently quoted with delectation the diction of the tax code’s references to piercing the corporate veil and to gifts made in the contemplation of mortality.

music *before* everything else, admits the necessity of something more than music in the poem.⁸

What Humphries has wrought is a variation on the terms of Moore's desideratum. He has remained, I think, a literalist of the imagination because, although his real garden (the Polo Grounds) has real toads in it (the players, Red Barber), the acts they perform, however real they may have been at other times or in other places, have been de-realized in an act of the imagination; Humphries has stripped them—in a poem about, among other things, the effects of time—of their chronological context. He then uses his combinatory art to re-realize the separate components in a new and organic artistic whole, the poem. He accomplishes this complex integration of the real and the imagined without losing his appeal to “the base- / ball fan and the statistician” (the expression is almost redundant).

In applying Moore's well-known paradox, “literalist of the imagination,” to describe Humphries, I am deliberately, and without intentional irony, taking that phrase out of *its* historical context and using it at its face value. Still, fairness to Moore demands that I point out that, in the same note that she wrote to identify her reference to Tolstoy, she tells us that the locution, which has come to be identified with her, was coined by A.H. Bullen in his study of Yeats's attitude towards good and evil. In Bullen's work, the expression is not a prescriptive paradox, but an attempt to describe an ironic situation. Yeats

⁸ Indeed, the title “Art poétique,” is ironic. The poem calls for verse that will be

bonne aventure
Éparsé au vent crispé du matin
Qui va fluerent la menthe et le thym . . .
Et tout le reste est littérature.

good fortune scattered in the brisk morning air
that smells of mint and thyme . . . and the rest
is literature. (33-36)

We can sympathize with the desire, but we're talking about literature.

was a too literal realist of the imagination, as others are of nature; and because he believed that the figures seen by the mind's eye, when exalted by inspiration, were "eternal existences," symbols of divine essences, he hated every grace of style that might obscure their lineaments.

Another American poet of Humphries' generation, William Carlos Williams, just a few years older than Moore, grappled with the Gordian knot of poetry, baseball, and quotidian detail. In his *mélange* of prose and verse, *Spring and All*, just after the poem that begins "The crowd at the ball game," (See p. 42, above), Williams discourses on the imagination. The exercise of that power, he says,

is not to avoid reality, nor is it description nor an invocation of objects or situations, it is to say that poetry does not tamper with the world but moves it. – It affirms reality most powerfully and therefore, since reality needs no personal support but exists free from human action, as proven by science in the indestructibility of matter and of force, it creates a new object, a play, a dance which is not a mirror up to nature but –

As birds' wings beat the solid air without which none could fly so words freed by the imagination affirm reality by their flight. (96)

The self-aware aspiration to create a living object out of words was in the air, as it had been since at least Coleridge. I have chosen Williams out of many other possible poets as an example because of the interest in baseball some of his poetry shares with Moore's and because the two of them deal with similar esthetic questions.⁹

⁹ Another poet, one who had no interest in baseball and so is relegated to this footnote, Vicente Huidobro, the Chilean who founded Creationism, had written in his "Arte poética" of 1916, "Por qué cantáis la rosa, ¡oh Poetas! / Hacedla crecer en el poema [. . .] 'Why do you sing of the rose, oh, Poets! Make it grow in the poem [. . . .]' (14-15) (The desire is clear, even if the disjunction is not; "cantáis la rosa" can mean both "sing the rose" as well as "of the rose").

In *El signo y el garabato* 'The Sign and the Scrawl,' Octavio Paz articulates the differences between the two poets' approach to the question of reality in poetry.

Las teorías poéticas de Williams y el “creacionismo” de Huidobro son gemelos pero gemelos enemigos. Huidobro ve en la poesía a un homólogo de la magia y quiere, como el chamán primitivo que *hace* lluvia, hacer poesía; Williams concibe a la imaginación poética como una actividad que complete a la ciencia y rivaliza con ella. . . . Huidobro intentó producir objetos verbales que no fuesen imitaciones de los objetos reales y que incluso los negasen. . . . Para Williams el artista – significativamente se apoya y se inspira en el ejemplo de Juan Gris—*separa* la cosas de la imaginación de las cosas de la realidad: la realidad cubista no es la mesa, la taza, la pipa y el periódico de la realidad sino que es *otra* cosa que simultáneamente es la *misma* cosa.

Williams's poetic theories and Huidobro's "creationism" are twins, but rival twins. Huidobro sees in poetry something homologous to magic and wants, like the primitive shaman who is a *rainmaker*, to make poetry. Williams conceives the poetic imagination as an activity that completes and competes with science. . . . Huidobro tried to produce verbal objects that weren't imitations of real objects and that even would negate them. . . . For Williams, the artist—significantly, he relied on and took inspiration from the example of Juan Gris—*separates* the things of the imagination from the things of reality; cubist reality isn't the table, the pipe, and the newspaper but something else that simultaneously is the *same* thing. (102-103)

Williams and Huidobro attempted something analogous to the shift in painting from impressionism to pointillism. The impressionists tried to give the effect of light with paints they had mixed on their palettes. The pointillists juxtaposed dots of primary colors and let the viewer's eyes and brain combine the colors to *create* the perception of secondary and tertiary colors. This technique can be very effective, but, when viewed from the wrong angle or distance, can produce the painterly equivalent of a newspaper wire photo.

Concrete poetry, of which Huidobro was an early practitioner, is an attempt to take the Creationist motto seriously. The result usually is static, a verbal statuary where no roses blossom. Even when the reader's eye

Williams calls “the conditions of music . . . objects for the action of the writer’s imagination just as a table or ---,” (97) which, although it seems an overly broad statement when applied to poetry in general, describes “Polo Grounds” quite well. None of Humphries’ concern for “objects or situations”—facts—means that “Polo Grounds” is devoid of music. Indeed, musicality is one of the poem’s themes and the source of much of its vocabulary. Humphries avails himself of music’s resources, carefully attending to matters of rhythm and, like Carl Hubbell preparing to face Dolf Cammilli, pitch.

The interplay between fact and fiction manifests itself in surprising ways in “Polo Grounds.” Humphries’ impersonation of Red Barber’s voice raises questions about who “really” is speaking, questions that go beyond those usually raised by the use of multiple points of view. Even the choice of Barber as the broadcaster whose voice informs much of the poem juggles factuality and invention. I believe I can show that the details that give such life to lines 11-24 are provided by Barber—that is, Humphries’ Barber—in the same way that Humphries provides the events of the ball game when he describes them: by transposing similar details in time.

Why does Humphries give us Red Barber’s narration, or what would have been Barber’s narration had the game “really” taken place, rather than the version of another announcer who would have been there? The answer lies, I would suggest, in the history of broadcasting.

In 1942, the Giants’ home games were broadcast live by Mel Allen and Connie Desmond (Patterson 60). Barber, the voice of the visiting Dodgers, however, had to recreate the game from telegraphed reports. The Dodgers’ broadcast crew

didn’t have reciprocity [with the Giants] in the early years of the broadcasts, and we couldn’t go into the Polo Grounds and do the games live. The Giants broadcaster was doing the game from the Polo Grounds, and that meant we were

jumps across the page while reading a text that has been disjointed to give the impression of motion, it takes a beat or two before her or his mind registers the distorted word or words, slowing down, rather than speeding up, comprehension. Talk about literalists of the imagination!

competing with a live broadcast of the same game right there in the same city. That's pretty tough competition. All a listener had to do was switch the dial back and forth . . . to see how far behind we were.

I told Western Union how important it was for their man at the Polo Grounds not to waste any time at all. [After all, time *is* of the essence]. We worked out a code [. . .] and we didn't wait for details. He'd send S and immediately I'd say "Strike" and then as I saw a second S I'd add, "Swinging." And so on. . . . If the batter hit the ball fair he sent H, and I'd say, "He swings and hits the ball" and by that time he'd add G for grounder, or whatever, and I'd add that information. . . . It was tightwire walking, you were feeling your way. But it was effective. They told me that you could listen to the Giant broadcast, hear a play, flip the dial to the Brooklyn broadcast, and by the time you got there we had broadcast the play, too. We not only survived doing Western Union wire reports opposite a live broadcast, we flourished. (Barber and Creamer 241-242)

In choosing Red Barber as the radio voice of his game, Humphries has chosen someone who, like the poet, is a visitor to the Polo Grounds, not, like Mel Allen and Connie Desmond, someone associated with the enterprise. He also has chosen imagination over witness. But that imagination was not unbridled; Barber's inventions were legitimate conjectures, and he didn't make an effort to pass them off as what he'd seen.

I didn't care for . . . simulated reality. It offended something in me—perhaps a sense of honesty, perhaps just the idea that listeners were a lot brighter than these fellows seemed to think they were. I assumed the audience knew that this was a wire recreation and I broadcast it that way. I made a point of having the microphone hung directly above the Western Union ticker so that the audience could hear the dots and dashes. (Barber and Creamer 240)

Those dots and dashes assumed a human voice, the “Red Barber crescendo.”

One of those fellows from and with whom Barber differed was Ronald Reagan, who in his memoir, *An American Life*, recounts a “story that I’ve probably repeated more times in my life than any other,” (72-73)

While Reagan was recreating a game between the St. Louis Cardinals and the Chicago Cubs over WHO in Des Moines, the telegraph operator passed him a note that read,

“The wire’s gone dead.”

Well, since I had the ball on the way to the plate I had to get it there. Although I could have told our listeners that the wire had gone dead, it would have sent them rushing toward their dials and a competitor. So, I decided to let Jurges [the same Billy Jurges who goes to his right to start a double play at the beginning of “Polo Grounds”] foul off the pitch, figuring Western Union would soon fix the problem. To fill in some time, I described a couple of kids in the stands fighting over the foul ball.

When [the operator] gestured that the wire was still dead, I had Jurges foul off another ball; I slowed [Cardinals pitcher Dizzy] Dean down, had him pick up the resin bag, and take a sign, shake it off, get another sign, and let him pitch; I said he’d fouled off another one, but this time he’d just missed a home run by only a few inches.

. . . .

I described Dean winding up and hurling another pitch; Jurges hit a foul ball, and then another . . . and another. A red-headed kid in the stands retrieved one of the fouls and held up the ball to show off his trophy.

By then I was in much too deep to admit the wire was dead, so I continued to let Jurges foul Dean’s pitches, and his string of foul balls went on for almost seven

minutes. I don't know how many foul balls there were, but I'm told someone reported the foul-slugging spree as a record to "Ripley's Believe It Or Not" column. Finally, [wire service was] restored. Relieved, I grabbed the slip of paper . . . and read it: "*Jurges popped out on the first ball pitched.*"

For days, people stopped me on the street and asked if Jurges had set a record for foul balls. I'd just say, "Yeah, he was there a long time." I never admitted a thing." (73)

Of course, even this last statement is untrustworthy. Reagan might not have admitted what he had done, but that was because he bragged about it. Barber recalls that, in 1938, The Great Communicator told a group of fellow sportscasters about his deception. Barber was not impressed by the future president's inventiveness. It was not admiration of Jurges's prowess at fouling off Dizzy Dean's offerings that made The Old Redhead think, "I'll be a suck-egg mule. Thirty-seven fouls. That's got to be a record." (Barber and Creamer 240) Although Barber disapproved of the extent of Reagan's inventiveness, wire recreation required this type of embroidery.

The convincing minutiae adduced by Humphries' Barber in the third stanza of "Polo Grounds" contains the sort of detail the historical Barber would have provided his listeners and is of a piece with Reagan's slow motion description of Dizzy Dean picking up the resin bag, looking in for a sign, shaking it off, and so on. Seeing (or hearing) Barber as an unreliable narrator makes the Giants' management's admiration for "Polo Grounds" as "an excellent piece of reporting" suggestive of more than the executives' philistinism; it reminds us that even excellent reporting often is an alloy of truth and fiction.

Red Barber's name, which Humphries uses to identify the musical interlude of "Polo Grounds," embodies the filial piety inherent in Jack Humphries' inclusion in the list of Giant greats. Walter Lanier "Red" Barber's middle name came from that of his father, William Lanier Barber, who, in turn, got it because his mother, Red's grandmother, was "a Miss Lanier of the Sidney Lanier family, the poet." (Barber and Cramer 113). Another member of the Lanier clan who bore the poet's name was Thomas (later, Tennessee) Lanier Williams, three years

younger than Barber and, like the sportscaster, born in Columbus, MS. Although the Theater Guild production of Williams' *Battle of the Angels* had, according to the Encyclopedia of World Biography web site, bombed (and been banned) in Boston, in 1942 its author was not yet a cultural reference.

Although knowing whether or not Humphries was aware of the family connections between Barber, Williams, and Lanier is an interesting question, it isn't a vital one. At the beginning of this chapter, I quoted Borges on writers' creation of their own precursors. Similarly, works of literature create their own references. Humphries may never have suspected most—or any—of the information I have presented about Red Barber, but that information enriches Humphries' poem and, when known, becomes part of it. The boundaries between art and reality are real, but porous. Towards the end of this chapter, I will make some more observations on the reciprocity between writers' intentions and knowledge and their products.

James Hart's entry for Lanier in *The Oxford Companion to American Literature* reports that Barber and Williams' namesake, in addition to writing poetry, played the flute in Baltimore's Peabody Orchestra and taught English literature at Johns Hopkins, where

the work for his classes resulted in *The Science of English Verse* In [this] book . . . he illuminates his own method by his thesis that the laws governing music and verse are identical, and that time, not accent, is the important element in verse rhythms. Lanier's complete *Poems* . . . are noted for the ballads and lyrics that embody his attempt to produce in verse the sound-patterns of music.

By chance or by choice, Humphries' use of Barber as the sportscaster in his poem fits beautifully, linking as it does the announcer to the themes of prosody, music, and family and, of course, to the claim that time is of the essence.

Proper Nouns

With Red Barber, historical fact has been melded with poetic invention to incarnate one of the paradoxes of Humphries' poem, the reality that exists in words, in this case, a name. And, for all their shortcomings as indicators of a specific reality—there are many Billy Jurgeses besides the one who played for the Chicago Cubs and New York Giants, and, even if we narrow the field to that one person, the name “Billy Jurges” can refer to him at any moment between his birth in 1908 and his death in 1997 and, beyond that, to his afterlife as a character in poetry, history, and anecdote--, names are the most specific words we have. They are, after all, *proper* nouns.

Humphries uses the specificity of nouns with great effectiveness in “Polo Grounds,” employing them to bring the poem to life and to make his fiction convincing thanks to their cargo of historical truth and precision. He took pains to specify who his players were, changing line 3 of the MS draft, now in the Amherst College Library, which had read “From the time the batter connects till he gets to first” to “From the time Riggs connects . . .” thereby turning the double play, which had been somewhat abstract, into a precise experience.

All the heroes celebrated in “Polo Grounds,” both those who already belonged to the past when the poem was written and those who belong to it now, really existed, and Humphries emphasizes this by giving us their real names. As a result, the dead seem more real than the speaker's nebulous listener. The power of the central, *ubi sunt*, section lies in great measure in its accumulation of names; one after another, the forgotten and then the dead parade before us, stretching back to the team's inception. The roll call achieves its full form and meaning—is realized—in *nomine patris* when Rolfe Humphries summons up the memory of “a left-handed catcher *named* Jack Humphries.” (42, my emphasis)

The Adamic act of naming occupies an important place in the literary tradition of the Americas, going back to the arrival of the Spanish in the new world and their need to name the flora and fauna they found there. A half a millennium later, Andrés Bello, the Venezuelan writer and politician whose literary treatment of the 1941 Amateur World Series I discuss in chapters 3-5, would define himself in “Confesión” (Poesías 135) as a “poeta . . . un hombre / que nombra y que camina, sin camino y sin nombre” ‘a “poet . . . a man who who names and walks, without a road and without a name.’ (3-4)

In one of the seminal essays of North American literature, Emerson declared, in 1844, “The poet is the sayer, the namer, and represents beauty,” (93), as opposed to (of all people!) the “esteemed umpires of taste.” (92)

Seven decades later, an irritated Ezra Pound exclaimed, “Hang it all, Robert Browning, / There can be only one ‘Sordello.’ / But Sordello, and my Sordello?” (Canto II, 1-3)

Sordello—his identity split between the man, the troubadour, and the versions of one and the other provided by historians and critics, by Dante, by Browning, and by Pound himself, changed by the title of Browning’s long eponymous poem from a man and a poet into an artifact—assumes yet another persona: the embodiment of the modern loss of certainty in the meaning of even what seem to be the most meaningful of words, names.

Van Lingle Mungo is a “euphonious appellation,” as Cuthbert J. Twillie (W.C. Fields) says of Flower Belle Lee (Mae West) in *My Little Chickadee*. It also is the title of a lyric by Dave Frishberg, one that both celebrates names and corrodes their significance. Van Lingle Mungo, a pitcher on the 1942 New York Giants who had spent the previous eleven seasons with the Brooklyn, is the subject of this eulogy of the great names of baseball’s past. The only words other than ballplayers’ names in the poem’s twenty-five lines are “and,” repeated six times, and “big,” which is used as part of a nickname (that of Johnny Mize, the Giants’ first baseman in “Polo Grounds”) and so counts as part of a name. (Although it is possible that the upper case B is owing to its initial position in the line and that, because of this, “big” should be treated as an adjective, Mize often was referred to as Big Johnny or Big Jawn).

Heenie Majeski, Johnny Gee
Eddie Joost, Johnny Pesky, Thornton Lee
Danny Gardella
Van Lingle Mungo

Whitey Kurowski, Max Lanier
Eddie Waitkus and Johnny Vandermeer
Bob Estalella
Van Lingle Mungo

Augie Bergamo, Sigmund Jakucki
 Big Johnny Mize and Barney McCosky
 Hal Trosky
 Augie Galan and Pinky May
 Stan Hack and Frenchy Bordagaray
 Phil Cavaretta, George McQuin
 Howie Pollett and Early Wynn
 Art Passarella
 Van Lingle Mungo

John Antonelli, Ferris Fain
 Frankie Crosetti, Johnny Sain
 Harry Brecheen and Lou Boudreau
 Frankie Gustine and Claude Passeau
 Eddie Basinski
 Ernie Lombardi
 Hughie Mulcahy
 Van Lingle . . . Van Lingle Mungo

© 1969 (renewed) **F Seven Music**
 Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Were it not for the nostalgia that these names, like those in the *ubi sunt* portion of “Polo Grounds,” evoke in those readers familiar with baseball’s history, Frishberg’s piece would be semantically affectless, aurally gratifying but nearly without meaning, closer to scat singing than to poetry. Indeed, “Van Lingle Mungo” first appeared as a song. Frishberg sings it on the Rhino album *Baseball’s Greatest Hits*, available on CD and tape.

A year after Frishberg wrote his piece, United States Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun wrote what we can only hope was meant to be a parody of it.

“Then there are many names,” [he said in his original opinion in the case of *Flood v. Kuhn*, Curt Flood’s suit contesting baseball’s reserve clause], “celebrated for one reason or another, that have sparked the diamond and its environs

and that have provided tinder for recaptured thrills, for reminiscence and comparisons, and for conversation and anticipation in-season and off-season.” He then proceeded to list 79 players in baseball history, beginning with Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, Tris Speaker, and Walter Johnson and ending his original list with Bill Dickey, Zack Wheat, George Sisler, and Charlie Gehringer. “The list seems endless,” Blackmun wrote. (Snyder 294)

Between Blackmun’s writing of the original text and the announcement of the final decision, the justice kept adding names to his list. The last was Moe Berg. (Snyder 306) (“I shall never forgive myself,” Blackmun said, presumably with a straight face, when told that he had omitted Mel Ott”) (Snyder 311).

The only parts of speech used in “Van Lingle Mungo” are proper nouns and a conjunction. Aside from that conjunction, the work has no syntax whatsoever, unless we consider meter and rhyme a form of syntax, which they well might be, but only in an exceptional sense. The only punctuation, commas and an ellipsis, are guides to delivery, not grammar. There isn’t even a period at the end of the piece. These absences combine to make the poem bafflingly abstract because, paradoxically, it is as concrete as a verbal object can be. Indeed, the text’s centered placement on the page makes Frishbeg’s work an attenuated form of concrete poetry, one in which the visual horizontal expansion and concentration of the lines reënforce the work’s oral rhythms. This is one of few cases of which I am aware in which the typographical layout of concrete poetry makes the poem breathe, adding life to, rather than subtracting it from, the text.

Nouns—which dominate “Van Lingle Mungo” — we are taught (or used to be taught) in elementary school refer to people, places, and things; proper nouns, to unique people, places, and things. Without adjectives to modify them or verbs to animate them, they stand in a world apart, one of pure being. “Van Lingle Mungo” is a poem, if it is a poem, that does not mean, but just, infuriatingly for the reader unversed in baseball, is.

Another baseball poem provides a different angle from which to view the poetic use of real names and places. Richard Jackson’s “Center

Field,” has many similarities to “Polo Grounds,” which is why I quote at length in chapter 1 from Warren Goldstein’s comments on Jackson’s poem. Some of the ways, aside from their topographic titles, in which the more recent work resembles its predecessor are Jackson’s use of the fly ball as both a real event and as metaphor for death, which was the immediate context of my quotation of Goldstein’s observations; the inclusion of what happens “between innings” (line 11); the “remembering that too many friends have died;” (14), and ending “as night falls,” (47). The poem’s full text is reprinted in note 6 to chapter 1.

In Jackson’s piece, it seems to be a participant, the center fielder, rather than a spectator, who, during the course of a game, has an *ubi sunt* experience. But the identity of that narrator of “Center Field” is ambiguous. The poem begins *in mediās rēs*—at least, as far as its ostensible action is concerned—after a fly ball has been hit, but before it has reached its apogee. The narrator feels that “I don’t think it ever will come down / it flew so quickly” (1-2) The ensuing details, “I begin to realize how uneven the outfield is— / the small holes that test your ankles, the slight pitch / towards deep center field that makes backpedaling so risky,” (4-6) would seem to support the belief that the point of view is the centerfielder’s. But it could be that of a spectator. As in “Polo Grounds,” where the double play is consummated faster than it can be described, the thoughts are too well articulated to have occurred in the time the poem allows, so whoever is speaking must be presenting thoughts and perceptions that, although narrated in the present tense, are recalled in tranquility.

Not knowing who the narrator is makes interpretation of the poem difficult, but our uncertainty, which also derealizes the game, enriches our experience of the text. The narrator’s thoughts and feelings become the raw materials that are converted into esthetic reality that is the poem.

Yet questions about the historical reality of the events narrated arise, stimulated by the details of the topography of “Center Field” (and of center field).

Neither Jackson nor Humphries, who reserves that information for his title, tells us in his poem the name of the field on which the narrated events occur. The “slight pitch” (5) —nice pun, that—“towards deep center field” (6) that gets Jackson’s narrator thinking about danger, time, loss, and death, might make us suspect that Engle Stadium, one-

time home of the Chattanooga Lookouts and well-known for the hill that rises in center field, is the site of the game. (I use expressions like this in a particularly literary way, understanding that when a person, place, or situation is transferred from the real world to the printed page, it is changed, changed utterly). Jackson's teaching at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga tends to strengthen that suspicion.

It certainly would be fitting if this poem about the death and memory of loved ones took place in Engle Stadium, where they used to play "They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree" on the public address system. (Jolley) After all, that country and western song treats, albeit in a less sophisticated manner than Jackson, the same themes that he does.

They cut down the old pine tree
 And they hauled it away to the mill
 To make a coffin of pine
 For that sweetheart of mine
 They cut down the old pine tree.

.....

But she's not alone in her grave tonight,
 For it's there my heart will always be;
 Now I always will roam,
 For they cut down my home,
 When they cut down the old pine tree. (Raskin, Brown,
 and Eliscu 11-25)

Unfortunately for this hypothesis, Jackson has told me in an e-mail dated March 10, 2010, that "the place" in which the action of his poem occurs "is one of the playing fields in Chattanooga, whose uneven outfield reminded me of one back in Lawrence, MA—at Mt Vernon Park—."

Thoughts about time lead the centerfielder to muse on loss:

I have so much time
 to imagine what you will say between innings
 about what we try to steal from our darkening pasts,
 how age means knowing how many steps we have lost,
 remembering that too many friends have died (10-
 14)

In another echo of “Polo Grounds,” both “you”--a fellow spectator, a friend towards whom the centerfielder’s thoughts fly, the reader?-- and the narrator, whom for the sake of convenience I call the centerfielder, are unidentified.

The witty bitterness with which Jackson vividly intertwines baseball with the violent death of those friends (the bullet “like a line drive,” “swing and miss everything / from a tree,” the Christological put out of “tagged him to a tree”) employs and transcends the facile similarities between the language of baseball and that of death, evident in expressions like “died on base,” “sacrifice,” and “twin killing.”¹⁰ In the

¹⁰ As early as 1910, Jack Regan and Will E. Stahl wrote light verse about the vocabulary baseball shares with death. Here is their “Willie’s Brother’s Demise,” taken from Joseph Wallace’s *Baseball Anthology*.

Willie was an office boy,
 Willie was a fan;
 Willie knew more about baseball
 Than many an older man.
 Willie said his brother
 Was sick as a man could be
 And “Please could he get off to-day
 To bear him companee?”

“You may,” the boss said gently,
 Gazing at Willie the while
 And Willie’s look as he stood there
 Was totally free from guile.
 His head bowed low with sorrow,
 He slowly went outside
 While gloom hung over the office
 And the secretary cried.

Next day he showed up at the office,
 With a frown as black as night;
 The boss, with kindly manner,
 Inquired if all was not right.
 “Not on your life,” said Willie,
 Forgetting himself in his rage,
 Which was rather improper of Willie,
 Considering he wasn’t of age.

“Oh, tell me, Willie, tell me,”

following example, I have italicized those places where puns are the vehicle for the merger of baseball and mortality.

I can see Joey Gile crouched at third base
 waiting as it happened, for the bullet of some sniper
 to snap like a line drive into his chest,
 for John Kearns to *swing and miss* everything
 from a tree in his back yard and not be found
 for two days, for Joe Daly, whom I hardly knew
 and who hardly had time to *steal* away
 when a tractor slipped gear and *tagged* him to a tree,
 for Gene Coskren who never understood baseball
 and was fooled by *a hit and run* in Syracuse, N.Y.,
 and somehow I am going to tell them all. (17-27)

Jackson's death notices conclude, like Humphries', with a family member. Again, I will use italics to indicate where Jackson uses the vocabulary of baseball to refer to death, a typographic technique that, unfortunately, detracts from the skill with which he merges the two realms.

And my mother's sister who loved this game
 and who complained for years about her stomach,
 the family joke, until the cancer struck
 and she *went down* faster than any of them.
 And her own aunt, "I don't want to die," she said, and *slid*
 her head to the pillow not out of fear
 but embarrassment, *stranded*, she thought,
 with no one to *bring her home*, no one to love. (28-35)

Even "pillow" used to be a synonym for "base." (Dickson Baseball Dictionary) In Spanish, it still is, in the diminutive (*almohadilla*).

The gentle Boss then cried;
 "Your brother—is he safe at home?
 Or has the poor chap died?"
 "I should say he wasn't safe at home
 (There was venom in every word),
 "In the end of the ninth—de score a tie—
 The sucker DIED AT THIRD."

In “Polo Grounds,” Humphries uses the real names of real people, performing real acts in a real place, but arranged in a fictitious chronology. (I use the word “real” in its everyday, common sense connotation). In doing this, he has gone beyond the creation of the willing suspension of disbelief, at least for his readers in the front office of the New York Giants, who needed no effort of the will to dissolve their distrust of the factuality of what Jack Schwarz called Humphries’ reporting.

Jackson does not have the same luxury of readily recognized names to make his obituary come to life. He names his dead, except for his aunt and great aunt, and as he told me in his e-mail, “all the names are real.” But these people are known to a circle so much smaller than the one Humphries was writing for that, for most readers, they might as well be inventions. (Similarly, the fame of Mt. Vernon Park cannot compare with that of the Polo Grounds). Jackson makes up for the loss of a built-in connection with his audience by the ironic merger of the vocabularies of play and of death. Joey Gile, John Kearns, Joe Daly, Gene Coskren, and the poet’s unnamed aunt and great aunt take on the ambiguity of the words that describe both the game we know and the deaths of these people we don’t. That ambiguity provides them with the complexity and, ironically, the vividness, that would be lacking in the mere recitation of the circumstances of their deaths. Recognizing the baseball expression under the language of death (and vice versa) provides a slight shock of recognition that offsets our lack of connection with those who have died. As in an etching, the acidity of Jackson’s wit scars the surface of our consciousness to leave a sharp outline of the deaths of “too many friends.” Their deaths become real to us, and so Jackson’s dead, individualized not just by their having names or by their relationship to the speaker but by the poet’s necrological wit, live on in us and on the printed page. That wit achieves this through the fusion of two contradictory experiences, mourning and recreation, that all of us, like the poet, have had at one time or another. In Jackson’s poem, they occur simultaneously.

Reporting

Jack Schwarz’s classification of “Polo Grounds” as reporting, which I have used to illustrate that poem’s convincing sense of reality, could be taken as an indication of Schwarz’s naivety in literary matters. But

poetry and reporting are not mutually exclusive, and not just because the epic is a spoken history book and songs like *décimas* and *corridos*, singing newspapers.

H.L. Mencken's newspaper writing illustrates the difficulty of distinguishing between invention and reporting. Mencken perpetrated one of America's most successful hoaxes, the legend that Millard Fillmore ordered the installation of the first bathtub in the White House. Fred Fedler reports in *Media Hoaxes* that Mencken believed the story "was so obviously fraudulent that no one would believe it" (121) and made repeated efforts to set the record straight. Yet, as late as 1976, the Baltimore *Sun* carried an article about a recent CBS Evening News broadcast that had stated that Fillmore was "best known for the compromise of 1850, the postage stamp, and the first bathtub in the White House." (Fedler 125)

Famous as that hoax may be, another example of Mencken's creative journalism better illustrates the difficulty of distinguishing reportorial from creative writing. Mencken called it "my masterpiece of all time, with the sole exemption of my bogus history of the bathtub," (Choice 219) He wrote it during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. After three days of waiting for more specific news of events in the Pacific than what "the brief and tantalizing bulletins from the China coast" (219) provided, Mencken, in his words,

retired to my cubby-hole of an office . . . and wrote the story in detail. The date-line I put on it was the plausible one of Seoul, and this is how it began:

From Chinese boatmen landing upon the Korean coast comes the first connected story of the great naval battle in the Straits of Korea on Saturday and Sunday.

After that I laid it on, as they used to say in those days, with a shovel. [News editor George] Worsham read copy on [sic] me, and contributed many illuminating details. Both of us, by hard poring over maps, had accumulated a knowledge of the terrain that was almost fit to be put beside that of a China coast pilot and both

of us had by heart the names of all the craft in both fleets, along with the names of their commanders. [We] described in throbbing phrases the arrival of the Russians, the onslaught of the Japs [sic], the smoke and roar of the encounter, and then the gradual rolling up of the Jap [sic] victory. No one really knew, as yet, which side had won, but we took that chance. And to give verisimilitude to our otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative, we mentioned every ship by name, and described its fate, sending most of the Russians to the bottom and leaving the field to Admiral Count Heihachiro Togo. With it we printed our largest, latest and most fierce portrait of the admiral, a smaller one of his unhappy antagonist, Admiral Zinivy Petrovitch Rozhdestvensky, and a whole series of pictures of the contending ships, all with the Russian [ones] marked either “damaged” or “sunk.”

Thus the *Evening Herald* scored a beat on the world, and what is more, a beat that lasted for nearly two weeks, for it took that long for any authentic details of the battle to reach civilization. By that time, alas, our feat was forgotten—but not by its perpetrators. Worsham and I searched the cables from Tokyo, when they began to come in at last, with sharp eyes, for we lived in fear that we might have pulled some very sour ones. But there were no such sour ones. We had guessed precisely right in every particular of the slightest importance, and on many fine points we had even beaten the Japs [sic] themselves.

Years later, reading an astonishing vivid first-hand account of the battle by an actual participant, Aleksei Silych Novikov, I was gratified to note that we were still right. (221-222)

Mencken, recounting his coup, sounds like Ronald Reagan, bragging about his successful wire fraud. The Baltimore journalists literally made history, and several of their techniques for achieving this foreshadow those Humphries uses in “Polo Grounds” and as well as the ones used by both the historical Red Barber and the one who

appears in Humphries' poem. The differences between Humphries and the Barbers, on the one hand, and the Great Communicator and the Sage of Baltimore, on the other, are not just a matter of technique.

Barber, in his broadcasts, invented details that were consistent with the information he had, and he supplemented that information with a dash of fiction, judiciously administered. Because they are routine, almost generic, Barber's details are qualitatively different from Reagan's invented fisticuffs and specifically redheaded youngster, which change the routine into the dramatic, while the sheer number of the fouls he invents for Jurgens makes Reagan's narrative improbable,

Mencken and Worsham studied a situation and made a reasonable conjecture about how it would develop, which they presented as having occurred. Reagan skipped the study and, after inventing a few innocent foul balls, created seven additional minutes' worth of fouls and fistfights arising from fans' attempts to catch the invented foul balls. Humphries when narrating Riggs' double play in his own voice and Camilli's fly ball out while functioning as Barber's ventriloquist—or allowing himself to function as Barber's ventriloquist's dummy—extrapolates, as Mencken does, what he knows of the past and presents it *as if* it were the present (or the immediate past). Pitchers pump and deliver, umpires put new balls into play after a foul has been hit into the stands, catchers go to the mound to confer with the pitcher. These incidents would not have been found in any wire report sent to Barber to put out over the radio, but he would have allowed his listeners to assume that someone had these events. In putting descriptions of them into Barber's mouth, Humphries Barberizes the Old Redhead.

We have a reasonable expectation of accuracy when listening to a broadcast report of a sporting event, even taking the sportscaster's bias into account. That expectation is not always met. Ring Lardner, who sat near Graham McNamee during one of his World Series broadcasts in the 1920s, famously commented, "I don't know which game to write about, the one I saw or [the one I] heard Graham McNamee announce." (Qtd in Smith, *Voices* 9) We do not have the same, often disappointed, expectation when we begin to read a poem, although the poet may trick us into forgetting our skepticism. Suspension of disbelief, however, is not the same as the a priori grant of belief.

Humphries, unlike Regan or either Barber, makes no claim to accurate reporting. The poet must have had the thoughts that appear in “Polo Grounds,” but not necessarily while watching a ball game at the Polo Grounds. In this, they resemble the events of the game in the poem.

The thoughts which comprise the main content of Jackson’s poem, whether they are those of the centerfielder or a spectator, are too well-developed to have occurred in their final form to anyone, player or observer, while a fly ball is falling to earth. (Ott has time enough only to pound his glove between settling under Camilli’s fly and catching it). Jackson presents strong emotion recollected in tranquility and presents the recollection as coinciding in time with the occasion of the emotion.

Mencken’s use of a Seoul dateline and his attribution of the reports to “Chinese boatmen” are a framing device for his informed guesswork about the Battle of Tsushima. Humphries uses a similar technique, with the title, “Polo Grounds,” serving as a dateline and the parenthetical “Red Barber crescendo” as the equivalent of the reference to the Chinese sailors. The recourse to a putatively outside voice that vouches for the facts of a story is, like so many other phenomena we have been encountering, an ambivalent one. It can emphasize the artificiality of the literary product by calling attention to its structure. Similarly, it can make us doubt the truthfulness of what is being narrated, as in the game of telephone, especially if the reliability of one or more of the narrators is uncertain. On the other hand, the technique can give the impression of documentation, which is a hallmark (albeit often forged) of authenticity. Giving sources can function as an effective appeal to authority, even though, as in the curious case of the Chinese mariners, that authority is anonymous and in that of Red Barber, someone who, although “offended” by “the simulated reality” of wire recreation, (Barber and Cramer 240) uses that very technique.

Mencken and Worsham’s mastery of the officers, ships, and geography involved in the battle parallels the familiarity of baseball history and minutia that Humphries employs to give the appearance of reality to a never-played Giants-Dodgers game, while Jackson’s command of baseball’s rich vocabulary makes his narrator appear to be someone whose account of a ball game we can trust, all the while enriching the nexus of baseball and death that is central to Jackson’s accomplishment.

The different types of deception practiced by Humphries and Jackson in their poems, by the two Red Barbers and Ronald Reagan in the wire recreations, and by Mencken and Worsham in their truthful, but fictitious, war reporting also raise interesting questions about the importance of the writers' intention when we come to judge what they have written.

The analysis of how an author achieves certain effects can help us infer the writer's intentions, the fulfilling of which we frequently use to judge, at least in part, the extent of her or his success. This tendency can lead to the intentional fallacy, a common critical practice that, for reasons I hope to show, is not all that fallacious. It is, however, fallible. D.H. Lawrence's famous admonition, "Never trust the artist. Trust the tale," (Studies 13) is, like "Polo Grounds," less straightforward than might seem on first reading. Trusting the tale personalizes it, and once a tale is personalized, it is capable of intentionality. If we prefer to avoid being accused of committing the intentional fallacy, we call the legible signs of authors' intentions their rhetoric, which we may reject, but which we ignore at our peril. In any case, never say "never."

Never Afraid to Tinker with Chance

In baseball, as in writing, intelligent planning is no guarantee of success. Just as a reader who sees what a writer is trying to do can be put off by the author's obvious manipulation, so can an opposing manager anticipate his rival's intentions and counter them. Even if this doesn't happen, attempts to control the game can fail. Advancing the winning run into scoring position with a sacrifice bunt sometimes is the proper move, especially in leagues without the designated hitter rule. But a successful sacrifice will produce an out that could cost the ball game. The correct execution of an appropriate intention can have immediate and direct negative effects. The batter can connect solidly with the ball and, "in three or four seconds only," ground into a rally-killing double play. Similarly, a pitcher can, as they say, "make his pitch" only to have the batter drop a dinky pop fly just out of the fielders' reach for an extra-base hit.

Yet, in baseball, as well as in other human endeavors, what looks like the chance destruction of well-laid plans can, on closer examination,

turn out to be the result of planning. This is how George Will describes one of baseball's most famous plays, known simply as "The Catch:"

With the score tied in the first game of the 1954 World Series between the New York Giants and the Cleveland Indians, the Giants brought in Don Liddle to pitch to Vic Wertz with two runners on. The Indians' batter crushed a Liddle pitch 460 feet to the deepest part of the deepest center field in baseball, where only Superman could catch it. Superman did. Willie Mays made his famous over-the-shoulder-catch and, even more remarkably, threw to hold the runner on third base. Liddle was immediately yanked. He strode into the dugout, put down his glove, and said, "Well, I got my man." (84)

"Luck," as Branch Rickey, one of baseball's great innovators and theoreticians, has it, "is the residue of design." (11) Liddle, in this case, was aware of the distance between home plate and the center field fence in the Polo Grounds and also knew that in Wertz's three previous at-bats he had gotten three hits, one a triple to deep right and another an opposite-field double to deep left-center field. If Wertz were to hit the ball to the outfield—and, as a power hitter, he likely would—it would be best for the Giants that he hit it to center field.

While it is unlikely that Liddle intended his pitch to be hit 460 feet, he probably did try to take advantage of the Polo Grounds' dimensions. He made his pitch and not only got his man, but allowed him to do less damage in the process than a weaker hitter would have inflicted with a sacrifice bunt or infield single.¹¹ Mays' catch also had the unplanned consequence of destroying the Indians' morale (Deane).

¹¹ Larry Doby advanced from second to third base, and Al Rosen remained on first (Baseball Reference box scores), so, in this sense, Will is right to say that Mays's play held the runner at third. A sacrifice bunt, infield single, or many types of ground outs would have advanced both runners. Even a sharp line drive single to the outfield could have loaded the bases with no outs.

Liddle was lucky to have Willie Mays playing center field, but it was not dumb luck. Rather, Mays's skills at running, catching, and throwing, along with the Polo Grounds' deep center field, were some of the materials with which Liddle was working. His claim, fatuous as it sounds, has merit; Liddle helped make his luck. Although Liddle's pitch was not perfect, it was one that had a good chance of being hit to center field. His catcher, Wes Westrum, whose comparison between baseball and church we already have noted, "didn't think it was going out because anything hit to centerfield with Mays there, I said, 'forget it.'" (Qtd. in Mayer 84) Sometimes, however, a pebble in the infield or a bad call by an umpire—those persons from Porlock—can decide a play, a game, a championship.

Baseball, contrary to the common belief, is not a game of failure; it is a game of balances. As with poetry, paradox and ambiguity are, along with time, of the essence. The *locus amoenus* of the ball park is a garden of forking paths in which, if a manager decides to draw his infield in to lessen the chances of a runner scoring from third base on a ground out, he simultaneously increases the likelihood that his fielders' new position will lessen the angle from which they can reach the batted ball. Managers face not just decisions, but a nearly infinite series of unfolding dilemmas. Each play—each pitch, even— involves calculations like these and leads to a new set of possible outcomes. Each play—each pitch—contributes, in a process analogous to the gestation of a poem or a person, to the development of a complex, living entity: a baseball game.

Will sees baseball's frequent failures as a training ground for civic virtue. "Because baseball is a game of failure," he writes, "and hence a constantly humbling experience, it is good that the national government is well stocked with students of the national pastime." (1-2) John Updike, too, sees the game as a school for failure:

Baseball was
invented in America, where beneath
the good cheer and sly jazz, the chance
of failure is everybody's right,
beginning with baseball. (Baseball 34-38)

Updike's conjoining of the failure theory of baseball to the game's American creation myth makes for a successful irony, but that does not make either of its two parts true. Neither baseball, nor its invention, nor its connection to failure is unique to these United States.

The Cuban novelist Leonardo Padura begins “Industriales en la novela de mi vida” “The Industriales {team} in the the Novel of my Life” by saying,

Si bien soy incapaz de recordar cuál fue la primera gran alegría de mi vida, tengo perfectamente fijados en la memoria más afectiva los momentos y las causas de mi primera frustración y de mi primer desgarramiento notables. Ambos desaguisados, como le ha sucedido a tantos cubanos, tienen un mismo origen: la pelota.

Even though I’m incapable of remembering what was the first great happiness of my life, I have the exact time and the causes of my first significant frustration and gut-wrenching distress perfectly fixed in my emotional memory. Both unpleasantnesses, as is the case with so many Cubans, have the same origin: baseball. (In Morales 165)

Baseball does, indeed, provide significant frustration and gut-wrenching distress to fans and players in at least four continents and their neighboring islands, but the failure theory of baseball, like the claim that it is an American invention, is an oversimplification. Even if, as its proponents would have it, the best batters fail two-thirds of the time, each time a batter fails, a pitcher and his teammates succeed. Even the two-thirds failure rate is questionable since there are better ways than batting average, or even on-base percentage, with which to measure a hitter’s success, ways that take into account the variation of the definition of success according to the game’s changing situations. This is the stuff that sabremetrics (from the analyses of the Society for American Baseball Research) and *Moneyball* are made on. (The latter’s transformation into film also provides material for meditations on the intricate relations between fact and fiction in art).

Yes, the best major league teams lose forty per cent of their games, but the worst teams win forty per cent. (There are, of course, extremes like Vic Wertz’s 1954 Cleveland Indians, who won 111 out of 154 regular season games—only to lose all four games of the World Series, impelled to their doom by *The Catch*—and the 1899 Cleveland Spiders, who lost 134 while winning but twenty). To understand the game and

the literature written about it is to appreciate their paradoxes, ironies, and ambiguities. In this, baseball is the New Criticism of sports. Life itself is ambiguous, and so the very ambiguities in the works we have been discussing—ambiguities that contribute the works' autonomy--also contribute to our sense of their reality. And baseball, a ludic construct, is at once a part of reality, a reality of its own, and, in the works we have been discussing, a literary reality

Understanding (or thinking we understand) a baseball player's tactics and strategy helps us appreciate the game but doesn't enable us to predict its outcome. Similarly, our awareness of writers' intentions and techniques broadens and deepens our appreciation of their work but doesn't guarantee a correct reading of it. Just as no ballplayer performs in a vacuum but depends on, among other factors, the work of his teammates, his opponents, and the umpires, writers rely on, again *inter alia*, the tradition in which they ineluctably write as well as on their readers, critics, and publishers.

Liddle's ambiguous success with Wertz both illustrates the Rickey equation, I=d-uf (luck=design–the unforeseen), and yields a corollary that can help us understand baseball and other art forms: intention is a component of outcome. Just as Liddle's pitch was part of *The Catch*, writers' intentions are a part of their work; we can't fully appreciate the latter without understanding the former. It is, as the left used to say, no coincidence that Romance languages use the locution "to want to say" for "to mean." The question, which needs to be dealt with in every work we read, is whether and to what extent concern with the writer's intentions enriches or impoverishes the work and our response to it

Intention and Parody

If the writers' intentions were irrelevant, there would be no distinction between a parody and the work parodied. Compare, for instance, two pieces, one a fictional parody of sports writing in the first third of the twentieth century and the other an example of it. In the first, Chet Williamson's 1983 story "Gandhi at the Bat," the father of Indian independence is invited to bat against the great Lefty Grove and his Philadelphia Athletics after the completion of a regulation game between them and the 1933 New York Yankees, reigning world champions. The "white-robed holy man" takes his stance at the plate,

“his sheet-draped posterior facing the catcher, and his bat held high over his head, as if to clobber the ball into submission.” At Babe Ruth’s prompting, “the Lord of the Loincloth” (30) swings.

The timing was perfect. Gandhi’s molasses-in-January swing met the Grove fastball right over the plate. The ball shot downward, hit the turf, and arced gracefully into the air toward Grove. “*Run, Peewee, run!*” yelled Ruth, as the crowd went wild.

“Yes, yes!” cried Gandhi, who started down the first-base line in what only can be described as a dancing skip, using his bat as a walking stick. An astonished Grove booted the high bouncer, then scooped up the ball and and flung it to Jimmie Fox at first.

But Foxx, mesmerized by the sight of a sixty-three-year-old Indian in white robes advancing merrily before him and blowing mightily on a tin whistle [the prize in his box of Cracker Jack], failed to descry the stiched orb, which struck the bill of his cap, knocking it off his head, and, slowed by its deed of dishabille, rolled to a stop by the fence.

Gandhi paused only long enough to touch first and to pick up Jimmie’s cap and return it to him. By the time the still gawking Foxx had perched it once more on his head, the vital vegetarian was halfway to second.

Rightfielder Coleman retrieved Foxx’s missed ball and now relayed it to Max Bishop at second, but too late. The instant Bishop tossed the ball back to the embarrassed Grove, Gandhi was off again. Grove, panicking, overthrew third base, and by the time left fielder Bob Johnson picked up the ball, deep in foul territory, the Tiny Terror of Tealand had rounded the hot corner and was scooting for home. Johnson hurled the ball on a true course to a stunned Cochrane. The ball hit the pocket of Cochrane’s mitt and popped out like a muffin from a toster.

Gandhi jumped on home plate with both sandaled feet, and the crowd exploded as [Yankee manager] Joe McCarthy, the entire Yankee squad, and even a beaming Connie Mack [manager of the Athletics] surged onto the field. (30-31)

The other, no less ludicrous, piece is the dispatch from the Polo Grounds by Damon Runyon, recounting the one major league plate appearance of the Giants mascot, Charles Victory Faust, whom Christie Mathewson described as “a Kansas farmer, with two or three screws rattling loose in his brain” (233) and whom Bill Veeck later claimed as the inspiration for his signing of Eddie Gaedel, the St. Louis Brown’s little pinch hitter shorter than his bat. (Veeck as in *Wreck* 12).¹²

¹² Gaedel walked in his one major league plate appearance, which often has been considered a case of life imitating art. “You Could Look it Up,” James Thurber’s story of a pinch hitting midget first appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* for April 5, 1941, ten years before Gaedel, proudly wearing the number 1/8 on his uniform, strode to the plate in Sportsman’s Park. Veeck denied the calumny that he had plagiarized Thurber’s fantasy, insisting, “I didn’t steal the idea from Thurber, [sic] I stole it from John J. McGraw,” who had hired Faust—whose life was a tragically farcical imitation of life—as a mascot, whom he allowed to play in two games in 1911. The suggestion that Veeck owed his hiring of Gaedel to Thurber’s story seems to have rattled the showman, because he alludes to it eight pages later in *Veeck as in Wreck*, when he responds to a different accusation,

I have never objected to being called vulgar. The word, as I never tire of pointing out to my tireless critics, comes from the Latin *vulgaris*, which means—students?—“the common people.” (If you don’t believe it, Joe, you could look it up.)

Jim Tootle believes that “a case can be made for the two uses of a midget pinch hitter [having been] the product of ‘two great minds thinking alike.’” (114) He nonetheless concludes—correctly, I think—that the evidence shows “conclusively that Veeck, from the very beginning was familiar with the Thurber story.” (116) Tootle concedes, however, that in “a roundabout way, the germ of the idea of using a mascot in a game could have come to both men from John McGraw.” (117)

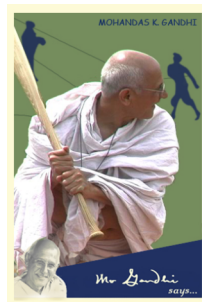
After the Giants had clinched the 1911 National League pennant, their manager, John McGraw, allowed his deranged and hopelessly untalented mascot to pitch in two games. In the second of them he even came to bat. Here is how Runyan describes the event:

Faust was the first man up for the Giants in their end of the ninth, and young Master [Eddie] Dent almost hit him on the wrist with a pitched ball, so [umpire William] Brennan sent Charley to first. He stole second, and then stole third, busting into both bases standing up like a bombardier. The Dodgers saw him do it too. Then Charley Herzog laid down a bunt over toward first, and Faust came booming into the plate with a noise like a patent harvester. (23)

Runyan’s deadpan “almost hit him on the wrist” and “The Dodgers saw him do it too” imply that both the umpire and the opposition collaborated in Victory Faust’s feat. Our imagination as readers allows



Painting © Ben Sakoguchi.



Based on photo by Kameran Kashani for the movie *Gandhi at the Bat*. ©Mental Slapstick.



©The Idea Logical Company

Eddie Gaedel, The Mighty Mahatmas, and Charles Victory Faust: three baseball powerhouses.

us to see the unseen by hearing the tacit and reading the unwritten. That is our contribution to the poetic imagination.¹³ Faust's family name is, perhaps, the contribution of the residue of design.

If Williamson had given "Gandhi at the Bat" a less parodic title and had published it in the sports section of a newspaper rather than in the fiction section of *The New Yorker*, readers might have applied the same journalistic criteria to his story as they do to Runyon's. (Even the applicability of "story" to both pieces indicates a similarity in the genres).

Runyon is best remembered today for the adaptation of his short fiction as the musical comedy *Guys and Dolls*, but he did not write his game reports for people comfortably installed in theater seats. He wrote them for subway straphangers and people grabbing breakfast on their way to and from work. If his work in the 1920s had appeared in an avant garde literary review instead of the Hearst newspapers, it would have been read very differently. Pick up a piece by Gertrude Stein at random and then compare it with Runyon's description of Casey Stengel's inside-the-park home run in the first World Series game played in Yankee Stadium.

This is the way old "Casey" Stengel ran yesterday afternoon, running his home run home.

This is the way old "Casey" Stengel ran running his home run home to a Giant victory by a score of 5 to 4 in the first game of the World Series of 1923.

This is the way old "Casey" Stengel ran, running his home run home, when two were out in the ninth inning and the score was tied and the ball was bounding inside the Yankee yard.

¹³ Williamson has told me, in an e-mail dated October 11, 2008, "I didn't have Faust in mind at all when I wrote the piece . . .". But whom are you going trust, the teller or the tale?

This is the way---

His mouth wide open.

His warped old legs bending beneath him at every stride.

His arms flying back and forth like those of a man
swimming with a crawl stroke.

His flanks heaving, his breath whistling, his head far
back. (179-180)

Where Williamson and Runyon published their work and for whom they were writing are, from one perspective, part of their work. After all, didn't our high school English teachers tell us to know our audience in order to determine the proper level of discourse? Published in a historical journal, Williamson's story, which he presents in a head note as a lost text, would have been seen as an example of the racism and overwrought style the story parodies. It might even have been taken by a few naïve souls as the record of a little known fact and not as the piece of *New Yorker* humor that it is. Runyon's article, if published in the original *Smart Set*, would have been a parody of Gertrude Stein. Published a few years later in *transition*, it would have established him as a major cubist writer. And, indeed, on October 11, 1923, he was one.¹⁴ We read a work, guided by what we think are its author's intentions, which we gauge in three tenses. Before we start, our judgment is in the future tense; we predict what sort of work it will be, based on the title,

¹⁴ Stengel's own account of his feat also makes for interesting reading and shows his appreciation of Runyon's style.

It's a problem for a man of my age, what with a pair of what could be called stagnant legs and because of the fact that my shoe came apart halfway around second base, causing me to stumble a lot and just barely beat the throw to the plate. Oh, but beat it I did, and game one was ours. It caused that writer Damon Runyon to write some beautiful words about how it was done (Qtd. in Berkow and Kaplan 114).

the author's reputation, and that of its publisher. (We do, alas, judge a book by its cover). While reading, when we modify our responses and the text reveals itself, our judgment is in the present tense. And, our reading over, we reflect on what we have read, now thinking in the past tense. (This is, of course, a rough schematic, capable of refinement).

Effective reportorial prose, be it Mencken's surreptitious speculation about the facts or Runyon's rollicking recounting of them, partakes of invention, a word derived from the Latin *in + venire*, to come upon or to find, which was its original meaning (Onions). In addition, the act of ordering events—the structuring that any writing requires—gives them a coherence that they lack in their quotidian occurrence. As Mary McCarthy quite rightly remarks in an essay to which I shall return, “the art of abridgement and condensation . . . is familiar to anybody who tries to relate an anecdote or give a direction” (71).

The Ineluctable Factuality of the Metaphor
The Ineluctable Metaphor of the Fact

It is a truth universally acknowledged, at least recently and in academic circles, that all language is a societal construct. Since the material out of which any linguistic product is formed is itself an artifact, raw data become a human creation once they are expressed in words. The internal development of that artifact, language, further complicates the difficulty we have in making an ultimate distinction between fiction and description. This development simultaneously and paradoxically, lends the weight of fact to figurative language.

As H.W. and F.G. Fowler have observed,

Strickly speaking, metaphor occurs as often as we take a word out of its original sphere and apply it to new circumstances. In this sense almost all words can be shown to be metaphorical when they do not bear a physical meaning; for the original meaning of almost all words can be traced back to something physical (199)

Monsieur Joudain was surprised to learn that he had been speaking prose all his life. To the standard rejoinder to Molière's joke—he was speaking speech, not prose—we can add another: he was speaking poetry. An exaggeration? Undoubtedly, but each sentence we think contains the germ of invention, metaphor, and each of our metaphors contains an element of fact. In poems like “Polo Grounds” and “Center Field,” this epistemological paradox, embodied in their tense balance between chaos and order, contributes to their convincing sense of reality.

In both poems, the immediate subject matter, because it is a game with known rules, comes ready-made with a greater amount of organization than most. Baseball poetry is metapoetry.

Humphries' combinatory art also makes a new reality of its own by organizing existing facts, which include literary and cultural facts like the rituals of baseball and the *ubi sunt* tradition, in a new way. In “Center Field,” Jackson reminds us (and himself) that he, too, is not just transcribing a series of mental and physical events but organizing them and, perhaps, inventing them.

But in the meantime, look, this is a poem,
that could go on being about either death or love,
and we have only the uncertain hang time
of a fly ball to decide how to position ourselves,
to find the right words for our love,
to turn towards home as the night falls, as the ball,
as the loves, the deaths we grab for our own. (42-48)

The game in “Polo Grounds” starts in daylight and ends as shadows envelope the field. The incident presented in “Center Field” takes place between “the approaching dusk” (3) and the moments before “the night falls.” That is, the time of the unfiltered reality, however imagined as it may be, of the two poems is a metaphor to all but the most literal-minded reader. For all the starkness with which they burst into the discourse, both Humphries' injunction to “Come on, play ball!” and Jackson's closing call to order, “look, this is a poem, . . . and we have only the uncertain hang time,” share the ambiguity with which the fading light endows the actions it allows to be seen, but does not illuminate.

What does it mean to say that “Center Field” has been “about either death or love”? Does it mean that the two are mutually incompatible alternatives or that they are inextricably entwined with each other? Is the speaker implying that he—and his readers—must choose between love and death, that choice between them is impossible, or that poet and reader must choose what the poem is about? What is clear is that Jackson has reversed the usual order in which “love” and “death” appear together, a tactic that heightens our awareness of the phrase.

The “uncertain hang time” in which the poem’s action occurs conveys beautifully the existential dilemmas of the poem. Not the least of the felicities of that phrase, a sports term used more often in football and basketball than baseball (although Dickson lists it in his dictionary) lies in the its middle word, usually a noun or a verb, but here used as an adjective. To hang is to be suspended, in suspense. It also is a way of dying, the one John Kearns chose for himself when he swung and missed from a tree (20-21).

“Position ourselves” refers to the outfielder’s physical attitude, that is, his posture and the angle at which he faces the ball. As a metaphor, it refers to the attitude of the speaker—be he the ball player or a spectator—in the sense of his approach towards or beliefs about love, death, and the poem. The use of “position” makes a pun on and of the poem itself, which becomes a position paper and which, as its title hints, is, at least partially, about the importance of being centered.

The use of the plural pronoun further increases the ambiguity of a stanza that ostensibly sets out to put things in order. “Ourselves” might be humanity at large or the poet and his audience, or it even could be a declination of the imperial we. It also could indicate that the poet speaking to, or through, the center fielder. Does this imply that the speaker is the outfielder, extending his situation to humanity at large or that he is a spectator, seeing similarities between his (and our) situation and the outfielder’s?

The comma after “ourselves” indicates that all of the poem’s last three lines are in apposition to “position ourselves” and each other rather than being a serial compliment that would tell us the various things we need to position ourselves to do. Finding the right words is the same thing as turning towards home; both expressions are other words for deciding how to position ourselves.

The need “to find the right words for our love,” implies that this highly articulate poem is about inarticulateness. Not only does the poetic voice confess that it has not found those words, but it leaves us unsure of what it means to find them. Do we need to find the right words to describe what our love is or name its object? Or does finding the right words for our love mean giving those we love the gift of the right words, i.e., this, or another, poem? Or, given the speaker’s dissatisfaction with the way the poem has been going, should those words be something outside of poetry? Indeed, all of “Center Field” deals with the most moving of subjects, love and death, by a controlled confusion, playing with words that unite love, death, and play. This paradox and the others that suffuse the poem are touching, intellectual and emotional at the same time. Indeed, “Center Field,” is a twentieth-century American manifestation of English Metaphysical wit.

The command to turn towards home is equally complex. A. Bartlett Giamatti sees baseball as an odyssey, a setting out from and, after braving hazards, a returning to home, an interpretation we will examine when discussing the homecoming speech Andrés Eloy Blanco made in 1941 to welcome Venezuela’s championship team on its return home to Caracas.

Although I have severe doubts about the Giamatti hypothesis as an hermeneutic for baseball, it is a perfectly valid tool for analyzing the poetic treatment of the game. But the return home called for in “Center Field” is not just the recuperation of the lost past. It also is a reunion in death with friends and relatives we have lost. This is how the expression is used in the spiritual “Going Home,” associated since 1945 with the death of Franklin Roosevelt:

Goin’ home, goin’ home, I’m a goin’ home;
 Quiet-like, some still day, I’m jes’ goin’ home.

.....

Mother’s there ‘spectin’ me,
 Father’s waitin’ too;
 Lots o’ folks gather’d there,
 All the friends I knew,

All the friends I knew.
Home, I'm goin' home! (Hall)

Jesse Jackson uses the voyage home—by definition, a return—in his eulogy to Jackie Robinson:

Jackie's body was a temple of God. An instrument of peace. We would watch him disappear into nothingness and stand back as spectators, and watch the suffering from afar.

The mercy of God intercepted this process Tuesday and permitted him to steal away home, where referees are out of place, and only the supreme judge of the universe speaks.

Although baseball has umpires, not referees—the fumble is easy for an ex-football player like Jackson to have made—and it isn't clear how watching “him disappear into nothingness” relates to watching “the suffering from afar,” the verb “steal” and Robinson's prowess as a base runner, known especially for his ability to steal home, make this much, at least, obvious: both Jacksons, the preacher and the poet, include the baseball meaning of “home” in the metaphoric equation of death and the return home. This bittersweet association of death with homecoming turns dying into a reunion with our loved ones, an act of love. “Turn towards home “ are some of “the right words for our love.”

In “Center Field,” as in “Polo Grounds,” form is content, and content is form. Jackson offers the right words for our love in a stanza that deals with the need to find those words and allows the enriching ambiguity of the narrator in “Center Field” to mirror the ambiguity of what he narrates. This latter ambiguity is manifest even in such details as the use of “as” in the last two lines of the poem.

The narrator says that we are granted only a moment “to turn towards home as the night falls, as the ball / as the loves, the deaths we grab for our own.” “As” appears three times. Which, if any, are comparative and which temporal? Must we return home the way the night and the ball fall, subject to the pull of gravity, towards the earth to which we are doomed to return and which is our final resting place? Or must we return while the light fails and the ball falls? Note that we have to turn *towards* home; our route is marked out for us, but there still is a slight window of time before everything becomes final. Our

end is fated, but we have the chance to “decide how to position ourselves.”

An even smaller detail signals the poem’s final ambiguity. If there had been a comma after “deaths” in the last line, it would have been in apposition to, and therefore synonymous with, “loves.” Without that comma, “the deaths we grab for our own” is an incomplete thought, one left hanging, like John Kearns or the ball before it falls. When we grab these deaths “for our own,” do we take possession of them, make them our own, and, in so doing, define our own mortality? Or does Jackson employ “our own” the way it’s used in another hymn, where we are enjoined to “Sing praises to His name; He forgets not His own”? In that case, the poem would be referring a rescue of our loved ones from the vast commonality of death: grab those deaths and give them to the people we love. This last possibility would allow the deaths of “our own” an individual significance, consistent with the way the irony with which those deaths were catalogued earlier in the poem gave individual life to all those who had died.

This final passage embodies phonetically the polysemy that characterizes “Center Field.” “Loves” is still fresh in our mind when we hear the “g” of “grab,” encouraging the phonetic equivalent of the persistence of vision, leading to a subliminal awareness of “glove,” the equipment players use to grab the ball. Moreover, “glove” is a word baseball fans associate with “ball,” the noun that precedes “loves.” In turn, this complex of sounds, images, and sensations facilitates something close to a sense of the physical awareness of the metaphorical act of grabbing death.

Knowing if the narrator is the center fielder, who faces immediate physical danger from the irregular terrain and insufficient lighting of the field, or a spectator, who stands back and watches the suffering from afar, would affect our interpretation of the poem, clarifying and intensifying our emotional response to it. Unfortunately, the heightened definition of our response would lessen our awareness of the poem’s complexity and muffle the lingering resonance that the ambiguity about the narrator’s identity provides us.

The narrator may have positioned himself actively-- as player or passively-- as spectator-- towards the physical action of the poem. In either case, his emotions, recalled in tranquility, are the stuff of which he is made.

The voice that narrates “Center Field” is analogous to the controlling poetic voice of “Polo Grounds,” that of a character concerned by death and aware of the subtleties of American English and what might still be America’s game. If we were to read “Polo Grounds” as pure text, the reference to Jack Humphries would lose its emotional and structural significance. That is, unless we considered the poet’s name, like the title of his work, only as a part of the text. But even without the hint provided by the shared family name between poet and left-handed catcher, we still would recognize the speaker and his tone of controlled intimacy. His section of the poem is a representation of private thoughts. We know him the way we know the speaker in a dramatic monologue.

A dramatic monologue is a fictional interview with one speaker repressed. However, a look at some of the most successful interviews of the twentieth century, the running series that appeared in the *Paris Review*, reveals that the expression “fictional interview” verges on redundancy.

Each [interviewer] would scribble down the [interviewed] writer’s remarks as fast as possible, transcript, which would be trimmed and shaped and reorganized into a cohesive, fluent whole—“a dramatic form in itself,” said George Plimpton, who edited the magazine for its first fifty years and made the interviews what they are. With the advent of the tape recorder, the task became at once more efficient and more cumbersome, since the volume of words recorded was far greater—and the cruel literalism of verbatim transcripts requires particular editorial vigilance to safeguard against what the journalist Janet Malcolm calls “tape-recorderese”—“the bizarre syntax, the hesitations, the circumlocutions, the repetitions, the contradictions, the lacunae in almost every non-sentence we speak.” In shaping a *Paris Review* interview, Plimpton said, “One’s tools are very much the dramatic devices: character build-up, surprise, argument even. The best interviews not only divulge something about the character of the writer, but have a surprise or two in them, and maybe even a plot.” (Gourevitch ix)

Well-wrought poems like “Polo Grounds” and “Center Field” not only appear life-like but also cause the suspicion—even the belief-- that they are factual reports of unfiltered reality. That is partially because the accounts we create for ourselves of that reality, as well as the accounts of it that we read, use many of the same resources we find in those poems. Nor are the two worlds, literature and factuality, hermetically closed off from each other.

Literature is a parallel universe, a world of the undead, a vampire that draws its life’s blood from the vitality of the living whom it mimics. Poetry’s disembodied existence and transgenerational endurance, the latter embodied in the ending of “Polo Grounds,” offer an alluring alternative to death. References to the immortality of art are riddled with ironies.

The order poetry offers us allows an escape from life’s messiness. Yet life, too, contains patterns (which is not to say that it *is* patterned). As R.P. Blackmur puts it when discussing Allen Tate, “order is imposed on chaos and . . . chaos is the substance of order . . . ; poetry is the means to knowledge of the complementary relation between the two . . .” (343). (Baseball, too, offers tension between the order of its complex rules and traditions and the chaos that comes when the human beings who practice them are not “afraid / To Tinker with Chance.” (See chapter 1, note 4)

Although poetry began as epic, we like to think that only the most naïve readers accept poems as faithful narratives of real events, which is why we are tempted to laugh, unjustly, at Jack Schwarz’s misreading of “Polo Grounds.” Yet, fifteen years or so after Schwarz’s gaff, the so-called “confessional school” of poetry was all the rage in English departments around the world, often the same departments in which proponents of the New Criticism had taught their students to reject the romantic claim that sincerity in poetry was a virtue. In 1954, Mary McCarthy wrote “Settling the Colonel’s Hash,” from which I already have quoted and in which she told of her despair on learning of the antics of “an English teacher in a small college in the Middle West,” (69) whose class had spent a week analyzing the literary symbolism of “Artists in Uniform,” McCarthy’s factual account of her conversation with an anti-Semitic military officer.

Some of the Midwestern English teacher's confusion came from *Harper's* magazine having published "Artists in Uniform" as a story, an ambiguous term, as we have seen. ("I myself would not have known quite what to call it," McCarthy says, "it was a fragment of an autobiography . . ." (69). Indeed, branding (a commercial term for genre) is an important factor in the way we approach a piece of writing. This may seem crass, reducing, not just the sale, but the appreciation of literature to the level of the market place, but it would not have surprised Rolfe Humphries or Marianne Moore or, for that matter, William Shakespeare. Nor would it have surprised Samuel Johnson, who hyperbolically remarked, "No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money" (qtd. In Boswell 2, 273).

In moving from Humphries and Jackson's mediations on death and questions of literary epistemology, I have followed a natural course of association. Thoughts about death frequently lead to a sense of the precarious—illusory, even—nature of life. Yet the same awareness that life is transitory, and therefore, in a sense, false, can lead to an enhanced appreciation of it. "Depend upon it," Dr. Johnson, in a more sensible moment, assures us, "when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully." (Qtd. in Boswell 2, 393) What the tax code calls the contemplation of mortality serves as a frame for our lives, allowing us to organize their parts while recognizing the limits imposed on them.

Questions about the ultimate nature of reality are notoriously hard to answer. They may lie behind my discussion of the nature of literary reality, but the latter is the only type of reality I feel remotely capable of discussing. Like everything else, the concentration provided by our knowledge of certain death is transitory. We turn from it, looking for whatever escape the imagination and the study of its products can provide, but that escape also is transitory.

Dr. Johnson responded to Bishop Berkeley's negation of matter by "striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it -- "I refute it *thus*." (Boswell 1, 334) Not all of us have a lexicographer's stone with which to put troubling questions to rest. Instead, we turn from them and tell ourselves, "Come on, play ball!"

Coda

We began our discussion of Humphries' poem on the banks of the Harlem River, beside the rivering waters of, hitherandthithering waters of, night. That discussion has taken us to the Battle of Abu Klea in Sudan, to Japan and the Straits of Korea, to Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Lawrence, Massachusetts. We have seen the Harlem riverrun from swerve of shore to bend of bay and take us by a comodus vicus of recirculation back to Humphries' Creation and Environs.

The physical environment of the Polo Grounds was on the corner of Eighth Avenue and 155th Street, in the shadow of Coogan's Bluff, a large stone that Johnson could have used as a guarantor of material reality. The environment of "Polo Grounds" would still remain at the intersection of Fact and Imagination, Life and Death.

CHAPTER 3

HEROES AND HELLENES: THE BACKGROUND OF BLANCO'S "CHAMPIONSHIP BALLAD"

The Heroes of '41: Radio and the Games

All hell broke loose in Venezuela in the afternoon of October 22, 1941. The whole nation was jubilant, celebrating the news from Havana that the country's team had just won the fourth World Series of Amateur Baseball. Javier González, in his *El béisbol en Venezuela*, describes the effects of that nation's unexpected, storybook triumph.

Esa victoria, que convulsionó todas las esferas del país, le dió el impulso definitivo al desarrollo de nuestro béisbol, y dividió la historia de este deporte en dos: "antes y después de La Habana", por lo que con ella se inició una nueva era, no solo en la historia de nuestro pasatiempo favorito, sino en el deporte en general. A partir de entonces, los gobernantes comenzaron a ver el deporte, en especial el béisbol, como un vehículo importante para su promoción política, por lo que la presencia del Estado comenzó a sentirse en cada una de las disciplinas deportivas que se practicaban en el país; tanto que empezó a gestarse la creación de un ente estatal que dirigiera las actividades deportivas de la nación, hasta este momento en manos de particulares. (61)

That victory, which convulsed every social sphere in the country, gave the definitive push to our baseball and divided the history of the sport in two parts, "before and after Havana," thus initiating a new period, not just in the history of our favorite pastime, but in that of sports in general. Starting then, our rulers began to view sport, especially baseball, as an important vehicle for their political advancement, as a result of which the state be-

gan to makes its presence felt in each and every sport played in the country; so much so that work began on the creation of a governmental entity that would direct the nation's sporting activities, up until then in private hands.¹ (61)

¹ That was only the beginning. The Venezuelan government's web page, "Gobierno en línea" 'Government on Line' summarizes the new institute's gestation.

Después de aquel glorioso año 1941, cuando Venezuela conquistó el Campeonato Mundial De Béisbol Amateur . . . todos reclamaban por una Dirección de Deportes, con miras a canalizar las actividades deportivas que se realizaban en el país, sin embargo hubo oídos sordos que no escucharon la noble petición.

Al llegar el año 45, ese grupo de insignes venezolanos no se rindió, por [el] contrario, planificó la formación de un organismo que regulará [sic], controlara; impulsara, desarrollara y estimulara el deporte en Venezuela y, después de tantos esfuerzos, la idea no cristalizó debido a que la convulsionada política que vivía el país no [lo] permitió.

A pesar, [sic] de los rotundos fracasos, el movimiento deportivo el año 48, insistió ante el Ministerio de Educación para la creación de [sic] referido ente que rigiera el deporte nacional y no consiguieron obtener la meta que se habían propuesto.

Después de tanto insistir, el sueño se cumple, cuando un 22 de junio de 1949 se crea el Instituto Nacional de Deportes

Sin embargo hubo de esperarse hasta el 50 para iniciar la tan ansiada gestión, la cual pusieron en marcha el teniente coronel Ricardo Arroyo Ludert, el doctor Antonio Planchart y el profesor Fernando Ríos, quienes fungieron como presidente, consultor jurídico y coordinador técnico, respectivamente.

After the glorious year of 1941, when Venezuela conquered the World Amateur Baseball Championship . . . everyone

In evaluating this statement, however, we should remember the frequent blurring in Venezuela of the line between public and private enterprise, as evidenced by the ownership of the Concordia baseball team by Colonel Gonzalo Gómez, son the legendary and rapacious dictator Juan Vicente Gómez (González 46).

“Venezuela se paralizó para escuchar la transmisión del juego. El Consejo de Ministros suspendió su reunión y declaró día de asueto en los colegios y escuelas. Hasta los comerciantes bajaron sus ‘santamarías’” ‘Venezuela was paralyzed so it could listen to the broadcast of the game. The cabinet postponed its meeting and

called for a Department of Sports, with a view to regularizing the country’s sports activity. Nonetheless, there were those who turned deaf ears to the noble proposition.

In ’45, that group of outstanding Venezuelans refused to yield. On the contrary, it laid plans for the formation of an organism that would regulate, control, advance, develop, and stimulate sports in Venezuela, and, after all these efforts, the idea didn’t take shape, because the country’s convulsive political situation didn’t permit it.

In spite of these resounding fiascos, in ’48 the sports movement appeared before the Ministry of Education to insist on the creation of the aforementioned entity that would regulate the national sports scene, and they weren’t able to achieve the goal they had proposed.

After all that insistence, the dream came true when the National Sports Institute was created on June 22, 1949.

It still was necessary to wait until ’50 to start the long-awaited gestation, which Lt. Col. Ricardo Arroyo Ludert, Dr. Antonio Planchart, and Prof. Fernando Ríos, who served as president, legal advisor, and technical coordinator, respectively, put it in motion.

It would seem that the Venezuelan bureaucracy was almost as impenetrable as its prose.

declared a national school holiday. Even the shopkeepers lowered their metallic shutters' (González, 63).

Venezuela's overwhelming response to the events occurring in Havana, 1,340 miles to the east of Caracas, itself on the eastern end of the country, is, indeed, impressive. But it is not as if Venezuelans filled the ballpark to experience their nation's achievement first hand. Indeed, an extremely small percentage of baseball fans anywhere manages to attend its teams' games, unless those teams play in local amateur leagues, in which case a small attendance still can represent a large percentage of the fan base. Poets who deal with the baseball experience frequently manifest their awareness of this reality by treating the experience of the fan who listens to the game on radio or watches it on television.

In "Polo Grounds," Rolfe Humphries incorporates Red Barber's radio narration into the poem, and in "Baseball and Writing," (Complete Poems 221-222) Marianne Moore incorporates some of the calls Mel Allen made while broadcasting the Yankees' games. She also says in a head note that her poem was "*suggested by post-game broadcasts.*" In both cases, although a significant amount of the words in the poem are spoken by, or attributable to, a broadcaster, it is the narrator who sees, and makes the reader see, the game.

But Venezuelans' most immediate experience of the games that inspired their national euphoria was entirely oral, consisting of words transmitted over the airways. Although Andrés Eloy Blanco delivered a speech in front of the 20,000 people who assembled to honor the team on its return to the country (Ramírez 170) and wrote a popular ballad in honor of the triumph, he had not been in Cuba to see the victory he was celebrating. Neither had the nation's president, who suspended a cabinet meeting to listen to the game on what the Venezuelan Baseball Museum describes as "un potente [powerful] 'Halicrafter' [sic] (Héroes del 41). There is a certain irony to the union of all Venezuelans being effected by radio broadcasts since, as Alonso Calatrava, Jr. writes in his *Obituario de voces caraqueñas* 'Obituary of Caracan Expressions,' *radioescucha* 'member of the listening audience' was not a complimentary term. Rather, it was one of the "apelativos con que se designaban los espías de Gómez" 'nouns used to designate the spies of [Juan Vicente] Gómez.'

While the game at the Polo Grounds that Humphries describes is mediated to a great extent by the medium of radio, the games celebrated by the people and poets of Venezuela are mediated in their entirety by that medium, one that filters and transforms, before transmitting, the product of that filtering and transformation.

Humphries uses the written word in a bid for immortality in which he incorporates the spoken word, Red Barber's narrative interlude, as a compliment to, but not a part of, the events the poet describes. Moore, although "Baseball and Writing" is an example of light verse, has a similar project of immortalization. Her poem's last lines-- "Studded with stars in belt and crown, the Stadium is an adastrum. / O flashing Orion, / your stars are muscled like the lion"—use an erudite pun to transform the Yankees from stars on the field to stars in the heavens, thereby effecting a light-hearted apotheosis.

Blanco's speech was advertised as part of an intended apotheosis of a group of baseball heroes. Alí Ramos, in his *Todos fueron heroes* 'They All Were Heroes', provides a reproduction of the announcement of the official reception for the returning Venezuelans, published by the Welcoming Committee in capital letters and bold type:

**LA JUNTA PRO-FESTEJOS Y LA
ASOCIACION VENEZOLANA DE BASE
BALL EN SU DESEO DE QUE ESTA RE-
CEPCION CONSTITUYA UNA MEREcida
APOTEOSIS A NUESTROS VALIENTES
MUCHACHOS INVITA [sic] A TODA LA
CIUDANIA DEL DISTRITO FEDERAL A
CONCURRIR A ESTE ACTO.**

**THE COMMITTEE FOR CELEBRATIONS AND
THE VENEZUELAN BASEBALL ASSOCI-
ATION, IN THEIR DESIRE TO ENSURE
THAT THIS RECEPTION CONSTITUTE
A WELL EARNED APOTHEOSIS OF OUR
BRAVE LADS, INVITE ALL THE CITIZENS
OF THE CAPITAL DISTRICT TO ATTEND
THIS EVENT. (98)**

Blanco employs the spoken word in an attempt to immortalize accomplishments that he and his audience have experienced only through the spoken word. (One Venezuelan term for broadcast announcer is *spiker*). That most ineffable of phenomena, shaped air,² is the source of the euphoria he describes and his means of celebrating it.

Red Barber, whose voice Humphries mimics in “Polo Grounds,” had something to say about the relationship between speech, writing, and a certain type of immortality, his own variation on the *ubi sunt* theme. In December 1965, he spoke with Robert Creamer about collaborating on an autobiography:

A man wants something tangible, [Creamer paraphrases Barber as having] said. If an engineer creates a bridge or an architect a building, the bridge and the building are there for people to use and admire. A composer’s music is played over and over; an artist’s painting is hung in a museum. A singer can be recorded, an actor can be filmed. All have tangible evidence of their work, something to show their children, material evidence of what they have done with their lives. But a broadcaster’s work, however well it is done, is gone an instant after it has come into being.

“I don’t know how many words I have spoken into a microphone,” Red said, “but it must be in the hundreds of millions. And where are they? All gone. I want something I can see. Something my friends can hold. Something my daughter can have in her hands all her life.” (Barber and Creamer 10)

Simply to note the evanescence of Blanco’s immediate subject matter, the radio broadcasts of the Amateur World Series, and leave it at that would be to ignore the epistemological problems to which those

² There was abundant coverage of the tournament in the written press, but its reports of the game were delayed. The games, or at least the announcers’ reactions to them, were *experienced* through radio, almost as soon as they occurred.

broadcasts give rise. The Venezuelan people experienced, not just a spoken report of what someone else saw, but something considerably more complicated and tenuous than that. Víctor José López, in “La radio, el béisbol y la nación,” draws the triumphant conclusion that

La Radio comunicó a los venezolanos al transmitir una experiencia no vivida, un triunfo absoluto a nivel internacional que le dio a la nación algo que había tenido pero que la humillación de gobiernos autócrata le había quitado: un perfil y la autoestima. Lo logró La Radio con el mensaje, y desde entonces a la fecha ha sido La Radio el gran comunicador para los venezolanos,

By broadcasting a vicarious experience, radio communicated to the Venezuelans an absolute triumph on the international level that the nation once had enjoyed but which the humiliation of autocratic governments had taken from it, a profile and self-esteem. Radio achieved that with its message, and, ever since then, radio has been Venezuelans’ great communicator.

However, the details of how radio achieved this raise questions about both the reliability of the broadcasts and the nature of the unprecedented experience they constituted. López’s adjective —“no vivida” ‘not lived’—indicates the attenuation between the events in Cuba and their reception in Venezuela. López’s use of an epithet often applied to Ronald Reagan has the same effect.

Los juegos se retransmitían y recreaban desde La Tropical de La Habana, donde narraban y comentaban los partidos para emisoras de Cuba Manolo de la Reguera . . . y en los comentarios Pedro Galiana, quien sería en un futuro cercano el padrino de Felo Ramírez en las transmisiones del beisbol. Aunque Pancho Pepe Cróquer había viajado a La Habana para seguir el campeonato de 1941, no transmitió. . . . Los juegos se recreaban, y a pesar de lo primitivo de las comunicaciones se enlazaban las estaciones de La Habana por vía telefónica con los

narradores en Venezuela. Aquellos relatos de cada uno de los partidos que llevaron a Venezuela al Campeonato Mundial fueron históricos y fueron transmitidos por Henrique Vera Fortique, Pablo Morales y Oscar Prieto, el miembro del Salón de la Fama “Negro Prieto”.

The games were retransmitted and recreated from Havana’s Tropical Stadium, where Manolo de la Reguera narrated them for the Cuban stations, with commentary by Pedro Galiana, who in the near future would be the broadcasting godfather of Felo Ramírez [the voice in Spanish of the Florida Marlins and winner of the Ford C. Frick Award, awarded by Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown]. Although Pancho Pepe Cróquer had traveled to Havana to follow the tournament, he didn’t broadcast. . . . The games were recreated, and, in spite of the primitive state of communications the Havana stations were linked by telephone with the Venezuelan announcers. Those reports of each of the games that led Venezuela to the world championship were historic and were transmitted by Henrique Vera Fortique, Pablo Morales, and Oscar Prieto, a member of the [Venezuelan] Hall of Fame

Unfortunately, contradictory documentation makes it difficult to determine exactly which sportscasters the Venezuelan radio audience heard while listening to the broadcast that paralyzed the nation.

According to Gabriel Zerpa, who cites Rubén Mijares as his source, the three Venezuelan announcers, Prieto, Morales, and Esteban Ballesté, didn’t listen to a telephoned account of the games but to the short wave broadcasts originating from Havana, from which they “retransmitían las acciones del juego como si estuvieran viendo cada jugada” ‘retransmitted the events of the game as if they were seeing every play’ (Los mundiales y el éxito).

Alí Ramos claims that Henrique (often spelled Enrique) Vera Fortique was part of that relay team and that his “narración del juego triunfal de desempate con Cuba el 22 de octubre de 1941 se repetía en las

siguientes efemérides de la famosa fecha” ‘narration of the triumphal tie-breaking game with Cuba on October 22, 1941, used to be replayed during the commemorations of that famous date’ (42).

Julio Barazarte says in the September 16, 2001, edition of the Caracas daily *Ultimas noticias* that

miles de receptores de radio estaban encendidos en toda la geografía de nuestro país, para oír las retransmisiones que hacían los locutores locales de las voces de Pablo Morales y Enrique Vera Fortique, quienes en vivo narraron las incidencias y comentarios del inquietante juego que hizo vibrar en una sola emoción a los venezolanos.

Thousands of radio sets were turned on all over the map of our country to hear the retransmissions that the local announcers made of the voices of Pablo Morales and Enrique Vera Fortique, who provided a live narration of and commentary on the events of the nerve wracking game that made all Venezuelans vibrate in a single emotion.

Trying to determine what happened between the events on the field and the Venezuelan radio audience’s reception of the second- or third-hand description of them is made even more difficult by the noun *retransmisiones*, which, in spite of the prefix *re*, often is used as a synonym of *transmisiones*.

For all the confusion sowed by these accounts, one important fact remains clear: the Venezuelan listening audience did not receive a direct, eyewitness report of the games played in Havana. The series was not just a media event, but a mediated media event. Most, if not all, heroes are media heroes, but the Heroes of ’41 were more so.

To make matters worse, Venezuelan baseball announcers did not have Red Barber’s reputation for scrupulous accuracy. The writings of Salvador Garmendia blur the boundary between chronicle and fiction, noticeably in his “story,” “El inquieto anacobero” “The Restless Man

from Anacoba,' a fictionalized biography of Puerto Rican singer Daniel Santos.³

Garmendia sees a fellow fabulator in Pancho Pepe Cróquer, a broadcaster who, as we have just seen, accompanied the players to Havana (although not in that capacity). Garmendia writes in “Como el béisbol por radio” ‘Like Baseball on Radio’ that “El partido narrado por Pancho Pepe era un ‘cuento,’ una narración menos real que inventada” ‘the game as told by Pancho Pepe was a “story,” a narration not so much real as invented’ (Pacanins 140).

Indeed, the date of the tournament’s final contest was determined by a misrepresentation that the Venezuelan delegate, Abelardo Raidi, perpetrated. Raidi claims that at the time, “los grandes locutores éramos Pancho Pepe y yo” ‘Pancho Pepe and I were the great announcers’ (qtd. in Cátedra de Radio 59). Juan Vené, in an e-mail to me, identifies him as the person who organized the transoceanic broadcasts to Venezuela.

After the Venezuelans, by tying the series with their defeat of Cuba in the final scheduled game, had made a play-off necessary, Raidi, believing that “los jugadores cubanos eran supersiticiosos y pensaban que Canónico tenía algo así, como un talisman, que lo hacía invencible” ‘the Cuban players were superstitious and thought that Canónico had something like a talisman that made him unbeatable,’ (Hazaña 130) used every trick in the book, including telling the Cubans that his team refused to play without sufficient rest—an outright lie—(Hazaña 134) to achieve the interval needed for the invincible knuckleballer to be Venezuela’s well-rested starting pitcher. In its official history, the Venezuelan radio industry takes a share of the credit, not just for the pride it brought the nation by communicating the team’s victory, but for the victory itself, stating that “cuando se escriba la

³ Daniel Santos seems to have encouraged confusion between biography and fable. The Puerto Rican Luis Rafael Sánchez has written a novel that he called *La importancia de llamarse Daniel Santos* (*The Importance of Being Daniel Santos*), patterned on *La importancia de llamarse Ernesto*, the Spanish title of *The Importance of Being Earnest*

historia del béisbol, se sabrá hasta dónde fue [Raidi] uno de los factores del triunfo” ‘when the history of baseball is written, the extent to which [Radi] was one of the factors in the triumph will be known’ (Cámara).

There is a certain justice, historical or poetic, in the role played by radio in the dissemination of the games that provide the basis of Blanco’s ballad. In 1932, Miguel Angel Asturias, who eventually would receive the 1966 Lenin Peace Prize and the 1967 Nobel Prize for literature, introduced a Parisian poetry reading with these words, which give an optimistic twist to some of the themes of Humphries’ “Sonnet For a Radio Audience”:

En una cárcel de Venezuela hay un hombre preso, que es Poeta. En Europa, en París, en la Sorbona, hay una sala que se vuelve hacia él como una oreja monstruosa, oreja para oír el diluvio, compuesta de muchos oídos en registros escalonados en diferentes sensibilidades, temperamentos y carnes.

Radiofonía espiritual, sin ondas eléctricas, ya que no solo sin hilos, con algo más sutil que la onda, menos costoso, menos mecánico y casi divino. La poesía es adivinación y en escuchándola se pasa a nosotros su fluido y nos hace adivinar las cosas, penetrar los secretos del universo en relación con los secretos del hombre. . . .

Andrés Eloy Blanco [es] el poeta que recitamos esta noche.

There’s a prisoner in a Venezuelan jail, a Poet. In Europe, in Paris, in the Sorbonne, there’s a hall that turns towards him like a monstrous ear, an ear with which to hear the deluge, made up of many ears in registers scaled to different sensibilities, temperaments, and flesh.

Spiritual radiotelephony, without electric waves, since it's not only wireless but something less costly, less mechanical, and almost divine. Poetry is divination, and when we listen to it, it passes its fluid on to us and makes us guess the things that will happen, penetrate the secrets of the universe in relation to the secrets of humanity.

Andrés Eloy Blanco [is] the poet whose work we are reciting tonight. (473)

The Tie-Breaker

However indirect the version of the games that reached those thousands of Venezuelan households may have been, the events of the Amateur World Series of 1941 *were* dramatic. Roberto González Echevarría's summary of them in *The Pride of Havana* gives an idea of the historical facts but it, too, is a medium through which they have been filtered.

The Series was tight On October 17, Venezuela tied the Series by defeating Cuba 4-1 Cuba and Venezuela would be co-champions. Then came the fateful decision. It is reported that Venezuela was content with the tie and would have happily gone home with it, while the Cubans wanted to play a deciding game. Venezuela stalled, claiming that they had no other hurler than Canónico, who, having pitched the entire last game, was not ready. The Cuban authorities, probably confident of winning it all, agreed to give Venezuela a few days to allow Canónico to recover. . . .

The die was cast on October 23, 1941, with La Tropical overflowing with fans, and the whole of Venezuela, Cuba, and probably the whole Caribbean basin hanging on every word of the broadcast. It was Marrero against Canónico for all the marbles. Venezuela scored three in the bottom of the first on two bases on balls, a hit to center that Guajiro Rodríguez muffed, and a bonehead play at third by Mosquito Ordeñana. Marrero was

notorious for first inning woes; some said because he did not warm up properly. He was also probably tired after the hectic finale of the Amateur League and [his] three victories in the Series. [Manager Joaquín] Viego let Marrero get out of trouble and pitch another inning, but then brought in Natilla Jiménez, who shut out the Venezuelans the rest of the way. Meanwhile, the wily Chino Canónico was mowing down the Cuban team with his pinpoint control, wide assortment of junk, and with the help of spectacular plays at third by Romero and at short by Casanova. In the ninth, Cuba finally scored one and seemed to be on the verge of coming back, but it was not to be. Venezuela had prevailed. The Cuban crowd, in a grand gesture of sportsmanship, surged onto the field and carried Canónico around in triumph. In Venezuela the country went berserk and gave the winners a riotous reception when they returned home. Cuba was numb. . . . (233-234)

This account, unfortunately, contains a few errors and other questionable assertions, which is inevitable in a work as large and as groundbreaking as *The Pride of Havana*. To point out these shortcomings is not to denigrate the importance of González Echevarría's achievement, which is considerable. Nonetheless, because he is one of the two principal sources in English for information about Cuban baseball before the revolution, the interested Anglophone reader requires a set of corrections of the errors in the account that *The Pride of Havana* provides of the climax to the 1941 championship.

First, González Echevarría commits the same mistake as the imaginary poet in the mental experiment I suggested involving Bobby Thomson's Shot Heard 'round the World: he gets the date wrong. The game was not played on October 23, but on the twenty-second. Even Peter C. Bjarkman, another authority in English on Cuban baseball history, who in his *History of Cuban Baseball* (2007) called *The Pride of Havana* "the most thoroughgoing history to date, for all [its] minor editorial shortcomings," (6) repeats González Echevarría's dating error (155). (Eight years earlier, in his text for *Smoke*, Bjarkman had gotten it right. [162]) The report in October 23 *New York Times* of the previous day's

game as well as the pregame commentary and postgame reports in the October 22 and 23 issues, respectively, of *El Diario de la Marina* (Havana), among other sources,⁴ confirm the earlier date.

Second, Mosquito Ordeñana's "bonehead play" didn't occur in the playoff but in the Venezuelan victory of October 17 that made the tie-breaker necessary. In the bottom of the first inning of the earlier game, the Cuban third baseman unsuccessfully chased Luis Romero home instead of throwing to the catcher for the out⁵ (Ramos 74).

4



Headline in the October 22, 1941, issue of *Diario de la Marina* (Havana). The subtitle reads, "This afternoon, beginning at exactly half past two, the two powerful teams will decide the fourth Amateur World Series of Baseball."

TODO HA TERMINADO

VENEZUELA CAMPEON...

Por ELADIO SECADES

PERDIO Cuba el juego de ayer... Y perdió la Serie Mundial y su calidad de potencia invicta en estas competencias, que empiezan a hacerse famosas en todo el continente y que empiezan a hacerse clásicas. Por un desatino de pelota jamás hubo en nuestra patria tanta emoción,

Same paper, next day: "Cuba lost yesterday's game."

⁵ A variant of the play would occur in the seventh game of the 1946 World Series. Enos Slaughter of the St. Louis Cardinals scored the series-winning run when the

González Echevarría may have made his error because Napoleón Reyes had told him that the play had been instrumental in Cuba's loss to Canónico. In that conversation, however, Reyes didn't specify to which of Cuba's two defeats by "El chino" he was referring (González Echevarría, *Peloteros* 13).

Third, Marrero may have been tired, but in 1941 the games of the Liga Nacional Amateur were played only on Sundays, (Jorge Alfonso) which did not make for a hectic end to the season. Although Marrero had pitched in all of Cienfuegos's regular season twenty-four games in 1941 (Jorge Alfonso), that doesn't constitute an exhausting workload. In the international tournament, he had pitched nineteen and two-thirds innings in twenty-four days before his wild start of October 22. That comes to about three and one-third innings every fourth day, significantly less than a regular Major League starter would have pitched in those days of four man rotations. Canónico had pitched a tournament-leading thirty-two innings, but he, like Marrero, was well rested. Remember that both teams had five days off before the deciding contest. The Venezuelan had the advantage relying on the knuckle ball, which is relatively easy on a hurler's arm.

I asked Rogelio Marrero, Conrado's grandson, to speak with the pitcher about the cause of his troubles in the first inning. Rogelio answered in an e-mail on May 15, 2010, in which he said,

Mi abuelo tenía la uña del dedo del medio de la mano derecha levantada (especie de uñero) pues días antes se había lastimado. Según me cuenta la bola que él lanzaba salía manchada de sangre.

Boston Red Sox' third baseman, Johnny Pesky, hesitated before throwing home. The Cards' third base coach was Mike González, the Cuban who had written the classic scouting report on Moe Berg, then a shortstop: "Good field, no hit." (Dawidoff 50) In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway has the boy ask the old man, "Who is the greatest manager . . . Luque [The Pride of Havana] or Mike Gonzalez?" (25) Norberto Codina observes in his article "Lezama Lima: 'El pelotero bizantino'" 'Lezama Lima: "The Byzantine Ballplayer" that "la comparación entre los dos era una constante en la Cuba que vivió Hemingway" 'the comparison between the two was a constant occurrence in Hemingway's Cuba.'

My grandfather had a swollen nail on the middle finger of his right hand (a sort of ingrown fingernail) since he'd hurt himself a few days earlier. He tells me that the balls he threw left his hand stained with blood.

Fourth, Viego did not keep Marrero in the game for only one inning after he got through his shaky opening frame. Marrero pitched six full innings before Natilla Jiménez pinch hit for him with no one on base and two out in the top of the seventh, a change the crowd protested by throwing bottles onto the field (Molina). (The substitution occurred in the top of the inning, because Venezuela was considered the home team and chose to bat last). Jiménez stayed in the game to pitch the last two innings (Ramos 83). Five days earlier, it had been Marrero who pitched two innings of relief. (Ramos 74) After having imported Ordeñana's "bonehead play" from the October 17 game to the one played on the twenty-second, González Echevarría has imported the two innings pitched by Marrero in the earlier contest and confused them with Jiménez's stint in relief in the later one.⁶

On the other hand, it would appear that when González Echevarría reports that Canónico threw a "wide assortment of junk," his account is more reliable than the recollections of El Chino's catcher, Conejo 'Rabbit' Fonseca, who decades later claimed that the pitcher's repertory consisted of nothing but "Knuckle-ball, puro Knucle-ball" (qtd. in Ramos 131 and shown in the documentary film *Venezuela al bate*). According to *La hazaña del siglo 'The Feat of the Century,'* the commemorative volume published in 2002 by Radio Deporte 'Sports Radio,' Fonseca called time in the first inning and told Canónico that the first two Cubans he faced had swung at the first pitch, which Fonseca's comments indicate were fast balls.

Canónico contestó: "No te preocupes". En efecto, no abrió con recta sino con una curva que rompió bien afuera y Napoleón Reyes, descolgado, levantó un globo a la primera base que se llevó el Zurdo Pérez en territorio foul.

⁶ González Echevarría does not change his version in the "corrected and enlarged" 'corregida y aumentada' Spanish edition.

Canónico answered, “Don’t worry.” Indeed, he didn’t start off with a fast ball but with a curve that broke way outside, and Napoleón Reyes [the batter], disconcerted, popped up to first base, where Lefty Pérez caught it in foul territory. (141)

The context indicates that this account comes from Venezuela’s manager, Pollo ‘Chicken’ Malpica, although it is unclear from the punctuation whether or not it is a direct quotation.

Preparations for the Speech, Venezuelans in the Agora

What is indisputable is that Venezuela did defeat Cuba and that the members of the winning team, from then on known *as Los héroes del 41*, were given a tumultuous homecoming. That title is not without irony. The team earned it for its victory in peaceful competition against the Cubans. In Peru, the expression *Los heroes del 41* refers to veterans of a less pacific struggle between Latin American nations, the July war between Peru and Ecuador.

Over “100,000 people—one-third of the population of Caracas—,” Milton Jamail writes in his *Venezuelan Bust, Baseball Boom*, “lined the twenty-mile-long highway between La Guaira and the capital city” (14) to hail the conquering heroes.

One thirteen year-old boy, who had taken turns with his mother using the family’s decrepit radio—she listening to music and soap operas; he, to the play-by-play broadcast—(Socorro 21) walked that highway in order to participate in the celebration.

Llegué a pie hasta La Guaira porque no tenía el bolívar o los tres reales que costaba el pasaje y me fui caminando por el cerro hasta La Guaira para estar presente en aquel recibimiento y, desde donde estaba, entre la multitud que llenó el puerto, darles las gracias porque a raíz de la hazaña la gente empezó a interesarse en el beisbol venezolano. Por eso es que yo a ellos, a Luis Romero Petit, al Chino Canónico, a Benítez Redondo, a todo el equipo de Venezuela en el 41, siempre les he mantenido un respeto y un gran cariño

porque considero que ellos abrieron la entrada del deporte a una sociedad que no nos aceptaba. Aquella emoción que movilizó incluso al presidente de la República a recibirlos y premiarlos, produjo un cambio de actitud que nos facilitó las cosas a todos: los padres empezaron a hacer deporte, instauraron el día semanal [sic, ¿nacional?] del deporte y todos los colegios llevaban a sus equipos al Estadio Nacional de El Paraíso. A ellos les debemos todo eso y por eso se merecen todos los homenajes que se les hagan hasta la muerte del último de ellos.

I arrived by foot in La Guaira because I didn't have the bolívar or bolívar and a half [about thirty and forty-five US cents, respectively] for the bus fare, and I walked through the mountains all the way to La Guaira so I could be present at the reception and, from my spot among the crowd that filled the port, thank them because as a result of what they accomplished, people began to take an interest in Venezuelan baseball. That's why I've always had the greatest respect and affection for them--for Luis Romero Petit, for El Chino Canónico, for Benítez Redondo, for the entire Venezuelan team of '41—because I believe that they opened the door of sport that let us enter a society that didn't accept us. The emotion that motivated even the president of the republic to receive and honor them produced a change in attitude that made things easier for all of us. Parents began to engage in sports, they established the Weekly [sic, National?] Sports Day, and all the schools took their teams to the National Stadium in El Paraíso. We owe all this to them, and because of this they deserve all the tributes paid to them until the last one of them dies. (Socorro 28-29)

In 1951, that youngster, Chico Carrasquel, would become the first Latin American major league all-star, winning the election for shortstop

over future Hall of Famer Phil Rizzuto, the previous season's Most Valuable Player in the American League.

The change in the public's attitude towards baseball and baseball players was more complicated than the one Carrasquel describes. "There is some debate about the social backgrounds of the founders of Venezuelan baseball," writes Milton H. Jamail in *Venezuelan Bust, Baseball Boom*.

"[Emilio] Cramer, the Cuban who helped form the original Caracas Base Ball Club in 1895, told reporter Jess Losada in 1941 that most of the members of the club hailed from wealthy families who put up money to import bats, gloves, and balls. . . . But historian [Javier] González argues that many of the players were from more modest backgrounds

"I researched the class background of every player in [the] first game in 1895," González told me. "Among others, there was a fruit vendor, a cigarette factory worker, and the son of the owner of a brewery." His source was a directory of the city of Caracas listing residents by profession (18)

Indeed, it is interesting that Carrasquel's decidedly working class parents opposed his playing baseball "porque los jugadores éramos considerados vagos, algo en contra de la sociedad venezolana" 'because we ballplayers were considered bums, something opposed to Venezuelan society' (26). Class prejudice takes complex forms.

The breakthrough that Carrasquel experienced was, nonetheless, real. After the 1941 Amateur World Series, baseball was, at least rhetorically, a unifying force in Venezuela. As we have observed, the game owed a significant measure of its new status to the coverage of the tournament on radio, itself a unifying and, arguably, democratizing medium, one that played an especially important role in Carrasquel's professional development.

Cuando yo jugaba en el Cervecería Caracas,
nos daban cien bolívares por un jonrón, treinta

por un tribey, veinte por un tubey, diez por un hit, eso si ganábamos el juego. Mi mamá escuchaba las transmisiones de Pancho Pepe Cróquer y estaba pendiente de cuando yo iba a batear. Al bate Alfonso Carrasquel decía Pancho Pepe, y conecta una [sic] batazo que la bola se va, se va, se va . . . Y mi madre: muchachos, tengo los cien bolos para el mercado libre. Y Pancho Pepe: y la agarra el centerfield. Qué decepcion entonces la de mi mamá (esto me lo contaban mis hermanos)_les scaba la madre a los outfielders del equipo contrario.

When I was playing for the Cervecería Caracas team, they gave us a hundred bolívares for a home run, thirty for a triple, twenty for a double, ten for a hit. That is, if we won the game. My mom would listen to Pancho Pepe Cróquer's broadcasts and would wait anxiously for me to come to bat. "At bat, Alfonso Carrasquel," Pancho Pepe would say, "and he hits a long one, and the ball is going, going, going . . ." And my mother, "Boys, I've got the hundred bolívares for the market." And Pancho Pepe, "And the centerfielder catches it." What a letdown for my mother (my brothers told me this)! She had some nasty things to say about the mothers of the opposing team. (Socorro 21)

Radio did more for the Carrasquel household than serve as the equivalent of a Wall Street ticker. It also informed Alfonso's determination to follow in the footsteps of his uncle Alejandro "Patón" 'Big Foot' Carrasquel, the first Venezuelan big leaguer, and play major league ball in the States. To keep up his spirits, the young Alfonso repeatedly told himself,

tú eres un ser humano completo como los que nacen en Estados Unidos, en Alemania o en Japón, en cualquier parte del mundo, fájate con ellos, tú tienes con qué . . . Era una obsesion que no se me alejaba de la mente. Me pasaba

muchas veces que yo estaba hablando con una persona y en medio de la conversación se me salía: Aquí está Alfonso Carrasquel participando en el Yankee Stadium en Nueva York . . . se me salía así, con voz de locutor y todo.

you're a complete human being, like anyone born in the States, in Germany, or Japan, anywhere in the world. Mix it up with them; you've got what it takes . . . It was an obsession I couldn't get out of my mind. Many times, I'd be talking with someone, and in the middle of the conversation I'd burst out with, "Here's Alfonso Carrasquel playing in Yankee Stadium in New York." It came out like that, in the voice of an announcer and everything. (Socorro 35-36)

Indeed, one Venezuelan has experienced a relationship between the radio and his nation's citizenry in which the mature Carrasquel plays a role analogous to the one of the Heroes of '41. On October 21, 1995, *El Nacional* published an open letter from José Ignacio Cabrujas to Pedro Padrón Panza, one of the founders of the Tiburones 'Sharks' of La Guaira. In it, Cabrujas wrote that

Chico fue un héroe radiofónico antes que un atleta real o mensurable en el caso de que a los jugadores de béisbol se les pueda llamar atletas. Ciertamente lo vi jugar en el estadio de la Cervecería Caracas, y aprecié el dechado de sus lances, pero ninguno de ellos, ninguna realidad de guante específico y disparo a home, tuvo la impronta, el delirio estremecido que Buck Cannel [sic] construyó A mí, este país me lo enseñaron por radio. Chico fue en el estadio de los White Sox como la muerte del general Gómez, como el 18 de octubre del general Medina, como la caída de Rómulo Gallegos, como el asesinato de Delgado Chalbaud, como el golpe cívico-militar que derribó a Pérez Jiménez; cosas que se sintonizaron y nunca se vieron.

Chico was more of a radio hero than an real or measurable athlete, that is, if you can call baseball players athletes. Certainly, I saw him play in the Cervecería Caracas stadium, and I admired the exemplary nature of his plays. But none of them, no specific reality with the glove and throw to home was as impressive as the soul stirring delirium that Buck Cannel [sic] constructed I was taught this country by the radio. Chico in Cominsky Park was like the death of General [Juan Vicente] Gómez, like the 18th of October [1945 overthrow] of General [Isaías] Medina, like the fall of Rómulo Gallegos, like the assassination of [Carlos Román] Delgado Chalbaud, like the civil-military coup that overthrew [Marcos] Pérez Jiménez: things that you turned the dial to hear and that you never saw. (Pacanins 129)

In 1975, Alí Ramos lamented that

Aquel seleccionado de Venezuela en la Cuarta Serie Mundial de Beisbol Aficionado, muchos de los cuales ya no están con nosotros, ha visto cómo su hazaña se ha perdido en el tiempo. Sólo de vez en cuando surge la voz de algún entusiasta deportivo para recordar a aquellos hombres que con mística, devoción y amor a su país, ganaron en octubre de 1941 el Campeonato Mundial de Beisbol Amateur.

That Venezuelan national team in the Fourth Baseball Amateur World Series, many of whom no longer are among us, has seen its heroic feat lost in time. Only now and then does the voice of some sports enthusiast arise to recall those men who with mystic devotion and patriotism won, in October 1941, the world championship of amateur baseball. (95)

Thirty-one years later, the Heroes of '41 would be enshrined, as a group, in Venezuelan baseball's Hall of Fame.

But when their election was announced, Iván Fernández, son of Venezuelan pitcher “Dumbo” Fernández, lamented his father’s fate and that of his teammates.

Héctor Benítez Redondo, Enrique Fonseca, Luis Romero Petit, Julio Bracho . . . aún esperan los reconocimientos y la ayuda económica que el país les debe Yo estoy muy triste, porque recuerdo a un Tarzán Contreras, alcoholizado y en la miseria, deambular en Maracaibo implorando una limosna. Yo estoy triste porque recuerdo a mi Viejo, ciego y a veces amargado, esperando la fecha para hacer una larga cola, a veces bajo el sol, para cobrar la miserable pensión que el gobierno de turno le pagaba, por sus largos años de trabajo en el desaparecido Ministerio de Obras Públicas MOP. Aún recuerdo su cara de tristeza, decepción y desconcierto.

Héctor Benítez Redondo, Enrique Fonseca, Luis Romero Petit, Juilio Bracho . . . still are waiting for the recognition and economic assistance that the country owes them

I’m very sad because I remember a Tarzan Contreras, ravaged by alcohol and living in misery, wandering around Maracaibo begging for a handout. I’m sad because I remember my old man, blind and sometimes embittered, waiting for the day when he would stand on a long line, sometimes under the hot sun, to collect the miserable pension that the whatever government was in power paid him for his long years of work in what used to be the Ministry of Public Works. I still remember his face filled with sadness, deception, and distress.

Ubi sunt?

***Blanco's Homecoming Speech and the Homeric Tradition in
Baseball Rhetoric***

Ancient Greece has figured in baseball's lexicon ever since June 19, 1846, when the "first organized team about which anything substantial is known[,] the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club of New York" (Seymour and Mills 15) played what Seymour and Mills call its "first match game" (18). The site was the Elysian Fields in Hoboken, New Jersey. David Quentin Voigt reproduces a Currier & Ives lithograph of that game facing page 48 of his *American Baseball: From the Gentleman's Sport to the Commissioner System. The Elysian Fields Quarterly*, successor to *The Minneapolis Review of Baseball*, was published in the last decade of the twentieth and first decade of the twenty-first centuries. Baseball is, indeed, the *Tochter aus Elysium*. (Movie-goers will remember the ending of *Eight Men Out*, when Shoeless Joe Jackson plays for a semi-pro team at the Elysian Fields, which is the closest he comes to Paradise Regained).

John Montgomery Ward was Jack Humphries' teammate on the 1883 and '84 New York Gothams and played center field in the game that earned Humphries the praise of the *Times'* correspondent. In 1888, Ward published *Base-Ball: How to Become a Player*, one of the first serious books on the sport. In his opening paragraph, Ward somewhat archly traces the game's origins to ancient Greece, all the while exhibiting a modern skepticism about the reliability of written sources. He begins his work by observing,

It may or it may not be a serious reflection upon the accuracy of history that the circumstances of the invention of the first ball are enveloped in some doubt. Herodotus attributes it to the Lydians, but several other writers unite in conceding to a certain beautiful lady of Corcyra, Anagalla by name, the credit of first having made a ball for the purpose of pastime. Several passages in Homer rather sustain this latter view, and, therefore, with the weight of evidence, and to the glory of woman, we, too, shall adopt this theory. Anagalla did not apply for letters of patent, but, whether from goodness of heart or inability to keep a secret,

she lost no time in making known her invention and expanding its uses. Homer, then, relates how

“O’er the green mead the sporting virgins play,
Their shining veils unbound; along the skies,
Tost and retost, the ball incessant flies.”

And this is the first ball game on record, though it is perhaps unnecessary to say that it was not yet baseball. (9)

The passage Ward quotes is from Book 6 of the *Odyssey*, the Nausicaa episode, a frequent trope in the literature of baseball.

The next year, Wenesalao Gálvez y Dalmonte, who recently had retired from baseball after having led the Cuban league in batting average for 1886 and finishing second at .400 in 1887,⁸ also associated the game with the glory that was Greece. Gálvez, however, rather than paying tribute “to the glory of woman,” presents the game as an alternative to womanizing. At the end of the first chapter of his *El base-ball en Cuba*, he implores,

¡Oh madres! ¡oh tutores! ¡oh maestros!

Dejad á los jóvenes adorar á Hércules antes de entregarse apasionadamente en los suaves y seductores contornos de Venus.

Oh, mothers! Oh, guardians. Oh, teachers!

Let young men worship Hercules before they passionately surrender to the soft and seductive curves of Venus. (15)

Blanco, too, in both his welcome home speech and his celebratory poem, claims a classical heritage for the game, putting that claim to a variety of uses. Indeed, the sexual implications of Blanco’s association

⁸ The seasons, however, were only six and nine games long, respectively. My source for information of Gálvez’s tenure with the Almendares club is Figueredo 12-13, 15-16.

of the Greeks, sport, and sexual union is more ambiguous than those of most of the other writers discussed in this study.

In any case, Blanco was not the last writer to connect ancient Greece with ball playing and balling. The invocation of the glory of the Greeks and “the glory of woman” when talking of baseball has continued during the six decades that have followed *il ritorno in patria* of The Heroes of ‘41.

Horacio Peña, in his *Poema a un hombre llamado Roberto Clemente*), which I quoted to illustrate the poetic use of the fly ball out in “Polo Grounds,” (see pp. 9-10, above) writes of the eponymous hero of his 1973 piece,

moviéndose con su inmensa gracia griega
 —gracia griega al lanzar el discobolo
 o bien la jabalina—
 gracia y fuerza que siempre estaban presentes
 en cualquiera de los innumerables juegos
 en que sabían ejercitarse los helenos,
 moviéndose con esa precisión y energía
 que solo encontramos en los grandes heroes del base-ball
 —Ty Cobb, Lou Gehrig—
 que son ya nombres míticos, legendarios,
 como lo es también el nombre de Roberto Clemente

moving with his immense Grecian grace —Grecian grace
 when throwing the discus or the javelin. Grace and
 power always were present in the innumerable games
 in which the Hellenes were experts. Moving with
 that precision and energy that we find only in the
 great heroes of baseball—Ty Cobb, Lou Gehrig—
 now mythical, legendary names. As is now the name
 of Roberto Clemente , , , , (40-50)

In these lines Peña combines admiration for the athletes’ physical, kinetic strength and beauty with an appreciation for the importance of their names, which have gone beyond history to become myth and legend.

One of the rhetorical devices most frequent in Blanco's "Championship Ballad," is the pun, especially the pun based on names, which the players' names more significant than the players they signify. In "Poema a un hombre . . ." the significance of the names Cobb, Gehrig, and Clemente is enhanced for a different reason. They have ceased merely to denote three individuals, but have come to designate something both more and less real than the human beings to which they refer. The complex value of the names is especially significant in view of the title of Peña's work, *Poem to a Man Named Roberto Clemente*. That complexity refracts yet another aspect of a problem we already have encountered, the paradox of the proper noun.

Peña connects baseball to ancient Greece in ways that recall the opening of Blanco's oration. The Nicaraguan poet pictures a paradise without prejudices,

{un] ágora,
 [un] estadio ya sin límites,
 donde no hay cercas ni fronteras
 el gran Baby Ruth, y Di Maggio,
 y Jackie Robinson,
 su hermano de color,
 todos los dioses haciendo sitio
 para recibir al nuevo visitante:
 Roberto Clemente.

[An] agora, [a] stadium, now without limits,
 where there are neither fences nor boundaries.
 The great Babe Ruth and DiMaggio and Jackie Robinson,
 his brother in color, all the gods moving over
 to make room for the new visitor: Roberto
 Clemente. (60-68)

The time was propitious for a work like Blanco's two-fold celebration of The Heroes of '41. In that year, baseball was coming into its own in Venezuela, fast replacing bullfighting as the nation's leading athletic art. The nation's victory in the playoff game served, as Milton H. Jamail says, "to consolidate baseball as the *deporte rey*—the dominant sport—in Venezuela" (15). Venezuela, having begun to shake the legacy of the Gómez dictatorship, was coming into its own in Latin

America. And Latin America, with European and Asian markets severely restricted, was coming into its own in relation to its northern neighbor, economically, as a source of war matériel and a market for exports, and diplomatically, as a theater of ideological conflict between the Axis and allied powers. The region's prestige in the United States rose as it replaced Europe as a tourist destination as well as a source of culture, high-, middle-, and lowbrow.

Peña, like John Montgomery Ward, makes use of the Nausicaa episode of the *Odyssey*, of which Góngora's *Soledades* 'The Solitudes' are—loosely speaking—a baroque retelling. (Alberto Manguel tells us in his introduction to Edith Grossman's translation of that poem that Góngora “was called by his contemporaries ‘the Spanish Homer’ and also the perpetrator of ‘Pestilential Poetry’ . . .”) (xi). Peña uses Homer to give an idea of Clemente,

listo para fildear en las profundidades
con el milagro de la pierna
y el pie firme sobre la tierra,
--pero veloz, en el aire, en vuelo,
sin parecer que tocara el suelo--
como describe Homero el juego de los feacios[.]

Ready to field deep in the outfield, with his miraculous leg and his foot firm on the earth. But fast, in the air, in flight, without seeming to touch the ground—the way Homer describes the Phaeacians' games [.] (146-150)

Those are the same games whose description John Montgomery Ward quotes at the beginning of his book.

James Joyce, too, was interested in the metempsychoses of Nausea and the games she plays, devoting a chapter to her frolics before an admiring Leopold Bloom. Michael J. Bielawa, in “what began as a whimsical academic exercise,” (145) prepares a striking catalogue “of concrete baseball symbolism” (146) in the “Nausicaa” episode of *Ulysses*.

The first item he lists is the number nine.

It is significant that [the first time] nine appears in “Nausicaa,” the digit is carefully coupled with Joyce’s life-giving number eleven. Nine is, indeed, a mystic number, for three bases multiplied by three equals nine (146)

As I mention when, in connection with the arcs and drives described by the ball in “Polo Grounds,” I call baseball a Pythagorean sport, “it’s three strikes, you’re out, three outs end an inning, [and] a normal game lasts nine (i.e., 3x3) innings, with the winning team recording twenty-seven (3x3x3) put outs.” apart.

Humphries’ geometric image of the ball going “out / In . . . long, slow arcs” reappears when Bielawa turns his attention to Joyce’s vocabulary.

Significantly, “arcing” fly balls hold a prominent role in the episode, a readily identifiable component of a ball game. The word “ball” is found throughout the episode. . . . The exclamation “O,” which appears thirty-one times . . . unmistakably resembles the shape of a ball. (147)

When Bielawar examines the scene’s inert objects he finds that

A bat and a “stick” (i.e., slang for “bat”) figure during the last pages of the episode. There is also Bloom the batsman: (1) Bloom on the beach holds a long stick—a bat—actually at one point flinging it into the sand like a batter who has just struck out (with Gerty); (2) Bloom strokes his own “bat” while admiring Gerty from afar; and (3) Bloom watches and wonders about the (mammal) bat flitting overhead. Note, too, other baseball bat imagery: ‘Edy got as cross as two stick [crossed bats] (13:260) and ‘that shaft had struck home. (147)

As Weneslao Gálvez y Delmonte asks in his pioneering history of Cuban baseball “Y para terminar, ¿no es muy varonil eso del *bat* y la

pelota?” ‘And let us end by asking, isn’t that business of the bat and the ball very manly?’ (23)

Bielawa quotes Harold Peterson’s *The Man Who Invented Baseball* on the primordial significance of the game’s basic equipment:

The very word *ball* is one of the oldest, strongest and strangest in cultural history Some historians are convinced that the first “ball” used in play was the skull of a dead enemy cheftain. (We still say a hairless man is “bald.”) It would account for the oddly passionate eagerness of players to come to bat. The Norse warriors, after all, called their war clubs “battes” and the word is related to “beat.”

. . . . The sun and moon are spheres, as are many eggs, fruits, and seeds. Many primitive peoples conceived of the earth and the universe as spheres and sensed that human beings begin from a single spherical cell. (Qtd in 147-148)

“Think about that,” Bielawa suggests, “whenever you hear a sports commentator simply remark about the ‘horsehide’ or ‘ash’” (148). Stephen Dedalus’s ash plant necessarily follows.

There is both astuteness and whimsy in Bielawa’s analysis of the encounter of Nausicaa MacDowell and Ulysses Bloom. After viewing them as pitcher and batter, respectively, the critic suggests that Bloom is, perhaps, a catcher.

Gerty, standing on the pitcher’s mound, “put on her hat [which, Bielawa points out, Joyce also calls a cap] so that she could see from underneath the brim” (13:514-15). During the interlude when Gerty and Bloom eye each other from afar, the distance between them has never been firmly established. After decades of scholarly debate, allow me to suggest the precise measurement: sixty feet and six inches, the distance between home plate and the pitching rubber. Gerty is awaiting a romantic “sign” from Bloom, who is also the visual

“catcher” of Gert’s undergarments. In reality she is “flashing” signs to Bloom. (148)

Bielawa also deals with the postcard bloom receives, bearing the cryptic message “U.p.” (more relevant to *Ulysses* than to Ulysses), color symbolism, time (“In a remarkable metaphor Bloom’s watch has stopped just as baseball suspends time Bloom’s watch stops,” (149), and, of course, “the focus on home and returning” (150). This leads him to an application of Giamatti’s “Baseball as Narrative” to Bloom on Sandymount Strand.

A. Bartlett Giamatti, who left a successful career as a professor of Comparative Literature at Yale to become, first, president of that institution, then National League president, and, finally, Commissioner of Major League baseball, has developed a complex and ingenious, but not altogether convincing, explanation for baseball’s appeal in the United States.

The strength of Giamatti’s argument lies in his ability to see baseball as a form of literature. His theory’s weakness lies in being based on home and Homer. The former, as home plate, is “the center of all universes, the *omphalos*, the navel of the world.” (Take Time 86) This Ithaca hypothesis sounds good, but home plate is not even at the center of the diamond; that’s occupied by the pitcher’s mound and rubber, which Giamatti describes as being in “eternal tension” with the area around the plate (Take Time 86). Although, as we are about to see, Giamatti recognizes the central place of the pitcher’s mound, he avoids dealing with the contradiction between that recognition and his claim for the centrality of home plate.

Giamatti introduces his omphalocentric theory of home with a masterly geometric analysis of the playing field.

The field, the literal plot of the game, consists of a square, whose four sides are ninety feet long; this square is tipped so that a “diamond” is en-chased in the grass. Not quite in the middle of the square, sixty feet, six inches from home plate, is a circle, with a radius of nine feet, at whose center (we are on the pitcher’s mound) is a “rectangular slab of whitened rubber, 24 inches

by six inches.” So far, all the dimensions are multiples of three.

The last rectangle is the central shape of the geometry of the field, set within but not parallel to the larger square of the “diamond.” The circle of the mound faces a larger circle around home plate, whose radius is thirteen feet, containing three squares, two of which, for batters, are six feet by four feet. The third is marked only on three sides, is forty-three inches wide, and is of undetermined length.

The square of the diamond is contained in a larger arc or partial circle, whose radius, measured from the center of the rectangular pitcher’s slab, is ninety-five feet. The perimeter of this (partial) circle denotes the grass line running from foul line to foul line at the outer infield or innermost outfield. The bases are rectangular, fifteen inches square. The foul lines extend from the tip of home plate along the sides of the ninety-foot square to first and third.

How to characterize the structural principles gounding this game? Squares containing circles containing rectangles; precision in counterpoint with passion; order compressing energy. (Take Time 84-86)

(The witty pun on “plot” recalls the one in the title of “Tract,” William Carlos Williams’ poetic instructions for a burial).

But, as I have mentioned, home plate is not, as Giamatti would have it, at the center of the field, Nor is it the safe haven the batter sets out from on his dangerous round trip through the base paths and back (although “round tripper” is a synonym for “home run.”) The only fatality of a major league game was caused on August 16, 1920, at the Polo Grounds, when a pitch thrown by Carl Mays shattered Ray Chapman’s left temple, a blow from which he died early the next morning. (Sowell 174, 182)

Giamatti is so enamored of “the mixture of memory and longing, the sense of security and autonomy and accessibility, the aroma of inclusiveness, of freedom from wariness, that cling to the word *home*” (Take Time 91) that he claims that “*Home* is an English word virtually impossible to translate into other languages,” (Take Time 91) which, if true, would virtually eliminate *heim* from the German dictionary. The reminiscence of the opening to *The Waste Land*, “April is the cruellest month . . . / mixing / Memory and desire,” in “the mixture of memory and longing” is, however, a nice and interesting touch, especially when we remember that Giamatti already had written his famous essay “The Green Fields of the Mind,” which begins by saying that baseball

breaks your heart, it is designed to break your heart. The game begins in the spring, when everything else begins again, and it blossoms in the summer, filling the afternoons and evenings, and then as soon as the chill rains come, it stops and leaves you to face the fall alone. (Great and Glorious 7)

The final alliteration gently calls attention to the pun on “fall,” the season of the year and the consequence of man’s first disobedience. The persistence of aural memory also suggests a slight misreading of the phrase to give us “leaves you to face the fall all alone,” all of which makes the whole paragraph vibrate beyond all the fancy writing of its opening sentence.

It’s curious how Eliot’s line crops up in baseball writing, even in a country like Puerto Rico, where it’s always summer, never spring, and the professional baseball season begins around the time the World Series winds down. Edgar Rodríguez Juliá observes in *Peloteros ‘Ball Players’* his series of essays on baseball on the island, “Los parques de pelota cultivan esa extraña complicidad entre padres e hijos, entre la memoria y el deseo” ‘Ballparks cultivate that strange complicity between fathers and sons, between memory and desire’(3). Rodríguez Juliá’s remark is reminiscent of the chronicle of spring training written by the American poet Donald Hall, “Fathers Playing Catch With Sons.” Hall’s love of baseball, interestingly enough, “began with listening to the Brooklyn Dodgers, about 1939 when I was ten years old. The gentle and vivacious voice of Red Barber floated from the Studebaker

radio during our Sunday afternoon drives along the shore of Long Island Sound” (Hall 9). (I believe that dropping the definite article from the name of that body of water is as much of a violation of spoken New Yorkese as is Humphries’ dropping of it from The Polo Grounds, but there is some disagreement about this).

The “strange complicity” that Rodríguez Juliá observes provides a variant to Humphries’ vision of each generation of players reviving the previous cohort, to Newbolt’s duty-bound appeal to pass on the torch of sacrifice and “play the game,” and to Fernández Retamar’s call to pass on the artistic heritage of the game. Like the Cuban journalist Miguel Valdés, who says that his country’s development program for baseball players “begins . . . with the dreams of their fathers” (qtd in Jamail, *Full Count* 14), Rodríguez Juliá implies a hope for individual success, a chance that the son, in a widening gyre of progress, will realize the dreams the father could not, even as the generations succeed and repeat each other.

It also is noteworthy that Rodríguez Juliá coincides with Giamatti in another respect. Giamatti tells us that he was

led to [his theory] by the opening lines of a poem by Marianne Moore called “Baseball and Writing”:

*Fanaticism? No. Writing is exciting
and baseball is like writing.
You can never tell with either
how it will go
or what you will do, (Take Time 82)*

Rodríguez Juliá also traces the kinship between baseball and literature to the unpredictability shared by the two arts. But he sees in that similarity something darker than the longing for home or the sadness at the season’s end.

Como la literatura, se trata de un oficio peligroso que contiene, por su increíble especialización, una enorme dosis de ensimismamiento. El *crack up*, o *slump*, siempre merodea, acechante.

. . . .

Quizás de ahí el alcoholismo, la adicción a drogas entre los peloteros actuales; es un oficio terriblemente exigente en tiempos emblemáticos por el *stress*. Pero no todo fue idílico en el juego antiguo.

Like literature, it's a case of a difficult craft, one that involves, owing to its incredible specialization, an enormous dose of self-involvement. The crack up, or slump, always lies in waiting, ready to pounce.

....

Perhaps that's where the alcoholism and drug addiction of today's ball players come from. It's a terribly demanding craft in a time characterized by stress. But not everything was idyllic in the old-time game. (6-7)

Giamatti's characterization of home plate as an *omphalos* has prepared us for his reading of baseball as an odyssey.

So home drew Odysseus, who then set out again because it is not necessary to be in a specific place . . . to be one who has gone home. So home is the goal

. . . . As the heroes of romance beginning with Odysseus know, the route is full of turning, wanderings, danger. . . . In baseball, the journey begins at home, negotiates the twists and turns at first, and often founders far out at the edges of the ordered world at rocky second—the farthest point from home. Whoever remains out there is said to “die” on base. Home is finally beyond reach in a hostile world full of quirks and tricks and hostile folk. There are no dragons in in baseball, only shortstops, but they can emerge from nowhere to cut one down.

And when it is given one to round third, a long journey seemingly over, the end in sight, then the

hunger for home, the desire to rejoin one's earlier self and one's fellows, is a pressing, growing, screaming in the blood. (Take Time 93)

The conceit is attractive but unconvincing. No one playing or watching baseball experiences the game as a perilous voyage that the base runner endures as he tries to return to the safety of home. The adventures Giamatti projects onto the runner's journey would still be an exaggeration, but we might be more willing to accept them if the winning team were the one that scored first, rather than the one that scores most. That was closer to being the case under baseball's original rules, adopted on September 23, 1845. Those rules provided that, "The game is to consist of 21 counts or aces, but at the conclusion an equal number of hands must be played" (qtd. Turkin and Thompson 3), who clarify that "An ace meant a run, hand was an out"). Yet even that primitive rule vitiated Giamatti's principle by requiring that the winning team make more than one successful odyssey around the bases. This is not to say that Giamatti's interpretation doesn't try to account for something as obvious as multiple run scoring. He writes,

The tale of leaving and seeking home is told in as many ways as one can imagine, and there still occur every season plays on the field that even the most experienced baseball people say they have never seen before. The random events, the variety of incidents, the different ways various personalities react to pressure, the passion poured into the quest to win—all are organized by the rhythms of the innings, by the metric of the count and the pitcher's rhythm, and by the cool geometry that is underfoot and overarching. (Take Time 94)

But this eloquent paragraph, possibly influenced by the fourth stanza of "Polo Grounds," where "the ball goes out / In sharp and angular drives" and the players watch "the signs, according to the batter / The score, the inning," elides the difference between the repetition and variation that occur in one game and the repetition and variation that occur over many. You can tell the story of the Odyssey in many ways, but Ulysses can't come home again and again and again in any one of

them. (Even if Sinbad can). In any case, the rule was changed in 1857 so that “nine innings, not 21 runs, constituted a game” (Turkin and Thompson 3).

No, baseball resembles the Odyssey, not when we play it or watch it, but when we talk about it. (Remember, the Marianne Moore poem that suggested Giamatti’s thoughts on baseball as narrative had, in turn, been suggested to her “by post-game broadcasts”).

And here, beyond the epic of difficulties overcome when

the attempt, long in planning and execution, works,
[and] the reunion and all it means is total . . . the
runner is a returned hero, and the teammates are for
an instant all true family.⁹ (Take Time 93-94)

lies the major strength of Giamatti’s essay. The same talking about the game that can endow it with a Homeric dimension is a source, perhaps the major source, of its endless fascination. What matters is not that baseball is Homeric (it isn’t) but that it allows us to talk about it in Homeric terms, which, in turn, allows us to see it in Homeric terms. In the beginning was the word.

The recurring presence of radio in this discussion gives an idea of the importance of oral transmission to the experience and study of the game. Indeed, talk of baseball can threaten to usurp the real thing, as in Ronald Reagan’s broadcast of Billy Jurges’s foul balls, Terry Cashman’s song “Play by Play: I Saw It on the Radio” (also the title of a tribute to Dodgers’ announcer Vin Scully), or the report delivered by Chicolini (Chico Marx) to Rufus T. Firefire, (Groucho Marx) in *Duck Soup*, “Friday, it rained all day. There was no ball game. We listened [to it] over the radio.”

⁹ Giamatti deals with the home run by calling it

the definitive kill, the overcoming of obstacle at one
stroke, the gratification instantaneous in knowing
one has earned a risk-free journey around, and
back—a journey to be taken at a leisurely pace (but
not too leisurely) so as to savor the freedom, the
magical invulnerability, from denial or delay. (94)

In 1965, Red Barber expressed his doubts about the permanence of his legacy as a sportscaster. A dozen years later, in the *Yale Alumni Magazine*, Giamatti published an article that may have comforted the Old Redhead. “I wrote,” Giamatti said,

a few things this last summer that did not last,
 nothing grand but some things, and yet that work
 was just camouflage. The real activity was done
 with the radio—not the all-seeing, all-falsifying tele-
 vision—and was the playing of the game in the only
 place it will last, the enclosed green field of the
 mind. (Great and Glorious 8)

Giamatti seems to disagree with Phil Rizzuto, the shortstop turned sportscaster whom *Baseball Almanac* quotes as having said, “I like radio better than television because if you make a mistake on radio, they don’t know. You can make up anything on the radio.” Yet both men coincide in valuing discourse over facts.

Peña, too, mentions Homer, but, unlike Giamatti, he doesn’t develop the analogy between the structure of the *Odyssey* and that of the game. He does, however, follow Blanco’s lead in equating the topography and climate of the islands of the Aegean and Caribbean Seas. Peña writes of Clemente growing up “allá en su Puerto Rico / —una isla en el sol, / una isla griega con arena dulce al cuerpo” ‘out there in his Puerto Rico, an island in the sun, a Greek island with sand sweet to the body’ (72-74) and repeats two lines later the binomial “grace and power.” Like Blanco, Peña ties the physical similarity of Greece and the Caribbean basin to athletic excellence and the militant defense of cultural identity. He invokes the tutelage of Rubén Darío, the patron saint of Spanish poetry in the Americas, while claiming for baseball the transformative power of art. Peña’s Roberto Clemente is

este Orfeo negro
 este Midas incomparable
 que todo lance
 jugada
 transformaba en asombroso júbilo.
 Desde Puerto Rico
 —una isla hecha de luz y armonía—
 en el viento que nunca duerme

en el río sin fin
 llegó Clemente
 como antes llegó Darío,
 Darío,
 que renovó las antiguas glorias
 y el esplendor indígenea
 --Nezahualcóyotl, Tikal, Palenque--
 como Clemente renovaba
 la perfección y el equilibrio
 de los héroes y atletas griegos
 --Fidépedes
 y la sagrada hazaña del Maratón—

This black Orpheus, this incomparable Midas
 who turned every critical situation, every play
 into astonishing joy. From Puerto Rico—an is-
 land made of light and harmony—Clemente
 arrived in the restless wind, in the endless
 river, as Darío had come. Darío, who renewed
 ancient glory and native splendor—Nezahualcóyotl,
 Tikal, Palenque—as Clemente renewed the balance
 and perfection of the Greek heroes and athletes
 —Pheidippides and the sacred feat of Marathon
 (205-224)

Darío, the Indian from Nicaragua who became known as *El príncipe de las letras castellanas* ‘The Prince of Spanish Letters,’ marks, as does Clemente, the working class Afro-Puerto Rican who became the prince of ballplayers in the United States, a significant inversion of the the relationship between the colony and metropolitan power, an incarnation of the Latin American self-assertion that is a prominent feature of the “Romance del campeonato.”

One of Peña’s pre-Columbian references is particularly fertile. Nezahualcóyotl was the poet king who, after a long guerilla war against the Chichimecas—invaders from the north— turned Texcoco into what the eighteenth-century historian and ethnographer Lorenzo Boturini Bernaducci called “the Athens of the Western World” (Tuck) . Thus,

poetry joins with resistance to imperialism to revindicate the claims of the colonized, and it does this under the aegis of classical Greece.

Nineteenth-century Greece was the battleground of one of the first modern people's liberation movements. The athletic Lord Byron participated in that movement, and, in "A la insurrección de la Grecia en 1820," (Poesías 36-43) the Cuban poet José María Heredia (and cousin of the nearly eponymous French poet born in Cuba) appeals to Greece's classical heritage as inspiration for that nation's nineteenth-century struggle for independence, all the while prefiguring his own country's wars of national liberation. Indeed, in one stanza, Heredia manages to combine revolutionary anti-colonialism and Mediterranean (which also is Caribbean) meteorological clarity, as well as a dash of salaciousness, with the theme of *ubi sunt*.

¿Dónde la Grecia fue? ¿Dónde de Atenas,
De Esparta y de Corinto se ocultara
El pasado esplendor? Campos incultos,
Esclavos oprimidos,
Tal fue el cuadro fatal que presentara
Por cuatro siglos la moderna Grecia.
Sus vírgenes beldades
Adornan el serrallo vergonzoso
De su imbécil sultan. ¡Ay! Afanoso
Busca el viajero en vano
La patria de las ciencias y las artes.
Todo desapareció: la bella Grecia
Busca el sabio con hondo desconsuelo,
Y solo la conoce
En su aire puro y su brillante cielo.

Where has Greece gone? Where has the
antique splendor of Athens, of Sparta, and of
Corinth been hidden? Barren fields, oppressed
slaves, such was the inevitable picture that
modern Greece presented for four centuries.
Her virgin beauties adorn the shameful seraglio
of their imbecile sultan. Alas! In vain the eager
traveler searches for the home of the arts and

sciences. All has disappeared. The wise man searches for beautiful Greece with deep discontent. And he only recognizes her in her pure air and in her brilliant sky. (58-72)

Heredia never wrote about baseball, having died in 1839, the year in which classic baseball mythology would have the rules of the game springing, like Minerva from Zeus' forehead, from the brow of Abner Doubleday in Cooperstown, New York. (Cooperstown, named for the father of the man who wrote the mythic first American novel)! Heredia did, however, write "Muerte del toro 'The Death of the Bull' (Antología herediana 14-15), an anti-taurine screed in verse, so there is no doubt as to where he would have stood in the baseball vs. bullfighting controversy in which, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century pro-independence Cubans favored the former, while pro-Spanish opinion sided with the latter (González Echevarría, *Pride* 81, *inter alia*).

Peña inscribes Roberto Clemente in Heredia and Blanco's tradition of Greco-Caribbean clarity and heroic rebellion. The Panamanian also touches on the *ubi sunt* tradition when he declares that Clemente arrived from Puerto Rico in "the restless wind and / the endless river." (12-13) The latter epithet is an allusion to Manrique's description of our lives as the "rivers / that empty into the sea, / which is death." By making the river endless, Peña implies a variation on Humphries' weary epiphany at the end of "Polo Grounds." Life flowing into death is an unceasing, not intermittent, process in the Clemente poem. The river of Heraclitus is renewed continuously, and, in Lorca's words, "the song of the water / is an eternal thing" 'la canción del agua / es una cosa eterna' ("Mañana" 'Morning' [1-2] in *Libro de poemas*). Humphries' river has alternating current; Peña's, Heraclitus's, and Lorca's, D.C. Clemente, a modern Icarus who died when his plane, bringing aid to an earthquake-devasted Nicaragua, fell into the sea, is identified with the life-giving rivers that nourish the sea, which is death.

Peña ends his poem with Clemente's death, which is overcome by the immortality granted by speech, memory, and identification with the people. The plane has gone down, but

una columna de eterno fuego
 levantándose sobre las aguas
 iluminando su historia que se contará siempre
 de generación en generación
 hasta la consumación de los siglos:
 Hubo una vez
 un hombre llamado
 Roberto Clemente.

a column of eternal fire arising over the waters
 illuminating his history that will be told forever
 from generation to generation until the end of time:
 Once upon a time there was a man named Roberto
 Clemente. (739-746)

Clemente will live in that eternal flame, as well as in the telling of his tale, a tradition handed down through the ages, embodied in the formula that introduces folktales and marks them as such. The sense that Clemente still lives survives ironically in the statement that he once lived, since that statement will be repeated “until the end of time,” serving as an invocation of the hero’s spirit.

Both Gálvez and Peña present analogies between the ancient Greek athletic contests and the early modern and modern game of baseball. John Montgomery Ward claims, facetiously, that baseball’s heritage goes back to the Greeks. George Will, whose discussion of *The Catch* informed much of my treatment of chance and intention in baseball, proposes, with roughly equal doses of seriousness, provocation, and pomposity, the same pedigree. In the introduction to *Men at Work* (1990), Will states,

Proof of the genius of ancient Greece is that it understood baseball’s future importance. Greek philosophers considered sport a religious and civic—in a word, moral—undertaking. Sport, they said, is morally serious because mankind’s noblest aim is the loving contemplation of worthy things, such as beauty and courage. By witnessing physical grace, the soul comes to understand and love beauty. Seeing people compete courageously

and fairly helps emancipate the individual by educating his passions.¹⁰ (2)

The Speech

Before Blanco could begin to deliver his oration, an incident occurred that in itself embodies the *vitaī lampada* theme and whose sequel provides an example of the way radio contributes to the experience of baseball, not just as a game but in its intersection with mortality. On July 31, 1944, three and half years after Venezuela's triumph and six days after the death in a plane crash of José Pérez, the team's first baseman, Blanco delivered a eulogy for the fallen hero in which the poet recalled that earlier incident.

Regresaban de Cuba los campeones. Les esperábamos en el Estadio Nacional. Yo debía decir el discurso de bienvenida. Se hizo de noche y cuando llegaron los jugadores no había luz en el campo.

¹⁰ There is an unintended irony in Wills' praise of the beneficent effects of "seeing people compete courageously and fairly." Jonathan Friendly reported in the July 9, 1983, edition of the New York Times that

George F. Will . . . helped coach Ronald Regan for his 1980 debate with Jimmy Carter and then told television viewers after the debate that Mr. Reagan had performed very well.

. . . .

[Mr. Will] has disclosed in recent broadcast and newspaper interviews that he saw some of [President Carter's] briefing material . . . that [Representative and Regan campaign aide David] Stockman said later was "pilfered" from the Carter campaign.

Perhaps Will listened to a wire recreation of the debate.

Trajeron fósforos; gastaron cajetillas de fósforos para alumbrar la página en que yo leía las notas de mi discurso. . . . Y apareció una vela, una pequeña vela de a cuartillo. La encendieron [sic] y a mi lado la sostuvo un jugador alto, moreno y firme. No le temblaba en la mano ni el copete de la luz. Y era José Pérez, que sostenía la vela, como el clásico corredor la antorcha.

Y ahora, frente a la cancha oscura de los cielos caribes, cruzados de hondas y pelotas con cintas negras; mientras la radio pasa con su luto en el brazo y los niños corren detrás de pelotas nocturnas como planetas sin sol, pago la cuenta de la luz, cancelo la deuda de la antorcha y enciendo esta vela de emoción junto a tu nombre

The champions were returning from Cuba. We were waiting for them in the National Stadium. I was supposed to give the welcoming speech. Night fell, and the field was dark when the players arrived. Some people brought matches. They used up boxes of matches trying to shed light on the page from which I was reading the notes for my speech. . . . Then a candle appeared, a small three-penny candle. They lit it, and a tall player, brown-skinned and steady, held it by my side. Not even the tip of the light trembled in his hand. And it was José Pérez who held the light, as the classical runner carried the torch.

And now, facing the dark playing field of the Caribbean heavens, criss-crossed by slingshots and black ribboned baseballs, while the radio passes by with a mourning band on its arm and the children chase nocturnal baseballs like sunless planets, I pay the light bill, I cancel the debt of the torch, and I light this candle of emotion beside your name (122)

Blanco's eulogy for Pérez, though marred by the excessively florid rhetoric that was the poet's stock in trade during his career as a

declamador, has its touching moments. At least as touching is the tribute of silence that Cuban radio paid to the fallen opponent. In his eulogy, Blanco tells his audience of Cuba's gesture, intertwining it with the themes of Greece and the political and moral virtues of sport.

Mientras se celebraban en Grecia los Juegos Olímpicos, los pueblos de la región helénica no podían declararse la Guerra; en plena lucha, se suspendía la faena del odio, para una pausa de fraternidad. El deportista es raíz de humanidad nueva, brote de Patria mejor, . . . de los diamantes y canchas van a salir hombres fuertes y generosos. El deporte se eleva a principio de vida y de perfección.

Cuba ha hecho en estos momentos hora griega, cuando sus emisoras de radio suspendieron su música por varios días en homenaje al atleta que murió en su función de aire. Y el homenaje de Cuba cobra olímpico sentido de metáfora, cuando recordamos esa misma función; porque es duelo de las ondas, es luto de los aires el que tienden las emisoras cubanas

While the Greeks were celebrating the Olympic Games, the people of the Hellenic region couldn't declare war on each other. At the height of the armed struggle, the task of hatred was suspended to allow a brotherly pause. The athlete is the root of a new humanity, the bursting forth of a better homeland, . . . from the diamonds and the playing fields strong and generous men will arise. Sport rises to the level of a principle of life and perfection.

Cuba recently has instituted a Greek interval, when its radio transmitters stopped playing music for several days as a tribute to an athlete who died fulfilling his airy function. And Cuba's homage takes on an Olympic sense of metaphor when we remember that very function. Because it's the griev-

ing of the airwaves, the mourning of the air, that
the Cuban radio stations are broadcasting (121-122)

The puzzling remark about Pérez's "airy function" that sets up the conceit of the grieving airways is an elaboration of two earlier remarks in Blanco's eulogy, "Juego de aire es el **baseball**" 'Baseball is a game of the air' (120) and "Juego de aire es el volar" 'Flying is a game of the air' (121), references to Pérez's athletic grace and the circumstances of his death.

The absence of music, the silence, reverberated like the pauses between the words and their amplification by the stadium loudspeakers in the farewell address that another first baseman, Lou Gehrig, had delivered on July 4, 1939. Although radio carried Gehrig's brief and poignant address, I am not aware of any recorded transcription of the speech in its entirety. Its closing lines are available, at, among other places, the Official Lou Gehrig web site, <http://www.lougehrig.com/about/speech.htm>.

In the two years between his retirement and his death, Gehrig found consolation in listening to baseball on the radio, telling Mel Allen in 1940, "I never got a chance to listen to your broadcasts before because I was playing every day. But I want you to know that they're the only thing that keeps me going") (Borelli 59). That conversation made Allen believe that

Lou knew he was dying. He was also convinced that Gehrig's words were not meant to be patronizing or or a conversational device. "Lou never said anything he didn't mean," said Allen. (Ray Robinson 269)

Nor was it a lack of interests outside of baseball that made the play-by-play broadcasts so important to The Iron Horse. Gehrig "was known to weep while [his wife] Eleanor read him *Anna Karenina*" (Kashatus 62). He was "almost overcome with excitement" by the Ballet Russe and found Wagner's operas . . . especially pleasing" (Ray Robinson 191). He was such a Wagnerian that he cried at *Tristan und Isolde* (Kashatus 62) and was buried in Valhalla, New York (Ray Robinson 274).

In the speech that José Pérez helped Blanco give, the orator, like Ward and Will, makes the argument for baseball's Attic provenance; only Blanco does it with complete seriousness. Homer sometimes nods, and Blanco, like Peña after him, gives a (albeit non Homeric) nod to the climatological similarity of the islands in the sun.

Comenzaré por recordar a los poetas. Porque era ésta la tribuna preferida de Píndaro; porque el primer canto que conocemos del poeta fue la consagración de un niño de Tesalia, vencedor de una carrera olímpica. Así, en un estadio así, sobre una tierra ardiente como ésta, bajo un cielo azul como éste, se hizo a Grecia.

I'll begin by recalling the poets. Because this was Pindar's favorite platform; because the first of the poet's songs we know was his consecration of a boy from Thessaly, the winner of an Olympic race. And so, in a stadium like this, on ground this, under a blue sky like this, Greece was made. (Discurso 296)

A few observations immediately suggest themselves. One, the starting point for Blanco's speech about the Amateur World Series is poetry, not geography or athletics. Two, the poetry he cites is Greek, and Blanco implicitly—although not necessarily correctly—assumes that his baseball-loving audience will be familiar with it, at least enough to know who Pindar was. Three, Blanco does not say just that ancient Greece was the root of the modern sport of baseball but that sport was the root of ancient Greece. He does not just invest baseball with the prestige of a classical pedigree; he affirms that sport (and, therefore, baseball) is a source, perhaps *the* source of classical culture, and so of western culture. And, finally, the stadium is the first part of the scenic trinity—stadium, earth, and sky—that Blanco and his audience share with Pindar and his listeners. That is, sport, community, and craft—which intersect with each other in the stadium—take precedence over their natural setting.

Blanco is not alone in using the ancient Greeks to validate baseball's cachet. Jacques Barzun and Robert Frost, among others, have made the connection, Barzun cites another tie-breaking playoff when he

writes of the

wonderful purging of the passions that we all experienced in the fall of '51, the despair groaned out over the fate of the Dodgers, from whom the league pennant was snatched at the last minute, [giving] us some idea of what Greek tragedy was like. Baseball is Greek in being national, heroic, and broken up in the rivalries of city-states. (151)

Frost is less political in his commentary, observing that sports, especially collegiate athletics, “are close to the soul of culture. At any rate, the Greeks thought so.” (53) Neither, however, explicitly refers to Pindar, although it is interesting that Barzun specifically contrasts the modern Olympics, which gives rhetorical support to the Greek ideal, with baseball:

How sad that Europe knows nothing like [baseball]! Its Olympics generate anger, not unity, and its interstate politics follow no rule that a people can grasp. At least Americans understand baseball, the true realm of clear ideas. (151)

Just as Pindar, if we are to believe Blanco, created Greece by singing the triumphs of pan-Hellenic athletic competition, the itinerant reciters of *The Song of the Cid*—a work present in the “Championship Ballad”—laid, with their celebrations of the hero’s battlefield exploits, the foundations for the notion of Spain. In this, Pindar and the collective makers of the ballad of *The Cid*, resemble the relay of sportscasters who, in narrating the games, helped mold Venezuelan and pan-Latin American popular culture and, through it, national and regional identity. The many men who were Homer also form part of this tradition.

In his welcoming speech, Blanco, famed as an orator,¹¹ makes an oral

¹¹ Beyond Giamatti’s insight about the nearly perfect match between baseball and radio, Stephen Jay Gould credits declamation for some of the breath of the game’s popularity before the age of radio.

I could never understand why such abominable and silly doggerel as “Casey at the Bat” ever became the canonical poem of both American baseball and the normalcy of failure in general. That is, until I *heard* the poem in an ancient film of a vaudeville performer Then I understood. The poem was written to be declaimed, not to be read silently. Declamation of poetry in the nineteenth century represented a standard social recreation in American life, a fixture of nearly every party, and the doggerel succeeds marvelously in this intended aural context. (217).

A couple of notes to this note are in order. Gould may have found “Casey at the Bat” abominable, but Martin Gardner points out that “T.S. Eliot admired the ballad and even wrote a parody about a cat, *Growthtiger’s Last Stand*, in which many of Thayer’s lines are echoed.” (15) Robert Frost says that he had hoped to write some day

an epic poem some day about a ball batted so hard by Babe Ruth that it never came back, but got to going round and round the world like a satellite. I got up the idea long before any artificial moon was thought of by the scientists. I meant to begin something like this:

It was nothing to nothing at the end of the tenth
And the prospects good it would last to the nth.

It needs a lot of work on it before it can take rank with Casey at the Bat. (51)

Blanco was a renowned political orator, in and out of Congress. But his popularity as a speaker was not just owing to the way in which he delivered his own words. Fernando Paz Castillo recalls the young Blanco:

Desde un comienzo Andrés se reveló como buen recitador. Y fueron sus versos favoritos, para decirlos, en forma nueva como era la suya, “La Marcha Triunfal” y la “Sonatina” de Rubén Darío. El público de Caracas amó estos poemas, como pocas veces creo que ha tenido devoción por poesía alguna.

Andrés fue conquistando para sí y para otros—porque en realidad formó escuela—el público. Y el aeda de la Academia y de las calles y las plazas de la ciudad, penetró en las casas, en los salones de las casas, en los cuales también se oyó, con afecto y admiración de jóvenes y viejos, su cálida voz recitadora

contribution to the task of nation-building and regional unification.

After tracing the foundation of Greece to the poetic celebration of athletic achievement, Blanco turns to the development of Venezuelan identity and nationhood. To do this, he uses images and a vocabulary taken, often tortuously, from sports, encapsulating his country's history in four tableaux, one for each of the four bases (counting home) of the baseball diamond. It is significant that the word Blanco uses to categorize these pictures is *estampa*, whose first acceptance according to the DRAE is the reproduction of an illustration. It is a popular—that is, peoples—art form. So, the principal rhetorical devices of Blanco's speech are metaphors drawn from sports and the popular, mechanical reproduction of descriptive art. (Remember that the radio is a popular mechanism for reproducing sound and that what a sportscast reproduces is a description).

In Blanco's telling, the end of the virtual monopoly exercised by the Real Compañía Guipuzcoana 'Royal Gipuzkoan Company' over Venezuelan trade for most of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century becomes a comic game of badminton. The scene is Aranjuez, where, in 1808, King Carlos IV of Spain was forced to abdicate in favor of his son, the Prince of Asturias, who would reign as Fernando VII.

From the beginning, Andrés showed himself to be a good reciter. And his favorite verses for recitation, in his own, new way, were Rubén Darío's "Triumphal March" and "Sonatina." The Caracas audiences loved these poems as I don't think they've ever loved any other poetry.

Andrés conquered the public for himself and for others-- because he really founded a school. And the epic singer of the Academy, of the city streets and of the squares, entered the homes, and the living rooms of the homes, where young and old listened his warm voice reciting (Qtd. in Blanco, *Poesía* xxviii)

It's worth noting that Paz Castillo calls Blanco an "aeda," an epic singer from ancient Greece.

Recordings of Blanco reciting his poetry (in a rather matter of fact tone of voice) are available at <http://www.rnv.gov.ve/noticias/index.php?act=ST&f=50&t=128128>

This abdication set off a series of events that included revocations, nullifications, counter abdications, the Latin American wars of independence, and Spain's Carlist Wars.

El príncipe de un lado, del otro lado, el criollo; va y viene el volante emplumado, resbalan las zapatillas y cruje el ante del pantalón ceñido, salta el sudor de los revueltos canelones a las gorgueras espumosas, vista, pulso y designio, van tomando compás ultramarino; el volante va y viene por el azul de la cancha, desde el príncipe al criollo, desde el criollo hasta el príncipe, como los barcos van por el azul océano, desde América a España, desde España hasta América. De súbito, el volante ha golpeado la cabeza del príncipe, en el propio lugar de la corona; así se fue, sin ser devuelto, el último navío guipuzcoano.

The prince on one side; on the other, the Creole. The feathered shuttlecock flies back and forth, the slippers slip, and the tight suede pants creak; sweat flies from the epaulettes to the foaming ruffs. Sight, pulse, and intention take on an overseas rhythm. The shuttlecock flies back and forth across the blue of the court, from the prince to the Creole, from the Creole to the prince, just as the ships sail the ocean blue, from America to Spain, from Spain to America. All of a sudden, the shuttlecock whacks the prince on the head, right on the crown. Just like that, the last Basque ship sailed off, never to return. (297-298)

At first glance, Blanco's choice to have badminton represent the beginnings of Venezuelan independence in a speech honoring a baseball team might seem a bit off the wall. However, Blanco gives an all too explicit explanation of how his simile works as a description of overseas commerce, and baseball and badminton, as games of bat and ball, are related to each other. They also are related, by the way, to sports like racquetball and *jai alai* that bounce the ball off walls. And, in this context, it's interesting to note that in 1779 Goya painted an oil

cartoon for a tapestry to be hung in the Prince of Asturias's bedroom: *El juego de la pelota a pala* 'The Game of Bat and Ball.' The painting depicts an early version of *jai alai* and currently is on display in Hall 92 of The Prado.¹²

The next *estampa* depicts the Battle of Ayacucho, where the victory of a pan-Hispanic American force under Venezuelan leadership determined the independence of both Peru, the location of the battlefield, and the rest of continental Spanish America. The game no longer is badminton, but baseball. Indeed, Blanco presents the decisive victory as a grand slam home run.

[. . .] la criollada está al bate; su Capitán tiene en el brazo el supremo campeonato de la libertad. Hay un hombre en primera, en Carabobo; hay un hombre en segunda, en Boyacá; hay un hombre en tercera, en Pichincha. El Capitán afronta la alta tribuna de la cordillera; él le lanza banderas y ella le devuelve cóndores . . . La pelota del Mundo Nuevo rompe de pronto los azules que suenan como sedas rasgadas; resplandece la cancha de Ayacucho con la estela del cohete cuadrangular, y, paso a paso, con renuevo de Grecia en el reposo de los bustos

12



henchidos, van entrando al hogar cuatro patrias nacientes. Y así fue como entonces, hizo el volante su segundo Aranjuez y el vasallaje fue out en los diamantes de América.

The Creoles are at bat. Their chance of winning the supreme championship of liberty lies in the strength of their Captain's arm. There's a man on first, in Carabobo [where Bolívar had defeated the Spanish, safeguarding the independence Venezuela had won three years earlier, in 1821]. There's a man on second, in Boyacá [where Colombia's independence had been secured in 1819]. There's a man on third, in Pichincha [the site of the battle which, in 1822, had sealed the independence of what would become Ecuador]. The Captain turns his face towards the high grandstand that is the Cordillera. He hurls banners at it, and it throws back condors . . . Suddenly, the ball of the New World shatters the blue, making the sound of silk being torn. The playing field of Ayacucho is resplendent with the fiery trail of the quadrangular rocket and, step by step, with Greece renewed in their swollen breasts, four newborn nations come home. And that is how it was that the old shuttlecock made its second Aranjuez and vassalage was put out in the diamonds of America. (298)

The conceit may be forced, but it isn't lacking in inventiveness. Note how Blanco uses the adjective *quadrangular* to modify *rocket* as a means of expressing the four-fold geography of Spanish American military success. *Cuadrangular* is a synonym for *jonron*. The reference to this allegorical baseball game as a second Aranjuez validates our including badminton and its relatives in the same sporting family as baseball.

In "El juego de pelota o la historia como hipóbole" "The Baseball *Marina* Game, or History as Hyperbole," a column that appeared in the October 9, 1949, edition of the *Diario de la Marina*, the Cuban poet and novelist José Lezama Lima inverts the order of Blanco's anachronistic treatment of his nation's foundational epic as a baseball game. Lezama first invokes the French national epic, next contrasts it to

present day quotidian reality, and then imagines how a scholar from the twenty-fourth or twenty-five century would describe a ballgame.

¡Qué sorpresa cuando nos relatan que la Durandarte, la batallada espada de Roldán, Conde de Bretaña, apenas podría ser movida por tres hombres, y que el bastón de Hernán Cortés costaba tal esfuerzo el movilizarlo que sería más bien un ancla que una compañía de la marcha! El hombre bajo especie de actualidad, que se zarandea y presume de su [sic, ¿ser?] *up to date*, piensa que todas esas señales están confundidas por los chisporroteos de lo legendario, y se ríe y deja hacer, convirtiendo en su tranquilo ideal que ninguna mosca descansa en el espejo de su cuarto de baño. Sin embargo, cuántas sorpresas de aquí a cuatro o cinco siglos, cuando ese hombre actual tenga que ser reconstruido con la ayuda de la lupa, el testimonio histórico, la paleografía y el pacífico y renuente archivero. Entonces, comenzaría su segunda vida, tan real como la que hoy se desliza como un dormido río de pastoral italiana.

Finjamos con la ayuda de la lámpara famosa [de Aladín] y el mago de Santiago, que han pasado cuatro siglos, y que los que entonces sean los caballeros del relato y del cronicón se vean obligados a reconstruir un juego de pelota. Supongamos un informe de los Mommsen de entonces remitido a la Academia de Ciencias Históricas de Berlín, sobre la suerte de la esfera voladora: “Hay nueve hombres en acecho de la bola de cristal irrompible que vuela por un cuadrado verderol. Esa pequeña esfera representa la unión del mundo griego con la cristiana, la esfera aristotélica y la esfera que se ve en muchos cuadros de pintores bizantinos en las manos del Niño Divino. Los nueve hombres en acecho, después de saborear una droga de Coculcán, unirán sus destinos a la caída y ruptura de esfera, pero con la enemiga de los nueve caballeros, vigilantes de la suerte de navegación de la bolilla. Jueces severísimos se reúnen, dictaminan, y se ve

después silencioso, a uno de aquellos caballeros defensores, abandonar el jardín de los combates. La esfera de cristal en manos de uno de aquellos guerreros, tiene fuerza suma para si se toca con ella el ajeno cuerpo, cincuenta mil hombres de asistencia prorumpen en gruñidos de alegría o rechazo. Si la esfera de cristal se pierde más allá de los jardines, el caballero de gris con grandes listones verdes, a pasos lentos sigue su marcha, como si tuviese la recompensa de un camino suyo e infinito.

What a surprise it is when we're told that Durandal, the battle-tested sword of Roland, Count of Brittany, could just barely be moved by three men and that it required such an effort to set Hernán Cortés's walking cane in motion that it would have been more of an anchor than a marching companion! The man who, viewed as he is right now, [*bajo especie de actualidad*, a pun on *sub specie aeternitatis* 'under the aspect of eternity'] rushes to and fro, proud of being *au courant*, thinks that all those signs are confused by the sparkling of the legendary and laughs and goes about his business, making it his tranquil ideal that no fly should settle on his bathroom mirror.

With the aid of [Aladdin's] well-known lamp and of the wizard of Santiago, [a reference to the fourteenth-century Spanish story of time travel, "De lo que contesçió a un deán de Sanctiago con don Yllán, el gran maestro que moraba en Toledo," 'What Happened to a Dean From Santiago with Don Illán, a Grand Master who Lived in Toledo' from don Juan Manuel's *El Conde 'Count' Lucanor*] let's pretend that four centuries have passed and that the gentlemen who then are the subjects of our story and chronicle find themselves obliged to reconstruct a game of baseball. Let us suppose a report by the Mommsens of that day, sent to the Berlin Academy of Historical Sciences, on the fate of the flying sphere:

“There are nine men hunting down an unbreakable crystal ball that flies over a green square. That small sphere represents the union of the Greek and Christian worlds, the Aristotelian sphere and the one seen in many pictures of the Holy Infant by Byzantine painters. The nine hunters, after savoring a drug of Coculcán, [a variant spelling of Kukulcán, the plumed serpent god associated with the Mayan ball game. Lezama may have chosen to use this spelling in order to highlight its resemblance to Coca-Cola] link their destinies to the fall and destruction of the symbolic sphere. A man equipped with a giant staff attempts to hit the sphere, but he is opposed by the nine knights, protectors of the fate and course of the little ball. Stern judges confer, pronounce sentence, and then one of those defending knights silently abandons the garden of combat. In the hands of one of those warriors, the crystal sphere has so much force that, if a foreign body is hit by it, 50,000 men in attendance break out in grunts of joy or disapproval. If the crystal sphere is lost beyond the gardens, the knight in grey with big green stripes goes on his way with slow steps, as if he were rewarded with his own personal and infinite road.” (51-52)

This fantasy is more than a whimsical and densely worded jest at the expense of historical relativism, one in which, among other transmigrations, the clairvoyant’s crystal ball becomes the baseball of the future and the Spanish word for outfield, *jardines*, is interpreted by future scholars as having its usual meaning of “gardens.” It also is a cautionary tale for critics who would overload Cuba’s—and our—national game with symbolic meaning. As Stephen Jay Gould has remarked, “baseball is profound all by itself and needs no excuses” for the attraction it exercises on us. (194)

Lezama Lima’s piece is worth quoting at length both for its intrinsic worth and because the contrast between Blanco’s reputation as a poet of the people and Lezama’s as the voice of the elite adds interest to the similarities in their works.

Blanco’s third *estampa* refers to independent Venezuela from the

failure of Bolívar's project for a Greater Colombia to the then recent overthrow of Juan Vicente Gómez's long dictatorship (1908-1935). Blanco had spent four years in prison (1928-1932) and another two and half of probation for his opposition to that dictatorship (Ramírez 57, 77, 78). In this tableau, Blanco makes use of one of the tensions inherent in baseball, the conflict between teamwork and individual performance—a sporting analogue of Eliot's tradition and individual talent—as an emblem of his nation's necessity and lack of national unity.

En la estampa tercera va el equipo sin rumbo,
falta de cohesión; marchas de selva a playa, de
llano a cordillera, descentrado el designio, rota
la fe, perdido el equilibrio. No abundan los que
buscan la posición precisa y el justo lanzamiento;
muchos son los que anhelan, sin nexos solidarios
la fácil atrapada; hacia atrás de los burdos bateadores,
cae foul el mundo que soñó hacer su órbita; pocos ven
hacia arriba; apenas unos cuantos y la tierra miran
hacia lo alto; aquéllos, persiguiendo estrellas para
aclarar el rumbo oscurecido y la tierra esperando
un fly de lluvia para la siembra abandonada.

In the third illustration, the team, lacking cohesion,
wanders, without direction. Marches from the
jungle to the shore, from the plain to the mountains,
without fixed purpose, faith broken, balance lost.
Only a few try get in the proper position or throw
the right pitch. Many, rejecting teamwork, yearn to
make an easy catch. Clumsy batters foul back the
world that dreamed of being launched into orbit.
Few look upwards. At most only a few men and the
earth look towards the heights; the former, in search
of stars to light the darkened path, and the earth,
awaiting a fly ball of rain for the abandoned harvest.
(298)

This suffering and uncertainty are redeemed when the agents of patriotism and democracy, Venezuela's baseball team—fisher kings in flannel—ends the draught and crosses the plate, driving in the three

runners who went before it.

En la estampa final, la cancha ha recobrado su luz, el equipo ha recobrado su confianza. Vuelve la hora de estadio y el pueblo vuelve a tomar el rumbo del estilo. Porque la historia de Grecia se repite; no eran los atenienses los que iban al estadio a contemplar a Praxíteles ni a Solón. Eran Solón y Praxíteles quienes iban a tomar lecciones de armonía y sorbos de plenitud en la muchedumbre acompasada. Cuando el deporte es patrimonio de unos pocos, cuando el gimnasio está en las manos de los escogidos, sólo es un campo de solaz o una escuela de fuerza singular y aislada, de donde sale el atleta que atropella a los débiles; y en las manos de un pequeño grupo que se cultiva solo, no llega a prosperar el sentido social y verdadero del deporte; pero cuando esta cultura pasa a manos del pueblo, entonces cobra su onda significación de conjunto: el sentido de equilibrio va extendiéndose hasta plasmar en forma de solidaridad colectiva y de disciplina nacional. Y así es la cultura general; y así es la cultura de gobierno; y así es el camino del estilo. Los que leemos libros, muchos libros, los que gobiernan pueblos, los que cultivan artes, los que redactan leyes, llevan cuando son grupos selectos, las huellas de las cosas leídas; su cultura está en ellas, ajena muchas veces a su ambiente. Llegan al pueblo los libros, las artes, la ciencia del gobierno, esa misma cultura de los selectos; y el pueblo, más enraizado en sí, más sembrado en su tierra, va, involuntaria o voluntariamente, marcando esa cultura con su manera peculiar, sudándola con su ardor, imprimiendo al deporte su típica jugada, imponiendo al artista perfil, gesto y presencia, dando a la democracia la forma de sus manos, estampando en la Ley la forma de su anhelo; y entonces, van Pericles y Licurgo, Píndaro y Praxíteles, a aprender la lección de cara nueva, a aprender la lección de gesto propio en que el pueblo

devuelve la cultura transformada en estilo.

In the final illustration, light again shines on the playing field, the team has recovered its self-confidence. The hour of the stadium has returned, and the people once more takes the road to style. Because the history of Greece repeats itself. It wasn't the Athenians who went to the stadium to contemplate Praxiteles and Solon. It was Solon and Praxiteles who went there to take lessons in harmony and to drink in the fullness of the stately multitude. When sport is the patrimony of a select few, when the gymnasium is in the hands of the elite, it's only a playing field or a school of single and isolated strength that produces the type of athlete who tramples on the weak. And, in the hands of a small group concerned only with itself, the true, social sense of sport can't flourish. But when this culture passes into the hands of the people, then it assumes its deeply communal meaning. The sense of balance expands until it takes shape in the form of collective solidarity and national discipline. And that's what a common culture is. That's what the culture of government is, and that's what the road to style is. Those of us who read books, many books, those who govern peoples, those who cultivate the arts, those who write laws bear the mark, when they are select groups, of what they've read. Their culture is in that, often unrelated to their environment. But when books, arts, the art of government, that same elite culture, come to the people, and the people, more deeply rooted in themselves, with deeper roots in their own soil, imprint their own peculiar ways on this culture, voluntarily or not, bathing it in the sweat of their ardor, leaving on sports the stamp of their typical style of play, imposing profile, gesture, and presence on the artist, giving the shape of their hands to democracy, imprinting their yearnings on the law. And then Pericles and Licurgus, Pindar and Praxiteles are going to learn a new kind of lesson, the lesson of the authentic gesture in which the people return culture to them, transformed into style. (298-299)

The general drift of Blanco's thought is clear: baseball, the classics, art, and left-wing politics joined together in a Humphries-like synthesis. Blanco's intellectual syntax, the relationship of one part of his thought to another, unfortunately, is not. Are sports a form of culture, or are they its inspiration? Do the great figures of Greek art and government take their lead from the athletes or from the crowd that comes to applaud them?

Another difficulty in this portion of the speech is that, although the fourth *estampa* is about the return of "the hour of the stadium," — that is, the commemorated and commemorative events, of which the speech itself is a part — this section, instead of uniting Blanco's major themes—nationalism, democracy, the classical Greek virtues, and their embodiment in baseball—suffers from a paucity of athletic vocabulary. Indeed, as in the first *estampa*, there is not one explicit reference to baseball in it.

We can, however, find plenty of baseball in the third tableau. The solution to the difficulties presented and resolved in baseball terms there is celebrated in "the hour of the stadium." In the former, the individual players, "rejecting teamwork, yearn to make an easy catch." In the latter, harmony and balance prevail. The squabbling players, at war with each other as much as against the enemy, now co-operate and function as teammates, playing according to the rules, the people "imprinting what they yearn for on the law." "Baseball is," according to Rule 1.01 of the Major League Baseball Rule Book, which is the basis for the rules of all professional leagues,

a game between two teams of nine players each,
under direction of a manager, played on an enclosed
field in accordance with these rules, under jurisdiction
of one or more umpires.¹³

Co-operation, rules, legitimate authority: baseball and its relation to

¹³ It's interesting that the Rules Committee hasn't amended this description of the game to accommodate the use of the designated hitter.

proper government are implicit in Blanco's coda.

Blanco's oration advocates a culture that comes, not from "las cosas leídas" (literarily, "read things") but from the circumambient world. He calls this culture "general," as opposed to "limited." I take this to mean, not "broad," but, given the context, "shared among the general population" or "broad-based," and so have translated it as "common," that is, held in common. As I have observed, it is unclear if Blanco is an anti-Harold Bloom *avant la lettre*,¹⁴ rejecting the idea of a canon and urging his audience to emulate the people and create a culture based on reality rather than literature or if he wants his listeners to embrace and contribute to a pre-existing, organic canon of popular culture.

The question of the nature and function of the baseball crowd is one that, as we have seen, Blanco shares with Humphries, William Carlos Williams, and Whitman, for whom Folsom, in a passage I quoted on page 41, "The baseball crowd . . . came to be a gauge of the democratic experience, a visible measure of the success of the attempt to meld the individual and the 'En-Masse.'" Also like Whitman, Blanco, standing in the open air and thundering that the letter killeth, claims to be "Done with indoor complaints [and] libraries" (Song 6).

Whitman was a member of the working press. Folsom calls him "one

¹⁴ It is an irresistible but perhaps irrelevant irony that Peter Gilliver has shown that Alexander J. Dowie, the evangelist who, in the Circe episode of *Ulysses*, cries "Fellowchristians and antiBloomites, the man called Bloom is from the roots of hell, a disgrace to Christian men" (492) is based on Billy Sunday, the evangelist who played for the Pittsburgh Alleghenys, Chicago White Stockings, and Philadelphia Phillies from 1883 through 1890. (He was the first major league outfielder to execute an unassisted double play). I have not been able to find the box scores for all the games played between the Gothams and White Stockings in 1883 and 1884, but the one published in the October 1, 1884, *New York Times* for the previous day's game shows that Sunday came to bat for the White Stockings with Jack Humphries, in one of his last appearances with the Gothams, behind the plate for the New Yorkers.

Another coincidence that could delight admirers of Joyce and baseball is that the umpire whose wrong safe call on the twenty-seventh batter cost Armando Galaraga a perfect game on June 2, 2010, was Jim Joyce.

of our first American baseball writers,” citing the pair of articles, “complete with box scores,” that the solitary singer wrote for the *Brooklyn Daily Times* in 1856 (38). There is no need to insist on the importance of the press, written and electronic, in the spread of baseball’s popularity in the United States; what we have seen so far about radio and telegraph demonstrates that. It *is* worth noting, however, it was only eight years after the first coast to coast telegraph message was sent and only four years after Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox that the 1869 Cincinnati Red Stockings became the first professional team, “in the sense that every player was under contract for a season’s service at a negotiated rate of pay” (Voigt I 21) as well as the first team to play on both coasts in the same season. That is, baseball, added by press coverage that relied heavily on the telegraph, grew as the states reunited after the Civil War. Both baseball and the media that promulgated it were agents in the rebuilding of these United States.

In Venezuela, too, the press fostered the sense of nationhood through baseball. Indeed, the Venezuelan press not only spread the news of the game but articulated in various ways its connection to the forging of the national identity. By 1940, the Asociación de Cronistas Deportivos ‘Sportswriters’ Association,’ organizers of the National Olympics—which included baseball—had popularized the motto *hacer deporte es hacer patria* ‘Playing sports creates the homeland’ (González 48).

Blanco, as a media figure, both contributed to and commented on this process. He closes his speech with what he calls “meditations” (299) on the significance of Venezuela’s victory, which he finds first its restoration of national hope and pride. He implies that the nation’s spiritual resurgence will lead to the eradication of its social and economic injustices. And he sees baseball, communicated by the radio, as the agent of that resurgence.

En los pies, en los brazos y en las cabezas de nuestros jugadores, a medida que iban acumulando triunfos, iban poniendo, junto a la fe deportista, otra fe en otra cosa. Tanto ha conocido de derrotas desde hace tantos años, este pueblo, que su fuerza mayor era de resistencia y de asimilación. Su fe en sí mismo se reincorpora hace pocos años; pero

contra esa fe están sus problemas tradicionales: paludismo y anemia, desequilibrio entre su pan y su hambre, entre su agua y su sed; todo eso, va haciendo estragos y va creando el complejo de inferioridad específica; la derrota se recibe con amable comentario. Pero la radio va anunciando los triunfos, nos dice que un grupo de los nuestros, y no de los que han vivido mejor, sino de los que tienen que correr más detrás de un pan que de una pelota, está imponiendo su músculo y su mente en un concurso con atletas internacionales.

As our players' feet, arms, and heads achieved one triumph after another, they laid the groundwork, alongside the faith that sports inspire, for a new faith, a faith in something else. For so many years, this people had known so many defeats that their greatest strength was resistance and assimilation. In the last few years, their faith in themselves has been revived, but that faith still faces its traditional problems: malaria and anemia, the imbalance between their bread and their hunger, between their water and their thirst. All of this takes its toll and creates the sense of a specific inferiority. Defeat is accepted as a matter of course. But the radio keeps announcing triumphs, it tells us that a group of our people—and not the ones who enjoy the easiest lives, but those who need to chase a loaf of bread more than they need to chase a baseball—is making its muscles and its mind felt by competing with athletes from other countries. (299-300)

This hope, born of unity, effects a communion that celebrates the glad tidings brought by the radio.

. . . el equipo está formado de muchachos de varias regiones. La espera se hace unánime; el alma de la nación se hace íntima, compacta, un alma sola para toda la Patria, desde el Presidente de la República hasta el último hombre del último rincón, desde el que practica el deporte hasta la

niña que ignora los rudimentos de él y el severo académico y el sabio profesor y el enfermo casi agonizante, todos están ante la radio, esperando; y ya puede decirse que no es en los guantes de nuestros jugadores donde caen las pelotas bateadas por sus contendores, sino que todas se meten en la voz de la radio, para caer, en atrapada unánime, como en una mascota de ternura, en el alma del pueblo que recobra su fe.

. . . the team is made up of boys from different parts of the country. The expectation becomes unanimous; the soul of the nation becomes intimate, compact, a single soul for the entire homeland. From the President of the Republic to the last man in the last hidden corner, from the man who plays the game to the girl who lacks a rudimentary knowledge of it, to the severe academician and the wise teacher and the sick man almost at death's door, all of them are by the radio, listening. And now it's safe to say that it's not in our players' gloves that the balls hit by the other team land, but that they enter the voice of the radio to fall, in a unanimous catch, as in a glove of tenderness, in the soul of a people in the act of recovering its faith. (300)

Blanco did not begin his speech by saying that Thebes was created, “under a blue sky like this.” Rather, he says it was Greece that was born. Similarly, Blanco does not limit his praise to Venezuela, but extends it to Cuba, asserting that

si alguien debe sonreír satisfecha de la victoria venezolana, es Cuba. Porque fue Cuba quien nos enseñó a jugar este maravilloso juego. . . . Y esta victoria venezolana no es otra cosa que un triunfo de la escuela cubana y la gloria del maestro es el triunfo del discípulo.

if anyone should smile with satisfaction at the Venezuelan victory, it's Cuba. Because it was Cuba

who taught us how to play this marvelous game. . . .
 And this Venezuelan victory is nothing else than a
 triumph of the Cuban school, and the glory of the
 master is the triumph of the pupil. (301)

When I discuss the “Championship Ballad,” I will return to Blanco’s treatment of the family relationship between the two republics and try to show that it is more complex than the shared triumphalism of the allusion to Gerbert of Aurillac’s tag “Gloria discipuli gloria magistri est” would indicate. At this point, I merely want to call attention to Blanco’s downplaying of the United States as source of Venezuela’s baseball knowledge and to note that the *in loco parentis* relationship of master to pupil does not exclude rivalry. For every pious Aeneas there is an Oedipus.

In Cuba, to whom Venezuela owes much of its baseball culture, there also is a traditional link between of the game, literature, and nation building. González Echeverría writes in pages 87-89 of *The Pride of Havana* of the relationship between baseball, Hispanic modernism, and nationalism, concluding that “baseball was a powerful force in the democratization and secularization of Cuban culture, at least as an ideal, if not quite so in practice” (89). The *ménage à trois* that González Echeverría envisions between baseball, *modernismo*—which he seems to conflate here with literary decadence—, and the development of Cuban democracy depends on his description of the social activities of well-to-do Cuban youth in the 1880s.

These activities were part of the “decadent” spirit of the *belle époque*, decadent here meaning something useless and frivolous, the opposite of work or worship. Decadent activities involved primarily the body as a means of obtaining both pleasure and health. . . . Cuban baseball appears to have been born under the aegis of modernista literature (Pride 87)

This assessment of late nineteenth-century decadence, a source of the *modernista* movement, clashes with the one Ilan Stavans offers in the introduction to Darío’s *Selected Works*, “what is Decadence if not a form of writing obsessed with style, in which the subject tends towards

the converse, dark, and sinful, and in which sensation is more important than morality?” (xxix) González Echevarría trashed this introduction, saying it “lacks scholarly credibility or [sic] academic reliability” (33) when he reviewed the anthology in the February 13, 2006, issue of *The Nation*. Nonetheless, Beckson and Ganz’s *Literary Terms: A Dictionary*, defines “decadence” as

a literary movement originating in nineteenth-century France which emphasized the autonomy of art, the hostility of the artist to bourgeois society, the superiority of artifice to nature, and the quest for new sensations,

which leans more towards Stavans’ use of the term than towards González Echevarría’s.

In “Lezama Lima: ‘El pelotero bizantino’” “The Byzantine Ballplayer,” Noberto Codina, writing about two of the writers González Echevarría discusses in his chapter on Cuba’s *Belle Epoque*, Gálvez and Julián del Casal, makes a valuable distinction that helps clarify the relationship between *modernismo* and early Cuban baseball.

Más allá del modernismo, está la modernidad a la que por momentos parecía negarse Casal, por “el cultivo de una melancolía innata”; fue sin embargo un hombre visceralmente ciudadano, que rechazaba toda paz bucólica: “Tengo el impuro amor de las ciudades, / Y a este sol que ilumina las edades / Prefiero yo del gas las claridades”. Apuesta por el gas y el beisbol

Beyond modernism is the modernity that Casal at times seems to deny in favor of “the cultivation of an inherent melancholy,” he still was a viscerally urban man who rejected any sort of bucolic peace: “I have an impure love of cities, and I prefer to this sun that lights the ages the clarity of gas.” He puts his money on gas and on baseball

This does not mean that, for all his counter intuitive view of physical culture as a symptom of literary decadence and his more apparent than real equation of *modernismo* with that movement, González Echevarría completely misses the mark. His observation that “baseball was mostly modernista by the indirection and complexity of its metaphors” (88) is a brilliant insight into both the game and its relation to literature.

A more narrowly focused study than González Echevarría’s, Thomas F. Carter’s “The Manifesto of a Baseball-Playing Country: Cuba, Baseball, and Poetry in the Late Nineteenth Century,” analyzes the ways in which a seemingly innocuous poem about the sport, written in the late Spanish colonial period, conceals a highly subversive nationalist message. That “impromptu poem demanding freedom” (Carter 257) was delivered by Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, for whom one of the first Venezuelan baseball clubs was named, “an all-star team that played exhibition games for the express purpose of raising revenues” for the second Cuban War of Independence. (Jamail, Full Count 19). The oration closes with thanks to the Cubans, praise for the Venezuelans, and expressions of hope for a better future, based on the virtues learned and practiced on the field of play.

Blanco delivered his speech on October 29, 1941.¹⁵ The Venezuelan magazine *El Morrocoy Azul* ‘*The Blue Tortoise*,’ which billed itself as a “Semanario surrealista de intereses generales” ‘Surrealist weekly of general interest,’ published his “El romance del campeonato” in its issue for March 25, 1942,¹⁶ half way between the last out of the 1941

¹⁵ The announcement for the homecoming celebration, published on October 27 and reproduced by Alí Ramos in *Todos fueron héroes*, says it will take place at The National Stadium on Wednesday. October 27, 1941, was a Monday, so Blanco delivered his oration on the twenty-ninth. The earliest text of that speech that I have found, the one published in the *OC* by The Presidential Commission for the Centennial of the Birth of Andrés Eloy Blanco, comes from the November 9 edition of *Ahora* (296).

¹⁶ Ramos claims that Blanco wrote the ballad “el mismo y glorioso 22 de octubre” ‘the same and glorious October 22’ of the final game) and published it three days later (46). Federico Pacanins says that it was “originalmente publicado en *El Morrocoy Azul*, el 25 de marzo de 1942.” (37)

Amateur World Series and the publication of “Polo Grounds” in the August 22, 1942, issue of *The New Yorker*. As we shall see, an examination of Blanco’s poem will show that, of the two—Blanco’s welcoming speech and his celebratory ballad—the latter is considerably more ambivalent about the themes they share.

CHAPTER 4

PROGRAM



A Home Run Trot

You Can't Tell the Players Without a Score Card¹

¹ To be inserted in printed text as a nine page, 5-1/2"x8-1/2" pamphlet.

Con matrimonio canónico
 en La Habana se han casado
 la bandera de Juan Bimba
 y el pendón del campeonato.
 Liborio, que fue el padrino,⁵
 llevó la novia del brazo;
 de un lado, Narciso López,
 Maceo del otro lado
 y la sombra de Martí
 con las arras en las manos;¹⁰
 junto a la estrella de Cuba,
 siete estrellas caminaron,
 lanzaban “estráis” de espuma
 las olas de Marianao;
 La Habana “bateaba” rumbas,¹⁵
 Caracas “hiteaba” cantos
 y cruzaban “fláis” azules
 Santa Clara y Maracaibo.
 Vienen Bimbas y Liborios
 rematando el festival;²⁰
 tiran las gorras al “vento”
 sacuden el “limonar”
 hasta que se caen los “ramos”
 por la fuerza del Tarzán”;
 va corriendo Ratón “Pérez”,²⁵
 pues lleva un “gatico” atrás;
 mientras se chupa un
 “mosquito”
 la nariz de magriñá,
 un “pollo” pica y repica
 y no acaba de picar³⁰
 y cuando “El Pollo” Malpica
 se siente el Catire “Maal”
 mientras va el pollo picando
 granitos de “petit puá”
 ¡”Conrado” se ve “Chirinos”,³⁵
 “Fernández” qué orondo va,
 cómo se siente “Fonseca”
 “goajiro” del goajiral!

In a canonical ceremony, Juan
 Bimba’s flag and the
 championship pennant were
 married in Havana. Liborio, the
 best man, led the bride by the
 arm. Narciso López was on one
 side of her. Maceo and the
 shade of Martí, with the thirteen
 symbolic coins in his hands,
 were on the other. Seven stars
 walked beside the star of Cuba.
 The waves of Marianao threw
 strikes of foam. Havana was
 batting out rumbas while
 Caracas was hitting songs and
 Santa Clara and Maracaibo
 criss-crossed blue flies. Bimbas
 and Liborios arrive, wrapping
 up the festivities. They throw
 their caps to the win’ and shake
 the lemon grove until Tarzan’s
 strength makes the branches
 fall. Mousy Pérez is running
 because he’s got a pussycat in
 back of him.

While a mosquito sucks at
 Magriñat’s nose, a chicken
 pecks and pecks again and
 doesn’t stop pecking. And
 when the chicken mispecks,
 Blondie feels baad.
 While the chicken pecks baby
 peas, Conrado appears Chirinos.
 How pumped up Fernández is!
 Fonseca feels like the king of the
 guajiros!

Mesándose la Barboza”
 “Bracho” se pone a gritar,⁴⁰
 porque con tanto bullicio
 las gentes van a tumbar
 la mesa, la “Casa-nova”
 la caña y el “limonar;”
 y al fin, vibrando en redondo”,⁴⁵
 que es lo “Finol” del final
 se mete por Varadero
 la balandra fraternal,
 suelta un “buzo” que va al
 fondo
 y surge para ofrendar⁵⁰
 dos perlas de igual oriente,
 dos perlas de brillo igual
 una a Liborio supremo,
 otra a Juan Bimba inmortal.
 Con Santa y Cuba Libre⁵⁵
 termina el ceremonial,
 hay un gran adios azul,
 porque empiezan a agitar
 Caracas su azul de cielo,
 La Habana su azul de mar;⁶⁰
 se tienden puentes de vivas
 litoral y litoral
 y en la embriaguez de la justa
 se saludan sin cesar,
 Juan Bimba, vuelto “natilla”⁶⁵
 y Liborio agar-agar.
 Y así terminó la boda
 nombrando la Catedral
 nada menos que a un chino,
 Canónigo Magistral.⁷⁰

Pulling on his beard, Bracho
 starts shouting because, with all
 the hubbub, the folks are going
 to tumble the table, the new
 house, the sugar cane, and the
 lemon tree. And, finally,
 vibrating all around, putting the
 final touch on the finale, the
 fraternal sloop enters Varadero
 and drops a diver who reaches
 the ocean floor and rises up to
 make an offering of two pearls of
 equal luster, two pearls of equal
 brilliance, one to the supreme
 Liborio, the other to the
 immortal Juan Bimba. The
 ceremony ends with fine
 Venezuelan rum and Cuba
 Libres. There’s a grand blue
 farewell because Caracas starts
 waving the blue of her sky and
 Havana the blue of her sea.
 From one coastline to another,
 they extend bridges of cheers,
 and, in the drunkenness of the
 joust, Juan Bimba, changed into
 natilla custard and Liborio, into
 jelly, endlessly salute each
 other.
 And that’s how the wedding
 ended, with the Cathedral
 naming a little Chinaman, no
 less!, as its master cannon.

You Can't Tell the Players Without a Score Card

I have used the text that appears on pages 296-302 of Federico Pacanins' anthology El libro de béisbol: Cien años de pelota en la literatura venezolana.

Line 1. Daniel “El Chino” Canónico was the winning pitcher in Venezuela’s upset victory over the defending champion Cuban team in the play-off game that decided the 1941 Amateur World Series. His line was nine innings pitched; one run, which was earned, eight hits, and two walks. Surprisingly, in spite of his effective knuckle ball, Canónico didn’t strike out anyone in the playoff. In the tournament, including the tie-breaker, he won five games without a loss, compiling an earned run average of 1.54. González Echevarría’s account of the series, quoted at length in Chapter 3, gives an idea of El Chino’s importance. (Canónico’s nickname would have been translated as “The Chinaman” or worse in 1941).

Line 3. Juan Bimba is the traditional personification of the Venezuelan rural proletariat.

Line 6. Liborio, a peasant in a straw hat, is the popular representation of Cuba, as Uncle Sam is of the United States. He is, in short, Juan Bimba’s counterpart.

Line 7. Narciso López, a native of Venezuela, led two mid nineteenth-century Cuban revolts against Spain.

Line 8. Antonio Maceo, whose father was a Venezuelan mulatto and whose mother was Afro-Cuban, was known as “The Bronze Titan.” He was a hero of both Cuban Wars of Independence and was second in command of the Army of Liberation at the time of his capture and execution by the Spanish in 1896.

Line 9. José Martí, “The Apostle of Cuban Independence,” was a poet, journalist, and revolutionary. The followers as well as the opponents of the Castro brothers claim his legacy.

Line 10. The *arras* are the thirteen symbolic coins that the bride and groom exchange during Catholic wedding ceremonies in Spanish-speaking countries.

Line 11. The Cuban flag has a single star. “La estrella de Cuba” is a patriotic poem, written in October 1823 by José María Heredia. Edel Morales says it is “considerado el primer poema revolucionario cubano . . . y emprende un proyecto emancipador” ‘considered the first revolutionary Cuban poem . . . and it undertakes a project of emancipation.’ (Estrella 5)

Line 12. In 1941, there were seven stars in the Venezuelan flag.

Line 14. La Tropical Stadium, site of the fourth Amateur World Series, was located in Marianao, a popular beach resort. The town lies across the Almendares River from Havana. The Marianao River flows through the eponymous municipality. Thus, “The waves of Marianao” can refer to the waters of either or both rivers.

Line 18. Roberto González Echevarría calls the Santa Clara Leopards of 1923 the Cuban “equivalent of the ’27 Yankees (113). Maracaibo, capital of the oil-rich state of Lara, was the home of so many members of the Venezuelan team that after the tumultuous welcome ceremony in Caracas, the team was flown to Maracaibo for another one (Ramos 93).

Line 21. “Vento” is a corruption of *viento* ‘wind’ that refers to Guillermo Vento, who got seven hits in fourteen at bats in the four games he played for Venezuela, none of them against Cuba.

Line 22. Rogelio “Limonar” ‘Lemon Grove’ Martínez was a left-handed pitcher for the Cuban team. A *limón* is a lemon in much of the Spanish-speaking world but a lime in the hispanophone Caribbean. Lemon or lime, *limonar* can refer to either a tree or a grove. I prefer the latter in some cases because of it brings to mind the name of Lefty Grove, the great hurler for the Philadelphia Athletics and Boston Red Sox. In other cases, lemon (or lime) tree is preferable because of the parallel it offers to the transformation of Daphne into a laurel in the *Metamorphoses*.

Line 23. Venezuelan outfielder Jesús “Chucho” Ramos hit .389 in the series and three years later would have a brief stint with the Cincinnati Reds. *Ramos* means “branches.”

Line 24. Francisco “Tarzán” Contreras was one of the Venezuelans’ outfielders. He hit .320 for the series. He should not be confused with Roberto “Tarzán” Estalella, the cripto Afro-Cuban whose entry into the major leagues preceded Jackie Robinson’s by a dozen seasons.

Line 25. *El Ratón Pérez* ‘Pérez the Mouse’ is the Hispanic tooth fairy. José Pérez Colmenares was Venezuela’s first baseman and lead off hitter, the man who held the candle by which Blanco read his speech in the National Stadium. The annual Sports Mass, celebrated in Caracas every Three Kings’ Day since 1945, was instituted in Pérez’s honor after his premature death in a plane crash the previous year.

Line 26. The *gatico*, or little cat, who chases Mousy Pérez is his teammate the pitcher Juan Francisco “Gatico” Hernández.

Line 27. Antonio “Mosquito” Ordeñana played third base for Cuba.

Line 28. José María “Kiko” Magriñat was one of the umpires who worked the tournament.

Line 29. The pecking chicken is Venezuela’s manager, Manuel Antonio “Pollo” ‘Chicken’ Malpica, *Picar* has a special meaning in Baseball Spanish: to hit the ground, as in *Pica y se extiende* ‘*It hits the ground and gets by the fielder*’, the title of Carlos Brito’s excellent book of baseball poems. Blanco had, as we will have occasion to observe, a fondness for playing with other uses of this word.

Line 32. *Catire* is an Americanism meaning someone with blonde or reddish hair or the child of white and mulato parents. Carlos Maal, whose family name would be the equivalent of “Baaad,” was one of Venezuela’s coaches. Lines 31-32 also could be translated as “And when Chicken Malpica feels like Blondie Maal.” This would have the advantages of not distorting the players’ names and of being compatible with Blanco’s punctuation of this fragment. It would, however, forfeit the suggestion of a pun on the players’ names, a suggestion that adheres to Blanco’s use of most of the names in his poem. It also would, as far as I can see, be meaningless. Besides,

Blanco's erratic punctuation should not be allowed much of a role in the interpretation of his poem.

Line 34. *Petit puá* is a hispanization of the French *petites pois* 'peas.' Another example of *petit* finding its way into the hispanophone Caribbean is *pitiyanqui*, or "Little Yankee," used to disparage those who aspire to the American Way of Life.

Line 35. The Cuban pitcher Conrado Marrero appeared in both of his team's defeats by Venezuela, pitching in relief without a decision in the first of them and starting and losing the second, decisive, one. The Venezuelan pitcher Benjamín Chirinos went 1-0 in his two starts, neither against Cuba. In my next chapter, I try to make sense out of this puzzling declaration of Marrero's feelings.

Line 36. The pumped up 'orondo' Fernández is the Venezuelan left-handed reliever, Ramón "Dumbo" Fernández. As his picture on pages 133 and 134 of *Todos fueron héroes* shows, this Dumbo was a slim young man. His face had an innocent look about it, and perhaps that is the reason for his nickname. *Goajiro* is an alternative spelling of *guajiro*, a Cuban peasant. The *guajiro* of *guajiroland* would be something like the cock of the walk or the king of the peasants.

Line 39. Domingo Barboza was the only Venezuelan pitcher charged with a loss in the tournament. My translation, unfortunately, hides the pun on *barba* 'beard' contained in his name. Later on, I will attempt to explain it in relation to the *Poem of the Cid*.

Line 40. Julio César Bracho had been chosen for the Venezuelan team as a relief pitcher but made his most significant contribution as an outfielder.

Line 43. Although two Cuban players named Mesa, Antoñico and Pablo, had been baseball stars in the years before 1941, I can find no record of either of them participating in that year's Amateur World Series.

Blanco hyphenates the name of Venezuela's shortstop, José Antonio Casanova, most likely in order to call attention to the pun on "house." This emphasis on the meaning of the player's name, combined with the resonance that comes from its similarity to the hall of fame pitcher

“Prince Hal” Newhouser, decided me on using the English translation of the Venezuelan’s name. His batting average of .429 was a major reason for his being named the tournament’s Most Valuable Player.

Line 44. For *limonar*, see the note to line 22.

Line 45. *Redondo* is a nickname, meaning “round.” Although Redondo is Benítez’s nickname, it often is printed without quotation marks, as if it were his mother’s birth name. In 1982, Alí Ramos called Héctor Benítez Redondo “el mejor jardinero que ha producido el país” ‘the best outfielder our country has produced’ (153). American League all-star outfielder Tony Armas of Venezuela had made his major league debut six years before Ramos pronounced this judgement.

Line 46. Dalmiro Finol played second base for Venezuela. In addition to his achievements in the deciding game, he made a sensational play in the game that made that necessitated that tie-breaker. He bore the puzzling nickname of “Ovejo” ‘The Ram’ because “en este país nadie escapa un apodo” ‘in this country, no one escapes having a nickname’ (Ramos 140).

Line 47. Varadero is a resort city about eight-five miles east of Havana.

Line 49. Pedro “Buzo” Nelson’s nickname means “the diver.” He was Venezuela’s reserve outfielder.

Line 55. “Santa” refers to Santa Teresa, the most famous brand of Venezuelan rum, known for its long-standing tradition ‘de mayor fama y tradición’ (Vené e-mail). A Cuba Libre is a mixture of rum and Coca Cola. The political implication of the name is obvious, as is the irony of its mixture of ingredients, one Cuban product and the other identified (as is baseball) with the American Way of Life. The outstanding Cuban pitcher and shortstop Silvio “Cuba Libre” García was born in the town of Limonar. A few months after the 1941 Amateur World Series, he got eight hits in twenty-one at bats in an exhibition series against the Brooklyn Dodgers. “Leo Durocher said that Marty Marion ‘can’t carry his glove’” (Baseball Reference, Silvio García).

Line 65. The patent meaning of *natilla* is a type of custard. Pedro Jiménez, a pitcher on the Cuban team, got his nickname from his fondness for that delicacy. The word is a diminutive of *nata* ‘cream,’ which, the DRAE informs us, is used in the Americas to mean the “escoria de la copulación” ‘the dregs of copulation.’

Line 66. *Agar-agar* is processed seaweed, also known as Chinese gelatin. It can be used in the preparation of natillas.

CHAPTER 5

PRELIMINARY COMMENTS ON ANDRES ELOY BLANCO'S
"ROMANCERO DEL CAMPEONATO"*Poems and Paintings*

It is not only the varieties of radio experience that we have noted in "Polo Grounds" and the 1941 Amateur World Series that connect yet distinguish Humphries' poem and Blanco's "Romance del campeonato" ("Championship Ballad") from one another.

Unlike the other baseball poems we have looked at, Blanco's piece does not, at first reading, deal with anything but baseball. Indeed, to many readers unversed in baseball, it would not seem to have very much to do with anything at all. In many ways, the "Romance" is the inverse of "Polo Grounds." Humphries' meditative poem is a seemingly straightforward one that, on first reading, presents few, if any, difficulties to our understanding. But once we begin to examine the poem more closely, it, like a pointillist painting or a newspaper wire photo, segregates itself into a kaleidoscope of independent, ambiguous elements. We can reassemble these elements into a complex, significant, and intelligible whole that modifies and enriches our original impression of the poem without negating it.

Blanco's piece is a burlesque epic and is more like R.B. Kitaj's oil painting, "Amerika (Baseball),"



© The Estate of R.B. Kitaj, courtesy Marlborough Gallery, New York

than the work of Georges Seurat and his followers. In Kitaj's work, we can see that something resembling a game of baseball is being played in a strange, unsettling, context. Uniformed players pitching and hitting baseballs act as individuals or, at most, couples, without regard to each other's positions or even existence. The batter in the center foreground seems to have hit a fellow player along the face with his bat.¹ These self-absorbed athletes are playing on the surface of what is both a swimming pool and a pond. Aaron Rosen sees this scene differently, claiming that in this painting

it is the sea—that aqueous blue field on which the players gambol—which lies at the heart of *Amerika*. At a biographical level, *Amerika's* central sea resonates with Kitaj's voyages as a young sailor, and in particular his migrations “across the pond” between America and England. (9)

But what are we to make of the stair handles on the right front of the body of water? You find them at swimming pools, not by the seaside. The pier on the left front, on which sits a dugout, a possible visual pun

¹ In his painting “The Williams Shift (for Lou Boudreau), Kitaj also shows his interest in displacing players from their normal positions.

on the baseball and boating meanings of the word, indicates that the water could be a pond, which is consonant with the landscape surrounding it. In that case, the sea exists in the painting through the metaphor supplied by the cliché Rosen uses to describe the trip across the Atlantic.

Two dogs are sniffing each other, standing, like the players, on water.² The only player I recognize is Satchel Paige (the third figure from the right in the second row), in a pose that resembles the photo of him taken in Yankee Stadium and published on the website of the Negro League Baseball Players Association.³ An image of Kitaj in profile stands in the lower right hand corner of the canvas, half-turned away from the scene.

Like Kitaj's painting, Blanco's ballad presents a series of incongruous baseball vignettes uncoupled from the temporal and physical organization—the logic-- of the game. The familiarity of baseball fans worldwide with the game's history in the United States, combined with Humphries' giving the names (or least nicknames) of the players in his poem, means that many of them can be identified by readers familiar with baseball history. Even readers for whom baseball is a mystery without being beautiful can assume that the names the poet lists in

² In a review of an exhibition of Kitaj's work at the Marlborough Gallery in New York, John Russell refers to this body of water as "a field of bright blue that derives from a painting by Velazquez called 'The Boar Hunt.'" There certainly is a resemblance between the two scenes, and Ethel Fisher, Kitaj's mother-in-law, has told me that he did base his painting on Velázquez's. But, since the field in Velázquez's work isn't blue, I see no reason to change my reading of the site of the painter's ball players.

3



“Polo Grounds” refer to ball players. Similarly, Humphries clearly describes the plays those players execute.

Blanco’s obscurity

Blanco, on the other hand, hides his players’ identities and activities behind a veil of verbal prestidigitation. Yet, even if he had named his players as forthrightly as Humphries does, Blanco’s line-up of amateur Venezuelan and Cuban players from 1941 would have been unrecognizable to baseball fans outside the Caribbean basin.

But Blanco’s obscurity is not due exclusively to the limited number of readers familiar with his subject matter. Let me suggest another thought experiment. Read “Polo Grounds” to a random worldwide sample of English speakers and, regardless of their familiarity with the game, a considerable percentage is bound to recognize that the poem is about baseball. Read “Romance del campeonato” to a similar sample of Spanish speakers, suppressing lines 13-18 (in which the waves of the Marianao throw strikes, Havana and Caracas bat out rumbas and hit songs, respectively, while Santa Clara and Maracaibo cross-cross the sky with fly balls), I doubt that anywhere nearly as many would recognize the subject of Blanco’s poem. I even suspect that verbs like *batear* and nouns like *fláis* would be unintelligible to them.

The inversion of the characteristics of the two poems constitutes, in itself, a relationship between them. Furthermore, the immediate difficulties presented by the “Romance del campeonato” force readers to look for patterns, connections, symbols, metaphors, etc.—the whole paraphernalia we use to try to find meaning in a poem—in an attempt to discover—or invent, a verb derived, as I mentioned earlier, citing Onions, from the Latin *in+venire*, giving us the word’s original, fifteenth-century, meaning of “come upon” —its significance. Once this voyage of discovery is started, it can take us to unexpected places.

In his ballad, Blanco provides a variant of the process Humphries employs in “Polo Grounds,” the combination of segments taken from a range of baseball events to create a new, literary, event. The baseball games memorialized in Blanco’s poem really occurred, but there is no pretense of reality in his account of the individual episodes of which

the work is composed, and the poet and his intended audience experienced them at several removes through radio broadcasts. Where Blanco provides highly figurative language to present a disguised description of the games, Humphries, as we have seen, portrays a game that never was played. He does this by providing a realistic description of real plays taken out of their historical context and reassembling them if they were pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. In “Polo Grounds,” the poet purports to have been a spectator at that reconstituted game and incorporates into his poetic rendition of the experience the voice of a sportscaster who, like the ones responsible for Blanco’s knowledge of the tournament, was not at the ballpark to see the game he narrates.

Unlike the tone of “Polo Grounds,” that of the “Romance” is festive, as befits the celebration of a sporting victory. The poem’s jocularity, announced by its publication in the humor magazine *El Morrocy Azul* ‘*The Blue Tortoise*,’ leaps out of its very first line, in which a pair of *esdrújulas* ‘proparoxytones’— a type of word often put to comic effect in Spanish—is rhymed internally while being used simultaneously to make a pun on the name of Venezuela’s starting pitcher. The result is the rough equivalent of W.S. Gilbert’s “You shall quickly be parsonfied, / Conjugally matrimonified” in *The Pirates of Penzance*, both in its prosody and its ecclesiastical allusion.

“The Championship Ballad” is, as its title indicates, a piece of occasional verse, written, to celebrate an identifiable historical event. Comic, occasional, and minor, these are properties of the “Romance,” but the use of them does not demean it. We have seen that, in his welcoming speech, Blanco likens Venezuela’s championship to the nation’s social and moral regeneration. By making a poem of the Venezuelan triumph, one that he and his compatriots learned of through the evanescent medium of radio, Blanco has conferred a fleeting measure of permanence, that is, a simulacrum of immortality, upon it. From unseen act, to spoken word, to written word, double play, This, too, is a form of regeneration, a highly skilled and beautiful mystery.

Blanco and Góngora

Blanco’s poem bears a striking resemblance—surprising, though not

overwhelming--to the intricate, carefully constructed work of the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Spanish baroque poet Luis de Góngora, whom I already have mentioned in connection with the Homeric tradition, specifically the Nausicaa episode, in baseball writing,

Góngora's *Solitudes* and Blanco's "Ballad" offer compatible, but not identical, treatments of marriage. In "Daphne, Apollo, and Homo Ludens in Luis de Góngora's *Soledad primera*," R. John McCaw draws attention to the "structural parallel among the wrestling match, the long run, and the wedding union [that] affirms the thematic importance of death and regeneration in the poem" (85).

In Góngora's *silva* (a combination of eleven- and seven-syllable verse), a wedding is celebrated with games, which are a metaphor for it. In the "Romance," the games themselves are a wedding, and the celebration of the winning team's apotheosis, an epithelium.

In Blanco's poem, then, the wedding is a metaphor for the games, not the other way around, as they are in Góngora's. Blanco's games are not merely the joyous celebration of a literal marriage, but a "canonical matrimony" in themselves, a celebration, in both the liturgical and festive senses, of a metaphorical wedding. The treatment of sport and sex (words whose meanings overlap) is not the only similarity between Blanco and Góngora, nor is the poets' resemblance limited to their shared trinity of marriage, games, and regeneration. In addition to his exceedingly difficult *Soledades*, Góngora wrote poems like "Hermana Marica" 'Little María, My Sister,' which Jorge Guillén calls "poesía de las *cosas* familiares, evocadas en un fondo de infancia y de pueblo" 'poetry of *familiar* [also meaning "family-related"] things, evoked in a background of childhood and small town life [also meaning "of the people"]' (Italics in orig.). Guillén, Blanco's contemporary and one of twentieth-century Spain's major poets, goes on to say, "Tanto relieve exacto no se opone a una difusa sugestión que ensordece, pero multiplica en ecos íntimos, la adorable música" 'Such exact relief isn't opposed to a diffuse suggestion that is deafening but multiplies the adorable music in intimate echoes' (53). Much of this could be said of some of Blanco's poems, "Ayer vino la paloma" 'The Dove Came Yesterday,' written during his imprisonment, for instance. But what I have in mind here is the mixture of imagery—especially images of sea,

wind, and stars— epithets, metaphors, and protean diction that Blanco’s “Romance” shares with Góngora’s “First Solitude.”

Both poems require extensive explication because their allusions demand an erudition that, although presumably frequent among their intended contemporary intended audiences, requires a greater degree of guidance for the modern, uninitiated reader. In this chapter, I refer to— indeed, rely on— some of the scholars who have explicated Góngora’s difficult work. Blanco’s esoteric references are not as daunting as Góngora’s, although the specialized knowledge Blanco demands of his readers, especially extra-Caribbean ones of a later generation, goes beyond that required for an understanding of baseball or a general knowledge of its history.

Those demands are, in themselves, formidable. As Jacques Barzun says, even newspaper accounts of games “don’t help [the novice]. To read them with profit you have to know a language that comes easy only after philosophy has taught you to judge practice. Here is scholarship that takes effort on the part of the outsider, but it is so bred into the native that it never becomes a dreary round of technicalities” (151). When reading about the 1941 Amateur World Series, all of us, except for Cubans and Venezuelans of a certain age, are outsiders. (Even this exception diminishes daily; time makes outsiders, and then corpses, of us all). I hope that my notes and explanations in the foregoing insert and the discussions in this chapter will lessen the gap between our outsiders’ bafflement and our goal of grasping the meaning of Blanco’s poem. (“Meaning” less as a noun than as a participle, not significance but the process of achieving it).

In spite (and because) of its difficulty, I do not intend to analyze the “Soledad primera” extensively. Indeed, I will give it less prolonged attention than I gave I the works I touched on in attempting to clarify my commentary on “Polo Grounds” and in my earlier comments on Blanco’s work. Rather, my aim is to use Góngora’s poem as a reference point in the discussion of Blanco’s technique and, as a collateral benefit, to validate the legitimacy of his *vers de occasion*’s claim to serious attention.

Dámaso Alonso observes in the provocatively titled introduction to his edition of the *Soledades*, “Claridad y belleza de Las soledades” ‘Clarity

and Beauty of The Solitudes,'

parece haber sido claro propósito de Góngora la formación de una lengua poética. A la abundancia de designativos metafóricos triviales tomados de la antigüedad . . . y a las imágenes insignes creadas por el genio del poeta, habría que añadir otros muchos tropos usados por sistema a lo largo de la obra: Vulcano, por el fuego Baco, por el vino . . . etc. Pónganse ahora, junto a estas traslaciones, limitaciones y extensiones retóricas, las alusiones—con frecuencia apenas iniciadas—a la Mitología, a la Historia Natural, en una palabra, a casi todas las ramas del saber humano, unas veces desde el punto de vista grecolatino; otras, desde el del siglo XVII. Añádase, por último, las audacias de léxico y sintaxis: cultismos, transposiciones, acusativos griegos, empleo singular de los relativos, complicación y longitud del período gramatical, lleno de incisos de valor diferente, de paréntesis enteramente desligados, de aposiciones, de gerundios y ablativos

La lectura de las Soledades es ciertamente—sería necio el negarlo—muy difícil.

The formation of a poetic language seems to have been Góngora's evident purpose. To the abundance of trivial metaphorical designations taken from antiquity and to the famous images created by the poet's genius, one would have to add the many tropes used systematically throughout the work: Vulcan, for fire; Bacchus, for wine . . . etc. Now, place next to these translations and rhetorical limitations and extensions, the allusions—frequently incipient—to mythology, to ancient and modern geography, to history, to natural history, in a word, to all the branches of human knowledge, sometimes from the Greco-Roman perspective; others, from the seventeenth-century point of view. Finally, throw in the lexical and syntactical audacities: words from classical languages

in their original form, transpositions, Greek accusatives, the singular use of relative phrases, complication and length of the grammatical period, filled with insertions of differing worth, with completely unrelated parenthesis, appositions, gerunds, and ablative absolutes

Reading the Solitudes certainly is—it would be silly to deny it—very difficult. (32-33)

Similarly, Blanco has invented a poetic language for baseball, whose reading certainly is—it would be silly to deny it—very difficult, although I hesitate to call this his clear intention. Nonetheless, Blanco's diction is, like Góngora's, allusive, image-laden, and multi-layered. Blanco's diction also is consonant with his declared beliefs about the relations between sport and culture, which he traces, in the opening words of his welcoming speech, to ancient Greece.

In the "Ballad." Cuba and Venezuela are married. Baseball-- the occasion of their union—and poetry—the means of its consecration—unite to construct a popular culture, a culture of the people, a Venezuela and Latin America of the mind, born of physical play. The sport, the Heroes of '41, and the language used to celebrate them are put to work in the service, or —better—the creation, of a democratic (as an ideal, if not quite so in practice) homeland. Andrés Eloy Blanco was after all, a politician, one of the founders of Acción Democrática, the party of presidents Rómulo Gallegos, nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature, and Rómulo Betancourt.

To understand this language, this verbal transmutation of the historical facts of baseball into poetry, it is, self-evidentially but nevertheless ironically, necessary to know those facts. Once the allusions of the "Romance" are clarified, the poem, like the *Soledades*, loses much of its obscurity. Of course, Blanco doesn't engage in all of Góngora's "lexical and syntactical audacities," unless, that is, we want to consider English a classical language. (Even there, Blanco adapts his spelling to Spanish usage). Blanco's grammatical periods aren't particularly complicated or lengthy, except as his punctuation makes them so. Finally, Blanco's work is neither as difficult nor as accomplished as Góngora's. It is, however, both difficult and accomplished. The two

poets try to “procurar,” as Rafael Lapesa says of Góngora, “el goce de la busca difícil y el hallazgo ‘procure the enjoyment of the difficult chase and of discovery’ (228).

One of the most notable qualities of the “Soledad primera” is the protean nature of its nouns. Springtime is “del año la estación florida” ‘the flowery season of the year’ (1). The season’s identity is both confirmed and elided when Góngora goes on to use an epithet and a combination of metaphors and synecdoches to describe its astrological classification:

cuando el mentido robador de Europa
—media luna de zafiros su frente,
y el Sol todos los rayos de su pelo—
luciente honor del cielo,
en campos de zafiro pace estrellas{.} (2-6)

Here, as elsewhere, I will translate Dámaso Alonso’s prose version of the *Soledades* when I render Góngora’s verse in English.⁴

When the Sun enters the sign of Taurus (the sign of the Zodiac that recalls the deceitful transformation of Jupiter into a bull so that he could rape Europa). The Sun enters Taurus in April, and then the celestial bull (his forehead armed by the half moon of his horns, shining and illuminated by the Sun, pierced through by sunlight in such a way that the rays of the star and the hair of the animal are confused with one another) appears to graze on stars (which he thus eclipses with his brilliance) in the sapphire blue fields of the sky. (134)

The anastrophe “del año la estación florida” ‘of the year the flowering season’ for la estación florida del año ‘the flowery season of the year

⁴ I cite Góngora’s poetry by the number of the verse and Alonso’s version by page number. I provide my own translation for Góngora’s passages of less than two lines.

‘and “el Sol todos los rayos de su pelo” ‘the Sun all the rays of his hair’ for “todos los rayos del sol su pelo” ‘all the rays of the sun his hair’ do not cause excessive problems, even for a modern reader. Góngora’s classically educated public would have known that it was Zeus in the form of a bull who was Europa’s deceitful abductor, although the half-moon in his forehead might have given it some trouble. Similarly, Blanco’s original readership of Venezuelan baseball fans probably could recognize that the pussycat who chases Mousy Pérez is Gatico Hernández running behind José Pérez. This does not mean that the “First Solitude” was an easy poem for its original readers, but it does take some of the responsibility our difficulty in understanding Góngora and Blanco off of their shoulders.

In any case, Góngora and Blanco’s original audiences were more likely to have had difficulty with the allusions I have just presented because of the sleight of hand with which they are realized than because they are particularly recondite. Neither the constellation of Taurus nor the horns that stargazers find there receives its right name. One substitution gives way to another, and another, and then another. Thus, the simple facts of the poem are cloaked in an emblemized mystery that announces at the same time that it disguises them the linked themes of violent sexual fulfillment—the Rape of Europa-- and displays of athletic prowess—the *medialuna*, or half-moon, an instrument employed in the bullfights of Góngora’s day— that will be reprised when the wedding is celebrated by, among other contests, wrestling matches. Then,

siendo Amor una deidad alada,
bien previno la hija de la espuma
a batallas de amor campo de pluma. (1096-1098)

since Love [i.e., Cupid] is a winged god,
the daughter of the foam [i.e., Venus] wisely
provided a field of feathers [i.e., the marriage
bed] for the battles of love. (183)

The association of games with sexual activity is an easy one to make. From there, it is but a short step to associating them with marriage, so it is not surprising, Góngora aside, that Blanco should present a

baseball game in matrimonial terms. After all, Hall of Fame pitcher Juan Marichal “comentaba con placer cómo a un narrador coterráneo suyo le gustaba celebrar un doble *play* relampagueante con la frase ‘tan feliz como una luna del miel’” ‘commented with pleasure on a how one of his fellow-countryman sportscasters would celebrate a lightening-fast double play with the phrase, “as happy as a honeymoon” (Codina, Lezama Lima). Each is, when properly executed, a highly skilled and beautiful mystery.

Yet the idea of sexuality conveyed by these games is not exclusively conjugal or heterosexual. Góngora’s wrestlers who

Abrazáronse pues los dos, y luego,
humo anhelando el que no suda fuego,
de recíprocos nudos impedidos,
cual duros olmos de implicantes vides,
yedra el uno es tenaz del otro, muro... (975-979)

embraced each other, and entrapping themselves reciprocally . . . strained to throw each other to the ground with such force that the one who can’t sweat liquid fire seems, at least, to breath burning smoke [so that each] one grabbing his opposite number, they looked like an elm tree embraced by the creeping vine and the tenacious ivy hugging the wall that the other offers. (178)

are the literary ancestors of Gerald Crich and Rupert Birkin, the two naked men who in a by-now iconic scene from D.H. Lawrence’s *Women in Love*

wrestled swiftly, rapturously, intent and mindless at last, two essential white figures working into a tighter, closer oneness of struggle, with a strange octopus-like knotting and flashing of limbs in the subdued light of the room; a tense white knot of flesh gripped in silence between the walls of old brown books. Now and again came a sharp gasp of breath, or a sound like a sigh, then the rapid thudding of movement on the thickly carpeted floor, then the strange sound of flesh escaping

under flesh. Often, in the white interlaced knot of violent living being that swayed silently, there was no head to be seen, only the swift, tight limbs, the solid white backs, the physical junction of two bodies clinched into oneness. (280-281)

Just as Góngora, when he begins the “First Soledad,” represents, without naming them, springtime and violent, illicit sexuality by referring to, without naming, the bull and his horns, Blanco starts his ballad by announcing an ambiguous sexual union achieved through conflict—the struggles on the field between Cuba and Venezuela—, neither of which he names. This union is presented first as the marriage of the Venezuelan flag and the championship pennant and will, by the end of the poem, evolve into Venezuela’s marriage with Cuba, which, before the game celebrated in the poem, had enjoyed possession of the flag. Before the poem is finished, the nature of this marriage will suffer the ineluctable mutability of the metaphorical.

CHAPTER 6

TRIUMPH IN HAVANA, APOTHEOSIS IN CARACAS

Let the Games Begin

In the first line of his ballad, Blanco converts the name of Venezuela's star pitcher, Daniel Canónico, into a sacramentally connubial adjective. He then takes another series of steps back from direct statement by describing the union, in itself symbolic, not as one between the Venezuelan team, or nation, and the championship, but between the pennant—the emblem—of the championship and the Venezuelan flag. The poet presents us with a system of synecdochal matrioshkas: a nation, Venezuela (the whole), is contained in its emblem, the flag, which belongs to a personification, Juan Bimba, who traditionally represents a portion, the rural proletariat, of that whole. The championship, too, is an abstraction. And the nation represented in this serial regression is represented in the tournament by a roster of eighteen players, two coaches, a delegate, and a trainer: the team as synecdoche for the nation. By the end of the poem Blanco will have moved towards a symbolic marriage of this synecdoche with the one that represents Cuba.

Con matrimonio canónico
 en la Habana se han casado
 la bandera de Juan Bimba
 y el pendón del campeonato.

In a canonical ceremony, Juan Bimba's flag
 and the championship pennant were married
 in Havana. (1-4)

But the interpretation of the poem's opening lines—its gonfalon bubble, if you will-- is not quite so straightforward as this. The primary meaning of *pendón* is, indeed, "pennant," a banner that is longer than it is wide, an object whose geometry is an invitation to a Freudian reading (as are the bat and ball with which the game is played).

The Freudian interpretation of the pennant is re-enforced by the secondary meanings of *pendón*, a person with a socially unacceptable lifestyle. In the feminine, it means “prostitute.” The head rhyme of *pendón* with *pendejo*, a vulgar Spanish insult whose literal meaning is “public hair” gives us even more reason to suspect that something untoward is going on here.

In his version of the Mexican song “Pénjamo,” Pedro Infante pauses after the first syllable of the title, thereby changing what begins as a paean to the small city that calls itself “The Cradle of Hidalgo,” one the fathers of Mexican independence, into a satire on machismo.

Me dijo un[a de] Cuéramaro;
 que yo parecía de Pénjamo
 voy, voy, pos ora...pos mire señora, que soy de
 Pénjamo
 lo habrá notado, por lo atravesado, que somos allá.

Si un hombre por una pérfida
 se mata con otro prójimo
 si es decidido y muy atrevido
 es que es de Pénjamo;
 si a quemarropa, te invita la copa, pos ya ni dudar.

Al cabo por todo México
 hay muchos que son de Pénjamo.

A woman from Cuéramaro told me that I looked like someone from Pénjamo. (Coming, coming, I’ll be right there). Look, lady, I’m from Pénjamo. You must have noticed because of what troublemakers the folks there are.

If a man gets himself killed on account of a feckless woman; if he’s strong-willed and daring, he’s from Pénjamo. If he offers you a drink at point-blank range, don’t think twice.

After all, all over Mexico, there are lots of people from Pénjamo. (Méndez 9-19, Infante Side A, cut 6)

In both the “Romance” and “Pénjamo,” the reader (or listener) anticipates the obscene syllables following “pen,” and the suggestion of that anticipation lives on, despite the very different text that the author provides.¹

In addition to its title word, “Pénjamo” uses an abundance of *esdrújulas*, ‘words in which the accent falls on the penultimate syllable, (itself an *esdrújula*) to increase the song’s comic effect: *cúpulas*, *pájaros* ‘birds,’ *júbilo*, the town name Cuéramo, *pérfida* ‘unfaithful woman,’ *prójimo* ‘neighbor, as in “love thy neighbor,’ and *cálida* ‘warm.’ (2, 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 23)

Blanco continues to use emblems to describe the details of the ceremony, referring to national flags and personifications, as well as

¹ An amusing example of this technique is the one Camilo José Cela reports in the second volume of his *Diccionario secreto* and José María Díez Borque reprints in his anthology of erotic poetry:

Te quiero jo-
te quiero jo-
te quiero joven y bella,
como una pu-
como una pu-
como una pura doncella,
y con mi pí-
y con mi pí-
y con mi pícara mano
tocar las te-
tocar las te-
tocar las teclas del piano.

The first two lines say, “I want to” and lead the reader to fill in “joder,” to make them mean “I want to fuck you.” But the *jo* is completed in a way to make the expression, “I love you young and beautiful.” The process is repeated when “like a pu-“ suggests “puta,” or whore, only to be converted when the word is spelled out into “pure virgen.” The next desire is, “and with my pi-,” where the syllable begs to be completed as, “pinga,” or “cock,” but gives way to “pícara mano,” or “picaresque hand.” The thought is completed with “touch your te-,” calling forth the thought of “tetas” (“tits”) but ending up as “teclas del piano,” “the piano keys.”

the symbols of union, before closing with stars and foam, two Gongorine images,

Liborio, que fue el padrino,
llevó la novia del brazo;
de un lado, Narciso López,
Maceo del otro
y la sombra de Martí
con las arras en las manos;

Liborio, the best man, led the bride by the arm. Narciso López was on one side of her. Maceo and the shade of Martí, with the thirteen symbolic coins in his hands, were on the other. (5-10)

The bride (the pennant) and best man (Liborio) are flanked by Narciso López, Antonio Maceo, and José Martí. The first two of these Cuban patriots had family connections with Venezuela, making them appropriate figures not just for the theme of national assertion but also for that of Cuban-Venezuelan fraternity.

Martí, Blanco, and Baseball

But it is the shade, the ghost, of Martí who casts the longest shadow over the scene. The champion of “Our”—as opposed to Anglo—“America,” in poetry, prose, politics, and action, Martí frequently is referred to as “el Apóstol,” “The Apostle,” just as Martín Dihigo, the great, multi-faceted Cuban ball player is called “El inmortal,” used as a noun, not an adjective.²

Martí’s career was similar enough to Blanco’s for us to suspect that the Venezuelan poet identified himself with, or at least found a role model in the Cuban. Indeed, Martí’s important article “Nuestra América,” whose title appropriates Martí’s expression, is permeated by the belief

² The inscription under Dihigo’s bust at the Estadio latinoamericano in Havana reads, “El inmortal”—nothing else. (Pettavino and Pye 32)

that the construction of a free and democratic nation requires that the educated classes respect the idiosyncrasies, the culture, of the less privileged sectors of the population. This belief underlies Blanco's speech at the National Stadium. (Alfonso Ramírez's biography of Blanco provides an interesting discussion of the similarities and differences between the thoughts of the two poets and activists [334-338]).

Both men were revolutionaries, founders of a political party, diplomats, journalists, and, of course, poets. Until the day of their death, they bore the scars left by the heavy leg irons they wore as political prisoners (Holdelín Tablada, Ramírez 61). Each of them wrote a poem that, adopted and set to music, has become a beloved popular song in Latin America. Martí's "Guantanamera" is known world-wide, while the popularity of the musical version of Blanco's "Píntame angelitos negros 'Paint Me Little Black Angels' is limited to "only" the Spanish-speaking world, where it provided the basis for the 1948 melodrama *Angelitos negros*, starring Pedro Infante and the great Cuban singer Rita Montaner. The poem was published in Blanco's *Juanbimbada 'The Juan Bimbiad,'* which also contains his "Palabreo a la muerte de José Martí" 'Chatter on the Death of José Martí.'

There are statues of Martí not only in Havana's Parque Central, but in New York's Central Park, in the belly of the beast, a phrase to which he gave a vivid turn when he wrote "Viví en el monstruo, y le conozco las entrañas" 'I lived in the belly of the beast [i.e., the United States], and I know what its intestines are like' (Cartas escogidas 203).

Blanco received a similar honor in a land whose policies he opposed. During the Franco dictatorship, his statue was placed in Madrid's



Photo: Gail Rubman

Parque del Reitro, even though the poet was, according to Leoncio Pérez, “el mejor amigo de la República Española” ‘the best friend of the Spanish Republic.’ (217)

Both poets are so much a part of their national culture that what Ana Teresa Torres says about Venezuela,

dentro del circuito de lenguaje que recorre el discurso social, ni siquiera es necesaria la lectura de un libro por el lector concreto para que ese libro sea leído. Citaré a Rómulo Gallegos y a otro que aún causará más espanto: Andrés Eloy Blanco. Es improbable que todos y cada uno de los ciudadanos de su generación los hayan leído, pero su obra los lee a ellos,

within the circuit of language described by social discourse, a book can be read without its having to have been read by any specific reader. I’ll cite Rómulo Gallegos and someone else even more startling: Andrés Eloy Blanco. It’s not likely that each and every citizen of their generation has read them, but those writers’ work reads those citizens, (57)

also is true for Cuba.

Blanco’s “Canto de España” won the Spanish Royal Academy’s prize for Hispanic American poetry in 1923 (Ramírez 29). Nonetheless, the poet once told Alí Ramos that a hit he got off the great Vidal López in an old-timers’ game “me enorgullece más que [ese poema]” ‘makes me prouder than [that poem does]’ (46), a remark similar to Robert Frost’s “Nothing flatters me more than to have it assumed that I could write prose—unless it be to have it assumed that I once pitched a baseball with distinction” (Selected Prose 87).

Blanco had played for Independencia and Samanes, teams so important in their day that the humorist Job Pim (Francisco Pimentel) lamented in “Batazos y pelotazos” ‘Hard-Hit and Hard-Thrown Balls’ that

los que en estas cosas somos legos

tenemos que apurar nuestra paciencia,
pues ya no se habla más que los juegos
de “Los Samanes” o el “Independencia.”

those of us who are unversed in these things
have to arm ourselves with patience, Since these
days no one talks about anything but the games
of the Samanes or Independencia. (Qtd in
Colmenares 206)

Martí never expressed an attitude towards baseball similar to Blanco's. Félix Julio Alfonso has to admit in his article “José Martí y el juego de pelota en los Estados Unidos” ‘José Martí and Baseball in the United States,’ that he found no evidence that the Apostle had any enthusiasm for the game. Indeed, Jorge Febles writes, in his “Martí frente a dos deportes anglosajones: antagonismo conceptual y traducción hermética en algunas Escenas norteamericanas” ‘Martí and Two Anglo-Saxon Sports: Conceptual Antagonism and Hermetic Translation in Some of the “North American Scenes,”’ that on one occasion, Martí, whom Febles has shown to have relied on press reports for most of his knowledge about that aspect of American life,

castiga de esta suerte a un joven atleta que decide
desempeñarse como beisbolista profesional y a las
instituciones académicas que producen esta clase de
criaturas:

En muchas universidades es más la pompa
que la ciencia, y el pelotear que el leer, tanto
que se ha dado el deshonor de que un mozo
de prendas abandonase ya al acabar la aboga-
cía, porque “como abogado, habiendo tantos,
me espera mucha fatiga y poca paga; y de pelo-
tero, como que nadie coge la pelota del aire me-
jor que yo, me dan diez mil pesos al año.”

criticizes a young athlete who decides to become a pro-
fessional baseball player and the academic
institutions that produce this sort of creature.

In many universities, there is more concern for ceremony than for science and for baseball than for books, so much so that we have the dishonorable case of a promising young man who gave up a career in law upon completing his legal studies because “since there are so many lawyers, all I could expect was a lot of work and little pay, and, as a ball player, since no one can catch a fly ball better than I can, they give me ten thousand pesos a year.”³ (21.

³ Martí probably was referring to the Cuban peso, which was worth one US dollar.

This was not the only time Martí disparaged the disproportion between the salaries paid to baseball players and more respectable professionals. The previous year, he wrote another passage that Febles quotes. Dated New York, June 28, 1888, it reads,

hay peloteros que han dejado la universidad para pelotear como oficio, porque como abogados o médicos, los pesos serían poco y les costaría mucho trabajo, mientras que por su firmeza para recibir la bola de lejos, o la habilidad para echarla de un macanazo a tal distancia que pueda, mientras la devuelvan, dar la vuelta el macanero a las cuatro esquinas del cuadrado en que están los jugadores, no solo gana fama en la nación, enamorada de los héroes de la pelota, y aplausos de las mujeres muy entendidas en el juego, sino sueldos enormes, tanto que muchos peloteadores de éstos reciben por sus dos meses de trabajo, más paga que un director de banco, o regente de universidad, o secretario de un departamento en Washington.

there are ballplayers who have dropped out of college in order to play ball as a profession because, as doctors or lawyers, the pay would be poor and the work, much harder, while, with their ability to catch a fly ball or to hit it with one swing of the bat so far that, while the ball is being returned, the swinger can run around the four corners of the square on which the players are positioned, they not earn not only fame in this baseball-loving nation and applause from the women who are very knowledgeable about the game, but enormous salaries, so much that for their two months of work they get more pay than a bank director, a university regent, or a cabinet member in Washington.

The quotation is from an article Martí published in *La opinión pública* of Montevideo in 1889.)

It is hard to determine the identity of the young man who preferred sports to torts as a way of earning a living, since \$10,000 is an unlikely salary for any rookie ball player to have received before the last quarter of the twentieth century. Indeed, it was more than any player could expect to earn in the 1880s. Cap Anson, “the game’s first true superstar” (Pietruszka, Silverman, and Gershman), was player-manager of the Chicago White Stockings in 1883 when he refused to let his team play against the Toledo Blue Stockings if Moses Fleetwood Walker, the African-American catcher from Oberlin College were allowed to take the field for Toledo (Zang 39). The next year, Anson’s salary was \$2,500 (Seymour 117).

To get an idea of what these figures meant to the players who received them, consider the case of Sid Farrar, an infielder for the Philadelphia Phillies, also known as the Quakers, from 1883 through 1890. Farrar’s daughter

had a fine voice but needed expensive lessons. Ballplayers not being that well paid in those days, and used tinfoil having some resale value, his teammates began to save tinfoil from wrappers.

I already have quoted Babe Ruth on Japanese cultural anthropology. He was a sharp observer of economic reality. This is how his wife, Claire Ruth, describes a conversation the Bambino had with his employer:

In the course of negotiating the 1932 contract, the Colonel said, “Ruth, last year you made more money than President . . . Hoover.”

The Babe’s reply was brief: “I had a better year . . . than Hoover had.” (83)

Although Ruth’s reply to Col. Ruppert doesn’t provide a complete refutation of Martí’s criticism of America’s priorities as expressed in its salary scales, the Babe really did have a better year than the Great Engineer.

Soon other teams and then people from outside baseball began to contribute tinfoil, and Geraldine Farrar got the lessons she needed to become one of America's first great opera singers. (Zoos and Bowman 376)

At whatever salary and Fleetwood Walker notwithstanding, not many college men played professional baseball in the 1880s.⁴ We already have come across two of them, John Montgomery Ward and his teammate on the New York Gothams Jack Humphries.

Ward, a graduate of The Agricultural College of Pennsylvania (later to become Pennsylvania State University) and already a star, received a salary of \$3,000 for the 1883 season (Baseball Almanac). In the off-seasons, he was a student at Columbia University's law school, from which he would graduate in 1885 (Voigt 156). In 1888, he held out for and received a raise to \$4,000. Ward's legal training helped him found the Players' League, in which the players received a share of the profits and which lasted for just one season, that of 1890.

According to Florence Yost Humphries, her husband

was "much criticized, not to say berated," by his university peers for his career choice. But he insisted baseball would be a pleasant way to earn a living. (McDonald)

For all the Apostle's puritanical disdain for baseball, it seems he was not above using the game's popularity and the financial benefits attendant on it to further the cause of the Cuban revolution. González Echevarría reports that

⁴ Bill James, in his *Historical Baseball Abstract*, notes that in

the middle part of the decade [of the 1890s] an educated element was filtering into the game; by 1900, there were a good many college players in the majors. When the Western League/American League went for major league status as a "clean" league [in 1901], this element was very attractive to many players, [sic] and helped the league to acquire the quality of players they [sic] needed to establish credibility. (41-42)

proceeds from games in Havana and Key West went to the revolutionary cause. In fact, one of the most influential figures in Cuban baseball, Agustín (Tinti) Molina . . . once hit a decisive homer in a game against an American squad with Martí in attendance. The revolutionary asked to meet the triumphant athlete, and Molina says that Martí told him that the victory in baseball was a good omen for the cause of independence. (Pride 83)

Thus, even if Martí wasn't, like Blanco, "the perfect person to connect baseball with the spirit of national unity evoked by the victory" of a baseball team (Jamail, Venezuelan Bust 14), both men appreciated the political value of the sport.

Venezuelan baseball has a history of solidarity with Cuban revolutionary movements. The

Carlos Manuel de Céspedes Baseball Club, named after a hero of Cuba's independence struggle against Spain [was founded in Venezuela in 1895. It was] "an all-star team that played exhibition games for the express purpose of raising revenue . . . to support the Cuban war effort," writes historian Louis Pérez. (Jamail, Venezuelan Bust 16)

Blanco's involvement in both left wing politics and baseball was an ongoing one. Chico Carrasquel describes his uncle Patón as having been "ligado a la resistencia contra Pérez Jiménez, incluso tuvo graves problemas por eso" 'linked to the resistance against [the dictator Andrés] Pérez Jiménez. He even had serious problems because of it' (23). Patón's circle of friends indicates the extent to which baseball and political struggle have been intertwined in the history of Venezuela, although just how far the pitcher's involvement in conspiratorial politics went is hard to determine.

Su casa en Monterrey, México, era centro de reunión de los adecos exiliados. Allí se reunían Rómulo Betancourt, Andrés Eloy Blanco, Raúl Leoni y otros a jugar domino. Por eso, aquí lo acusaron de estar implicado en las conspiraciones.

His house in Monterrey, Mexico, was the meeting place for the exiled members of the Democratic Action party. Rómulo Betancourt, Andrés Eloy Blanco, Raúl Leoni, and others met there to play dominoes. Because of that, people here accused him of being implicated in the conspiracies. (23-24)

Blanco's two fellow guests at Patón Carrasquel's home went on to become president of Venezuela. Another of that nation's presidents also has baseball connections. The list of members of the Venezuelan Sociedad por el análisis del béisbol e investigación de su historia published in the first, and—as far as I know-- only, issue of *Bate, guante y pelota: Análisis e historia 'Bat, Glove, and Ball: Analysis and History'* includes an ex-pitcher named Hugo Chávez, *that* Hugo Chávez.

Both González Echeverría and Carter have made valuable contributions to the study of the nexus between Cuba's struggle for nationhood, her literature, and baseball. Poetry, too, is a member of the wedding in Havana.

Two Gongorine Images, the Rumba, and Unbridled Lust

Humphries' initial musings in "Polo Grounds" are followed by the description of a double play. Then comes the musical interlude. Blanco, once he has announced the canonical ceremony and its participants, turns his baseball field into a stage for singing and dancing.

[J]unto a la estrella de Cuba,
siete estrellas caminaron,
lanzaban "estráis" de espuma
las olas de Marianao;
La Habana "bateaba" rumbas,
Caracas "hiteaba" cantos
y cruzaban "fláis" azules
Santa Clara y Maracaibo.

Seven stars walked beside the star of Cuba. The waves of Marianao threw strikes of foam. Havana was

batting out rumbas while Caracas was hitting songs and Santa Clara and Maracaibo were criss-crossing fly balls of blue. (5-12)

The only female member of the wedding is the flag, and Blanco most likely chose it to play the role of the bride because *bandera* is a feminine noun. Everyone else, the pennant— whose phallic outlines disqualify it from bridehood—, the Cuban revolutionaries, Juan Bimbo, and Liborio, is male. We will have more to say later on about this single-sex arrangement.

The image of the eight stars— “the star of Cuba,” from that nation’s flag, and the seven from the Venezuelan flag of 1941 that accompany it—resumes the flag motif, and with it the emphasis on emblematic representation that opened the poem. These stars also are a pun on *estrella* ‘star,’ an outstanding player.

The relation of the walks taken by the seven Venezuelan stars to the events of October 22, 1941, is a tentative one; only four walks were issued in the play-off game, two by each team. More historically accurate are the strikes the Río Marianao throws.

That image is a strikingly effective one. Tropical Stadium, where the game was played, was in the Havana suburb of Marianao, a stone’s throw across the river of that name from the main part of town. (Although *estadio* is masculine, the ballpark was referred to as La Tropical, with the feminine definite article, because it belonged to the Cerveza Tropical brewery, and *cervecería*, ‘brewery’ is feminine). And what better image for a strike? The pitch, like the course of a river, moves downward, sometimes to the right or left, but always forward. The ball, like foam, seems evanescent to the batter who swings and misses. He fans, hitting nothing but air. The metaphor is apt, particularly for the work of Chino Canónico, who, his battery-mate told Alí Ramos, threw “Knuckle-ball, puro Knuckle-Ball.” (131) (In English, we usually say that a batter has fanned only after he’s struck out. In Spanish, the verb is used for any swing and miss).

The passage has a lexical similarity to Góngora’s second “Soledad,” where the poet links stars to foam to compare six Phaeacian women to the Nereids by calling them “del cielo espumas y del mar estrellas” ‘of

heaven foam and of the sea, stars' (215). The similarity between the two images is not merely a matter of diction. Blanco's trope is, like the foam, Gongorine in its baroque laciness.

Another felicity of Blanco's image is that the river's strikes of foam correspond to the rice that wedding guests toss at the bride and groom. Even without this correspondence, the poet must have been pleased with his linking of stars, river waters, and homeland, using it in the title of his famous "El río de las siete estrellas (Canto al Orinoco)," written the year after the "Romance."

This image of pitching— visual and almost tactile— is followed by images of hitting that, thanks to both their meaning and the exploding bilabial fricatives and *k* sounds that dominate their pronunciation, are powerfully auditory: "La Habana bateaba rumbas," "hiteaba;" "cantos" "cruzaban," and "Clara." Blanco's synthesis of batting and rumbas, achieved by his combination of verb and object, aestheticizes both. Like the striking image of the foam, the expression impresses us with the event it describes at the same time that it calls attention to itself as an esthetic device.

At first, Blanco's invocation of the rumba under tropical skies might seem like just another cliché about Romantic Cuba, similar to Max Gordon's lyrics that Carmen Miranda sings in the title song of the 1941 film *Week-End in Havana*, starring Alice Faye and César Romero: "How would you like to go where nights are so romantic, / Where stars are dancing rumbas in the sky-ay-ay?" (7-8)

The appeal of both the film and the song is unabashedly escapist, inviting us to free ourselves of our workaday obligations and routines.

Come and run away over Sunday
To where the view and the music is tropical.
You'll hurry back to your office on Monday,
But you won't be the same any more. (3-6)

But, those stars dancing rumbas in that sky are not offering some sort of extended coffee break to the harried office worker; the last line of the quatrain hints at that. Beneath the wholesome naughtiness that this

typical piece of Hollywood glamour offers us is an implied world of unbridled lust.⁵

González Echevarría illustrates the libidinous aspect of Cuban dance music hinted at by such artifacts as *Week-End in Havana*. In his excellent analysis of rumba, transgression, and baseball in the chapter of *The Pride of Havana* devoted to Adolfo Luque, from whose stateside nickname the book gets its title, González Echevarría writes that

in Cuba [Luque's] nickname was "Papá Montero," after a legendary Afro-Cuban rumba dancer and pimp originally from Sagua la Grande and celebrated in songs and poems. A popular rumba from the twenties sings of this legend's wake It is Eliseo Grenet's "Papá Montero," whose refrain is:

*A llorar a Papá Montero, zumba,
canalla rumbero.
Ese negro no llega al cielo, zumba,
canalla rumbero.*

Let's all weep for Big Daddy Montero,
zumba,
what a carousing bad dude.
That bad nigger won't go to heaven,
zumba,
what a carousing bad dude.

Luque was white, but it did not matter. Like Papá Montero he had *zumba*, an Afro-Cuban concept of Yoruba origin that is a kind of life force, including sexual prowess, aggressive-

⁵ The etymology of "glamour" reveals a certain maleficence lurking in the concept. In the eighteenth century, the word denoted a magic spell. In the nineteenth century, that meaning was modified to "magic beauty." Linguists will be enchanted by the word's morphological roots in "grammar." (Onions)

ness, and charisma. Montero is not without depth in Afro-Cuban lore.

Though it is not an uncommon name in Spanish, it means someone from the “Monte,” the hills or bush, abode of the gods in Afro-Cuban mythology. So Luque was incorporated into a lore that, although African in origin, was permeating, through music and popular religion, all of Cuban society [. . .]. This shows how baseball [. . .] dropped in social class only to become more widely accepted and ingrained in Cuban society

The connection of Luque with the rumba is very revealing in this respect. According to Emilio Grenet (Eliseo’s brother), the rumba is the most popular of Cuban musical genres, close to its African origin Nicolás Guillen, the leading poet of the Afro-Cuban movement, saw the pathos in Papá Montero’s figure and wrote a poem, “Velorio de Papá Montero” ‘Papá Montero’s Wake,’ which he published in his widely acclaimed 1931 *Sóngoro cosongo*. (145-146)

González Echevarría’s translation of “rumbero” is especially worth noting.

Tom Lasorda is more succinct and has less use for theoretical considerations. “Luque was” as far as the former manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers and pitcher for the Brooklyn Dodgers and Alacranes de Almendares ‘Almendares Scorpions,’ “the worst human being I have ever known.” (75)

In any case, the *rumbero* incarnated in Papá Montero is a far cry from the male characters in films like *Week-End in Havana*, where, as the great Mexican film scholar Emilio García Riera has it,

rubias [fueron] seducidas en *resorts* por un folclore “latino” higienizado . . . sus

galanes, *latin lovers* o no, pero siempre en *smoking* blanco, fueron Don Ameche, John Payne o César Romero.

blonde women [were] seduced in resorts by a sanitized “Latin” folklore . . . their leading men, Latin lovers or not, but always in a white tuxedo, were Don Ameche, John Payne, or César Romero. (Mexico visto 19)

In another of McFate’s tricks, the obituary in the *Los Angeles Times* for Romero accepts his claim that his

maternal grandfather was Jose Marti, the Cuban patriot and martyr for whom Havana's airport is named. The entertainer was the guest of honor in 1965 when New York unveiled its Central Park statue of Marti.

The displeasure that Hollywood’s presentation of a major Latin American capital city inspires in García Riera is evident in his choice of the word “resort,” (in English, no less!) and provides a measure of the abyss that separates the *luxe* of the Latin lover from the lust of the *rumbero*.

Although music is inherent in the texture of baseball and much American music has been written about the game, song and dance, music’s explicit forms, remain mere accompaniments to the experience of baseball north of the Rio Grande. Before the game starts, English-speaking public address announcers ask fans to join in the singing of the national anthem and, during the seventh-inning stretch, of “Take Me Out to the Ball Game.” Lloyd Johnson reports that the inauguration of the Union Grounds in Brooklyn on May 15, 1862, when a band played “The Star Spangled Banner,

marked the first time there was music at a ball game [in the United States]. The tune did not become the national anthem until Herbert Hoover signed it into law many years later. The song was not played exclusively in baseball [sic] until World War II, when patriotic fervor de-

manded it for every game. Other songs that were played at the start of ball games included “Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean.” (146)

The reliable Baseball Reference web adds,

On September 5, 1918, at Comiskey Park, the Red Sox and Cubs were playing the opening game of the World Series, which started earlier than usual due to World War I. During the 7th-inning stretch, a military band played "The Star Spangled Banner" and Fred Thomas, on leave from the Navy, snapped to attention. From then on, the song has been played at every World Series game, every season opener, and whenever a band is present to play it.

But, the entry adds, it was “the installation of public address systems [that made the] custom of playing [the song] before every game” practical.

But music remains a mainly passive experience for the fans in Anglophone stadiums, and until the last quarter of the twentieth century, when cavalry charges, chants, and players’ walk-up songs began to be blared over the stadium’s loud speaker system, the only music regularly played at the ball parks of the racially segregated all-white professional leagues was “The Star Spangled Banner” (or “O, Canada!”) and the contributions of a few house organists like Brooklyn’s Gladys Gooding. Gooding was a special case, as illustrated by her performance in 1942—her rookie year and the one in which “Polo Grounds” was written— of “Three Blind Mice” as the umpires took the field. (Scorecard) Pregame festivities, team parades, and the occasional eccentricity like Joe Engel’s arranging to have “The Old Pine Tree” played at his stadium in Chattanooga are another matter. Music was not an integral part of the experience in the games of what likes to call itself “organized baseball.”⁶

⁶ I have found little documentation of the role played by music in Negro League baseball. One student of the Negro Leagues, David Lawrence, has told me that they used music a means of luring paying customers into the ballpark, in contrast to what

Crowds didn't even start to sing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" until Harry Caray, then the Chicago White Sox' broadcaster, began leading them in 1976. (Smith 159) The inspiration for that tune, by the way, was an advertisement that appeared in the New York subway system in

happens in the Caribbean, where the game is experienced as a celebration, of which music is a part. In an e-mail he sent me on August 3, 2011, Lawrence added,

bands playing, parades, shadow ball [defined by *The Dickson Baseball Dictionary* as "A crowd-pleasing pantomime stunt in which a team played without the benefit of a ball. It called for a lot of action, including brilliant leaping catches, as players tossed an imaginary ball around the infield], staged foot races, comedy antics of various kinds—these are some of the ways in which Negro League baseball tried to combine entertainments in order to attract more customers.

We can get an idea of what it was like to be in the crowd at a Negro League game from Neil Lanctot's comments on "the sometimes disorderly atmosphere" (171) that attended it, but, as he says, "Rowdy fan behavior . . . was hardly limited to African Americans, as Organized Baseball contended with more than its share of drunken and disorderly male and female patrons." (171) On the field, the Negro League approach to the game was closer to that of the Latino players than to the whites'. Donn Rogosin says,

The story of the impact of Latin American baseball on the Negro leagues is the missing link in black baseball history. Not only was Latin America an enormously exciting place for the Negro leaguers to play baseball; more important, it was in Latin America that the critical groundwork for baseball integration occurred. In Latin America virtually every important defense of segregation was destroyed.

It was argued that blacks played an inferior brand of baseball. But in Latin America the Negro league style of play dominated the Latin American leagues. When the Yankees met Vargas in Caracas in March of 1947, Ray Dandridge, Bill Cash, Hilton Smith, an Lennie Pearson of the Negro league outperformed Rizzuto, Berra, and King Kong Keller. (175)

Ray Dandridge, by the way, was Dorothy's brother.

1908, urging that “customers take in a baseball game at the Polo Grounds.” (Lloyd Johnson 146) In the other putatively spontaneous musical outburst, the fans who sing “Sweet Caroline” in the eighth inning at Fenway Park wait until the stadium personnel gives them the signal to start by turning off the loud speakers that have been playing a recorded version of the song (Good Times).

There have been, however, occasional exceptions to the North American baseball fans’ aphonic state. One was Brooklyn’s Dodger Sym-phony, which Carl Prince calls “an amateur band, often described as dissonant, that haunted the park” (31) during the years that Gladys Gooding played the organ and Hilda Chester rang her cowbell at Charlie Ebbetts’ stately pleasure dome.

Today, live, spontaneous, fan-generated music is the exception in the United States and Canada. In Latin America, on the other hand, spontaneous music, especially dance music in the Afro-Caribbean tradition, is the rule. It permeates the baseball experience. Played in the stands by fans throughout the game, that music is integrated with and has a positive effect on the players’ performance. Helio Orovio, a Cuban writer, reports,

He hablado con peloteros y les he preguntado: “Chico, ¿a ti te estimula la conga en las gradas?” y me han dicho: “Claro, el equipo se crece el doble porque hay un ritmo musical que está de soporte al ritmo en que juegan, en que se proyectan los peloteros . . . [”].

. . . . Todo pelotero cubano es un rumbero o un sonero, y hoy sería en ese caso un salsero o un rapero.”

I’ve spoken with ball players and asked them, “Kid, does the conga in the stands stimulate you?” And they’ve told me, “Sure. The team doubles its efforts because there’s a musical rhythm that supports the team’s rhythm, that they throw themselves into . . . {”].

. . . . Every Cuban ball player is a *rumbero* or a

sonero ‘player, singer, or dancer of the *son*’ and today would be a rapper.

Indeed, when the side goes down 1-2-3 in a Latin American baseball game, *se cae a paso de conga*, ‘it goes down to a conga beat,’ a locution Daniel R. Pichel attributes to the journalist, broadcaster, and Vice President of the Panamanian National League, Arqímedes “Fat” Fernández.

In an article published in *Poetry* magazine, Fernando Pérez, a native of New Jersey whose parents were born in Cuba, describes what it’s like to play ball in Venezuela, where the rumba has many of the same social connotations as it does in on the island.

At the ankles of the Avila Mountain amongst a patch of dusky high-rises, the downtown grounds of el Estadio Universitario packed beyond capacity are ripe for a full-bodied poem. A mere pitching change is an occasion “para rumbiar,” and the purse-lipped riot squad is always on the move with their spanking machetes swinging from their hips. The game isn’t paced necessarily by innings or score. It’s marked by the pulsating brass drums of the samba band that trail bright, scantily-clad, head-dressed goddesses strutting about the mezzanine. The young fireworks crew stand mere feet from flares that don’t always set out vertically, sometimes landing in the outfield still aflame. “The wave” includes heaving drinks into the sky.

The band may play sambas, but the rowdy atmosphere is described by the verb *rumbiar*, ‘to rumba.’ At the close of his rumba “Cachita,” the Puerto Rican composer Rafael Hernández advises

El que tenga algún pesar,
que se busque su Cachita
y le diga, ven negrita,
vamos a rumbiar.

If anything’s weighing someone down, let him

go out and find his sweetie and tell her, “Come over here, my little black girl, let’s go out and *rumbiar*.”

When Hernández composed that song in Cuba, he named it “Rumba para una virgen,” dedicating it to the Virgin of de la Caridad del Cobre ‘The Virgen of Charity of El Cobre’, Cuba’s patron saint, whose devotees call “Cachita” as a term of endearment (López Ortiz). Although the word is the diminutive of *cachas* ‘buttocks,’ its use in this context implies no disrespect. Even with its secular title, the music of “Cachita” shows that the fervor of *zumba* and the devotion of a canonical ceremony are not mutually exclusive. (St. John of the Cross wrote the extremely sensual “Cántico espiritual,” based on the biblical and similarly sensual “Song of Songs” to celebrate the mystic union of Christ and the Church). The exuberance of the rumba, like intense mysticism, annihilates conventional limits and distinctions. Indeed, as “Cachita” itself proclaims, “Para la rumba no hay frontera” ‘The rumba knows no boundaries.’

One of Hernández’s compositions occupies a prominent place in Venezuelan baseball history. After the *Aguilas del Concordia* ‘Concordia Eagles’ lost their opening game in the 1932 season, a sportswriter said that the team was *buche y pluma*, a reference to Hernández’s hit song “*Buche y Pluma Na’ Más*,” which takes its title from a colloquial expression meaning “without substance,” like a stuffed owl, which is nothing but a beak ‘buche’ and feathers ‘plumas.’ Colonel Gonzalo Gómez, the team’s owner and son of the dictator Juan Vicente Gómez, was so stung by this criticism that he

decidió colocarle en el pecho del uniforme de su club la famosa expresión cubana. A partir de entonces y por el resto del campeonato, los peloteros del Concordia lucieron en su flamante uniforme la humillante frase de ¡Buche y Pluma!

decided to put the famous Cuban expression on the front of his club’s uniform. From then until the end of the season, the flashy uniform of the Concordia players blazed forth the humiliating phrase “All bark and no bite!” (González 47)

The role of music in Latin American baseball is more comprehensive

that these few examples indicate. The Afro-Puerto Rican Víctor Pellot Pove, known in the States as Vic Power, never hid his fondness for Cadillacs and white women (including his blonde Puerto Rican wife). Indeed, this fondness, which exacerbated the racial stereotyping that saw a Papá Montero in every black man, probably was a factor in the decision of the New York Yankees, whose treatment of Power indicates that they considered him a *canalla rumbero*, to trade him to the Philadelphia Athletics in 1954 rather than promoting him to the major leagues.⁷ Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá, however, does not compare him

⁷ Both Miñoso and Pellot Power were the living embodiment of Anasi, the trickster figure of the West African oral tradition. Miñoso's "nocturnal ramblings" led Warren Brown to call him "O Restless Mino." (Minnie's full name was Saturnino Orestes Arrieta Armas Miñoso, Orestes Miñoso for short). Once, when the player returned to the team hotel after 7:00 in the morning, he explained to his irate manager, Al López, known as El Señor, "Oh, Señor, I'm just coming back from 6:00 Mass." (Bill Gleason, qtd in Miñoso and Fagen 62_

Pellot Power showed wit and grace in the way he handled the racism he encountered in the States. He told John Krich that, when was hauled into court for jaywalking in a southern city,

a judge, a white judge, he wanna put me in jail. He ask me how I plead, "Guilty or innocent?" I tol' him, "Mister Judge, I innocent." He ask me, "Why you innocent? An' I say, "Well, listen, I'm a Puerto Rican. I came here to the South. I don't know nothing about the South. I was in the street, I try to get in a restaurant, I see a sign that say For Whites Only. I try to get in a bar an' the bar say For Whites Only. I keep walking an' try to get in a movie house an' they say For Whites Only. Then I walk to the end of the sidewalk an' I see a bunch of white people an' they went by when the green light was on. Then I stop. An' when the red light was on I pass. An' the policeman caught me. I thought that the red light was for colored only!" (86)

When Power became the only man ever to steal home twice in one game, a reporter asked him,

"How you do it? You not supposed to be fast, you a fat man, you a big man, you not supposed to steal base!" He asked a silly question. So I tol' him, you know. "If it was daytime, they could have caught me. But it was a night game. Nobody saw me coming in." (Qtd in Krich 87)

with Papá Montero. Rather, he says, “Así como hizo Pablo Casals con el cello, Pellot hizo con la primera base; al desempeñarse en ésta fue el inventor de su gracia y su lirismo” ‘What Pablo Casals did with the cello, Vic Power did with first base, where his performance invented its grace and lyricism’ (9).

Elaborating on this comparison between the Catalan-Puerto Rican cellist and the Afro-Puerto Rican infielder hasn’t done justice to the latter, Rodríguez Juliá adds, “Su estilo de juego sería barroco, excesivo, rumboso, afrocaribeño, como influenciado por los mambos de Pérez Prado.” (9-10) ‘His playing style would be baroque, excessive, boisterous, Afro-Caribbean, as if influenced by Prez Prado’s mambos’. After all, grace and the life force are not mutually exclusive. Pellot Power had both grace and *zumba*. Indeed, *zumba* is a type of grace, Dionysian grace.

While Pellot Power performed his intricate counterpoints at first base, the Yankee manager, Casey Stengel, sent Bill Skowron, who took over the position that would have been Power’s, “to the Arthur Murray

The white pitcher Jim Bouton recounts a satiric dialogue he had with his African-American friend Tommy Davis in 1969 after another black player had told Davis that, after he retired, the only job baseball would offer him would be “a scouting job in Watts, someplace.”

I started doing a general-manager bit, giving Tommy Davis his instructions. “Now, Tom, you have to make sure to sign the right kind of colored guy. You know what I mean? None of that rabble-rousing.”

“It’s not ‘colored’ now, Marvin, it’s ‘black,’” Tommy said.

“Yeah, well, you know what I mean. I don’t have to tell you. The right kind of kid. Can he laugh? Can he dance? Find out if he knows how to shuffle. We don’t want any of that Vic Power shit.”

“I know just what you mean,” Davis said. “I know just what to look for. I won’t give you any trouble.” (263)

dance studio . . . three nights a week to learn to shift [his] legs” (Skowron qtd. in Berklow and Kaplan 76). This contrast in playing styles validates Rafael Hernandez’s boast in the opening lines of “Cachita” that “la rumba caliente es mejor que el fox” ‘the hot rumba’s better than the fox trot.’

Even without Blanco’s reference to the rumba, Santa Clara and Maracaibo’s criss-crossing fly balls would bear a similarity to that dance. Percussion lies at the heart of the art of the outfielder and of the *rumbero*. Writing on music and baseball, Bernabé Figueroa Williams, AKA Bernie Williams, the classically trained Puerto Rican guitarist who hit for a respectable .297 batting average over sixteen seasons as the New York Yankees’ centerfielder, asks

if—from 350 feet away—you could recognize whether a ball is heading for the left-field bleachers or for a loop single to right—all from listening and paying attention to the repertoire of songs that baseball bats sing. (Williams, Gluck, and Thompson 101)

He answers this rhetorical question,

if you can train your ears to discern the differences in musical “timbre,” those same ears can also be used to discern the differences in “timber”—as in the sound that a wood bat makes when it comes into contact with a baseball. (102)

The rumba, as Helio Orovio reminds us in his *Cuban Music from A to Z*, is “a musical and song genre, driven by drums.”

Sensual music has been a part of Latin American baseball from the start. As Blanco Echevarría acutely observes in his article “Literatura, baile y béisbol, ” published in revised form in *The Pride of Havana as “A Cuban Belle Époque”*), “Como el danzón, el béisbol [del siglo xix] contenía una carga erotica considerable, y como el baile—y aliado a él—facilita el encuentro de jóvenes que llegarían a constituir parejas, convirtiéndose en una especie de rito prenupcial” ‘Like the danzón, [nineteenth-century] baseball contained a considerable erotic charge and, like the dance—and allied with it —facilitates the encounter of youngsters who will evolve into couples, thus becoming a sort of prenuptial rite.’ (38)

In Humphries' poem, the music inheres in the events described. The poet uses technical musical terms—"crescendo," "obbligato," "staccatos"—that indicate the musical nature of the game, wherever it is played. Blanco, on the other hand, uses music to convey the particular verve with which the game is played in the Caribbean. He refers to the rumba, a particular, ethnically and sexually charged dance form that helps convey the specific style and sexual energy the players bring to the playing field. (It is ironic example of Blanco's tendency to de-emphasize the factual that he chooses a the rumba, an Afro-Cuban art form—however popular among whites—, to characterize a team that had only one black player, Rafael Villa Cabrera, on its roster).

While Humphries uses fly balls to develop the theme of death and resurrection, Blanco's association of the rumba with *fláis* uses them to develop the complimentary theme of sex.

The Games Goya Plays: More on Rampant Lust

Blanco's use of the imperfect tense indicates that the festival of fly balls occurs while the crowd is filtering into the ballpark.

Vienen Bimbas y Liborios
rematando el festival

Bimbas and Liborios arrive, wrapping up
the festivities. (19-20)

That is, the balls are being hit during batting practice, which means that the poem, after metaphorically characterizing the events of the afternoon, establishes an initial rough chronological correspondence between itself and the game.

By using Juan Bimba's last name alone to refer to the Venezuelans present, Blanco feminizes them. Blanco's diction has other effects.

Although Juan Bimba is used as a symbol of the Venezulean common people, even appearing as an insignia of Acción Democrática, the party Blanco helped to found, Luis Loreta traces the use of "Juan Bimba" to an article by the journalist Juan Vicente González, who uses the

expression to mean “tonto, mentecato” ‘stupid, foolish’ (64). Venezuela, whose name means “Little Venice,” has a significant population of Italian origin, and so, whether or not “Juan Bimba” has an Italian etymology, the resemblance it bears to the Italian word for child, *bimbo*, -a, is enough to give rise to negative associations when referring to an adult. “Bimbo” also is pejorative in the United States, referring to either a contemptible man or a “promiscuous or unintelligent young woman.” (Lighter) We feel-- influenced perhaps, by cross-linguistic contamination but also by the word’s history in Venezuela--the subliminal undertone of festive derision, as we do when reading the earlier reference to baseball bats and rumbas, reminiscent of the bawdy comments frequently heard at wedding celebrations.

“Bimba” has another connotation that the contemporary Spanish-speaker cannot shake, even though its origin is after Blanco’s poem The Mexican bakery Bimbo, is a large international concern. (In Spain, sliced bread is known as “pan bimbo”). The brand name may be innocent, but the company isn’t above advertising at baseball games by hiring scantily attired busty models, the much admired Chicas Bimbo, to serve as human billboards.



Photo: Gail Rubman

Batting practice, when the players concentrate on hitting and the crowd pays only cursory attention, is the part of the game that most resembles what happens in the Goya cartoon I mentioned in my discussion of the royal badminton game Blanco uses in his welcoming speech.

Janis A. Tomlinson’s analysis of that cartoon helps us understand that the worlds of the Madrid fair and the Tropical Stadium are not very far apart. She observes that the

juxtaposition of *The Ball Game* to the other main scenes [of Goya's cartoon series] forces the viewer to appreciate the eroticism underlying their apparent narrative, transforming the fair [they illustrate] into bedchamber fare.

[Goya's] invoice of 21 July 1779 describes the scene as "a ball game, three against three, and to see them play are twenty-five figures on the sidelines in various postures among those that constitute the principal group, one is smoking, others discussing the game, and another pointing to the ball about to be served." Set before the haphazardly scattered players in the middle distance, the foreground spectator parallel to the picture assumes a special significance. Use of bright red signals three foci within the group: the batter on the left, the central, hulking *majo*, and the group on the far right. The lateral figures direct our gaze not toward the game, but to the central seated *majo*, who shows little interest in the play, turning instead to look out, becoming a spectator of those viewing the tapestry from within the bedchamber. Intimidating in stature, he is enframed by a mound of pastel capes to the right and by the pointing figure on the left; we are compelled to examine his figure more closely. With his right hand he raises a coarse black stogie to his mouth, while his left arm is prominently and unnaturally twisted outwards, drawing attention to the hand resting in his lap. Upon closer inspection, we blush to find that his fingers encircle a second cylindrical shape But it is not a cigar. Although the form is blurred, the suggestion remains lucid: This spectator ignores the game to exhibit his own sporting equipment. It is no wonder that [Gregorio Cruzada] Villaamil referred to these spectators as "curious." Goya's visual pun corresponds to the double meaning of the word *pelota*, which means ball, as in

the cartoon's title . . . or, when used colloquially, might refer to the testicles. The compositional dichotomy of the scene, which gives equal emphasis to the game and to the spectators, is explained when we discover that each axis represents a separate *juego de pelota*. (89-90).

That *bate* and *batear* have entered Venezuelan slang meaning “penis” and “to copulate,” respectively (Colmenares del Valle, *Productividad* 112) adds spice the passage in the “Romance” that led us to these observations. Indeed, the suggestive use of the words denoting the tools of the baseball player's trade have their place in a tradition that includes Góngora, or at least a poet whose work has been attributed to him—in this instance, it makes no difference—and Wenescalo Gálvez y Delmonte's quip about the virility of the bat and ball.

Tomlinson quotes a poem she categorizes as “ambitiously attributed to Góngora” (91), although José María Díez Borque, from whose *Poesía erótica: Siglos XVI-XX I* have taken the Spanish text, (204-205) dispenses with the dismissive adverb.

Como estaban solas
 pidióme Teresa
 que sacase apriosa
 mi cayado y bolas.
 Quitéme el gabán,
 saquéle de grado,
 ¡Si me vieran, Juan,
 jugar del cayado!
 Ahorróse Inés
 de su ropa, y luego
 se comenzó el juego
 de uno y dos y tres.
 Di con ademán
 de muy enamorado.
 ¡Si me vieran, Juan,
 jugar del cayado!

Here is the translation Tomlinson provides, including the clarifications she provides within brackets:

Since they were alone
 Theresa asked me

to quickly take out [also, to serve as in a ball game]
my staff and balls.

I took off my coat
served it with pleasure
“Juan if they could see how
I play the staff game!”
Inés disposed
of her clothes
and the game began
by one, two, and three.
I gave in the manner
of one much in love.
“Juan if they could see how
I play the staff game!” (91-92)

(“One, two, three strikes, you’re out at the old ball game,” indeed).

Tomlinson uses cartoon’s physical context and linguistic contexts to drive home her point.

Hanging on the northern wall [of the bed chamber], *The Ball Game* would have faced *The Hose Seller* and *The Militar and the Lady* on the southern wall, and perhaps also the royal bed
The implicit relation of the sporting field depicted and the matrimonial bed demands no exegesis. (92)

This part of Tomlinson’s argument relies too heavily on the adverb “perhaps” to be entirely convincing. The other part is less tentative. She refers to the “all encompassing definition of *pelota*” in Nicolás Fernández de Moratín’s *Arte de las putas ‘The Whores’ Art’*, also known as the *Arte de putear ‘The Art of Whoring,’* which “leads us to suspect the integrity of many, if not all, of the extroverted women at the *feria* that Goya depicts (93).

For all her valuable observations, Tomlinson misses a curious detail in her astute analysis of *El juego de pelota a pala*. José Manuel Fernández of the Prado’s Commercial Service Department has pointed out to me that the face of the figure just behind and to the right of the spectator that Tomlinson describes is turned in the same direction as his buttocks. This literally pre-posterous posture may have been the result of some careless touching up by the painter, perhaps in a

botched attempt to censor what otherwise might have been the depiction of public urination. In any case, the figure's anatomical anomaly calls attention to his buttocks and ineluctably gives rise to the suggestion of Greek love.

A passage from the classic Greek theater merges the sport of wrestling with not just sex, but anal sex, a variety that, while not privative to male homosexuals, certainly is not confined exclusively to heterosexual couples (or trios, etc.). Marguerite Johnson and Terry Ryan's *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature: A Sourcebook* quotes a passage from Aristophanes' *Peace* (421 BC) that presents an encounter between a man and a woman in terms of wrestlers (both of whom would be men) and anal penetration.

Now that you have her, you can straightway conduct a
very nice athletic competition tomorrow:
wrestle her to the ground, set her on all fours,
throw her on her side, bent forward, onto her knees;
then, well oiled up for the pancration, [a form of no holds
barred wrestling]
strike out with vigour, fist burrowing in with the cock. (150-
151)

They comment in a helpful note to the fourth line, "The imagery . . . entails grasping her from behind, with rear entry intercourse implicit." Another note, which cites J. Henderson's *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Poetry*, yields the equation "'burrowing' = 'buggery'" (Both notes on 151).

We do not have to confine ourselves to the Greek classics, the school of Góngora, or to the implications of Goya's satirical painting when looking for evidence of the association between sport and illicit sex in art. The wrestling scene in the first "Soledad," which I compared with a similar one in *Women in Love*, shows that Góngora himself made the connection. R. John McCaw, in his article on sport in that poem, quotes Walter Pabst as saying,

Ni siquiera en la dura lucha de los jóvenes al final
de la *Soledad primera* abandona el poeta la sensu-

alidad de su mirada. Para mostrar el abrazo de los luchadores emplea ahora imágenes que antes aplicó a la union de los sexos

Not even in the hard-fought battle between the young men at the end of the “First Solitude” does the poet abandon the sensuality of his gaze. He now uses images that he earlier applied to sexual union to describe the wrestlers’ embrace (85)

In turn, the pervasive echoes of Góngora in Blanco’s poem add credibility to the suggestion that the union between the two teams in the “Romance” is sexual, and neither strictly matrimonial nor strictly heterosexual.

Some readers may have difficulties in relating Góngora and Blanco’s celebrations of marriage (and, therefore, sexual union) with such single-sex sports as wrestling and baseball. Yet Góngora’s wrestlers and the ballplayers all are men, as are Liborio and Juan Bimba, who, along with the Venezuelan flag and the championship pennant, integrate Blanco’s wedding party.

Nonetheless, those who would dismiss the suggestion that Blanco’s poem figures some sort of a same-sex marriage could bolster their argument by claiming that the controlling conceit of Blanco’s poem, the canonical ceremony celebrating union, is innocent, platitudinous even. They would consider my reading perverse and reject it for sullyng the wholesome brotherhood of sport. Since wrestling, which so obviously involves continuous physical intimacy, may be an exceptional case, I will try to refute those imagined objections by providing some examples of the presence of homosexuality in baseball, which is, after all, the sport that concerns us here.

To manichean thinkers, all transgressions are one. Moral absolutism like this, unpleasant as it may be, has a certain logical and psychological foundation. Once the libido breaks one of its bonds, the remaining restraints are weakened. The sinner no longer is someone who has deviated from one standard of prescribed behavior but as a deviant, capable on any and all evil. Perversity becomes

polymorphous. To this mindset, the sleep of reason breeds monsters; when nothing is forbidden, all is permitted.

This exaggerated and suffocating morality also has a foundation in etymology and literary history. As Ezequiel Alemian has pointed out in a review of Mauro Armiño's anthology *Cuentos y relatos libertinos* 'Libertine Stories and Tales,' the origin of the word *libertine* is *libertus*, the son of a newly-freed slave. "Nonetheless," Alemian continues,

son dos acepciones posteriores las que le dan su sentido más contemporáneo. Por un lado, el libertino es un libre pensador que cuestiona los dogmas establecidos; por el otro lado, es quien se entrega a los placeres sexuales rompiendo con la moral dominante.

two later meanings are the ones that give it its most contemporary sense. On the one hand, the libertine is a free thinker who questions established dogmas; on the other, it is he who abandons himself to sexual pleasures, breaking with the dominant morality.

Libertine literature does not confine its break with convention to its subject matter. In the same review, Alemian summarizes an essay by Patrick Wald Lasowski:

Lo que se pone en escena en el relato libertino, subraya . . . es una libertad de pensar y de actuar sorprendentemente renovadora. Se inventa una nueva clase de narración, que implica un tratamiento diferente del tiempo: estallan las formas, se mezclan los géneros, abundan los juegos de significantes, la intertextualidad.

What takes center stage in the libertine tale, he emphasizes . . . is a surprisingly renovating freedom to think and to act. A new type of narration is invented, one that implies a different treatment of time: forms explode, genres are mixed, games with signifiers abound, intertextuality.

This last paragraph cuts two ways. It reinforces the claim that the violation of one standard leads to the violation of all. It also indicates that there is a relationship between formal experimentation in literature and the liberating power of unorthodox forms of sexuality.

Although we already have seen sexual transgression in such peri-baseball works of art as the Goya cartoons, we need not rely on a unified theory of perversion or a domino theory of transgression to establish the presence of non-canonical love in Blanco's poem. Rather, we can look to some of Leslie Fiedler's trenchant observations about North American culture as well some specific facts about the history and literature of baseball in the Americas.

Fiedler makes those observations in his influential and revolutionary article that appeared in the June 1948 issue of the *Partisan Review*, bearing the provocative title of "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!" In it, he writes,

The existence of overt homosexuality threatens to compromise an essential aspect of American sentimental life: the camaraderie of the locker-room and ball park, the good fellowship of the poker game and fishing trip, a kind of passionless passion, at once gross and delicate, homoerotic in the boy's sense, possessing an innocence above suspicion. To doubt for a moment this innocence, which can survive only as *assumed*, would destroy our stubborn belief in a relationship simple, utterly satisfying, yet immune to lust; physical as the handshake is physical, this side of copulation. The nineteenth-century myth of the Immaculate Young Girl has failed to survive in any *felt* way into our time; rather in the dirty jokes shared among men in the smoking-car, the barracks, or the dormitory there is a common male revenge against women for having betrayed that myth, and under the revenge, there is the rather smug assumption of the chastity of the group as a masculine society. It is this self-congratulatory buddy-

buddiness, its astonishing naiveté, that breeds at once endless opportunities for inversion and the terrible reluctance to admit its existence, to surrender the last believed-in stronghold of love without passion. (665)

Fiedler's essay is, in its discussion of both race and sexuality, limited by its links to the time and place in which he wrote it, the United States of 1948, when many southern democrats bolted the national party for being soft of racial segregation and formed the States' Rights Democratic Party (commonly referred to as the Dixiecrats) to run in that year's elections. But, before we dismiss the applicability of Fiedler's observation to the racial situation in Cuba and Venezuela, we should hear what Miñoso has to say about it.

I get very annoyed when I hear tales of how Cuba was a sort of racial paradise, a country free from the segregation and discrimination practiced in the United States. This is complete nonsense. Discrimination and segregation were very much alive in the Cuba of my birth. There was a distinct difference, however. In the United States, there were laws sanctioning these practices. In Cuba conditions were more subtle, but just as real. (Miñoso and Fagen 17)

If racial discrimination didn't exist in Venezuela, the immense popularity of Blanco's "Píntame angelitos negros" with its sentimental plea,

Pintor nacido en mi tierra,
con el pincel extranjero,
pintor que sigues el rumbo
de tantos pintores viejos,
aunque la Virgen sea blanca,
píntame angelitos negros,

Painter born in my land, with a foreign brush,
painter who follows the steps of so many old
painters, even if the virgin is white, paint little

black angels for me, (15-20)

would be inexplicable.⁸

The similarities between the racisms of the two Americas at the time of Blanco's poems and Fiedler's essay are mitigated by the more nuanced taxonomy prevalent in Latin America, which allowed a blurring of racial distinctions. The old cliché is that a single drop of black blood made you black in the States while a single drop of white blood made you white in Latin America. Miguel Angel Asturias, in his introduction to the 1932 poetry reading that I quote in chapter 3, calls Blanco's skin "color moreno lavado" 'a washed-out brown color' (473). But, even though Spanish-speaking people say that misnaming something is like

⁸ We should not lose sight of the complexities and contradictions of racial attitudes in the individual baseball-playing nations of the Caribbean—especially when viewed by an outsider, no matter how sympathetic that outsider thinks he or she is—nor of the way those attitudes differ among the different countries in the region. Lorca wrote his parents from Havana in 1930,

Anteayer me ofrecieron un té las damas distinguidas de La Habana en un Lyceum Club. Allí vi las mujeres más hermosas del mundo. Esta isla tiene más bellezas femeninas de tipo original, debido a las gotas de sangre negra que llevan todos los cubanos. Y cuanto más negro, mejor. La mulata es la mujer superior aquí en belleza y en distinción y en delicadeza.

The day before yesterday, the distinguished ladies of Havana offered me a tea in the Lyceum Club. I saw the most beautiful women in the world there. This island has the most female beauties, of a type you won't see elsewhere, thanks to the drops of black blood in every Cuban's veins. And the blacker, the better. The mulatta is the superior woman here, in beauty, in distinction, and in delicacy. (Epistolario 686)

Yet Lanctot writes that, in 1942, the African-American pitcher Terris McDuffie "complained that [in Cuba] 'Negroes are segregated at the decent eating places and in the hotels because so many American white people are taking over.' McDuffie asserted that, in contrast, Puerto Rico {then unabashedly an American colony} was 'everything Cuba is not,' and other players viewed Venezuela in a similarly positive light." (163)

calling the black man John White ‘*llamarle al negro Juan Blanco*,’ I am unaware of anyone having considered Andrés Ely Blanco an Afro-Venezuelan.⁹

Latin American racial tolerance and mutability were, and still are, subject to their own turns of the racial screw. However emphatically the Nuyorican poet Pedro Pietri claims that in Puerto Rico, “Aquí to be called negrito / means to be called LOVE” (309-310), the question asked by the title and throughout the text of the Puerto Rican poet Fortunato Vizcarrondo’s famous “¿Y tu agüela, aónde ejtá?” ‘Where’s Your Granny?’ was asked throughout the Hispanophone Caribbean in the last century and probably still is. Here is how the poem, written in dialect, ends:

Ayé me dijite negro

⁹ In “El matrimonio de Andrés Eloy,” however, Miguel Otero Silva, combined race, Blanco’s name, and titles of his works in a series of puns celebrating the poet’s wedding, which occurred in 1944. I have italicized the references to Blanco’s poems.

Y aunque tu nombre sea Blanco,
verte con el tiempo espero
podado y con *Giraluna*
por las *tierras que te oyeron*,
floreando en tus cuatro razas
como florecó el *limonero*
con tus angelitos rubios,
con tus ángeles morenos,
con tus angelitos indios,
con tus *angelitos negros*
que vayan comiendo mango
de La Vega a Puente Hierro.

And although your name is Blanco, I hope in time to see you
pruned and with *Moonflower* in the *lands that heard you*,
flowering in your four races, the way the *lemon tree* flowered,
with your blonde angels, with your little brown angels, with
your little Indian angels, with your *little black angels* who
walk from La Vega to Puente Hierro eating mangos. (53-64)

Queriéndome abochoná.
 Mi agüela sale a la sala,
 Y la tuya oculta ejtá.

La pobre se ejtá muriendo
 Al belse tan maltratá.
 Que hajta tu perro le ladra
 Si acaso a la sala ba.

¡Y bien que yo la conojco!
 Se ñama siña Tatá . . .
 Po'que ej prieta de a beldá.

Yesterday you called me black, trying to make shame me. My granny's at home in the living room, and yours keeps herself hidden. The poor old lady's dying because you treat her so bad. Even your dog barks at her if she steps into the living room. But I know her real well. She's called Miz Tatá . . . because she's really and truly black! (34-45)

Perhaps, I should translate that last line, “she's truly and beautifully black,” because *beldá* the Puerto Rican working class way of pronouncing *verdad* ‘truth,’ combines that meaning with *beauty*.

In spite of the unambiguous racism prevalent in the States, Latin American players of African descent enjoyed a measure of extraterritoriality when playing here. The light-skinned Afro-Cuban Roberto Estalella played major league baseball between 1935 and 1949, “protected by the American confusion over race, color, and nationality before Jackie Robinson broke the color line” (González Echevarría 45), while the biracial Italian-American Roy Campanella was relegated to the Negro Leagues until the Brooklyn Dodgers' organization signed him in 1946 in the wake of the Jackie Robinson breakthrough. Still, Estalella's honorary Aryanism didn't protect him from the “steady stream of insults and beanballs” (Lanctot 213) directed at him by opposing players. That verbal and physical aggression was consistent with the level of acceptable discourse prevailing in the United States during the middle of the fifth decade of the twentieth century. Donn

Rogosin quotes the words Hall of Fame sportswriter Red Smith used to interpret Branch Rickey's assertion that Estalella's boss, Clark Griffith, had hired black Cubans to play for his team: "This seems to imply that there was a Senegambian somewhere in the Cuban batpile where Senatorial timber is stored." (160)

Amateur status, like racial classification, with which it was intimately involved, was a term of art. González Echevarría observes that in Cuba

There was . . . a kind of leveling, for in some realms there was a place where those players who ascended converged in the national mythology regardless of color. Cuban baseball was different from the American game and had a distinctive Cuban inflection, like Cuban music. Part of that inflection was a greater tolerance of racial differences But like all nationalisms, fables about the pan-Cubanness of baseball hid many contradictions, the most flagrant being the exclusion of blacks from amateur competition and therefore from national teams (Pride 169)

That the tournament was called the Amateur World Series gives the entire enterprise a fictional tinge that invites us to look at the subject of the "Romance" as something invented, even if we don't take the ludic—rule-bound and gratuitous, i.e., esthetic— nature of the game itself into account.

There is an interesting sidelight to the ambivalence between professional and amateur that plays an unexpected role in the "Romance." We already have seen the importance Blanco attributed to the Greek ideal of athletics. "The ancient Greeks," Allen Guttmann reminds us, "never distinguished between amateur and professionals" (526).

Just as racial categories are permeable in Latin America, the distinction between amateur and professional was subject to a great deal of, not necessarily disinterested, interpretation in the Amateur World Series. González Echevarría deals on pages 244-247 of *The Pride of Havana* with some of the difficulties in distinguishing amateur from

professional in the Cuba of the 1940s. In those pages, he also mentions that Mexico sent “a strong team that again included not a few professionals” to the 1943 Amateur World Series (247). Conrado Marrero says, “los equipos amateur de aquel entonces lo que hacían era buscarle un trabajo al pelotero (aunque éste nunca lo ejerciera . . .) y le pagaban un sueldo” ‘what the amateur teams did back then was to find the ball player a job (even if he never worked at it . . .), and pay him a salary’ (E-mail of 15 May 2010).

Jamail sums up the situation in Venezuela.

During the 1930s and early 1940s, the line was often blurred between professional and amateur players. The imported players were clearly professional. Some Venezuelans were paid, while others received a percentage of the ticket sales, and still others were given merchandise. (24)

Thus, it would be naïve to believe either team was composed exclusively of amateurs. At least three of the Venezuelans must have received one or more of the varieties of payment to which Jamail refers. *¡Play ball!*, Carlos Cárdenas Lares’s biography of the umpire Roberto “Tarzán” Olivo, mentions that Luis Romero Petit and Chucho Ramos had played on the 1940 Vargas team alongside both Ray Dandridge, now in the Cooperstown Hall of Fame, and Tetelo Vargas, one of the greatest stars of black and Latin baseball of the 1920s, ‘30s, and 40s, both professionals. Ramos and Pedro “Buzo” ‘The Diver’ Nelson were members of the professional Magallanes team that played a pre-tournament exhibition against the amateur selection on August 24, 1941 (Años dorados 349). Cárdenas Lares adds that Guillermo Ventos was a teammate of the legendary Josh Gibson on the 1940 Centauro team (84-85). Alí Ramos reports that Tarzan Contreras earned 400 bolívares in 1935 or 1936, dividing his time between the amateur La Guaira OSP team and the professional Santa María outfit (142). Abelardo Raidi, one of the team’s organizers, learned from his attendance at the 1940 Amateur World Series that “varios equipos llevaron jugadores profesionales” ‘various teams carried professional players’ on their rosters (Hazaña 19). It’s unlikely he forgot this lesson when he selected the players for the 1941 Venezuelan team.

In spite of the historical limitations of Fiedler's essay, manifested in his tendency to use the vocabulary of a straight white man when dealing with racial and sexual relationships, and his belief that dirty jokes somehow are a male revenge for the death of the "nineteenth-century myth of the Immaculate Young Girl"—a belief that would have us accept the dirty joke as a particularly twentieth-century phenomenon—what he has to say about the mythic nature of locker room innocence is both revealing and pertinent.

Before Weneslao Gálvez made his arch and ambivalent remark about the virile business of bat and ball, long before outfielder Billy Bean and umpire Ron Pallone came out of the closet, before plays like Richard Greenberg's *Take Me Out* dealt sympathetically with the problems of gay ballplayers, before Miguel Terry Valdespino and Francisco García González compiled their anthology of Cuban baseball stories, *Escribas en el estadio*, 'Scribes in the Stadium,' in which Félix Julio Alfonso López noted the presence of

un erotismo trasgresor, satírico, que pone en solfa estereotipos sociales muy arraigados, como la supuesta "hombría" de ese macho por definición que es el pelotero.

a transgressive, satirical eroticism that makes deeply rooted social stereotypes, like the supposed "manliness" of that *macho* by definition who is the baseball player look ridiculous, (Juego)

Walt Whitman, was enjoying baseball. Beyond the game's inherent virtues, there was, as Ed Folsom observes, an

aspect of baseball behavior that would have appealed to Whitman . . . when he was writing his *Cadmus* poem, and that is the sport's sanctioning of open expressions of male-male affection. Early baseball clubs were very close fraternities, sites of intense male bonding. Descriptions of early games often includes mention of a physical and spiritual closeness among players This tendency of players to express their camaraderie

in physical terms would have struck Whitman, of course, as a healthy sign of the kind of intense friendship . . . that he believed had to evolve in America to “offset . . . our materialistic and vulgar American democracy.” (39)

Fiedler finds the unrecognized myth of inter-racial homoerotic escape in

Melville and Twain at the center of our tradition, in the lesser writers at the periphery . . . Nigger Jim and Queequeg make concrete for us what was without them a vague pressure upon the threshold of our consciousness; the proper existence of the myth is in the realized character, who waits, as it were, only to be asked his secret. Think of Oedipus biding in silence from Sophocles to Freud.

Unwittingly we are possessed in childhood by the characters and their indiscriminated meaning, and it is difficult for us to dissociate them without a sense of disbelief. What! these household figures clues to our subtlest passions! The foreigner finds it easier to perceive the remoter significance; D.H. Lawrence saw in our classics a linked mythos of escape and immaculate male love; Lorca in *The Poet in New York* grasped instinctively the kinship of Harlem and Walt Whitman, the fairy as bard. (669)¹⁰

¹⁰ In his “Oda a Walt Whitman,” Lorca has a vision of “viejo hermoso” ‘handsome old’ (29) Whitman) with his “barba llena de mariposas” ‘beard full of butterflies’ (30) — an uncomplimentary term in Spanish for gay or effeminate men—, the

enemigo del sátiro,
enemigo de la vid
y amante de los cuerpos bajo la burda tela.

enemy of the satyr, enemy of the vine, and lover of the bodies
beneath the coarse cloth. (37-39)

The Spanish poet contrasts the pansexual American bard, who called himself “liberal and lusty as Nature” (To a Common Prostitute I) to the debased examples of sexuality provided by civilization.

Por eso no levanto mi voz, viejo Walt Whítman,
 contra el niño que escribe
 nombre de niña en su almohada,
 ni contra el muchacho que se viste de novia
 en la oscuridad del ropero,
 ni contra los solitarios de los casinos
 que beben con asco el agua de la prostitución,
 ni contra los hombres de mirada verde
 Pero sí contra vosotros, maricas de las ciudades,
 de carne tumefacta y pensamiento inmundo,
 madres de lodo, arpías, enemigos sin sueño
 del Amor que reparte coronas de alegría.

Contra vosotros siempre, que dais a los muchachos
 gotas de sucia muerte con amargo veneno.
 Contra vosotros siempre,
 Faeries de Norteamérica,
 Pájaros de la Habana,
 Jotos de Méjico,
 Sarasas de Cádiz,
 Ápios de Sevilla,
 Cancos de Madrid,
 Floras de Alicante,
 Adelaidas de Portugal. (92-114)

Humphries’ translation, published in *The Poet in New York and Other Poems of Federico García Lorca*,

So, ancient Walt Whitman, I do not lift my voice
 Against the boy who writes
 A girl’s name on his pillow;
 Against the fellow who dresses himself as a bride
 In the darkness of the wardrobe
 Nor against the solitaires of the dance halls
 Who drink and loathe the waters of prostitution,
 Nor against the men of greenish look
 Who love mankind and burn their lips in silence,
 But against you, perverts of the cities,
 Of swollen flesh and filthy thought,
 Mothers of mud. Harpies. Sleepless foes
 Of love that gives garlands of happiness.

It isn't easy to tell where intense friendship ends and physical intimacy begins or what place "immaculate male love" occupies along the spectrum that includes the three terms. I am not aware of any reports that the relationship between Smokey Joe Wood and Tris Speaker, inseparable friends and two of the greatest players of the first third of the twentieth century—as well as racial and religious bigots—(Whalen 69,70,78,89) was anything but heterosexual in its physical manifestations. But if you were to write a novel about a closeted baseball player, there are some incidents from Smokey Joe's life you would want to include.

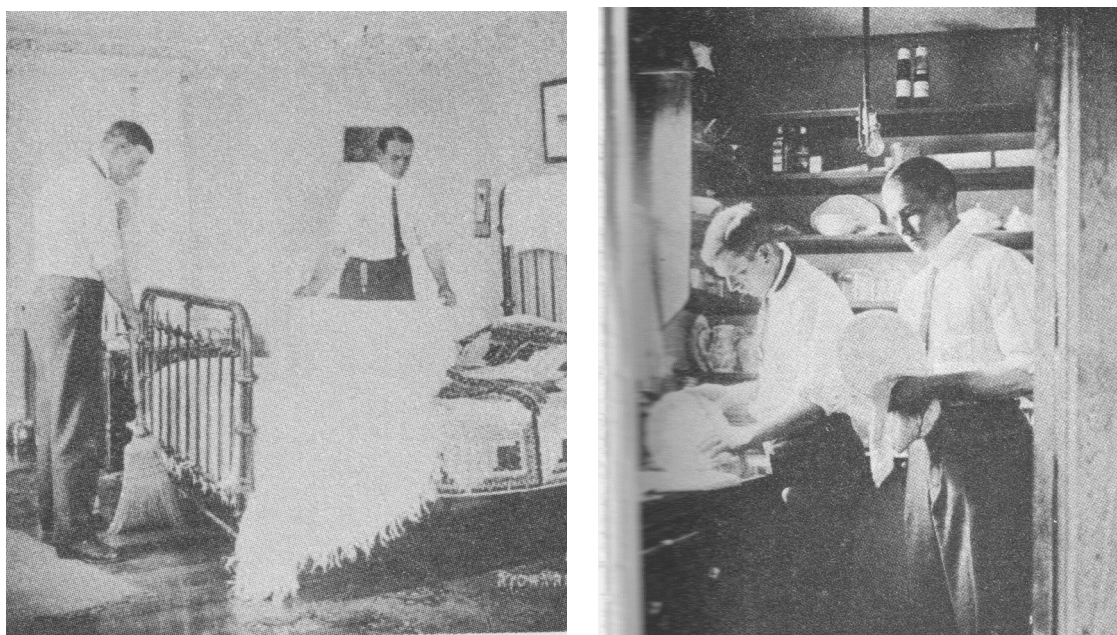
Wood began his professional career in 1906 with the Bloomer Girls, a barnstorming team consisting of four men and five women, all in female attire. When invited to join the team, Wood told the manager, "If you think I'm going to put a wig on, you're crazy." The manager answered, "With your baby face you won't need one anyway" (Wood qtd. in Ritter 157). Ken Berg claims that Joe never wore a wig while playing for the Bloomer Girls but bases this claim on the rhetorical question, "What young boy in Kansas, or anywhere, would wear a girl's wig?" (5), as if Woods' three male teammates weren't the answer to that question.

Against you always, when you give to boys
 Drops of dirty death and bitter poison,
 Always against you, by whatever name,
Fairies or *birdies*, *stalks of celery*,
Floras or *Adelaides*, in Mexico,
 In North America, or in Havana,
 In Cadiz, in Seville, or in Madrid,
 In Alicante or in Portugal. (92-112)

gets around the difficulties poised for the translator by Lorca's list of synonyms for "fairies," but at the cost of losing the Whitmanesque feel provided by the Spaniard's catalogue of opprobrium.

By 1908, he was pitching in the major leagues with the Boston Red Sox. Early in the next season, he hurt his foot “in a mock tussle with his best friend [and career-long roommate,] Tris Speaker,” (Berg 17) causing the pitcher to miss at least a dozen starts. I use “roommate” in a loose way; the two men roomed together on the road and shared a house when the team was not at home.

Photographs of the couple’s domestic arrangements raise eyebrows today but might not have if they had been published when they were taken. Unfortunately, I have not seen any documentation to verify either conjecture.



Both photos probably by Boston photographer Richard W. Sears. © holder unknown.

In pointing out these details about Joe Wood and his friend, I am not engaging in the doubtful enterprise of posthumously outing the two men. Rather, I want to indicate the markers of a homoerotic relationship in their well-known friendship, markers that seem not to have caused much—if any—comment in their day. If there had been any, such comment would have been easy to dismiss by appealing to “the camaraderie of the locker-room and ball park.”

Unlike Wood’s closeness with Speaker, Minnie Miñoso’s locker room behavior seems not to have become public knowledge until the appearance of Chico Carrasquel’s memoirs. The implications of his

account of Miñoso's antics a decade after players from their two countries faced each other in the fourth Amateur World Series are unmistakable.

Miñoso se ufanaba de tener un miembro muy grande y los que han estado en un vestidor cuando él sale de la ducha saben que no le faltan razones. En la época del racismo más violento, Miñoso salía desnudo, se ponía el miembro hacia atrás, como una cola, y hacía la imitación de un mono. Era una broma pero a la vez un desafío, era como si dijera: soy un mono ¿verdad? miren al mono, aquí en medio de todos ustedes, blancos de pipí chiquito.

Miñoso was proud of having a very large member, and anyone who has been in a locker room when he came out of the showers knows he had every right to be. In an age of the most violent racism, Miñoso would come out of the showers naked, push his member backwards, so it looked like a tail, and imitate a monkey. It was a joke but at the same time a challenge. It was as if he said, "I'm a monkey, right? Look at the monkey, here, right in the middle of you white guys and your little weenies." (62-63)

The camaraderie of this locker room certainly doesn't possess an innocence above suspicion. Miñoso's flaunting of his virility, with its tacit taunt— "Don't you wish your organ were as big as mine?" — is a psychological version of male on male rape; his phallic calisthenics aggressively and graphically proclaim, "fuck yourselves" to his teammates.

Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá describes the behavior of a visitor to the clubhouse of the 1995 Puerto Rican "dream team" at the Caribbean Series. The visitor enjoys the atmosphere of the locker room

con un deleite casi adolescente. Le va repitiendo a los distintos peloteros: ¿Tú usas esas lentes de contacto o es que tienes esos ojos tan

bellos?” . . . La mariconería de *locker room*, de camerino oliente a suspensorio, es una variante de ese machismo atávico, que encandila hasta obviar el hecho de que se trata de un chiste mingo Es como si . . . estuviera repitiendo: *I can afford it*, puedo bromear así porque nadie tiene dudas sobre mi hombría. Que nadie se equivoque . . . Como ustedes bien saben lo que hay, aquí tienen esto . . .

with an almost adolescent delight. He goes around repeating to the different players, “Do you use contact lenses or do you just have pretty eyes?” . . . The locker room faggotry, redolent of jock straps, is a variety of that atavic *machismo* that illuminates to the point of irrelevance the fact that this is a lame joke It’s as if [he] were repeating, “I can afford it,” I can make jokes like this because no one can doubt my manliness. Make no mistake about it: since all of you know damn well what’s up, take a look at this . . . (73)

What sort of manliness requires the counterpoint of effeminacy to affirm its existence? The ostentation—the campiness— of the visitor’s mock disdain for the traditional trappings of masculinity betrays his underlying anxiety. It makes real the metaphor of the deprecatory epithet “jock sniffer.”

Immediately after his comments on this exhibition, Rodríguez Juliá reflects on race, *machismo*, and homophobia in the baseball culture of his homeland. The easy transition from the description of aggressively mocking pseudo-gay behavior to the in your face social and sexual ostentation of Rubén Sierra, in whom Rodríguez Juliá finds it “fácil reconocer cierta jacquetonería” ‘easy to recognize a certain bullying bravado’ (73), is an indication of the hollowness of both impersonations. Rodríguez Juliá’s treatment of Sierra presents a dialectic of pride and insecurity.

El pelotero “natural” por antonomasia, al menos de su generación, con la belleza de un Clemente que se decidió por alzar pesas—al

principio de su carrera Rubén llevaba un número veinte y uno colgándole de la oreja, a modo de pantalla--, no puede disimular cierta altanería, la del joven guapo—atildado con bigotito de tumbahembras latino—que triunfó en el mundo ancho y además exige respeto Idolatrado por los tigres del barrio a donde siempre regresa, donde también tiene novia, intimida con la mirada alerta del puertorriqueño acomplexado. Quizás dudemos y hasta podríamos disculparle algo de la parejería como timidez preventiva. De todos modos, mi padre mulato lo hubiese tildado de “negro parejero” y el club nocturno Copacabana, del cual es dueño, como su camino de perdición.

The “natural” ball player by definition, at least for his generation, with the beauty of a Clemente who chose to lift weights—at the start of his career, Rubén wore [Clemente’s] number twenty-one dangling from his ear as if it were a screen—can’t hide a certain haughtiness, the haughtiness of the handsome young man—elegant, with the little moustache of a Latin lady killer—who has triumphed in the outside world and demands respect. . . . Idolized by the wolves of the neighborhood to which he always returns, where he also has a girl friend, he intimates you with his alert stare of a complex-ridden Puerto Rican. Maybe we’re doubtful, and we might even forgive some of his vanity as preventive timidity. In any case, my mulatto father would have put him down as a “pushy black,” and his night club, the Copacabana, as the road to his perdition. (73-74)

In the light of Fiedler’s likening the relationship between Natty Bumpo and Chingachgook to that between Huck and Jim, it is interesting that Sierra’s nickname was “El indio” ‘The Indian.’ It also is interesting

that the creator of Natty and Chinachgook was James Fenimore Cooper, of the Cooperstown Coopers.

Billy Bean, one of the few major league players publicly to declare his homosexuality, recounts another variant of Miñoso's exhibition, one in which, under the cover of homophobic bravado, Bean rightly detects a core of erotic ambivalence.

I was always shocked at how brazenly guys who professed to hate "homos" strutted around the locker room, showing off their well-toned muscles and flopping cocks. They were always bragging about the "abuse" their "baby" took screwing a chick the night before. . . .

Rafael García was . . . team clown [of the 1986 Glens Falls Tigers, of the Eastern League]. He'd been laboring in the minors, waiting for his shot, for nearly a decade. An extremely well-endowed man, he loved to put on a show by placing his "package" out of sight between his legs. Every time he'd record a save or win, this hyper-masculine guy would prance around the locker room mimicking the stereotype of an effeminate homosexual, earning the nickname "Marty," shorthand for *maricón* or "fag." (53-54)

(Sometime in the early 1980s, Curt Flood told me that, thanks to their experience playing winter baseball, many Anglophone players had a working knowledge of Spanish. It's interesting to see here which words made it into their vocabularies).

Although there was no Rafael García on the 1986 Glens Falls Tigers, I believe Bean's account is trustworthy. The prancing pitcher most likely had one of "the names of people [that] have been changed to protect their privacy," and there was one Dominican reliever on the squad who had begun his minor league career nearly ten years earlier. He made it briefly to the major leagues, where his brother and nephew had more successful careers.

In the highly charged vortex of sexual identity and race in the locker room, redolent of jock straps, the white Dolf Luque can take on the

persona of Papá Montero—the incarnation of the racist’s nightmare of black sensuality—, and Billy Bean’s hyper macho teammate and the dream team’s locker room visitor can affirm their heterosexuality by mockingly inhabiting an exaggerated version of stereotypical homosexual behavior. The context of their role playing is ball playing. Here, again, Gálvez comes to mind, as does Fiedler:

In each generation we *play* out the impossible mythos, and we live to see our children play it, the white boy and the black we can discover wrestling affectionately on any American street, along which they will walk in adulthood, eyes averted from each other, unwilling to touch. (671)

Baseball, like poetry, is an eminently structured sport that, in its amateur version can be considered a profession, and those who engage in it professionally often are accused of earning their living by playing a child’s game. It occupies an ambivalent space between play and work, and, in a sliver of that space, its practitioners enjoy the freedom to act in ways they would otherwise disavow: “We were only playing.”

Think of what Roy Campanella said:

To be good you've gotta have a lot of little boy in you. When you see Willie Mays and Ted Williams jumping and hopping around the bases after hitting a home run, and the kissing and hugging that goes on at home plate, you realize they have to be little boys. (Baseball Almanac, Roy Campanella Quotes)

(It makes you wonder what the racists who opposed the integration of baseball *really* feared).

Blanco begins his welcome speech by stating that the occasion he and the crowd are celebrating has roots in “the first of [Pindar’s] songs we know,” the Greek poet’s “consecration” of a boy ‘*niño*’ from Thessaly, the “winner of an Olympic race.” This remark is a means of claiming a classical heritage for baseball that establishes a symmetry between the runner consecrated by Pindar and the Heroes of ’41, in whose apotheosis Blanco is participating. The reference seems to be a conflation of Pindar’s tenth Pythian ode, which sings of Hippokleas of Thessaly,

with his first Olympic ode, which praises Hieron of Syracuse. That second poem is the *locus classicus* of Pindar's reputation as a poet of the physical love between men. (Google "Pindar homosexual," and you will get "about 116,000" results"). The characterization of Hippokleas as a *niño*, however well it fits the Thessalian runner, is inappropriate when applied to the modern-day athletes with whom Blanco would equate him. Adult Latin American baseball players might refer to their teammates as *chicos* or *muchachos*, but *niño* is too juvenile a term for "boy" in that social context. The one exception that comes to mind is Omar Linares, the Cuban third baseman, who was known as "El niño" because he was only seventeen years old when he played for his country's national team in 1984 (Jamail, Full Count 31). When Blanco uses an example of man-boy love to propose his equation of Greece and the Caribbean, the Olympic games and the Amateur World Series, he, wittingly or otherwise, invites us to see that love practiced on both sides of his equation.

It is a commonplace that young boys in ancient Greece traditionally were lovingly mentored in a variety of skills, including sexual ones, by men. Naomi Mitchison's short piece of historical fiction "O Lucky Thessaly," places Pindar and his runner squarely in that tradition. As Gregory Woods summarizes the plot in his *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition*, the story begins when

the young poet Pindar arrives in Thessaly, commissioned by the Grand Duke Thorax to write a celebratory ode on the boy Hippokleas, who has won the race at Delphi. The poet and the boy fall in love. Hippokleas becomes broody and stops playing with his friends. When the poem is finished and the chorus has been rehearsed. Pindar declares himself to the boy, but his intellectual detachment interferes with the pleasure of their love-making. Once the poem has triumphantly been performed at a great feast, Pindar decides to leave Thessaly. He feels that he must move on to hear the Muses speaking through another love. When he leaves, the heartbroken Hippokleas reluctantly goes back to the company of his friends. (201)

In this context, the young José Pérez Colmenares who stood by Blanco during his speech, holding the flame that allowed him to read his notes, seems at least as much a Ganymede as a Prometheus. Blanco says that the “tall player, brown-skinned and steady” held the light “as the classical runner carried the torch.” *Sic transit vitā lampada*.

It should be clear that my point here that my aim is not to uncover Blanco’s hidden feelings towards any of the players, singularly or as a group, whose exploits he chronicles but to show the wide range of unsuspected emotional content that can be liberated by a careful examination of the words he uses (and that use him or any other poet).

Early in his essay, Fiedler finds “the mutual love of *a white man and a colored*” at the heart of the Leatherstocking Tales, *Two Years Before the Mast*, *Moby-Dick*, and *Huckleberry Finn*” and comments,

So buried at a level of acceptance which does not touch reason, so desperately repressed from overt recognition, so contrary to what is usually thought of as our ultimate level of taboo—the sense of that love can survive only in the obliquity of a symbol, persistent, archetypal, in short, as a myth: the boy’s homoerotic crush, the love of the black fused at this level into a single thing. (667)

I can find no documentation of locker room antics like those of Miñoso and “Rafael García,” from the days of segregated baseball, probably because, as late as the 1950s, “The writers were gentlemen They didn’t hound [the players] the way they hound athletes today.” (Miñoso and Fagen 87). So, while these players’ sexually aggressive behavior clearly was charged with racial and ethnic feelings, among both the actors and the spectators, we can’t assume that racial antagonism was the cause of that tomfoolery. Jim Bouton, in his infamous and entertaining memoir, *Ball Four*, shows that the Miñoso-“García” syndrome is not privative to any one racial or ethnic group. He reports that the white Yogi Berra and Elson Howard, whose respectability made the Yankee brass consider him a better candidate than Vic Power to break the team’s color barrier, “were famous for dragging Charley over the cold cuts” served in the pre-game spread (152). It would seem that the resistance ballplayers showed to the admission of women reporters

to their locker rooms was not due to some vestigial remnant of Victorian modesty and decorum.

Bolton depicts a world of competitive fornication, one in which, when the Seattle Pilots' public relations department distributed a questionnaire that asked the players "What's the most difficult thing about playing major-league baseball?" Jim Hegan could answer, "Explaining to your wife why *she* needs a penicillin shot for *your* kidney infection." (263)

Competition usually implies an audience, and the players whose exploits fill Bolton's updated version of *Gesta Romanorum* have bonded with theirs.

Jim Gosger told about hiding in a closet to shoot a little beaver while his roommate made out on the bed with some local talent. Nothing sneaky about it, the roommate even provided the towel for Gosger to bite on in case he was moved to laughter. At the height of the activity on the bed, local talent, moaning, says, "Oh darling, I've never done it *that* way before." Whereupon Gosger sticks his head out, drawls "Yeah, surrre," and retreats into the closet.

After he told us the story, "Yeah, surrre became a watchword around the club.

"I only had three beers last night."

"Yeah, surrre."

And I've known ballplayers who thought it was great fun to turn on a tape-recorder under the bed while they were making it with their latest broad and play it back on the bus to the ball-park the next day. (176)

Who is having sex with whom?

A Peek at Venezuelan Slang

In colloquial Venezuelan Spanish, the act of fielding balls is as subject to sexual innuendo as is the act of hitting them. In fact, the picaresque noun *picón* is derived from baseball. Angel Rosenblatt tells an anecdote about Blanco when he was president of the Venezuelan Constituent Assembly, which leads the Venezuelan philologist to a discussion of an article about the meaning and derivation of the word.

En 1946 o 1947 hubo que hacer unas reparaciones en la planta alta del Capitolio, en el que funcionaba la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente. El público, y entre él el público femenino, en vez de ascender a las galerías, tenía que permanecer en la planta baja. Entonces el Presidente, que era Andrés Eloy Blanco, improvisó una copla, casi dramática:

Por vicio de construcción
el Senado está de duelo,
pues pa coger un picón
hay que agacharse en el suelo.

La afición a los picones tiene tanta importancia sociológica, que nuestro ensayista Ramón Escovar Salom publicó . . . un muy meditado artículo titulado “El picón en la historia”. En él sacaba conclusiones [tales como] “El picón es un mirador furtivo, un ángulo secreto, un pliegue distraído por donde se mira y por donde se muestra”. . . . El picón le parece más castizo e ingenuo [que el rascabucho cubano], “puesto que solo se contenta con mirar”. Y el mirar es a veces mínimo deber de cortesía.

Mínimo deber de cortesía, pero también puede ser mínimo deber de correspondencia. Pues no faltan damas jóvenes que lo ofrecen con complacencia generosa al subir a un vehículo, al sentarse, etc.: “Está dando un picón: “Está dando un piconzote”.

¿De dónde viene ese picón?

El pecaminoso picón viene del ino cente béisbol. En el béisbol se llama pick up la bola que al batear [sic] pega en el suelo; el jugador tiene que agacharse para recogerla, sin dejar de mirar al mismo tiempo para cacular su jugada con precisión. De ahí la expresión beisbolera “cogí un picón”, con su terminación hispanizada. Del campo de juego pasó a la vida urbana, que es también campo de juegos variados. Hay en el béisbol otra expresión análoga, que ha tendio ocasionalmente el mismo desarrollo: “Cogí un flaicito” (flay, del ingles fly De ese modo picón y flay son de la misma familia, solo que el flay es más bien un picón de altura.

In 1946 or 1947, it was necessary to make some repairs to the ground floor of the Capitol building, where the National Constituent Assembly was meeting. The public, including the female public, had to stay on the ground floor instead of climbing the stairs to the galleries. Then the Chair, who was Andrés Eloy Blanco, improvised an almost dramatic quatrain:

The Senate’s in mourning on account of
faulty construction, because to snatch a
picón you have to get down on the floor.

The love of the picón has such sociological importance that our essayist Ramón Escovar Salom published . . . a thoughtful article called “The *Picón* in History.” In it, he came to conclusions [like] “The *picón* is a hidden lookout point, a secret angle, a distracted fold through which to see and be seen. . . . It seems to him that the *picón* has a more honorable popular tradition and is more ingenuous [than its Cuban

relative, the *rascabucheo*] “since [the *picón*] is satisfied with just looking.” And looking sometimes is a minimal requirement of courtesy.

A minimal requirement of courtesy, but it also can be a minimal requirement of correspondence. After all, there’s no dearth of young ladies who offer it with generous complaisance when getting into a vehicle, sitting down, etc. “She’s giving a *picón*.” “She’s giving a hell of a *picón*.”

Where does this *picón* come from?

The sinful *picón* comes from guileless baseball. In baseball, it’s called a pick up [Escovar Salom uses the expression in English] when a batted ball is caught after hitting the ground. The player has to bend over to pick it up, without neglecting to take a quick peek around so he can calculate his play precisely.

That’s the origin of the baseball expression “I caught a *picón*,” with its hispanized termination. It passed from the playing field to the urban scene, where many games also are played. There is another analogous expression in baseball that happens to have undergone the same development, “I caught a flai-cito” (flay, from the English *fly* Thus, *picón* and *flay* belong to the same family, except that a *flay* is a high-flying *picón*. (394-395)

In short, for a Venezuelan bouncer, “to field a grounder” is to look up a woman’s skirt—a beaver shot, in the sense in which Bouton uses the expression when he complains that when a team gives

the kids [attending a game] free bats [it] makes it very bad for beaver-shooting because there are too many kids, too many bats and not enough beaver. John Gelnar brought a pair of binoculars out to the bullpen and we took turns looking into the stands.

Then somebody said that we better not let the umpires catch us with binoculars in the bullpen—they're liable to think we're stealing signs. And I said, "No. If we explain we're shooting beaver, they'll understand." And they would. If there's a baseball universal, that's it. (229)

In Joyce's version of the sixth chapter of the *Odyssey*, the one alluded to by John Montgomery Ward and Horacio Peña, the lame girl, Gertie McDowell, provides Leopold Bloom with a *picón* by bending over to pick up an errant ball. "Have to let fly," he thinks upon ejaculating. (374)

CHAPTER 7

HEAVEN AND EARTH REJOICE

Why is the Fly Blue?

The 1950 Boston Red Sox, who depended on their utility man and league-leading hitter, Billy Goodman, to enable the team to finish only four games out of first place in spite of a catastrophic accident to the great Ted Williams that made him miss nearly half the season, As the Red Sox relied on Goodman, Blanco relies on the versatility of the Spanish language for the effectiveness of the “Romance” to replace clear diction and an immediately recognizable structure. The same batting practice sequence in Blanco’s poem that reveals a plethora of sexual associations also contains both the apotheosis theme and the theme of national self-assertion. These additional complexes of meanings are expressed by the blue fly balls that cross the sky in line 15.

The hypallage that endows the baseballs with color of the sky they cross carries religious overtones beyond the tenuous one implied in the verb *cruzar* ‘to cross.’ The white balls against the blue sky are heralds of joy, the two Marian colors contrasting to the “*cancha oscura de los cielos caribes, cruzados de hondas y pelotas con cintas negras*” ‘dark playing field of the Caribbean heavens, criss-crossed by slingshots and black ribboned baseballs’ that will preside over the eulogy for José Pérez Colmenares. The Virgin Mary is blessing the canonical ceremony we are witnessing.

But how can the Virgin bless an event so rife with insinuations of ribaldry? First, Catholic weddings are celebrated by a mass, which includes holy communion, in which the bridal couple swallow the wafer and wine that are Christ’s body. This is not a ceremony that despises the body. Second, the sacrament transforms unholy lust into holy matrimony. Third, the ceremony occurs in Cuba, whose patron saint is the Virgin of Charity of El Cobre, *La Cachita*, honored in Rafael Hernández’s rumba, a song whose dedication to the Virgin blends the sacred with the profane, a mixture frequently found in Spanish poetry. Think of Saint John of the Cross and his spiritual canticle. Think of the Incarnation and of the woman taken in adultery.

When Blanco speaks in his welcoming speech of Pindar's consecration of Hippokleas, the emphasis is not on the physical relationship between the two Greeks, although that relationship is relevant to the situation Blanco is describing. Rather, he is establishing a Hellenic parallel to the two Caribbean nations, who recently had overcome—partially and temporarily—the brutal dictatorships of Gerardo Machado and Juan Vicente Gómez and forged bonds of brotherhood when the Venezuelans showed themselves the equals of the Cubans on the field of play. Indeed, the fourth and final of Blanco's *estampas*, the one that depicts Venezuela's political and moral rebirth, would have been merely banal had Blanco not prepared us for it with his introduction, where he posits ancient Greece as the archetype of the reassertion of Venezuela's political and moral worth, established through athletic prowess. Even with that preparation, the *estampa* doesn't escape wholly unscathed by the charge.

So it should not surprise us to find a political theme developing along with the themes of sexuality and apotheosis (a Greek word, lest we forget) in the "Romance." Anti-imperialism enters the poem through the white balls that cross the clear Cuban skies and become "fláis azules." After all, blue and white are not just Mary's colors but also those of the flag of the nation for whose independence Byron fought and died.

At the center of the Grecian golden age that Blanco presents in his speech, we find Pindar's homoerotic celebration of a young man's victory in athletic competition, but we also find the celebration of democracy and its collateral, independence. Blanco sings the body and the body politic. In his speech, Blanco has Praxiteles and Solon go to the stadium to learn true culture and democracy from the *hoi polloi*. When his poem introduces the national colors of Greece as a part of the Caribbean sky, we hear an echo of the city-states of the Aegean, the cradle of democracy, and of Greece's nineteenth-century struggle for independence.

Thomas Carter, in his article "The Manifesto of a Baseball-playing Country: Cuba, Baseball, and Poetry in the Late Nineteenth Century," treats the historical confluence of baseball, the color blue, and poetry in the struggle for Cuban independence. Carter reprints and analyses a "celebrated nineteenth-century poem" (247) in which team

colours are also used to denote political affiliations as well as sporting loyalty. Each club had a representative colour: that of Almendares was blue, while Habana's was red, and Fé's yellow. Blue is particularly important throughout the poem, and it is worth reiterating that *Almendaristas* are 'blues.' By refusing allegiance to Habana and abandoning Fé [in order to root for Almendares], the poet rejects the two colours of the Spanish flag. (260)

Rubén Darío put the poetry of Latin American poetry on a plane of equality with Spain's, much as Venezuela's play in the 1941 Amateur World Series established parity between baseball in that country and Cuba. The color blue and the technique of synesthesia (which is a close relative of hypallage) are prominent in the Nicaraguan's early work, so much so that he gave his first published collection the title *Azul* and used that color as shorthand for "ideal." Indeed, in a poem known by its opening line, Darío announced his distancing himself from aestheticism by proclaiming, "Yo soy aquel que ayer no más decía / el verso azul y la canción profana" 'I'm the one who yesterday could speak only the blue verse and the profane song' (1-2). Darío, who had established himself as an implicit champion of Latin American cultural equality with Spain, now openly called for Latin American unity in resistance to the hegemony of the United States in the region. In "A Roosevelt" 'To Theodore Roosevelt,' he personified the "The Colossus of the North" (the epithet is Martí's) in its president and called him

el futuro invasor
de la América ingenua que tiene sangre indígena,
que aún reza a Jesucristo y aún habla en español.
the future invader of the innocent America that
has native blood and that still prays to Jesus
and still speaks Spanish. (6-8).

It's worth noting, in view of our earlier observations on Humphries and Moore's vindication of the prosaic in poetry that, when Darío criticizes the rapaciousness of the United States as embodied in its representative figure, he says, "eres culto, eres hábil; te opones a Tolstoy" 'you're cultured, you're cunning; you oppose Tolstoy' (10).

The “Championship Ballad” treats baseball games, which Blanco traces in his speech to classical Greece, as celebrations of, and analogous to, marriage. Liborio and Juan Bimba, the exemplars he chooses for Cuba and Venezuela in that poem’s opening wedding sequence, as well as his paean to the democratic force of athletics, imply an anti-imperialist assertion of regional and national identity, based on working-class solidarity.

Ricardo Padrón notes, in “Against Apollo: Góngora’s *Soledad primera* and the Mapping of Empire,” that “some of Góngora’s contemporaries . . . identified [a passage of his] as an unpatriotic assault on Spain’s providential mission to bring Christianity to the New World through conquest” (367). (Padrón is referring to “the so-called diatribe against navigation in verses 366-502.”) We might call that providential mission Spain’s manifest destiny.

Whether Góngora was a flat-out anti-imperialist, as this interpretation would have him be, or something more complex was at work, as Padrón argues, is something on which I am not equipped to pass judgment. What I can say is that, if Góngora can legitimately—even if ultimately incorrectly—be seen in his poetry as a foe of empire, then his poetry sounds an anti-imperialistic chord. Error may have no rights, but critical error has a few. “Góngora” is not just one man or even just one man and his work. He (it?) is a cultural construct, part of which is how other people perceive (and perceived) him. The *Complete Works* of “Góngora” would include poems Góngora never wrote but which were attributed to him, works like the one Tomlison uses in her discussion of the Goya cartoons. “Hang it all, Robert Browning, / There can be only one “Sordello.” But Góngora, and my Góngora?

In Blanco’s approach to the socio-political and matrimonial unions between Cuba and Venezuela, in the parallel he establishes between them and athletic contests, in his use of a high style to celebrate the unprestigious subject of those contests, and in the anti-imperialism implicit of his work, Blanco has much in common with Góngora (or “Góngora”),

The Batting Order

The Bimbas and Liborios who show up in line 19 to wrap up the festivities inaugurate an honor roll of participants in the games. Unlike Humphries, who uses a roll call of players' names to, among other things, connect his readers with the reality of baseball's past and present and thereby validate his fiction, Blanco often—but not always—distorts his players' names, frequently using them in ways that require an exegesis like the one I have attempted to provide in my inserted program notes. Blanco so frequently and so drastically modifies those names or what they stand for that we could call his list a role call.

Blanco's original readers would have been familiar with the players who appear disguised in the "Romance," but that circumstance, while making the readers' job of deciphering a less onerous one than our inverse task of tracing the literal reference from the figured narration, largely *terra incognita* to twenty-first century readers, even Cuban and Venezuelan ones, would not have made the task unnecessary.

By referring to my insert, and with a little help from Humphries' translation of the *Metamorphoses*, a shot may be made at what Blanco's hybrid of a line up actually was like to look at. (Blanco's repeated acts of Gongorine transformation, like my cribbing of *Finnegans Wake*, emphasize the artifice of the work).

On arrival, the Bimbas and Liborios

tiran las gorras al "vento"
sacuden el "limonar"
hasta que se caen los "ramos"
por la fuerza del "Tarzán."

throw their caps to the win' and shake the
lemon grove [or tree] until Tarzan's strength makes
the branches fall, (21-24)

Three players— Guillermo Vento, "Limonar" Martínez, and "Chucho" Ramos— are transformed by virtue of their names or nicknames into wind, a tree (or group of trees), and its branches, respectively, while a fourth, Francisco Contreras, whose strength here is a function of his

nickname,¹ is the agent of the tree's loss of branches. The Cuban pitcher Rogelio Martínez, transformed by his nickname, into a lemon tree, suffers the fate of Daphne, the daughter of the river god Peneus. Fleeing from Apollo, who desires her by "no blind chance, but Cupid's malice," (Ovid I, 452) "her limbs bare in the wind, / . . . her soft hair streaming" (I,529-530), she begs her father to "Change and destroy the body which has given / Too much delight!" (I, 547-548). He turns her into a laurel tree, but Apollo "embraced the branches / As if they were still limbs" (I,555-556), like "Tarzán" Contreras stripping the lemon tree of its branches.

The puns on the players' names treat those names as autonomous entities, retaining only a tenuous relationship with the players' acts, acts that the poem's title declares it was written to celebrate. Nevertheless, a sort of narrative emerges. Tarzan-Apollo's embrace of the virginal Daphne-Martínez can be seen as a bit of pre-game male bonding.

A Game of Cat and Mouse

With the appearance of Mousey Pérez and the cat who chases him, Blanco's roll call, already a parade of paronomasia, assumes the form of a procession of animals. His prestidigitations with names in the treatment of José Pérez Colmenares at this point are both complex and deft. Pérez's nickname was "El terrible" —"The Terrible" not "The Terrified" —yet "va corriendo Ratón 'Pérez', / pues lleva un "gatico" atrás 'Mousy Pérez is running because he's got a pussycat in back of him' (25-26).

Pérez's transformation from awe-inspiring man to frightened mouse is owing to the nickname of his teammate Juan Francisco Hernández,

¹ Ramos says that Contreras got his nickname because Abeladrdo Raidi "encontró bastante similtud entre el recio pelotero, con su corte hasta la nuca, y el artista del cine Americano Herman Brix, famoso por sus interpretaciones del personaje selvático" "found a resemblance between the tough ball player, with his close cropped hair, and the American movie actor Herman Brix, famous for his interpretations of the jungle character." (141)

“Gatico” ‘Pussycat.’ But Hernández’s sobriquet would not have been enough to transform Pérez the Terrible into a running rodent if the Hispanic equivalent of the tooth fairy had not been *El ratón Pérez* ‘Pérez the Mouse.’ Terrible Pérez’s second family name, Colmenares, also contributes to the metamorphosis, thanks to its similarity to “colmillo” ‘eye-tooth,’ the tooth fairy’s stock in trade.

The combination of Hernández’s nickname and the childhood figure of the tooth fairy enables Blanco to execute a mysterious double play, the morphing of Terrible Pérez into the intended victim of a household pet. At the same time, the nickname of *Ratón* that Blanco confers ad hoc on Pérez grants him the dignity of literature and folklore. The nature of the man is doubly transformed—first, downward to a mouse; then, upward to a beloved figure of children’s fiction. Blanco accomplishes all this through the power inherent in the mixing of words: A magic spell.

First published in 1902 by Father Luis Coloma, S.J., “Pérez the Mouse” tells the story of a young king who has placed his fallen baby tooth under his pillow. Pérez awakens the child monarch, and the two take a nocturnal tour of Spain. Their last stop is at the home of a boy named Gilito.

Era aquello un cuchitril infecto, en que el techo y el suelo se unían por un lado, y no se separaban lo bastante por el otro para dejar cabida á la estatura de un hombre. Entraba por las innumerables rendijas el viento helado del alba, que ya clareaba, y veíanse por debajo de la tejavana del techo grandes cuajarones de hielo.

No había allí más muebles que la silla que servía de observatorio al rey . . . [un cesto de pan vacío, colgado del techo á la altura de la mano, y en el rincón menos expuesto á la intemperie, una cama de pajas y de trapos, en que dormían abrazados Gilito y su madre.

Acercóse Ratón Pérez, llevando al rey . . . de la mano, y al ver éste de cerca al pobre Gilito, asomando las yertas manecitas por los trapos miserables que le cu-

brían, y pegada la preciosa carita al seno de su madre, para buscar allí un poco de calor, angustiósele el corazón de pena y de asombro, y rompió á llorar amargamente.

¡Pero si él nunca había visto eso!... ¿Cómo era posible que no hubiese él sabido hasta entonces que había niños pobres que tenían hambre y frío y se morían de miseria y de tristeza en un horrible camaranchón?... hubiese en su reino un solo niño que no tuviera por lo menos tres calzones de bayeta y un vestidito de bombasí!...

Conmovido también Ratón Pérez, se enjugó á hurtadillas una lágrima con la pata, y procuró calmar el dolor del rey . . . enseñándole la brillante monedita de oro que iba á poner bajo la almohada de Gilito, en cambio de su primer diente.

Despertó en esto la madre de Gilito, é incorporóse en el lecho, contemplando al niño dormido. Amanecía ya, y érale forzoso levantarse para ganar un mísero jornal, lavando en el río. Cogió á Gilito en sus brazos, y le puso de rodillas, medio dormido, delante de una estampita del Niño Jesús de Praga que había pegada en la pared, sobre la misma cama.

El rey . . . y Ratón Pérez se pusieron de rodillas con el mayor respeto, y hasta los cazadores ligeros se arrodillaron también, dentro del canasto vacío en que merodeaban silenciosos.

El niño comenzó á rezar:

—*¡Padre nuestro, que estás en los cielos!...*

It was a filthy narrow room, on one side of which the roof and ceiling came so close to each other that there wasn't space for a man to stand in. The freezing winds of dawn, which was beginning to lighten the

sky, entered through countless cracks, and large batches of ice could be seen beneath the crude roof.

There wasn't any furniture besides the chair that served as the king's observatory, an empty bread basket, hanging from the ceiling to the level of his hand in the corner of the room least exposed to the elements, and a straw bed covered with rags in which Gilito and his mother slept.

Taking the king by the hand, Mousey Pérez approached, and when the king saw poor Gilito close up, with his lifeless little hands showing through the miserable rags that covered him and his darling little face pressed against his mother's breast, looking for a bit of heat, the king's heart ached from sorrow and surprise, and he began to cry bitterly.

He'd never seen anything like that! . . . How was it possible that he hadn't known before then that there were poor children who were hungry and cold and who died of misery and sadness in a horrible garret? He didn't want to have even blankets on his bed as long as there was a single child in his kingdom who didn't have at least three pairs of woolen trousers and a little cotton-lined leather suit.

Mousey Pérez, also moved, surreptitiously used his paw to dry a tear from his eye and tried to calm the king's pain, showing him the shiny gold piece he was going to put under Gilito's pillow in exchange for his first tooth.

Just then, Gilito's mother woke up and, pulled herself up in the bed, contemplating the sleeping child. Day was breaking, and she had to get up and earn the pittance she made washing clothes in the river. She held Gilito in her arms and made him kneel, half-asleep, in front of a little print of the Infant Jesus of Prague that was hanging on the wall, right above the bed.

The king . . . and Mousey Pérez also kneeled down with the utmost respect until the hem of their jackets touched the bottom of the basket in which they silently watched and waited.

The child began to pray:

“Our Father Who art in Heaven” (In both the Spanish and English versions, ellipses in which the dots aren’t separated by spaces are in the orig.)

The young king, shaken by this experience, returns with Pérez to the palace. There,

Creyó, por el pronto, que todo había sido sueño; mas levantó prontamente la almohada, buscando la carta para Ratón Pérez que había puesto allí la noche antes, y la carta había desaparecido.

En su lugar había un precioso estuche con la insignia del Toisón de Oro, toda cuajada de brillantes, regalo magnífico que le hacía el generoso Ratón Pérez, en cambio de su primer diente.

Dejólo caer, sin embargo, el Reyecito sobre la rica colcha, sin mirarlo casi, y quedóse largo tiempo pensativo, con el codo apoyado en la almohada. De pronto dijo, con esa expresión seria y meditabunda que toman á veces los niños, cuando reflexionan ó sufren:

—Mamá... ¿Por qué los niños pobres rezan lo mismo que yo, *Padre nuestro, que estás en los cielos?*...

La Reina le respondió:

—Porque Dios es padre de ellos, lo mismo que lo es tuyo.

—Entonces—replicó . . . aun más pensativo— seremos hermanos...

—Sí, hijo mío; son tus hermanos.

Los ojitos de[l] rey rebosaron entonces admiración profunda, y con la voz empañada por las lágrimas y trémulo el pechito por el temblor de un sollozo, preguntó:

—¿Y por qué soy yo Rey, y tengo de todo, y ellos son pobres y no tienen de nada?

Apretóle la Reina contra su corazón con amor inmenso, y besándole en la frente, le dijo:

—Porque tú eres el *hermano mayor*, que eso es ser Rey... ¿Lo entiendes . . . ? ... Y Dios te ha dado de todo, para que cuides en lo posible de que tus *hermanos menores* no carezcan de nada.

He believed, at first, that it had all been a dream. But he soon lifted up the pillow, looking for the letter that he had left for Mousey Pérez the night before, and the letter had disappeared.

In its place was a gorgeous jewelry box with the insignia of the Order of Toisón, all incrustated with diamonds, the magnificent gift that the generous Mousey Pérez had given him in exchange for his first tooth.

The little king let it fall, nonetheless, onto the rich bedspread, hardly looking at it, and stayed quiet for a long time, thinking, with his elbow resting on the pillow. All of a sudden, he said, with that serious and meditative expression that children sometimes have when they are thinking or when they suffer:

“Mommy . . . Why do the poor children pray just like I do, “*Our Father Who art in Heaven?* . . .”

The Queen answered him:

“Because God is their father, just the same as He’s yours.”

“Then,” he answered, even more thoughtfully, “we’re brothers. . .”

“Yes, my son. They’re your brothers.”

“{The king’s] eyes overflowed with deep admiration, and with a voice muffled by tears and with his little chest trembling from the shaking of a sigh, he asked,

“And why am I King and have everything and they’re poor and don’t have anything?”

The Queen held him close next to her heart with intense love, and, kissing his forehead, told him,

“Because you’re their *older brother*. That’s what being King means. Do you understand . . . ? And God’s given you everything so that you will make sure that as far as is possible your *younger brothers* don’t lack for anything.” (Again, in both versions, ellipses in which dots aren’t separated by spaces are in the orig.)

The story ends here, although Coloma goes on to tell us that the boy king lived to a ripe old age, did a lot of good, and went straight to heaven.

In spite of the incident in the attic, which reads like a parody of Dickens, and the story’s syrupy ending, whose glucose content makes “Angelitos negros” seem astringent, Father Coloma was not a literary lightweight. A member of the Spanish Royal Academy, he was the subject of a critical biography by Emilia Pardo Bazán and a friend of

Fernán Caballero (Instituto Cervantes), the woman generally accepted as having initiated the school of nineteenth-century Spanish realist fiction. He wrote “El Ratón Pérez” at the request of the royal family when King Alfonso XIII lost his first baby tooth (Amigos del foro). Alfonso, who had been king from the moment of his birth, abdicated in April 1932, following widespread demonstrations. His abdication was followed by the creation of the Second Spanish Republic.

The story’s message of brotherly love told in terms of Catholic worship would have appealed to the devout author of “Píntame angelitos negros,” although the conceit of the king as everyone’s older brother would not have jibed with his social democratic politics. Both sides of Blanco’s political personality, the Christian and the socialist, would, however, have found Coloma’s vision more congenial than the common, and blasphemous, one of viewing the king as Our Father.

Even Blanco’s more secular friend, the Lenin Peace Prize winner Miguel Otero Silva, mixes religious imagery and diction with political concerns when he comes to write his elegy for Terrible Pérez Colmenares, the sonnet “En la muerte de José Pérez, atleta) ‘On the Occasion of the Death of José Perez, Athlete.’

Y poblarán de gritos los confines
 los niños del Señor, los serafines,
 si le das un tribey al Padre Eterno.

And the children of the Lord, the seraphs, will
 fill the confines with cries of joy if you hit a
 three-bagger for the Eternal Father. (Pacanins 53)

Blanco shortens the first baseman’s name to Pérez in order to take advantage of the puns offered by Coloma’s story and Hernández’s nickname. When Otero Silva performs the same operation it makes the athlete more of an Everyman than he otherwise would have been (Pacanins 49). Otero Silva’s change fulfills the dual function of lessening the emotional distance between hero and readers and democratizing heroism.

That three-base hit is a nice touch of *béisbol a lo divino*, amalgamating as it does the triple and the Holy Trinity. As a result, we can see

Blanco's ballad as the start of a process of elevation that includes his poem and eulogy, his friend's poem, and the memorial mass that was the foundation of Venezuela's National Day of Sports—canonical and civil ceremonies.

“Pussy Cat” Hernández, who chases the baseball playing mouse, didn't participate in the deciding game of the fourth Amateur World Series. In fact, the only instance of Hernández and Pérez Colmenares having been on base at the same time during the series that I can document occurred in Venezuela's 12-1 thrashing of the USA. In that game, Hernández was thrown out at home while Pérez advanced from second to third base (Ramos 62). The mouse chased the cat! Once again, the historical facts of a player's actions are sacrificed to allow the poet to play with his name.

I don't know how Hernández got his nickname; perhaps it came from his feline grace on the field. In any case, his attitude towards the game was anything but pussycatlike. In Carlos Oteyza's 2002 documentary film, *Venezuela al bate*, Hernández tells an interviewer that the object of baseball is to win at all costs ‘a cómo dé lugar.’

Animals on Parade

Blanco presents the cat and mouse in a jovial way. The next animal we see—a mosquito—is too much of a nuisance (and, especially in the tropics, too much of a danger) for that sort of levity. Blanco sets the scene for his next tableau by telling us it occurs “mientras se chupa un ‘mosquito’ / la nariz de magriñá” ‘while a mosquito sucks at Magriñat's nose’ (27-28), a much more upsetting image than the cartoonish one that precedes it.

Why Cuba's third baseman, Antonio “Mosquito” Ordeñana, is sucking at umpire Kiko Magriñat's nose is an interesting question. Certainly, mosquitos suck blood, but the verb *picar*, which means both “to bite,” as in an insect bite and to “peck” would have described the mosquito's attack on the umpire's nose while enabling an easy transition to the lines about the manager of the Venezuelan team, Manuel Antonio “Pollo” ‘Chicken’ Malpica, that follow the confrontation between Ordeñana and Magriñat. Malpica's sobriquet is implicit in the last two syllables of his family name; chickens peck. (His nickname helps

distinguish him from his brother, utility man Atilano “Inga” Malpica, who saw limited action in the series).

There is, however, another way in which the meanings of *chupar* and *picar* compliment each other, one that would allude to one of Cuba’s major exports and Pollo Malpica’s biography. *Chupar* means “to smoke,” in the sense of inhaling and exhaling tobacco. Malpica’s father owned a cigar factory “en la que el mayor de sus hijos le quitaba las venas a las hojas de tabaco para luego picarlo y cernirlo” ‘in which his oldest son [Pollo] stripped the leaves of their veins, chopped, and cleaned them’ (Ramos 116).

Chicken Malpica also is, at least in one way, a double for Blanco himself. Pussycat Hernández has called the Venezuelan manager “nuestro profesor de historia” because before each game he, like Blanco in his welcoming speech,

comenzaba por explicarnos pasajes de la historia de Venezuela, hablarnos de batallas como la de Carabobo . . . para que nosotros saliéramos al terreno a partirnos el pecho. A darnos íntegros en defensa de la Patria. Eran batallas aquellos juegos. Por eso no podíamos perder, ni existía enemigo suficientemente grande, con suficiente garra para que lo consideráramos con capacidad para vencernos.

he began by explaining passages from the history of Venezuela, speaking to us about battles like the one at Carabobo . . . so that we would take the field ready to bust our butts. To give our all in defense of the fatherland. Those games were battles. That’s why we couldn’t lose, why there couldn’t be an enemy strong enough, determined enough to beat us. (Qtd. in Ramos 115)

Of course, Malpica’s purpose was to inspire, while Blanco’s was to celebrate, the results of Malpica’s baseball and rhetorical strategy.

Chupar also alludes to Ordeñana’s on-field performance, specifically his lapse of judgment when he chose not to throw Romero out but chased him home in the last scheduled game of the tournament. This

is not a case of a late twentieth-century North American vulgarity being transported violently into the Spanish of the middle of that century in an attempt to explain an otherwise puzzling expression. One of the Spanish Royal Academy's definitions of *chupar* is, "En un deporte de equipo, abusar del juego individual" 'In a team sport, to rely excessively on individual efforts'. The mosquito would seem to have been a hot dog.

A reading that sees the use of *chupar* as a criticism of Ordeñana's lack of team play would be consistent with Magriñat's having officiated in the game of October 17, when Ordeñana committed his bonehead play. According to the box score that Herman Etedgui prepared based on the play-by-play broadcast of Cuban radio station COCO, Magriñat was part of that day's umpiring crew (Hazaña 125-126). Ordeñana had made his mistake right in front of Magriñat, or, as the Spanish expression has it, "in his nose" '*en sus narices.*'

José María "Kiko" Magriñat was a confrontational umpire. Jorge Alfonso Chacón cites a report by Horacio Roqueta of Magriñat using his tenor's voice to call Babe Ruth out on strikes when the Bambino was playing against Almendares as a ringer for the New York Giants. Kiko did this by singing successively, "Buenos días, buenas tardes, buenas noches." Conrado Marrero's grandson Rogelio tells me that the pitcher did not consider Magriñat a good umpire and that he even made calls on the base paths with his back turned to the play, leading Marrero to shout "Viejo huevón" 'Lazy old bastard' at him (E-mail of 15 May 2010). All the photographs I've seen of Magriñat show him as a man with a prominent probiscus, and Marrero, in his e-mail, confirms this. (Miguel Angel Asturias describes Blanco as having a "nariz de ave ganchuda" 'a hooked beak of a nose'). (473)

As we have come to expect from Blanco, Magriñat's nickname also helps explain his presence in the "Romance." A *kiko* is a grain of toasted corn, and the Spanish onomatopoeic representation of a rooster's crowing is *quiquiriquí*, so Kiko Magriñat would have been doubly at home calling foul balls in the verbal barnyard that Blanco presents.

A Game of Chicken With No Clear Winner

“Mosquito” Ordeñana’s rape of “Kiko” Magriñat’s nose is introduced as occurring concurrently with other events, a simultaneity Blanco emphasizes with a series of adverbs: “mientras” ‘while’ (27), “cuando” ‘when, at the same time as’ (31), and then “mientras” again (33).

The image of Ordeñana sucking Magriñat’s nose doesn’t require the intricate web of associations I have suggested to explain its force nor why it serves as a bridge to Malpica. The graphic sexual undercurrent of “se chupa un ‘mosquito’ / la nariz de magriñá” is pretty close to the surface. That undercurrent leads us to another bit of hanky-panky: the augmentative form of Malpica is *picón*. The combination of wrongdoing implicit in “mal,” and the applicability of the *picón* to baseball as well as to sexual misconduct makes the transition from the nose-sucking mosquito to the bad pecker almost inevitable.

While Ordeñana is having his way with the umpire’s nose,

un “pollo” pica y repica
y no acaba de picar
y cuando “El Pollo” Malpica
se siente el Catire “Maal”
mientras va el pollo picando
granitos de “petit puá”
¡”Conrado” se ve “Chirinos.

a chicken pecks and pecks again and doesn’t stop
pecking. And when the chicken mispecks, Blondie
feels baad. While the chicken pecks baby peas,
Conrado appears Chirinos. (29-35)

“Chicken” Malpica appears, perpetually pecking. Blanco has a blast with the repeated explosive *p* sounds of *pollo* (three times) and *pica*, *repica*, *picar*, *Malpica*, *picando*, and *petit puá* with which he mimics Malpica’s repetitive pursuits. The poet’s puns are not only aural but semantic, as he jokes on “pica,” and “pollo,” two more ingredients of Blanco’s chicken soup, as well as on “mal.” (Not to mention “picón”).

Once again, names provide the pivot for Blanco’s puns. The verbal phrase “pecks poorly” also refers to “The Chicken”’s family name,

Malpica. “Maal” is not just a variant of the adjective “mal”, but also refers to the ballplayer Carlos “Catire” Maal, whose nickname means something like “Blondie.” The grains a chicken would be expected to peck are converted by Blanco’s wit to peas ‘petit puá,’ which remits us to Luis Romero Petit, the Venezuelan third baseman.

Nor should we forget the meaning of *pollo* as an elegant young man or of *picar* as “to bounce,” which we came across in the discussion of the etymology of the ubiquitous *picón*.

Blanco was not alone in playing with Malpica and Maal’s names. Miguel Otero Silva, using the pen name of Morrocoy Sprinter, wrote “Pica que pica Malpica,” ‘Peck Peck Malpica’ which goes like this:

Voy a mi pollo que pica
y que cuando pica mal
y voy al Catire Maal
que ayuda al Pollo Malpica.

Pica que pica Malpica
Malpica junto con Maal,
Y entre tanta pica-pica
Pica Maal, pica Malpica
Y ninguno pica mal.

I’m betting on my pecking chicken who pecks.
And when he pecks poorly, I bet on Blondie
Maal, who helps Chicken Malpica. Malpica pecks
and pecks, Malpica and Maal together. And with so
much peck pecking, Maal pecks, Malpica pecks,
and neither pecks poorly. (Hazaña 179)

Otero Silva’s ditty provides the added delight of conflating baseball with another favorite Venezuelan sport, cock fighting.

Blanco returned to the pun a few years later when he criticized a colleague during a session of the Venezuelan congress by observing, “la diputada Malpica pica mal” ‘Deputy Malpica pecks poorly.’ (Rangel)

Parade's End

The animal parade ends, but the roll call continues in a series of exclamations about the players. And it continues to require interpretation.

It's difficult to find a connection between the intricately woven Malpica-Maal segment and the series of exclamations that follows it. Indeed, it's difficult to make any sense out of the first of the series, "Conrado' se ve 'Chirinos' . . . !!(35)

What does that mean?

In my unilluminating translation, *Chirinos*, even though capitalized, probably is an adverb. If the meaning were "Conrado looks like Benjamín Chirinos," the sentence would have to read, "Conrado' se ve como Chirinos," which would present metric difficulties. In addition to "appears," "se ve" can mean, "finds himself," as in "se ve en apuros" 'he finds himself in trouble', or "sees himself," in the sense of "has an image of himself as." But these alternatives also would require a preposition, *en* or *como*. Putting that difficulty aside, we could say that the line means something like, "Conrado's in the same situation as Chirinos," whatever that is. This might work, but it would not do much to increase our understanding of the poem or of the 1941 Amateur World Series.

We need a second meaning for "Chirinos" to achieve that. The DRAE offers a possibility, the colloquial Puerto Rican adjective *chiringo*, *-a*, "Pequeño, corto, escaso. Esa prenda le queda chiringa" 'small, short, insufficient. That piece of clothing is too small for him.' Dropping the *g* from *chiringo*, and the final *s* from the Venezuelan pitcher's name, as frequently is done in Caribbean speech, would yield "Conrado se ve chirino," i.e., "Conrado feels inadequate." Unfortunately, the only examples of the disappearing *g* I can think of appear before *u* sounds, as in *agua*, *guagua*, or *agüela*. Nor have I found "chiringo" in any dictionary of Cuban or Venezuelan idioms. So this solution *me queda chiringa*.

I asked Conrado Marrero through his grandson what he made of this puzzling line. His answer gave me some consolation for my

inadequate understanding of Blanco's line. "He, like you doesn't understand that phrase in the poem" 'Desconoce como Ud esa frase en el poema' was the e-mail reply.

The Batteries

The puzzling opening of the quatrain is completed by three verses that, like the one that introduces them, focus on members of the two teams' batteries. The completing verses,

"Fernández" qué orondo va,
cómo se siente "Fonseca"
"goajiro" del goajiral!

How pumped up Fernández is! Fonseca feels like
the king of the guajiros! (37-39)

are, however, easier to understand.

One of the colloquial meanings the DRAE gives for the adjective *orondo—hinchado* 'swollen'—conveys the pride Dumbo Fernández took in his team's victory. Another—*grueso, gordo* 'fat'—would be appropriate to his elephantine nickname, but Fernández, who was not a fat man, could not have had that moniker when Blanco wrote his poem. The Internet Movie Database gives the release date of Disney's feature length cartoon about the large-eared flying pachyderm as October 23, 1941, the day after the Amateur World Series ended. The word *Dumbo* does not appear in the "Romance."

It would be uncharitable to attribute to Fernández another of the definitions given by the Royal Academy, the one that interprets *hinchado* in a moral sense: "Lleno de presunción y muy contento de sí mismo" 'Pretentious and self-satisfied,' although that, too, is a possibility, but only in a world of speculation.

The Venezuelan catcher, Rabbit Fonseca, feels like the cock of the walk among the *guajiros*—Cuban countryfolk—, probably because his team has just defeated Conrado Marrero, "El Guajiro del Laberinto," and his teammate, centerfielder Segundo "Guajiro" Ramírez, whose error allowed Venezuela to capitalize on Marrero's poor performance in the

top of the first of the decisive game, a bad half inning for the inhabitants of Guajiroland. Linking Rodríguez and Marrero is appropriate not just because of their nicknames but because their shortcomings contributed to the Cuban defeat that has so elated Fernández and Fonseca.

There is nothing Borgesian about Marrero's labyrinth; it was the name of a farm in the Cuban municipality of Sagua la Grande. Roberto González Echevarría, another native son of Sagua la Grande, describes the five-foot seven, one hundred sixty-five pound Marrero as being "A bit plump, of less than average height, with short arms and small hands, [he] looked, in uniform, like someone in a baseball costume, not a player (Pride 26). In this, he resembled Fernández, whom Carlitos González, a sportswriter Ramos considers "polémico cual valioso" 'as polemic as he is valuable' (133), characterizes as "un pitcherito dentro de un uniforme grande" 'a little pitcher in a large uniform' (qtd. in Ramos 134).

The reflexive constructions "'Conrado' se ve," whose subject is the Cuban pitcher and "se siente 'Fonseca,'" referring to the Venezuelan catcher, are wrapped around a reference to a Venezuelan pitcher. The passage closes with Fonseca identifying with and surpassing two Cuban players, Marrero and Ramírez, who are identified by their Cubanity, their status as *guajiros*. Venezuela defeats Cuba by becoming Cuban.

The opacity of "'Conrado' se ve 'Chirinos'" notwithstanding, that line also contributes to the increasing closeness of the players on the opposing teams.

Pulling the Cid's Beard

Something else has been happening while there is a pause in the action and Marrero, Fernández, and Fonseca's emotions occupy our attention, "Mesándose la Barboza" / 'Bracho' se pone a gritar" 'Pulling on his beard, Bracho starts shouting' (39-40).

Julio César Bracho strokes (or pulls on) what is both his big beard ("barba"="beard" + "-osa," an augmentative) and the pitcher Domingo

Barboza. Bracho's military names and the action he is engaged in immediately remit us to the Spanish national epic, *The Song of the Cid*, whose eponymous hero characteristically affirms his masculinity by stroking the beard (1663 inter alia), on which no one else ever has laid a hand 'aquesta barba que nadi non messo' (2832, 3186). Even as we appreciate the reference to The Cid, it is difficult to read of Bracho pulling on his Barboza without once more being aware of the haze of sexual ambiguity that envelopes Blanco's ballad.

In the Spanish epic, The Cid is so identified with his beard that it is used as a synecdoche for him, as in "Enclinó las manos la barba vellida / a las sues fijas" "The bushy beard stretched out his hands to his daughters" (274-275). Neither the Cid nor Barboza, nicknamed "El indio taciturno" "The Silent Indian," was given to grandiloquence. Both men appear in a ballad that recounts the triumph of the underdog as part of a myth of national foundation. Besides, El Cid *Campeador* 'War Hero' is an appropriate presence in a ballad celebrating the *campeonato*. The warrior and the ball players are champions, victors on the field of battle, *el campo de batalla*.

War, the forging of a nation, and heroic feats on baseball fields are fitting subjects for the bardic imagination. José Lezama Lima, in his "El juego de pelota o la historia como hipérbole" brings Roland, the hero of France's foundational epic, into a fantasy about twenty-fourth or -fifth-century scholars discussing a twentieth-century baseball game. In his ballad, Blanco brings Spain's version of Roland into a fantastic description of the fourth Amateur World Series. Remember, the Spanish word for "bat"—*bate*—is pronounced the same as the word for "bard"—*vate*.

On page 30 of his *Peloteros*, Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá reprints a photograph of three baseball players and a politician, originally published by the now-defunct daily *El Mundo*. Rodríguez Juliá's caption reads, "Luis 'Tite' Arroyo, El Vate, Peruchín Cepeda y Roberto Clemente, octubre de 1961." "El Vate" is Luis Muñoz Marín, founder of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, who earned his nickname for his youthful poetic output, including a piece published in Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* magazine (Aitken 64-65). Muñoz Marín is the one holding his nickname's homophone.



El debate del bate de El Vate

Muñoz Marín's creation, the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, which went into effect in 1952, can be considered, like Humphries' "Polo Grounds," a poetic act of filial piety. Poetic, or at least fictional, because the document is not a constitution but a program authorized by federal law and subject to revocation at the whim of the United States' congress. In 1993, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit ruled in *United States v. Sanchez*, a judgment that has not, as far as I know, been overturned,

With each new organic act, first the Foraker Act in 1900, then the Jones Act in 1917, and then the Federal Relations Act in 1950 and later amendments, [of which the so-called Commonwealth Constitution is one] Congress has simply delegated more authority to Puerto Rico over local matters. But this has not changed in any way Puerto Rico's constitutional status as a territory, or the source of power over Puerto Rico. Congress continues to be the ultimate source of power pursuant to the Territory Clause of the Constitution.

An act of filial piety, because Muñoz Marín's father, Luis Muñoz Rivera, had led the successful fight for an Autonomous Charter, granted by Spain in 1897. That *carta autonómica* gave Puerto Rico universal suffrage, parliamentary representation, the right to ratify commercial treaties, set tariffs, be consulted on all proposed peninsular legislation that might affect the island, elect governmental bodies in the colony, and more (Maldonado Denis, Puerto Rico 46). The American invasion of Puerto Rico put an end to any chance the island had to exercise its rights under the Charter that had been granted only a few months earlier. (Maldonado Denis 47) Spain, caving in to President McKinley's threats of renewed hostilities (Maldonado Denis 51-52), ceded Puerto Rico to the Colossus of the North as a spoil of war in the Treaty of Paris, which officially ended the hostilities between the empires.

The long-time president of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, Pedro Albizu Campos, reiteratedly opposed the adoption of Muñoz Marín's proposed compact between their country and the United States on moral, patriotic, cultural, political, and legal grounds. One of Albizu's judicial objections was that Spain had had no right to cede the island in the first place. "El Tratado de París, en virtud del cual Estados Unidos ha pretendido gobernar este país es nulo en lo que atañe a Puerto Rico" "The Treaty of Paris, by virtue of which the United States has tried to govern this country is null and void as far as Puerto Rico is concerned" (Conciencia 91). Another was that the proposed Commonwealth would be a perpetuation of Puerto Rico's colonial status. "La Ley Jones queda intacta en cuanto a la soberanía de Estados Unidos en Puerto Rico" "The Jones Act [under which Puerto Ricans were granted American citizenship—and made subject to the draft in exchange for renouncing loyalty to Spain] remains intact regarding the sovereignty of the United States in Puerto Rico" (Habla Albizu Campos 8).

Manuel Maldonado Denis, who edited a collection of Albizu's writings and speeches and who, in his *Puerto Rico: Una interpretación histórico-social* and "*Hacia una interpretación marxista de la historia de Puerto Rico*" y otros ensayos "*Towards a Marxist Interpretation of the History of Puerto Rico*" and *Other Essays*' devotes several excellent pages to Albizu Campos, was a childhood friend of Roberto Clemente (Wagenheim 21). The historian pitched for the Caguas Criollos of the

Puerto Rican winter league and in the Washington Senators' minor league organization during the mid-1950s. The highest level he reached was Double-A, with the Chattanooga Lookouts (Baseball Reference), whose home field was Engel Stadium. Maldonado, who, as the title of his last-cited book indicates, was an avowed Marxist, must have enjoyed the irony.

I don't make these observations about Maldonado Denis's baseball career because I think they contribute to an exegesis of Blanco's poem; they don't. Rather, I include them for their intrinsic interest and because they are an example of the surprising results it is possible to obtain by using Blanco's method of following where the names take you, results that lead us to the porous dividing line between the use and abuse of metaphor. Interesting things happen when the genie in the lexicon is released.

The End is Nigh

Humphries signals the approaching end of "Polo Grounds" by tracing the progress of the lengthening shadows that engulf the field, indicating time's passage and the day's inexorable close. Blanco signals the approaching end of "Romance" with a series of puns that convey the mounting excitement of the impending Venezuelan triumph and Cuban defeat, a series that culminates with a play on the word "final" and the name of the fielder who executes the final play of the contest.

The noise and excitement in the stadium combine to create pandemonium. "Aquello era un infierno" "That was an inferno" is how Fonseca describes the commotion (Ramos 131). Blanco makes it clear that the game is about to end when he tells us the reason Bracho is shouting. It is

porque con tanto bullicio
 las gentes van a tumbar
 la mesa, la "Casa-nova"
 la caña y el "limonar;"
 y al fin, vibrando en "redondo",
 que es lo "Finol" del final
 se mete por Varadero
 la balandra fraternal (41-49)

because, with all the hubbub, the folks are going to tumble the table, the new house, the sugar cane, and the lemon tree. And, finally, vibrating all around, putting the final touch on the finale, the fraternal sloop enters Varadero (41-49)

The New-house is Venezuela's shortstop, José Antonio Casanova. Blanco, who throughout the poem uses quotation marks as markers of importance, here hyphenates "Casanova" to call additional attention to the joke. That name, which the shortstop shares with the lecherous eighteenth-century Venetian, re-enforces the theme of unbridled eroticism. The lemon grove (or tree) the crowd threatens to tumble after bringing down the new house is, of course, the Cuban pitcher Limonar Martínez, who twenty-three verses earlier was shaken up by the Bimbas and Liborios who crowded the stadium.

In verse 45, Blanco announces that at last 'al fin' the game has come to an end. That adverbial phrase adumbrates a pun whose full appreciation is postponed by the observation that something (what it is does not become clear until after the pun has been played out) is vibrating "all around" or "in circles," a brief tip of the cap to Venezuelan outfielder Héctor Benítez Redondo. Although this identity of the vibrating object isn't immediately revealed, it is clear that there is another object vibrating *en redondo*: the poem itself, which, as it approaches its end, returns, like a baseball player reaching home plate, to its beginning: a loud celebration and a shaken Limonar. In my end is my beginning.

The announcement that the end is near does not mean that Blanco's verbal prestidigitation has ended. We still have to deal with "lo 'Finol' del final" 'the final touch on the finale' (46) and its sequelae.

Between the top and bottom halves of the third inning of the playoff game, the other Venezuelan infielders carried second baseman Dalmiro Finol off the field on their shoulders to celebrate "the most sensational catch of the Series" 'la atrapada más sensacional de la Serie, Finol's leaping grab of a line drive by Rafael Villa Cabrera (Ramos 86). This same Finol, who six innings later fielded Natilla Jiménez's hard ground ball and tossed it to Casanova for a force at

second for the final out of Amateur World Series, is the “Finol’ del final “ of line 45, which I have translated as I have in an attempt to convey the pun on *final*” Blanco’s expression also has overtones of “fine” ‘fino,’ and his use of *lo* instead of *el* for the definite object turns the second baseman into the essence, the embodiment, of finesse.

The word play with Casanova’s name is intelligible, even to readers unfamiliar with the roster of Venezuela’s team. The ease, after so many difficulties, with which the joke is understood allows Blanco’s readers to accelerate their attention to the poem as it approaches its climax.

The puns naming the Venezuelans’ most outstanding position players—Casanova, the Series’ Most Valuable Player (Ramos 111), and Finol, the fielding hero and Casanova’s partner in the final out—compliment the pun on the name of the pitching hero, Canónico, which opened the poem and prepared the reader for the coming plethora of paronomasia. This rounding out closes the circle (Giamatti describes baseball’s geometry as, “squares containing circles containing rectangles” [85]) in which the on-field action is contained; the poem is *en redondo*,” a round-tripper. (*Viaje redondo* is a way to refer to a home run).

The closure is reinforced by the repetition of the reference to Lemon Grove Martínez, who was shaken in line 22 and now, in line 44, is about to be tumbled. Line 48, with the adjective *fraternal* heralding the return of the theme of union, remits us, as do lines 42-45, to the poem’s beginning, where all is unity and the conflicts of competition have not yet appeared. *Fraternal* is a hypallage, since the sloop (which is what has been “vibrating all around”) is transporting the band of brothers who have just defeated Cuba. The adjective also applies because the ship in which they are traveling was provided by the Cuban navy and so manifests a wider brotherhood, one that unites the members of the two rival teams. The sloop itself could be a metaphor for the Venezuelan team itself, even without reference to fraternity. This would be consistent with the maritime component in baseball’s lexicon; the manager frequently is known as the skipper, or, in

Spanish, *timonel*.¹

The fraternal vessel was called the *Cuba*, which provides Blanco with another opportunity to write polysemously. The *Cuba*, thanks to its name, is both ship and island. A ship also is a floating island, which John Donne, who, like Blanco, enjoyed playing with words, reminds us a man is not. An irony of history extends the multivalence of the ship's name. Two steamers named *Cuba* were involved in the odyssey of the Heroes of '41, the private ocean liner that carried the Venezuelans to the tournament and its homonym, the navy cruiser that brought them home (Hazaña 170).

Although uncomfortable—this *Cuba* was small, and the waves were large—the trip home was a short one, since the Cuban cruiser was a fast ship and it traveled straight 'directo' (Hazaña 171) to La Guaira. I have not been able to find any reference to the ship having called on any ports on the way to Venezuela. So, why does Blanco have it stop at Varadero, eighty-seven miles east of Havana?

One answer that might settle my hash, the way Mary McCarthy settled her colonel's, would be that the ship did, indeed, put in at Varadero and that I just can't verify that it did. But, until such verification comes along, I'll have to string along with a tentative reply to my question. Besides, even if the stop over at Varadero were a historical fact, the way Blanco uses and describes it obviously affects the reading of his poem. I think the significance of *se mete en Varadero* lies in both the verb and its object.

The locution *se mete* has a wide variety of uses, including "enters" as in "the ship enters the port." It is a noticeably vigorous verb, not

¹ Examples are "around the horn," "on deck," "wheel house," "submarine," "dugout," and "in the hole," or "hold," all words you can hear—in Spanish, English, or hispanicized English—in a typical Latin American baseball broadcast. In Spanish, a run batted in often is called "una carrera remolcada," a tugboat being a *remolcador*, Joe DiMaggio's nickname, "The Yankee Clipper," refers to the Pan American Airlines' seaplane, which got its name from the nineteenth-century sailing ships, so that might qualify for the bilingual nautical list. Unfortunately, a Latino port sider is just a *zurdo*, a terrestrial lefty.

exempt from aggressively sexual implications. Víctor León, in his *Diccionario de argot español* crudely defines *meterla en caliente* as “Introducir la picha en el coño” “To put the cock in the cunt.”

Varadero was, and still is, a resort town. Before the revolution of 1959, it was a bastion of racial and economic discrimination. So much so, that the propaganda of the new revolutionary establishment touted the resort’s desegregation in this song by Carlos Puebla:

Usted recuerda cuando Varadero
era para ricos y nada más.
Por la playa, playa tan hermosa,
el pueblo no podía ni caminar.
Aquello estaba en manos de los míster
y casi solamente se hablaba inglés
hasta que un día se corrió la corredera
y ahora Varadero del pueblo es.

You remember when Varadero was just for
rich people. On that beach, that beautiful
beach, ordinary people couldn’t even take a
stroll. The “misters” controlled everything, and
hardly anyone spoke anything but English. Until
one day the door slid open, and now Varadero be-
longs to the people.

So Blanco’s lines about the brotherly sloop entering Varadero Harbor imply something like “the Cuban and Venezuelan people unite to stick it to the imperialists and their racist lackeys.” Remember, however, that this union is not a military alliance; the ceremony is a marriage, canonical, not cannonical. *Amor vincet omnia*.

This is crucial for the understanding of Blanco’s poem and would still be a part of the poem even if it were to turn out that the Varadero episode has a firm basis in the *Cuba*’s itinerary. What began as a marriage between Venezuela and the championship pennant has become the union between the two teams. Through the agency of their male athletes, Venezuela and Cuba now are joined to each other in the brotherly (and phallic) sloop, a cruiser. They soon will be so united in their conjugal embrace that they will lose their separate individual and

national identities, become, that is, one flesh. We don't even have to appeal to Fiedler's "buggery of sailors [that] is taken for granted among us" (669) to come to the conclusion that Blanco's union of two body politics is one with the union of three dozen bodies.

As it enters Varadero, the sloop

suelta un "buzo" que va al fondo
y surge para ofrendar
dos perlas de igual oriente,
dos perlas de brillo igual,
una a Liborio supremo,
otra a Juan Bimba inmortal.

drops a diver who reaches the ocean floor and
rises up to make an offering of two pearls of equal
luster, two pearls of equal brilliance, one to the
supreme Liborio, the other to the immortal Juan
Bimba. (49-54)

Callejo and Pajares's *Concordance of Góngora's Fábula de Polyfemo y Galathea and Las soledades* lists five appearances of *perlas*, two in each "Solitude." Lapesa mentions Góngora's use of *perlas* for "teeth," as one of the "metáforas que el uso había convertido en lugares comunes" 'metaphors that usage had made commonplace' (227) and to which the baroque poet restored their original shine. Blanco, too, restores the brilliance of his pearls. To understand how he does it, will take us a bit off course.

Callejo and Pajares cite "cuyos purpúreos senos perlas netas" from line 458 (465 in Dámaso Alonso's edition). The context of that example is

los reinos de la Aurora al fin besaste,
cuyos purpúreos senos perlas netas,
cuyas minas secretas
hoy te guardan su más precioso engaste

At last you kissed the kingdoms of the Dawn,
whose purple breasts pure pearls, whose secret
mines, hold their most precious setting for you

today

Góngora's pearls are buried in the purple breasts of the wine-dark eastern seas, and their "most precious setting" is hidden in the "secret mines" of those same waters. In short, the passage equates the jewels with the erogenous zones of the female body.

The Venezuelan pitcher and outfielder Pedro Nelson, nicknamed "Buzo" 'Diver,' throws himself into the sea east of Havana and returns *de profundis* with a pair of round, white pearls. The thematically Gongorine echoes of the wedding scene of the beginning of Blanco's poem return here as the emphasis shifts from the baseball games to their culmination in marriage foreshadowed in the earlier lines.

The diving episode is reminiscent of Góngora in more than theme alone. Blanco's treatment of the *perlas* is almost as baroque as Góngora's. The modern poet's pearls are of "igual oriente," literally of "equal orient." The word reeks of the exotic, as well as indicating the direction in which the brotherly sloop is traveling. *Oriente* also is a technical term, used in the jewelry trade to refer to the "brillo especial de las perlas, que les da valor" 'special brightness of pearls, which makes them valuable' (DRAE), as in the phrase *perla de fino oriente*. Nor does this technical usage of *oriente* exhaust the word's allusiveness in the "Romance." Remember that the masterful Daniel Canónico was known as "El chino" 'The Chinaman' in the English of 1941.

The pearls, whose purity and perfection make them a traditional part of the bride's trousseau, further develop the theme of marriage. They are gifts bestowed by the diver on the personifications of the Cuban and Venezuelan peasantry, called respectively "supreme" and "immortal." These adjectives would be either a joke or an awkward tribute to the dignity of labor if Liborio and Juan Bimba didn't also stand for the two nations in their entirety. Having received their tribute of pearls, Cuba and Venezuela, represented by their personifications and their baseball teams, are accoutered as brides and take each other in the matrimony the poem celebrates.

Blanco both repeats the same phrase and provides a mirror image by reversing the order of noun and adjective when he tells describes the "dos perlas de igual oriente, / dos perlas de brillo igual," This

embodies the theme of unity in duality inherent in the ideas of marriage and brotherhood as the very nature of Blanco's diction.

That the pearls are given as gifts underlines the ritual nature of the ceremony. The verb Blanco uses to indicate the offering of the pearls is, *ofrendar* 'to make an offering,' usually in a religious context.

Thus, although Pedro "Buzo" Nelson, was the only player on the Venezuelan team not to see action in the tournament, (Ramos 120) he manages, thanks to his nickname, to make a significant post series contribution to Blanco's poem. He also made a significant contribution to Venezuela's triumph by bolstering the team's confidence when, during the five-day interval between the end of the regular series and the playoff game, he turned in a strong pitching performance in an exhibition game, thereby convincing his teammates that they could win even without Canónico on the mound (Hazaña 131).

Any suspicions we might entertain that we have been reading too much into an innocent celebration of an athletic victory are dispelled by linguistically complex passages like those of the diver sequence and the results they yield, which frequently are more coherent than the poem's surface meanings. Unlike Blanco's contemporary Venezuelan baseball fans, we need to do detective work merely to recognize the poem's *dramatis personae*. But, even without that stimulus to further investigation, the "Romance" would require and repay the careful reading and scholarship that enable the reader distant in both time and space from the original to see the existence of patterns that would have escaped the notice of someone to whom initial comprehension of the poem came more easily. The poem's neo-baroque passages invite the reader, whatever her or his degree of familiarity with 1940s' Caribbean baseball, to delve into those verses that clearly suggest that there is sunken treasure to be rescued and, by extension, invite the careful examination of even the less overtly seductive sections of poem.

It is possible that Blanco's mixture of the sacred and profane and of homosexual details with what in 1941 would have been a strictly heterosexual ceremony is parodic. The "Romance" is, after all, a burlesque. But parody, which requires not only a knowledge of what is being parodied, but a willingness to accept that knowledge. I seriously doubt that Blanco's original readers would have allowed themselves to

recognize the homoerotic portion of Blanco's allusions. Although they enjoyed the poem's ribaldry and caught Blanco's baseball references much more quickly than we can, those readers would have reacted to the depiction of the marriage of two all-male teams the way Chico Carrasquel did to Minnie Miñoso's antics, not the way Billy Bean did to the pseudonymous García's. While the ballad parodies marriage, it is unlikely that he was intended, or read, as a gay parody.

A More Perfect Union

At last the ceremony ends and, with it, the poem

Con Santa y Cuba Libre
termina el ceremonial,
hay un gran adios azul,
porque empiezan a agitar
Caracas su azul de cielo,
La Habana su azul de mar;⁶⁰

The ceremony ends with fine Venezuelan rum
and Cuba Libres. There's a grand blue farewell
because Caracas starts waving the blue of her sky
and Havana the blue of her sea. (55-60)

The hard-fought contest has become an agape, a love feast in which the wine of the wedding mass has become Venezuelan and Cuban rum—the latter mixed with Coca-Cola—and the bread, natillas, a delicacy indented with one of the Cuban players. The profane and politically named Cuba Libre becomes one with the nominally sacred Santa as the two celebrate the spiritual, and suggest the physical, union of the two teams.

The sky over Havana, the setting for the marriage ceremony, which, from the very first line of the "Romance" has been the poem's dominating metaphor, gives way to the sky over Caracas, heaven and earth united by their color. The return of "blue" takes us back to the "fláis' azules" of line 17 and to the blue Olympic skies under which, Blanco tells us in his welcoming speech, Greece was created. R. John McCaw has shown that the sexual-athletic nexus of the first "Soledad" is related, through Apollo's frustrated courtship of Daphne,

to the origin the Olympic games (90-93) The confluence of the Olympic and matrimonial allusions is another indication of Blanco's Gongorism, the most significant of which is the Venezuelan's protean virtuosity in naming.

Over the blue Caribbean sea,

se tienden puentes de vivas
litoral y litoral
y en la embriaguez de la justa
se saludan sin cesar,
Juan Bimba, vuelto "natilla"
y Liborio agar-agar.

From one coastline to another, they extend
bridges of cheers, and, in the drunkenness of
the joust, Juan Bimba, changed into natilla
custard and Liborio, into jelly, endlessly salute
each other. (55-66)

In lines 19-22, the fans of the two teams threw their caps and shook lemon trees to wind up the pre-game festivities. Now, they celebrate the end of the ceremony by reaching out to each other, building bridges of cheers, as conflict gives rise to mutual recognition. There's a whole lot of shaking goin' on, agitating sea and sky . . . the earth moved for them.

The phallic image of raised lances implicit in the joust could not be more appropriate. We once more return to Gálvez's sarcasm, "Y para terminar, ¿no es muy varonil eso del bat y la pelota?" 'And let us end by asking, isn't that business of the bat and the ball very manly?'

The crudity of the image summoned by Blanco's metaphor is mitigated by its contextual function. It is not only rum and Coca-Cola that have intoxicated the multitude; the two nations are so inebriated by the excitement of their champions—from the Latin *campus*, "field of athletic or military exercise, place of combat, lists" (OED)— going at each other with raised lances that they lose their separate identities and become one flesh. Venezuelans become Cubans through the exchange of vital bodily fluids, "Juan Bimba, vuelto 'natilla' /

In one sense, *natilla* refers to the Cuban pitcher who bears it as his nickname and, in another, to the dessert from which he derived the moniker, the little custard made of milk, eggs, and sugar, the first two of which have the Spanish slang meanings of “sperm” and “testicles,” respectively.²

Blanco’s choice of *natilla* as the product of Juan Bimba’s transubstantiation is an interesting one. Just as both Venezuelans and Cubans use *criollo* ‘creole’ to describe what is distinctive to their respective countries,³ each country considers *natillas* a traditional national delicacy. Perhaps Juan Bimba was Liborio all along. The transformation of Juan Bimba’s Cuban counterpart is equally intriguing and rather more puzzling. He turns into *agar agar*, a type of jelly. Perhaps, Juan Bimba, endowed with Natilla Jiménez’s *leche* and *huevos* has Liborio all a-tremble.

In this section, the mutation of the roles of the members of the wedding hints at a clue that reveals Blanco’s ultimate metaphorical camouflage. Venezuela takes as its bride the championship, which Cuba has enjoyed for two years without creating a permanent union. Cuba’s erstwhile concubine is now Venezuela’s legitimate spouse. At the end of the poem, Venezuela supplants Cuba in the championship’s affections. Yet the winning team is united, not just with the prize, but also with the defeated team’s players, thus consummating a relationship that is both homoerotic and Oedipal, one that began with their rivalry for possession of the prized banner.

Cuba is the supplanted father. In Blanco’s welcoming speech, he reminds his hearers that it was the Cubans who taught Venezuelans to play baseball, which leads to his allusion to Gerbert of Aurillac’s tag “Gloria discipuli gloria magistri est.” The teacher not only is a father

² The twentieth-century Mexican counterrevolutionary Victoriano Huerta was known as *El general Rompope* ‘General Egnog,’ because he was made of eggs and alcohol

³ Commenting on the October 17 game in his article in the next day’s *Diario de la Marina* of Havana, René Molina refers to the Cuban team as “criollos,” while Herman Ettedegui, writing on the same game in the October 18 issue of *El Universal* (Caracas) calls Canónico “el criollito.” (Hazaña 117)

figure, but he also feels parental pride in his disciple's accomplishments. Although Blanco takes pains to clarify that Venezuela's triumph is a peaceful one, quoting "mi tocayo" 'my namesake' Eloy González's remark, "Gracias a Dios, señores, [se puede hablar] de heroísmo sin delito, de glorias sin sangre" 'Thank God, gentlemen, [we can speak] of heroism without crime, of glories without tears' (OCVII, 301), Blanco's reference to crime and tears indicate the potential for violence that menaces the object of his complacent paean to selfless striving.

Cuba's younger brother functions here as son; Venezuela as both Cain and Oedipus. The older brother, Cain, is the functional equivalent of Laius. Venezuela's victory is Oedipus's supplantation of his father in Jocasta's bed. It also is redress for Cain's murder of his brother and restores on the field of play the historical relationship between the two nations: Venezuela was the first of Spain's American colonies to attain its independence; Cuba, if we discount Puerto Rico, the last.

The phallically shaped championship pennant, mentioned prominently at the beginning of the poem as the object whose possession the teams are contesting, is nowhere to be found at the end. Now, after their strife, Venezuelans and Cubans are united with one another; they become one flesh. Brothers become father and son, husband and wife. By becoming Cuba's father, Venezuela assumes power over the island, as the father does over the son and his mother. Think of the boast, "Yo soy tu padre" 'I'm your father.' Baseball fans will remember the dueling chants of "Who's your daddy?" and "Who's your papi?" directed, respectively, at the Red Sox' Pedro Martínez by Yankee fans and in support of David Ortiz by members of the Red Sox Nation.

The agar agar, commonly known as Chinese gelatin, revives the theme of the east and sets up the closing humorous tribute to "El Chino" Canónico.

Y así terminó la boda
nombrando la Catedral
nada menos a un chinito,
Canónigo Magistral. (67-70)

And that's how the wedding ended, with the

Cathedral naming a little Chinaman, no
less! as its master cannon. (67-70)

Nombrando, naming. That's what Blanco has been doing all poem long. He makes connections, not between the intrinsic nature or appearance of phenomena but between their names. It is the name Canónico that opens and closes the poem and enables the central metaphor of the poem, the Amateur World Series as a wedding, a canonical ceremony. Blanco's coded chronicle is the elaboration of a pun.

But punning also is misnaming. And calling Canónico Chinese is a misnomer. Daniél Canónico was Chinese in cognomen only. Juan Vené, who broadcast the New York Mets' games in Spanish from 1974 through 1982, has told me that, not only was the pitcher ethnically Venezuelan, but his father, Benito Canónico, whose given and family names contain their own play on words, was the composer of one of Venezuela's most famous regional songs, "El totumo guarenero" 'The Calabash Tree From Guarenas.' "Era Daniél, pues, muy venezolano, pero sí, su rostro tenía rasgos asiáticos" 'Daniel was, then, very Venezuelan, although his face did have some Asian features' (E-mail of 11 Dec 2009).

There is more to Blanco's final quip. The "Romance" is a story, a *cuento*, about Venezuela's victory in the tournament. The DRAE defines a *cuento chino* 'Chinese story' as an *embuste*, which it, in turn, defines as an artful deception, a "mentira disfrazada con artificio." Chino Canónico's tale is a self-reflexive joke, cunningly disguised.

Indeed, intensive punning, where words, people, and actions suffer changes of identity, is the central activity in Blanco's poem. What are we to make of this compulsive paronomasia?

A pun, by compressing two or more meanings into a single word or phrase provides the pleasure of wit, whose soul, it is said, is brevity. Many people call puns the lowest form of wit,⁴ but they are the essence

⁴ Freud says that puns "are generally counted as the lowest form of wit, perhaps because they are "cheapest" and can be formed with the least effort. They really make the least demands on the technique of expression just as the actual play on words makes the most. Whereas in the latter, both meanings find expression in the identical word, and hence in a word used only once, in the pun it is enough if two words for both meanings resemble each other through some slight similarity in structure, in rhythmic consonance,

of metaphor. But this pleasure doesn't explain, the almost constant semantic shifts the names in Blanco's ballad undergo. If Blanco's poem were nothing but a witty tour de force he would have produced something more like his friend Otero Silva's gloss "Versos para el 'Chino':"

La estrofa popular era esta:
 ¿Quién lanza con pulso fino?
 El Chino
 ¿Quién es superior a él?
 Daniel
 ¿Quién es de la lid el tónico?
 Canónico
 Por eso es más económico
 y para valorar lo nuestro
 dicen que es grande y es diestro
 El Chino Daniel Canónico.

This was the popular stanza: Who's the steadiest pitcher? El Chino. Who's better than he is? Daniel. Who sets the tone for the battle? Canónico. That's why it's more economical and to give us our due they say that a great and skillful righty is El Chino Daniel Canónico. (Qtd in Ramos 110)

A pun provides readers the pleasure of discovering additional meanings in what they read. It also provides writers the pleasure of hiding those additional meanings. Once the punning starts, its mechanism of hide-and-seek is at work regardless of the writer's motivation. Nonetheless, an examination of some of the reasons for such verbal equivocation can help us understand its functioning.

in the community of several vowels, or in some similar manner." (655) It seems to me that the father of psychoanalysis, or his translation, has got it wrong; all puns are word play, not all word play is puns.

CHAPTER 8

SUBMERGED SOLIDARITY

Despised and Rejected of Men

Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645), a great and witty writer and, by all accounts, an extremely nasty person, accused a fellow writer of being both gay and Jewish, crimes prosecuted by the Inquisition and punishable by death at the stake in seventeenth-century Spain¹ (Lola González *passim*). The object of Quevedo's scorn was Góngora, whose similarities to Blanco we have had occasion, in spite of the vast difference in the quality of their verse, to observe. In his aversion to calling people and things by their right name we can detect an echo of the Jewish refusal to pronounce the name of God.

In *De la edad conflictiva* 'On the Age of Conflict,' Américo Castro quotes Miguel Artigas's report of the reply Góngora made to Bishop Francisco Pacheco, who had complained that the poet's work was not sufficiently spiritual: "mi poca teología me disculpa, pues es tan poca, que he tenido por mejor ser condenado por liviano que por hereje" 'my ignorance of theology excuses me, since I know so little of it that I think it better to be condemned for frivolity than for heresy' (179). A rejoinder worthy of Víctor Pellot Pové/Víctor Pellot Power/Vic Power!

Semites and sodomites—Hebrews and Hellenes—like blacks, have a history of being despised and rejected, but also desired. After the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, those who remained, the *conversos*, and their New Christian descendants suffered increasing suspicion, surveillance, and repression, Castro's book provides abundant examples. The situation of the Moors, dark skinned non-Christians,

¹ An incident Salvador García-Castañeda told me about decades ago shows that the tendency of Spanish Catholics to attribute homosexuality to followers of other religions survived the Inquisition. When the Franco regime first permitted an extremely modest Protestant church to function in the capital, Madrileños awoke one morning to find a graffito painted on its door: "Lutero maricón" 'Luther's a fairy. Incidents like this are balanced by the widely held belief of Protestants and Jews that Catholics are a lascivious group.

was similar to that of the Jews but complicated by having armed coreligionists across the Strait of Gibraltar. The *novela morisca* ‘Moorish novel’, *El Abencerraje y la hermosa Jarifa* ‘*The Abencerraje* [a family name] *and the Beautiful Jarifa*,’ written between 1550 and 1561, gives an idea of the allure defeated enemies held for the society that excluded them. Alfonso Zamora summarizes the novel’s plot in Bleiberg and María’s *Diccionario de literatura española*.

Es una deliciosa novelita corta, en la que se narran los amores de Abindarráez . . . y Jarifa Cuando aquél iba a buscar a Jarifa para casarse, Rodrigo de Narváez apresó al Abencerraje. Apiadado, Narváez le deja ir bajo palabra de regreso, que cumple, pero acompañado de Jarifa. Todo se resuelve satisfactoriamente.

It is a delightful short novel, which narrates the love between Abindarráez [the Abencerraje] and Jarifa When Abindarráez was on his way to find Jarifa so they could get married, Rodrigo de Narváez captured him. Taking pity [on his prisoner] Narváez releases him, subject to his promise, which he keeps, to return, but accompanied by Jarifa, Everything ends well.

Borges, in an attack on the dubbing of foreign-language films, has remarked,

Más de un espectador se pregunta: Ya que hay usurpación de voces, ¿por qué no también de figuras? ¿Cuándo será perfecto el sistema? ¿Cuándo veremos directamente a Juana González en el papel de Greta Garbo, en el papel de la Reina Cristina de Suecia?

More than one viewer wonders, “Now that we have the usurpation of voices, why not that of bodies as well? When will the system be perfect? When will we see Juana González in the role of Greta Garbo, in the role of Queen

Christina of Sweden. (Sobre 178n)²

If literature were to be dubbed in this hypothetical way, instead of being merely translated, *El Abencerraje*, for its sympathetic portrayal of the dark-skinned, non-Christian other, would be a good choice to play the part of the Leatherstocking Tales in “Come Back to the Raft Ag’in, Huck Honey!” The objection that *El Abencerraje* is a purely heterosexual work can be countered by a reading of Barbara Fuchs’ essay “Homosexual Bonds and Desires in the *Abencerraje*.”

The Andalusia of *El Abencerraje* and Cooper’s upper New York State were frontiers between hostile civilizations, Moslem and Christian in the former and Indian and Anglo-American in the latter. The Caribbean basin also is a frontier zone, both internally, given the island’s variegated population, and externally, given the confrontation and cooperation between the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking worlds, not to mention the Francophone nations of the area and the Netherlands Antilles. The basin as a whole exists in the shadow of its hegemonic neighbor to the north, who still maintains a colonial presence in Puerto Rico and a hegemonic one throughout the area with the exception of Cuba and, perhaps, Venezuela. The strained relationship between Major League Baseball and the Caribbean Baseball Federation as seen in their negotiations over the participation of big leaguers in winter league play and the applicability of the major league draft to Latin American players is one manifestation of this conflict between neighbors. Situations like these breed equivocal language, especially by the weaker party.

Over the centuries and on both sides of the Atlantic, people passing as white, straight, and Christian, have lived and live in dread of

² Borges, or his conjectural moviegoer apparently didn’t realize—or pretended not to realize—that Hollywood in the 1930s often filmed multiple versions of films, all with the same sets, aimed at different linguistic markets, with each version featuring performers who spoke the language of its targeted audience. *Dracula*, with Bela Lugosi and Helen Chandler in the English version and Carlos Villarias and Lupita Tovar in the Spanish one, is an example.

discovery, while others wondered if, perhaps, they, too, were not just passing.

Some crypto-Jews and crypto-Muslims followed the advice Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount, “When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret” (Matt 6:6, JKV). *Conversos* and *moriscos*,³ converted Jews and Muslims, respectively, and their descendents lived in constant fear of discovery of their origins. Gay people, too, lived in their closet. This did not prevent the three groups from being persecuted in various unpleasant ways. The persecution often led its victims to identify with their oppressors.

The uncle of Spain’s Inquisitor General from 1483 to 1498, Cardinal Tomás de Torquemada, was married to a New Christian woman, which led to rumors that he, too, was Jewish (Netanyahu 1249). Although Benzion Netanyahu believes that the nephew was an Old Christian, (1250) it is hard not to attribute the Inquisitor’s prosecutorial zeal to an attempt to prove his bona fides, whether to himself, others, or both. The sense, the fear (the hope?), that a person might somehow, somewhere, in some way might be Jewish has persisted in Spain. Lorca, the gay poet who railed against the fairies, wrote home after visiting a Sephardic synagogue in New York, “en Granada somos casi todos judíos. Era una cosa estupenda ver como parecían todos [los fieles] granadinos” ‘in Granada, almost all of us are Jews. It was stupendous to see how all [the congregation] looked like Granadans’ (Epistolario 627).

Among gay men of Góngora’s time, manifestations of the Stockholm syndrome *avant la lettre* could take the form of behavior analogous to the hyper macho antics of the clubhouse carousers described by Billy Bean, Chico Carrasquel, and Jim Bouton. Gregorio Marañón believes that the Juan de Tassis y Peralta, Count of Villamediana, was the model for the first literary Don Juan, the protagonist of Tirso de Molina’s 1630 verse drama *El burlador de Sevilla* ‘*The Trickster of*

³ In Mexico, *morisco* was used to describe “the offspring of mulattos and Europeans” ‘descendiente de mulato y europea o de mulata y europeo.’ (DRAE)

Seville, Villamediana's sexual exploits were legendary, and Marañón writes convincingly that the count encouraged the legend. But, Marañón adds, "aun queda por decir lo más imprevisto 'we haven't come yet to the most unforeseen fact' (109), which is that documents unearthed by the historian Alfonso Cortés reveal that in 1622

Villamediana fue complicado en un proceso de lo que entonces se llamaba el crimen nefando. . . . Gran número de personas de Madrid fueron inculpadas de homosexualidad. Desde criados y bufones de las casas aristocráticas, hasta los mismos señores de éstas. Uno de ellos era Don Juan de Tassis. . . . Él era, ¡quién pudiera pensarlo!, el jefe de la banda. Los más humildes fueron condenados a muerte y ejecutados en Madrid: que entonces lo exigía así el rigor incomprensivo de la ley. A los pecadores encopetados les dejaban huir a Francia y a Italia. Villamediana acababa de ser asesinado, y su muerte fué, precisamente, el punto de partida para el descubrimiento de esta insospechada organización de anormales. Pero su honra se salvó. Una orden piadosa del propio rey, ahora exhumada, manda que "por estar el conde ya muerto, se guarde el secreto de lo que contra él hay. para no infamar su memoria."

Villamediana was implicated in a case involving what then was called the nefarious crime. . . . Many people in Madrid were accused of homosexuality, from the servants and jesters of aristocratic houses to their lords. One of them was Don Juan de Tassis. . . . He was—who would have thought it?—the leader of the group. The most humble were condemned to death and executed in Madrid, which is what the intolerant rigor of the law demanded in those days. The noble sinners were allowed to escape to France and Italy. Villamediana had just been murdered, and it was precisely his death that was the starting point for the discovery of

this unsuspected organization of perverts. But his honor was saved. The king's charitable command, now exhumed, orders that "since the count now is dead, the secret of what there is against him should be kept, so that his memory not be defamed." (110)⁴

The macho masquerade of the rake or the ballplayer is, like the pseudo Christianity of the *judaizante* or of the incompletely converted *morisco*, a sort of pun, in which the trickster's apparent behavior both masks and allows the discerning reader to see a different reality beneath the mask. It is not surprising that criminalized religious, ethnic, and sexual groups would resort to the techniques for physical and emotional survival of the criminal class. In chapter 22 of *Don Quixote*, where the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance asks a galley slave what crime one of his companions in misery has committed to deserve his harsh punishment, Cervantes gives us an example of the sensibility of evasion that the abused and downtrodden express in the coping mechanism of word play.

⁴I mentioned in chapter 2 that, in "Confesión," Blanco called himself a "poeta . . . un hombre / que nombra y que camina, sin camino y sin nombre" 'a "poet . . . a man who who names and walks, without a road and without a name.' (3-4) In *El burlador de Sevilla*, Don Juan, after impersonating Duke Octavio in order to bed the Duchess Isabela, is caught out when she lights a candle. To her distressed and indignant cry of "¡Ah, cielo! ¿Quién eres, hombre? 'Oh my God, who are you, man?' he replies "¿Quién soy? Un hombre sin nombre." 'Who am I? I man without a name.' (14-15) With the passage of time, there is a sense in which Don Juan has become *un nombre sin hombre*. The ironies and the echo resonate.

Américo Castro, in his edition of Tirso's play, tells us what lies behind the name of Don Juan's servant: "*Catalinón*, de Catalina; cf. *Maricón*, de Marica. En andaluz vulgar, *catalina* es 'el excremento que se halla en la calle'; *catalinón* sería algo como 'cagón, cobarde.'" '*Catalinón*, from Catalina; cf. *Maricón* [*fairy*], from Marica [fag, from the diminutive of María]. In vulgar Andalusian speech, *catalina* is the "the excrement found in the street;" *Catalinón* would be something like "shithead, coward.'" (881) Castro's analogy shows an intuitive psychological understanding of the drama at least as valuable as the philological information he provides. You can learn a lot from footnotes.

—Éste, señor, va por canario, digo, por músico y cantor.

—Pues ¿cómo?—replicó don Quijote—. ¿Por músicos y cantores van también a galeras?

—Sí, señor—respondió el galeote—, que no hay peor cosa que cantar en el ansia.

—Antes he oído yo decir—dijo don Quijote— que quien canta sus males espanta.

—Acá es el revés—dijo el galeote—, que quien canta una vez llora toda la vida.

“This one, sir, is here for being a canary. That is for being a singer and a musician.”

“How can that be?” don Quixote replied. “They send people to galleys for being singers and musicians?”

“Yes, sir,” the galley slave answered, “because there’s nothing worse than singing on the water board.” {*Ansia*=that form of enhanced interrogation and “anguish”}.

“But I’ve heard them say,” don Quixote said, “singing chases the blues away.”

“Around here’s it’s just the opposite,” said the galley slave,” because if you sing just once, you’ll cry for the rest of your life.” (201)

Did He Really Mean That?

Neither the ambiguous machismo of the clubhouse, the raucous sensuality of the rumba, nor the homoerotic component of the classical Greek tradition compels a transgressive—sexual or otherwise— reading of the “Romance.” But, as Henry David Thoreau observed, “Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the

milk.” (168) The combination of those factors with the ballad’s central metaphor of the wedding, its permutations at the end of the poem, and the analogous uses of sport in Góngora and Blanco’s two works under study are the trout in our milk.

We also have seen that while Blanco, by echoing the techniques of baroque poetry in his poem and citing classical Greek history and culture in his “Discurso,” legitimates baseball as a cultural activity, something else also is being legitimized. Blanco’s Gongorine model and his appeal to Greek institutions like the Olympic games carry with them a latent sexual charge. Sexuality of all types, but especially homoeroticism, is sublimated as sport, and sport is sublimated as the heritage of classical Greece, a culture that idealized homoeroticism. This is an unexpected and probably unperceived part of the apotheosis—a Greek word-- that the organizing committee for the championship festivities promised the citizens of Caracas.

But accepting the presence of homosexual and other transgressive themes in the “Romance” does not mean that it is a poem *about* unconventional sex.

My reading of the ballad does not imply that it is an exposé of or an apologia for sexual non-conformity, either hetero- or homosexual, much less for incest, fratricide, or parricide. Exposés and apologias are by definition overt genres. Although we may speak of a veiled apology, an apology, veiled or open, is not an apologia, and a hidden exposé is an oxymoron. Perhaps Blanco’s burlesque is a satire, but to call the ballad that would require us to gauge Blanco’s intentions, which would bring us up against the problems I discussed in chapter 2. Such a project might be a useful one, but it would tell us only what Blanco meant to say and how successful he was in saying it, not what the poem says. There remains the possibility that the “Romance” reveals Blanco’s anxieties about his sexual orientation or is evidence of repressed homosexuality. That possibility is real, but accepting it as a basis for reading Blanco’s text would be to put literature at the service of psychology and not psychology at the service of literature. If we knew what Blanco’s sexual fears and desires were, it might help us understand the process by which he transmuted them into his poetry. From the poet’s remarks on the *picón*, we can infer that he was tolerant of straight sexual misbehavior. But we don’t know if he felt (or even

exhibited) a similar tolerance towards openly gay people and their sexual activity. Nor would an attempt to reason (or imagine) back from Blanco's texts to his private thoughts, feelings, and practices suit the purposes of a study that deals with literature as an end, not a mean. That type of retro-analysis would be an appropriate undertaking for a biographer or practitioner of Gender or Queer Studies, but it's not grist for my mill.

Beyond that, the same-sex intimacy that occurs in baseball is similar to what existed in ancient Greece. Until gay liberation subjected baseball, along with the rest of society, to a certain amount of honesty about the topic, no one seemed to take any particular notice of it. In Greece, it was *the way things are*. In baseball, the myth of locker room innocence normalized clubhouse high jinks: boys will be boys.

After all, people have engaged in homosexual acts for all of our history, and even though the people who committed those acts often were persecuted for them, it appears that the distinction between "gay" and "straight" was not as rigid as it was to become. As W.C.Fields says of drunkenness in the middle ages, it "was so common, it went unnoticed." The first use of "homosexual" and "homosexuality" recorded by the 1987 compact supplement to the OED did not occur until 1892. (Oscar Wilde's conviction for gross indecency occurred in 1895). The tenuous homosexuality implicit in the "Romance" is not a problem; it is barely perceptible, but *it is there*.

Furthermore, I am not interested in the homosexual undercurrents of Blanco's poem as an isolated phenomenon. In the controlling metaphor of the "Romance," they are part of process by which illicit behavior becomes licit. Unbridled sexuality is reduced to regularity by the sacrament of marriage, analogous to the reduction of the chaos of words to the form of a poem. Both reductions are a sort of apotheosis, or at least sublimation, a redemption of the physical and the inchoate. In psychoanalytic terms, where id was, there ego shall be. I am concerned with the dionysian energy behind the poem and the process by which it is shaped, as well as the power transfer that goes in the other direction, where the ordinary metaphor of the marriage ceremony acquires the raging force of the unsanctioned. This, rather than the taxonomy of the details of that energy, is what interests me. Of course,

we can't have the process without the details. That is, we are told, where the devil resides.

In 1954, Fernando Alegría summarized what he called “La cuestión sexual” in Latin American critics’ response to Whitman.

Sus conclusiones pueden resumirse sencillamente así: primero, no existe en la biografía de Whitman ninguna evidencia que preube fehacientemente que que padeciera de alguna anormalidad sexual; y segundo, su sensualismo fué sometido a un profundo y cuidadoso proceso de elaboración artística, de modo que en su obra poética assume un significado indudablemente social y metafísico.

Their conclusions can be summed up simply as, first, there is no evidence in Whitman’s biography that convincingly proves that he suffered from any sexual abnormality; and, second, his sensuality was submitted to a profound and careful process of artistic elaboration so that his poetic work assumes an undoubtable social and metaphysical meaning. (225-266)

Alegría’s diction—at once clinical and brutal, typical of the way homosexuality was referred to in the mid-twentieth century— shows why a poet who was gay—as opposed to a gay poet—would make every effort to hide the nature of her or his sexuality. I also would hesitate to call what Blanco has done in the “Romance” a “profound and careful artistic elaboration.” Nonetheless, in certain fundamental ways, Alegría’s summary can be applied to that poem. I have not found any convincing evidence of Blanco’s having been gay, and his work clearly does have a social, if not metaphysical, meaning.

During his years of imprisonment, Blanco was the functional equivalent of Cervantes’ galley slave. He surely could sympathize with and, it would seem from the text of his poem, share the slave’s need for linguistic deception. As a baseball player, he would have sensed the unspoken subtext of clubhouse camaraderie, and his acute ear would have been attuned to the sexual references that abound in locker room repartee.

Both Blanco and Martí, also imprisoned under extremely harsh conditions, fought for the dignity of their respective nations and devoted their lives to the causes of freedom and justice. Blanco could proclaim with his Cuban brother that, in the words of the latter's poem that has become the "Kumbaya" of the Latin American left, *Con los pobres de la tierra / yo quiero mi suerte echar* 'I want to throw my lot in with the wretched of the earth.' I wrote earlier, while speaking of unsanctioned sex, that to the Manichean mindset, all transgressions are one. That unified view of transgression finds a threat in both sexual and political dissent, which it often conflates. (Not that the holders of such views unanimously practice sexual orthodoxy). Tom Hayden quotes from a speech made by Tom Foran, the prosecuting attorney in the 1969-70 trial of the Chicago Seven:

Our kids don't understand that we don't mean anything when we use the word "nigger" . . . we've lost our kids to the freaking fag revolution.
(Bloom and Breines 375)

The oversimplifications of the repressors are a self-fulfilling prophecy; one tear weakens the entire fabric of their system of belief. One small misstep for a man, one giant leap for mankind.

We do not know what either Blanco's intentions or his innermost inclinations were, but we do know this. He could sense the raw, anarchic power of desire, a force that doesn't respect the strictures of canonical or secular law, of gender, of class, or of race. *El Morrocy Azul*, the satirical magazine in which Blanco published the "Romance" and which he helped found in the same year of the victory he celebrates in that poem, called itself a "semanario surrealista de intereses generales," 'a surrealist weekly of general interest.' The immense power of desire, of sexuality is at the center of the surrealist movement, and Blanco could sense its liberating force in the crude language and behavior of the penitentiary and the locker room, homosocial environments in which had some of his most significant experiences. He also was able to process the indirectness with which so much is communicated in those societies. Like Whitman, Blanco wrote of the people, of all the people, in the language of the people, of all the people, with a special affection for the proscribed. The

unconventional sexual undercurrents that rage beneath the surface of the “Romance del campeonato” are not anything as rational as a criticism or a coherent justification of any form of sexuality, nor are they the inadvertent revelation of unconfessed tendencies. They do not argue; although they might—just might—reveal. The sexual subtext of Blanco’s poem does not define what the poem is.

Blanco wrote his poem as part of an apotheosis, an immortalization, of the players he honors. As far as I know, only two of the Heroes of ’41, Luis Romero Petit and “Conejo” Fonseca still are alive. In spite the of toll that time, illness, and neglect have taken on that team, whenever the “Romance” is read, its members return in their youth and their glory, a consolation, perhaps, to the reader, if not to the two surviving players and certainly not to their dead teammates.

That poem, that burlesque epic, is like “Polo Grounds, a bid for something resembling immortality. It also is a jocoserious and triumphant, albeit artistically flawed, song of freedom and of, yes, brotherhood.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUDING UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT

This text is not a thesis, nor does it try to argue a thesis, although it does have several themes, a word that can be used as a synonym for “thesis.” Rather, it is a dissertation, from the combination of the Latin *dis-* ‘apart’ and *serere* ‘join, connect, join words in composition,’ which led to *dissertātiō*, which, in turn, gave us *dissertāre* ‘discuss, debate’ (Onions). Connect the distant—dissertation as metaphor! And, in its form, this dissertation can be read as a metaphor, since that form embodies a blend of several of the major themes of my study: the legitimacy of speaking of baseball in literary terms (and of baseball in terms of literature), the importance of radio to baseball as a narrative, and, of course, the theme of form as metaphor being the most prominent.

My decision (my acquiescence in what I felt were the demands of my subject) to make my form a metaphor for its content flirts with the fallacy of imitative form. The most obvious example of this is the division of my dissertation into nine chapters, one for each inning of the game and each player in the classical starting line up, which plays into baseball’s numerical structure, its Pythagorean rhythms.

The form of my study also resembles the radio broadcast of a double-header on a long Sunday afternoon, one of the pleasures baseball used to afford us and about which we now can—alas! — ask, *ubi sunt?* My narrative may seem to meander far from the objects it attempts to describe and understand, but it always is anchored, and returns, to the two games it describes: Rolfe Humphries’ “Polo Grounds” and the combination of Andrés Eloy Blanco’s “Romance del campeonato” and his speech to the fans. If we consider, as I do, the speech and the “Romance” a single poem, then, like the games of a double header, the two remaining poems are separate entities, standing on their own, yet anchored in their respective historical contexts and literary traditions. Yet those contexts and traditions overlap and, although each poem can be understood without reference to the other, that doesn’t mean that juxtaposing the two won’t enrich our awareness of what is going on in both.

The order in which I treat the two works, first Humphries' philosophical piece from the late spring or summer of 1942 and then Blanco's burlesque from the previous fall, is another example of my metaphoric use of form. Like those impartial and fallible arbitrators of the diamond, the umpires, who rotate their positions from home plate, to third base, to second, and then to first, before returning to home, I turn my attention counter-clockwise. I also frequently return, like Al Jolson, weary at heart, back where I started from.

My approach to my subjects is not (need I say it?) a purely logical one, and in this I again try to make my writing embody one of its themes, in this case the permeability of boundaries in life and art. Indeed, this last sentence, in which I use "subjects" to signify the objects of my attention, while I am the grammatical subject of the phrase, mimics the way so many of the words I discuss morph into their opposites. This is not a confession; in this dissertation, I discuss poetry and baseball—the poetry *of* baseball, including baseball *as* poetry and baseball *in* poetry—and poetry, although poetry may use and contain logic, is not logical. Where logic has categories, poetry has, *grosso modo*, clusters of association. Where logic separates, poetry conjoins (although we can parse a verse). It has a hard time with Aristotle's laws of identity, contradiction, and the excluded middle. When Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz coyly says of one of her most famous poems that it "describe racionalmente los efectos irracionales del amor" 'rationally describes the irrational effects of love' (31), she is being disingenuous. That poem, which is known by Sor Juana's characterization of it, consists of a series of paradoxes. Paradox is a scandal to reason, and, with a little help from Robert Penn Warren, Cleanth Brooks has taught a generation of students that "there is a sense in which paradox is the language appropriate and inevitable to poetry" (3).

Proceeding by association rather than by syllogism or chronology is not the only way in which I try to write a critical study of literature using not just the techniques of criticism but also those of literature itself. Embedded throughout my study are quotations—some within quotation marks; others woven directly into my text—that I hope will implant an association in the reader's mind that will strengthen a point or suggestion that I try on make later on. When I say that the stoppage of play exactly one hour after sundown on August 3, 1942 "left [Giants' fans] to rage, rage against the dying of the light," those echoes of Dylan

Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle Into that Good Night," have a chance of resonating in the readers' mind when they come to my remarks about filial piety and the death of the father.

Similarly, when I say that "an ignorant army of fans had invaded the darkening plain of the field" after Merkle's bonehead play, the allusion to "Dover Beach" is not a gratuitous reference to Matthew Arnold. Not only did he coin the phrase "Hebrews and Hellenes" that I appropriate in my discussion of Blanco, but at the beginning of *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus remembers a "deaf gardener, aproned, masked with Matthew Arnold's face" appearing among the "shouts from the open window startling evening in the quadrangle." Those shouts from the quadrangle—we hear them in "Vitaī Lampada"—come from schoolboys at play. It's likely that they're playing cricket, a sport that Arnold's father encouraged while he was headmaster at Rugby. (The hero of *Tom Brown's School Days* was based on him). My allusion thus links sports with literature, introduces the theme of Greek athleticism, and sets up the father-son connection between the classics-loving left handed catcher and his baseball-loving, poetry writing, left-leaning, classicist son. I did not plan these linkages; Arnold's line came to me spontaneously and brought the other associations in its wake. I believe that this is how words dictate the poem to the poet.

I have not, however, thrown in every quotation that came to my mind. I have subjected them to an editing process in which I have tried to combine intertextuality with Chekov's much-quoted dictum that, if you put a gun on the wall in act one, it should go off later in act three.

A shot may be made at what this hybrid text of mine actually is like to look at, and the Chekovian shotgun with which I will take aim at its appearance is the explication of my pastiches, their functions, and contexts. The logic of association dictates that I begin with my attempt as I began this explanation, with allusions to Joyce.

At the end of chapter 2, I insert a slightly modified version of the beginning of *Finnegans Wake*, which is a continuation of that novel's—if it *is* a novel—unfinished last sentence. My modifications consist of changing the river from the Liffey, which in the *Wake* is all rivers, to the Harlem and Howth Castle and Environs, one of the many meanings for HCE (which also stands for Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, who Haveth Childers Everywhere) to Humphries' Creation and Environs. In

doing so, I have compressed into one sentence several themes of my study. These are, at last counting,

- 1) The compatibility of “high” and “low” culture, illustrated by Joyce’s all-inclusive method in *Finnegan Wakes*, the ultimate pastiche;
- 2) The interweaving of past and present and form and content;
- 3) The river theme and its relation to life and death.
- 3) The theme of oncoming of night as an intimation of death.
- 4) The intimation of dawn following that night, with all the symbolic weight that carries;
- 5) Filial piety;
- 6) Patricidal and fratricidal rivalry;
- 7) The instability of rigid distinctions of genre, as seen by my parenthetical remark, “if it *is* a novel;”
- 8) The mutual usurpation by life and art of each other’s realms.

This technique of allusion I use to embed meaning in my text is a sort of literary shorthand, which illustrates another of my themes, the imperfection of the dichotomy between literature and commerce. Shem the Penman—literature—and Shaun the Post—commerce—are rivals, but brothers. Or better, brothers and, therefore, rivals, like Cuba and Venezuela in the Amateur World Series. My using the adjective “protean” to describe the quality of diction Blanco shares with Góngora, owes much to the third, “Proteus,” episode of Joyce’s other transtemporal masterpiece, *Ulysses*, where Stephen Dedalus meditates on the “ineluctable modality of the visible,” (37) which is why I end chapter 4 with a reference to the ineluctable mutability of the metaphorical. The many pastiches scattered throughout my study are a homage to Joyce, whose two long novels are textbooks of that technique.

I first read *Ulysses* as a young man, around the time that, having discovered books and girls, I stopped following baseball for the next quarter-century. I have returned many times in the last five and a half

decades to Joyce. So it is inevitable that his work will influence the way I read and write about Homeric questions, more, in fact, than Homer has. Aside from Joyce's highly touted stream of consciousness, the technique of his that most caught my attention in that first reading was the use of form to mimic content. The first examples of the many that come to mind are *Ulysses*' cave of Aeolus, a newspaper office, where events are narrated by a series of news items punctuated by headlines, and the prose of the scene in the lying-in hospital, which evolves from Old English to Billy Sunday's oratory, studded by representations of the stages of fetal gestation.

There is a Spanish word, *periplo*, one of whose definitions in the DRAE is "Viaje o recorrido, por lo común con regreso al punto de partida" 'Trip or voyage, usually with a return to the starting point.' Another is "Obra antigua en que se cuenta o refiere un viaje de circunnavegación" 'an ancient work in which a voyage of circumnavigation is narrated.' My fourth chapter includes a long section entitled "Blanco's Homecoming Speech and the Homeric Tradition in Baseball Rhetoric," which is in itself a *periplo*, beginning right after I treat the preparations for that speech, and followed, after a long and perilous journey through the archipelago of that tradition, by a lengthy analysis of the speech itself. I hope that the chapter--a reproduction in another form of the coda to my second chapter-- will repay in some measure the reader's patience in wading through it. Indeed, once my focus shifts from Humphries' world to Blanco's, my study becomes a somewhat of a Caribbean cruise in which we occasionally are buffeted by high seas.

Ulysses reworks both the Homeric and Oedipal myths of classical Greece. Leopold Bloom is the returning and unrecognized father. His much-vaunted atonement with the son never is complete. They may urinate together under the night sky, but when Bloom goes home to his wife, she muses on the prospect of an affair with the younger man. Bloom may be Odysseus to Stephen's Telemachus, but he also is Laertes to Stephens's Oedipus.

The preceding four paragraphs explain why my suggestion that Blanco may be a premature anti-Harold Bloomite is not just a ploy to allow me to introduce Gilliver's identification of the model for the evangelist who appeals to his "Fellowchristians and antiBloomites" in the Oxen of the

Sun episode of *Ulysses* as Billy Sunday. The anxiety of influence is a twentieth-century reworking of the Oedipal myth.

Perhaps Michael Bielawa's striking catalogue of baseball symbolism in the "Nausicaa" chapter is just a *jeu d'esprit*—Bloom, after all, is a spirited Jew—but its success in relating baseball to a text that, at first reading, seems so distant from it gives an indication of the extent to which the sport taps into some of humanity's basic emotions. I try to do something similar in my attempt to convey the manifestation of primeval power in unlikely forms in the "Romance del campeonato." Joyce's Nausicaa episode is not about baseball, and the "Romance" is not about the varieties of sexual experience. The activities of the playing field and of the bedroom find their expression through the words that come to the writers as they attempt to convert the energies of lived human experience to those of written human experience. (I long have felt that the triumph of Molly Bloom's soliloquy is that it is what the character would have written if she were more than barely literate). In this sense of being conveyors of energies that come from, as the Beatles put it, within them and without them, poets are Sybils, agents of the words that speak through them. No wonder Humphries employs the images of oracles and the Sybil's cave when he writes about the medium of radio.

My purpose in calling attention here to my rhetorical tricks is not the vain one of shifting the reader's attention from the works I discuss to how I discuss them. Rather, it is, because I give so much attention in my text to the stylistic replication of theme in the various authors whose work I treat, that I consider my borrowings a way of developing my argument. If Rolfe Humphries can mimic Red Barber, and Marianne Moore, Mel Allen, then I can lift a phrase here, a structure there, from my mental anthology of western literature. Indeed, my themes require it.

The power inherent in words is one reason why poetry, even intensely personal poetry, can be so impersonal. When emotions are expressed through words, those emotions become words. What is private takes the form of that most social of artifacts, language. This ties into the complex dialectic that T.S. Eliot sums up succinctly in "Tradition and the Individual Talent:"

Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things. (10-11)

The paradoxical phenomenon of the impersonal personal brings me to the intersection between my own life and my text. When, in *The Catcher Was a Spy*, Nicholas Dawidoff discusses the effect baseball had on a generation of immigrants, he quotes Horace Bresler, “a baseball enthusiast who grew up outside New York City,” (60) who says,

My dad came from Russia to New York when he was seven and grew up in the Bronx. He had two passions in life. One was opera, one was baseball. He was inclined to be refined, but when he could bring the conversation around to baseball, he was delighted. The assimilation is very important. . . . Baseball eased my father’s entry into this country. (60-61)

That terms of that entry were dialectical; Bresler’s father was influenced by baseball, and America was influenced by immigrants who, like him, participated in the nation-building exercise that is, or was, the national pastime.

But Bresler’s connection with my task— and with me— does not end here. That connection goes beyond the associations between his recollections of his father and Humphries’ interweaving music, baseball, and the memory of his father. It also goes beyond my suggestion that “Polo Grounds” is an Americanization of “Vitaï Lampada” and what I see as the link between music, nation building, and baseball in the two of Blanco’s works I analyze.

Horace Bresler’s father, Moe Bresler, was born into a family named Lipshitz, but, in order to avoid service in the Czarist army— onerous to all its recruits, particularly so for Jews—, he took the family name of an uncle who had no male children. This practice was common among Jewish families in the Russian Empire as a way of escaping

conscription, which usually spared only sons. In Bresler's case, the precaution proved to be unnecessary; even the Russian army did not draft seven year olds. I know this history because Sophie Lipshitz, Moe's sister, was my grandmother.

Grown up and established in New York, my grandmother's other brothers –“the Lipshitzes (I never know how to make that plural,)” complains the narrator of T Cooper's *Lipshitz Six* (328) –shared the ownership of two businesses in which the written word joined with deception in the twin service of a counter culture and economic security, the Yiddish Folk Theatre, on Second Avenue and 12th Street, and the Lipshitz Press, “the program printer for all the Yiddish playhouses.” (Boris) Sophie's husband, my grandfather Louis Rubman, owned a Yiddish theater and movie house located a Bronx block down the street from the Discoteca Victoria, the record store belonging to Rafael Hernández, author of “Cachita” and “Buche y Pluma Na' Más.” These details of my family history came back to me while I was proof-reading my remarks on the resemblance between Blanco's slippery naming and the use oppressed peoples make of aliases as, in the worst cases, a means of self-defense and, in the best, of removing obstacles to advancement—think of Melvin Israel, AKA Mel Allen, (Borelli 8)

In the 1920s, my father's Uncle Moe would take him on the 163rd Street trolley across the Bronx to see games at the newly opened Yankee Stadium (now the old Yankee Stadium), just as twenty-five or thirty years later, on May 13, 1950, my father took me on the CC train to the Polo Grounds, where we walked across the bridge over the Harlem River to Yankee Stadium to see the first ball game I can remember with any clarity. That game, like the one in *Gandhi at the Bat*, was between the Yankees and the Philadelphia Athletics, still managed by Connie Mack. It was preceded by an old-timer's game between teams of retired National and American League players. Portions of the account of that game in the following day's *New York Times*, which I have no recollection of having read before I wrote my “Polo Grounds” chapters, sound like a rough draft for Humphries' poem, sharing with it the recitation of the names of baseball's past glories and the lament for the inevitable effects of time. Unfortunately, the order of the sections differs in the two texts. The *Times*' unidentified correspondent, mentions the players' presentation and right after that heaves a plaintive sigh before he begins to recite the roll call.

ear-splitting cheers . . . echoed over the expansive Bronx acres as the old-timers were introduced and then trotted on the field for a game that was limited to two innings because time's inexorable march has left its imprint on those heroes of a by-gone day.

J. Franklin Baker, the "home run king" of another generation, whose clubbing exploits long since have been eclipsed by the immortal Babe Ruth, as well as Ralph Kiner and Hank Greenberg, among others, was back at third base, reliving olden days as far as his aching joints would permit.

Mel Ott, Paul Waner, Carl Hubbell, Dave Bancroft, Rabbit Maranville, Johnny Rawlings, Pie Traynor, Terry Moore, Dolph Camilli, Charley Hargreaves, Whitey Witt, Joey Sewell, Lefty Vernon Gomez, Tom Zachary, Bob Meusel, Wally Pipp, Roger Peckinpaugh, Chick Hafey, Bill Dickey, Ben Chapman—these were some of the old-timers called back from their quiet retirement

Dizzy Dean and Paul Derringer went out to the limit of their aged arms (Old-Timers)

Three decades later, my father suffered the first of two strokes. The resulting aphasia made it exceedingly difficult for this proud and extremely articulate man to communicate, although he still managed to show that, in a confused and confusing way, his mind still functioned. He just (just!) couldn't write clearly or speak coherently. His condition was worse and his frustration greater, than Mencken's as William Manchester describes them in "The Last Years of H.L. Mencken."

One afternoon, while trying to have a telephone conversation with my father, I mentioned *The Pitch that Killed*, a Mike Sowell's study about the fatal beaming of Cleveland Indian shortstop Ray Chapman by Yankee pitcher Carl Mays. "Carl Mays," my father said, "he had a

terrific outshoot,” a word Dickson defines as a “19th-century term for a pitch that breaks, or otherwise has a pronounced movement, away from the batter.” For the next fifteen minutes, my father spoke clearly and coherently, with the precision and elegance that previously had characterized his speech. A reference to baseball had evoked an obsolete word that undid time and briefly reversed the ravages it had caused my father, a man whose only interest in the game during my lifetime came from the pleasure it gave me. I never had another coherent conversation with him.

None of these narratives was on my mind when I wrote the chapters that seem to echo them. All of those narratives are in those chapters. The paragraphs that recount these facts are my belated expression of filial piety.

Would it be legitimate to use the noun “allusions” to describe the unbidden appearances in this work of details from my private life? The question is not an idle one, since it deals with the boundary-related problems I have discussed in these studies, among them, the porous nature of the frontiers between genres (here, criticism and biography), the personal and impersonal. It also involves the problem of intention and coincidence. When I wrote of “time’s inexorable march towards death,” something in my mind clicked. Does it matter if it was an awareness that I had seen “time’s inexorable march [leave] its imprint on those heroes of a by-gone day?” Does it even matter that I felt that click?

What I think does matter is that a well-turned, albeit hackneyed, expression, “time’s inexorable march,” links my experiences and emotions with each other and with those of most other people. My suspicion that the phrase had been lurking in the recesses of my mind, waiting to bound to the surface, is a legitimate topic for psychological speculation and might provide insight into the process of writing.

The *Times* article on the 1950 old-timers’ game also provides a justification of the epistemological skepticism I exhibit throughout my discussion. For sixty years I had remembered seeing Home Run Baker, dressed in street clothes, waving to the fans, while the public address announcer told the crowd that the old man—who was seven years younger than I am now—wasn’t healthy enough to play. And then I read in the old newspaper article that he “was back at third base,

reliving olden days as far as his aching joints would permit.” I was delighted to learn that I actually had seen the star of the 1911 World Series in action, attenuated as it may have been.

But then I looked at what accompanied the story. It was a photograph and caption that identified Home Run Baker the man to the right of Lefty Gómez, the first player clearly visible on the far left. And Home Run Baker was dressed in a business suit, standing up in the seats behind first base, separated from his fellow old-timers, all of them, with the exception of general manager Ed Barrow, leaning out of the Yankee dugout and wearing Yankee pinstripes.



© Ernest Sisto/The New York Times/Redux

My memory was more reliable than the journalist’s observation! Unless, that is, the report was just ambiguous, poorly written rather than poorly observed. The writer says that Baker was at third base, reliving the past, not that he was playing third base. Although semantic ambiguity can be a poetic virtue, that ambiguity must enrich, or at least complicate, rather than merely muddle, the reader’s perception. Something as nebulous as the brown fog of the unreal city in lines 60 and 61 of “The Waste Land” demands the precision that naming its color provides. Journalism has a different set of requirements. It

should be clear in both its perception and its prose. The *Times'* anonymous reporter, because of factual error, sloppy syntax, or both, is an unreliable narrator.

I don't believe that the resonances of my family history in this study of the poetry of baseball have any bearing on the worth of my analysis of the poems I discuss in it or that they are necessary to an understanding of it. Nor is the value of what I have to say about "Polo Grounds" affected by whether I really didn't read the *Times'* sports section on May 14, 1950, or if the long-buried memory of a sixty-year old newspaper article that sparked my mental ignition as Carl Mays and his outshoot triggered my father's brief return to coherence.

They do, however, illustrate one of the processes at work in both literary creation and criticism, and, in illustrating it, speak to one of the similarities between those two forms of writing. That is, they are one more example of the genre blending I discuss and in which I engage, on this pages. This, in turn, takes us (by a *comodius vicus* of recirculation?) to that expression's quasi-homophone, gender bending. In Spanish, one word, *género*, stands for "genre" and "gender," and the pliancy of the two concepts is evident in my treatment of the "Romance del campeonato," and, I hope, at least after that treatment, in the poem itself.

No one needs to know about my father, my grandmother, or my Uncle Moe to understand what I say about "Polo Grounds," much less to understand what Humphries has written." But I'm sure that my attendance at that game a half a century ago influenced the way I think about baseball and its history: Today's game is woven in the same tapestry as the glories of the past, and those glories have suffered, as will today's, an inevitable deterioration. That deterioration will lead to death. I remember Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig's widows being announced and waving to the fans.

All of us can think of times when we've recognized an almost-forgotten piece of autobiography in what we heretofore had considered an objective analysis and realized that a bit of our past was focusing or shaping our current concerns. In this sense, as a glimpse of the murky recesses of the mind in which perception and diction are formed, my family history *is* relevant, if not to the poems I have discussed, then to an understanding of the ways in which writers' lives intersect with their

work and as a warning against the assumption that we, or anyone else, is completely objective.

Although in some sense, my relationship with my father informs vast portions of what I've written here, almost none of my allusions, though idiosyncratic, are idiotic, at least, not in the etymological sense, from the Greek *idios* 'private' (Onions, idiot), and the reader should have no trouble in recognizing most, if not all, of them. The few examples I've given were not meant to explain the allusions but their function in my discussion.

One allusion, however, is private enough to require explication before it can complete its mission. I twice repeat Jane Austen's famous opening to *Pride and Prejudice*, "it is a truth universally acknowledged" Knowing the provenance of the phrase, readers can, without doing any research, sense my wariness in the presence of universally acknowledged truths. Those who suspect that there is some other reason besides mere archness for my echoing Austen's words could google "baseball" and "Austen" and read that in the first chapter of *Northanger Abbey* she describes the fourteen-year old Catherine Morland as preferring "cricket, base-ball, riding on horseback, and running about the country . . . to books . . . (1064). But there is little reason to believe that a reader could see in my appropriation of Austen's words a tip of the cap to an old friend I haven't seen for almost fifty years.

Edward Pechter begins "'Too Much Violence': Murdering Wives in *Othello*," an essay he reprints in his Norton critical edition of that play, by observing,

It is a truth universally acknowledged that, of all all the acts of violence against women represented on the English Renaissance stage with such generous abundance and peculiar gusto, Othello's murder of Desdemona, followed quickly by Iago's murder of Emilia, is the most appalling. (366)

And even the few remaining members of the dwindling band of allusion seekers who by a judicious use of Google's search engine might have tracked down the similarity between what Pechter and I wrote would not know that in the mid-1960s he twice cosigned for loans

that enabled me to pay my fees at Berkeley and for letting me, when I was sick and without anywhere else to stay, sleep on his living room floor for a week in the summer of 1967. The last two paragraphs are my long distance and long overdue thanks to him for his generosity.

In his memoir, *Baseball Love*, George Bowering, Canada's first Parliamentary Poet Laureate, describes what it was like to attend a Yankees-Red Sox game at Fenway Park with Pechter:

Every time the Yanks would score a run, Ed would stand up and cheer. Every time the Red Sox would score a run . . . the rest of the thirty-one thousand people would stand up and cheer. (107)

A good critic needs to be able to stand up against 31,000 adherents of truths universally accepted.

My choice of the two poems about which my study revolves (or which revolve throughout my study) was not fortuitous. I had been thinking about and enjoying "Polo Grounds" years before the opportunity to write about it presented itself. When I first read the "Romance del campeonato," I immediately was taken by what looked like a series of stark contrasts between the two poems.

On first reading, "Polo Grounds" seems easy to understand. The New York Giants' front office thought it a nice poem about baseball and probably even appreciated its intimations of mortality, worked in neatly through the image of the setting sun. You don't even need to know much about baseball or poetry to think you understand the poem any more than you need to know about much about cricket or *De rerum natura* to think you understand "Vitaï Lampada." (And you're probably right). The "Romance," on the other hand, requires a certain amount of arcane knowledge, much of it about baseball, even to realize that it's about baseball. (That much, but not much more, might have been evident to its original audience).

It has taken me two chapters to show and to try to explicate the complexities of Humphries' seemingly simple mediation on Thanantos. The attempt to make plain—or at least plainer—the rough places of Blanco's celebration of Eros has taken me five

The importance of radio in “Polo Grounds” is obvious from the moment the “Red Barber crescendo” appears in line 8. This allusion, transparent to North American baseball fans of a certain age and geographical provenance, is more explicit, but no less readily accessible than the medium’s role as the source of knowledge of the events referred in the “Romance” would have been to a Venezuelan baseball fan in the span of less than a year in which the two poems were written. Radio’s role in both of them is, I think, a topic worthy of investigation.

The use both poets make of names is another area in which a comparative reading of the texts can be helpful. Humphries calls the roll of his players, name by name, lamenting their transience and, dialectically, placing a bet on their immortality. This poem, named for a place, is, among other things, a eulogy, reclaiming the dignity of the dead. Reading it, in the way I have suggested, as a distorted echo of “Vitaī Lampada,” invites triangulation between “Polo Grounds,” Newbolt’s bellicose call to duty, and Frederick Henry’s bitter thoughts in *A Farewell to Arms*:

I was always embarrassed by the words sacred,
glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain.
. . . . I had seen nothing sacred and the sacrifices
were like the stockyards in Chicago if nothing
was done with the meat except to bury it.
There were many words you could not stand to
hear and finally only the names of places had
dignity. (184-185)

Names play a very different role in the “Romance,” where they are the vehicle for puns. As such, they are at the center of Blanco’s transformative process. Remember that both Blanco’s poem and his speech are part of an apotheosis, the ultimate sublimation. While the recitation of names in “Polo Grounds” confers historical credibility on the poem and restores a pathetic dignity to the players, the names in the ballad affectionately mock the players they identify and from whom they frequently seem to be independent. The “Romance” sublimates war, treating it as peaceful competition. That poem also sublimates names, raising them from signifiers of flesh-and-blood people into the protean and deceptive protagonists of the poet’s celebration of his own

wit, an analogue to his celebration of the team's triumph on the field. The instability of names in the "Romance" also has a more equivocal nature, one that is hard to define but whose sense I have tried to approximate.

Both poets contradict the assertion in Mark 2:22 by serving us the new wine of baseball out of the old barrels of tradition. The result is not just reporting but genre bending of the most delightful type. Radio replaced the itinerant reciter of poems as the medium for the divulgation of oral poetry. New treatments of old poetic genres and themes appear in both "Polo Grounds" and "Romance del campeonato." Humphries' poem clearly occupies a place in the tradition of *ubi sunt*? It also belongs to the traditions of laments for fallen athletes and expressions of filial piety. That filial piety is intertwined with Humphries' love of the classics, which he inherited along with a love of baseball from his father.

The very title of Blanco's poem situates it in the most traditional of Spanish poetic forms, the ballad. Like "Polo Grounds," the "Romance" and its companion "Discurso" bring classical literature into the present, as is obvious on first looking into Blanco's Homeric tradition.

That the occasion of both works is a baseball game significantly yanks their genres into a new context. Although sports poetry has a long history, in 1941, baseball in anything close to its modern form was barely a century old, and serious poetry about it had been around for only a couple of decades.

The baseball *estampas* in Blanco's speech are traditional political allegories, war and politics presented in the guise of a baseball game. The poem inverts that genre's customary levels. The games in the ballad do not reveal a hidden, but easily divined, meaning, as they do in the speech. Rather, a series of disguised narrations reveals—after degrees of effort, varying according to the reader's knowledge—a hidden baseball game.

Baseball is both the occasion and the ostensible subject of "Polo Grounds." It is no allegory—neither is the "Romance"—but in Humphries' poem, as in Blanco's speech, the poem is superficially about the game. In Blanco's poem, the game is what lies beneath the surface. The meaning—if that's what it is—is in the poem's

modulations between its surface and depth, its constant metamorphoses. Blanco is the diver who offers us pearls.

Musical terminology is prominent in both poems, which leads to my discussions, not merely of the use of music in them, but to a comparative study of the role of that art's role in baseball as practiced in two of the Americas.

Samuel Johnson complained about the wit of the English metaphysical poets that

The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtlety surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.
(95)

I hope that my wit's paling before that of the metaphysicals exempts it from at least some of Johnson's strictures. But there is more to be said about the heterogeneity of my illustrations, comparisons, and allusions. The tendency to see coherence in the disparate is one of the signs of paranoia. No wonder Delmore Schwartz makes a few cameo appearances here. His bitter wise crack "Even paranoids have real enemies"—an echo of Marianne Moore's call for imaginary gardens with real frogs in them—has become a commonplace. The Poetry Foundation's biography of Schwartz quotes Alfred Kazin as saying,

"In Delmore's world of writer-heroes, none was greater than Joyce," . . . noting that Schwartz was known to carry with him a heavily-annotated copy of *Finnegans Wake*. "Joyce, after all, had proved that naturalist art could attain to the condition of poetry."

Even in his celebrated remark on paranoia, Schwartz was, like his writing, a frequently anguished amalgam of the "real" and the "poetic:" When Schwartz ran out of real enemies, he made some out of his friends. The depressing chronicle of his alienation is recorded as fact

by James Atlas in part three of his life of Schwartz; in fiction, by Saul Bellow in *Humboldt's Gift*.

I have not had world enough and time to explore all the topics my associative method of proceeding has suggested. In this, I am an illustration of another of my themes, the nexus between literature and economy, the study of choices between limited resources. Among the topics whose discussion has remained in my inkwell are the relations between "Polo Grounds" and Blake's "The Darkening Green;" Nicolás Guillén's lament "Elegía por Martín Dihigo;" the comparative study of baseball stadium poems, including ones by John Updike, Jack Spicer, George Bowering, and Julián Herbert; and, within that last forgone opportunity, the relationships between Dante and Updike's "Tao in the Yankee Stadium Bleachers," and between Pound, Homer, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti's "Baseball Canto." I also would have liked to have included a chapter on popular songs about baseball in Anglo- and Hispanic-America.

Art is a way of finding patterns in the chaos of experience and of creating patterns that allow us to sense the chaos from which they have been rescued. In this, baseball is an art, spatial and temporal, physical and mental, an art that cohabits with commerce. Stephen Jay Gould has written judiciously on the uses and reliability of our need to find and create patterns.

As for matter, many patterns and sequences in our complex world owe their apparent order to the luck of the draw within random systems. We flip five heads in a row once every thirty-two sequences on average. Stars clump into patterns in the sky because they are distributed effectively at random (within constraints imposed by the general shape of our Milky Way galaxy) with respect to the earth's position in space. An absolutely even spacing of stars, yielding no perceivable clumps at all, would require some fairly fancy, and obviously nonexistent, rules of deterministic order. Thus, if our minds obey an almost irresistible urge to detect patterns, and then to explain these patterns in the causal terms of a few canonical stories, our quest to

understand the sources (often random) of order will be stymied.

As for mind, even when we can attribute a pattern to conventional nonrandom reasons, we often fail to apprehend both the richness and the nature of these causes because the lure of canonical stories leads us to entertain only a small subset among legitimate hypotheses for explaining the recorded events. Even worse, since we cannot observe everything in the blooming and buzzing confusion of the world's surrounding richness, the organizing power of canonical stories leads us to ignore important facts readily within our potential sight, and to twist or misread that information that we do manage to record. . . . We . . . fail to note important items in plain sight, while we misread other facts by forcing them into preset mental channels, even when we retain a buried memory of actual events. (222-223)

Gould's concept of an order that has random sources sounds like a good way out of the dilemma of justifying the attempt to place a poem in a context that may be foreign to the poet's experience and intentions. But it also sounds like, to use Delmore Schwartz's word, an antimony. And we still are left with the difficulty of deciding which stories to tell ourselves about the text we have experienced, those our individual talent has idiosyncratically devised or those we have received from a tradition that turns others' idiosyncratic stories into a canon, culture's *matrimonio canónico*, in which our boundless critical libido is confined to a single licit relationship with the text, or at least to a form of serial monogamy with it. It is from the intercourse of detail with pattern, as well as that between the sounds and senses of its words that the meaning of a literary work is born.

There are many kinds of valuable scholarship that I think tell canonical stories about literature. That scholarship may focus on the text itself; its social implications; its genre; the writer's sources, social milieu, sexual orientation, or biography. The list goes on, and all of these critical approaches can, but don't always, avoid the dangers of free association. But texts and genres are malleable; implications by

definition require interpretation; sources may be hidden; the relevance and verification of sexuality and biography present problems of their own. The list, again, goes on.

The method—if it is a method—I have chosen also has its risks, but one of them, the discovery of parallels to works with which the writers under consideration may have been unfamiliar, often provides a better illumination of their texts more effectively than a more “responsible” treatment might have done. I have tried to offset the risks of my wide ranging quest for patterns by a judicious recourse to other, also fallible, approaches to my subject. I’m certain that I have made many mistakes, what Mencken would have called “some very sour ones.” But I’m also reasonably certain that I have made some valuable contributions to the appreciation of the poetry of baseball and of poetry and baseball in general.

The “blooming and buzzing confusion of the world’s surrounding richness” is infinite and would be unnavigable without the structures we apply to it. A text or a game is a considerably smaller subset of that infinity and would seem to be more reliably manageable. But every text is made up of a varying number of words that easily can stretch to the hundreds of thousands, and each of those words implies the entire history of the language in which they were written and of those from which they are derived. And, even then, the hypothetical student who spent his or her lifetime trying to exhaust the meaning of the now infinite (or quasi-infinite) data that her or his computer has uncovered would have to pass on to the study of the texts used to explicate the original text. All this before, in an ever-receding horizon, that student could turn her or his attention to the phonemes of which the chaotic alphabet soup of words is composed. So the claim that the order that poets have imposed on experience is there, just waiting for us to recognize it, is, ultimately, false. We cannot escape the conclusion that, in reading, we, too, impose an order that is not necessarily the poet’s. Anything we say about a text, even what seems to be a wide-ranging discussion of it, turns out to be a fiercely reductive schematic, and a subjectively based one at that. None of this, however, lessens the utility of subway maps, which are more of a help to successful underground travel than are topographical maps with superimposed lines, which are themselves artifices that are an abstracted representation of the city to be navigated. It would seem that critics are

condemned to be the poets of the poetry we criticize and that we have no choice but to “practice criticism,” as Harold Bloom urges us to do, by thinking “poetically about poetic thinking.” (13)

A poet has no obligation to get the facts right. (“Fact,” from the Latin, *facio, facere* ‘to do,’ according to Onions, but also “to make.” Even facts are artifacts). A critic, however, does have that obligation, but fulfilling it is another question. Both critics and poets work through words and use many of the same techniques—ambivalence, paradox, irony, indirection, foreshadowing, suspense, parallel and contrast, tradition, you name it—to shape their works. Even the most objective critics have, at best, an approximate perception of the poetic reality on which they comment. Words change meaning; poets’ occupational ambiguity breeds misinterpretation. Critics and scholars who compensate for their own necessary subjectivity turn to . . . other critics and scholars. Those who rely on their own direct experience are left at the mercy of the most unreliable narrator of them all, memory.

As this last paragraph indicates, paranoia, even in its benign form of a hyperactive perception and arrangement of similarities, is not the only danger lurking behind the attempt to practice criticism only by thinking poetically about poetic thinking. Exclusive use of that technique would license the practitioner to substitute a new literary object for the work being studied, rather than illuminate it. Such an endeavor invites solipsism as critics place their—no, *our*—experience of the poem, of art and life at the center of our discourse. To avoid this danger, whenever we stumble over one of those stones of painful fact that Dr. Johnson used to refute Bishop Berkeley, we should welcome the interruption and hesitate before we resume the weaving of our patterns of interpretation. Nor can we afford to question ourselves too closely about how we know whether the stone and the pain it caused were real or imaginary. I don’t understand Kierkegaard, but I do understand the necessity of making a leap of faith, although probably not in the sense in which he meant the expression.

Taking all this in consideration, any critic, but especially one who would study poetry by writing it, would be well advised to remember Eliot’s balancing of emotion and personality—the subjective— against the need to escape from them.

The uncertainty inherent in the task of criticism relieves its practitioners of another obligation that we often are all too willing to assume: the obligation to draw conclusions. Even the expression “draw conclusions” indicates that it is an art, not a science, although “to draw” can mean to enclose tightly, to wrap up, as when we pull the drawstrings on a bag.

And so the maddening alternatives go back and forth, like the shuttlecock in Blanco’s badminton match at Aranjuez. Just as the most adamantly definitive criticism is fallible, so, too, is the absolute refusal to embrace definitiveness. To be adamant about one’s uncertainty is to live a necessary oxymoron.

Dilemmas like these are not foreign to baseball, that game of ambivalence and paradox, interspersed with brief flashes of indescribable beauty, where young men with short careers toil in their craft or sullen art, slogging through a season—“grinding it out,” as they say— that, in the United States, lasts 162 games in leagues that extend from St. Petersburg, Florida, to Seattle and from Miami to San Francisco. When they are through, they know which team won but not which team and which players were better. Neither they nor we will reduce their art to a science.

Nor do I believe that we can understand complex phenomena like poetry and baseball by recurring to a simple secret meaning. For all the symbolism we can find in its handling of bats and balls and its geometry of straight lines within circles, I don’t think that baseball represents our sexual desires or doubts, be they straight, gay, Oedipal. Baseball can accommodate Humphries’ filial piety as well as Ty Cobb’s murderous rage. What I do believe is that everyone has a wide and often contradictory range of feelings, existing on many levels and that poetry, including poetry about baseball, can tap into the energies, positive and negative, inherent in those feelings. I also believe that much social activity, especially homosocial athletic activity, and the words used describe it, resonate strongly with notes of sexuality and violence. The catcher who pats the pitcher’s butt after a conference on the mound is not caressing his teammate, or even engaging in a covert form of rough sex. But he *is* engaging in a physical intimacy, usually at a moment of heightened physical and emotion stress. Blanco’s sexual metaphors are there, in the poem, as

clearly as the catcher's hand is on the pitcher's buttocks, although we should be wary of supplying them with univocal meaning. When, in this study, I speak of the manifestations of these underlying structures of thought and emotion I sometimes use such crude categorizations as straight and gay, acceptable and transgressive. These are shortcuts, terms of art, and should be understood in the context of what I say in this paragraph. ("Term of art," by the way, is not a term of literary or artistic criticism. It is a legal expression, like "time is of the essence," another example of words' ability to misdirect us).

Many readers will dismiss Blanco's rhetoric as just that, so much rhetoric. Such a dismissal, by providing a motive for Blanco's verbal prestidigitation, re-enforces the need for a careful examination of everything a writer says. If the reader can write off the import of poets' words by calling them rhetorical, then they need not fear the disapproval that comes from expressing the outrageous. Rhetoric allows the writer, like the court jester, to say the unsayable, but rhetoric is the stuff of literature. Publishing the "Romance" in *El Morrocy Azul*, a humor magazine, may have saved Blanco considerable grief. His decision to publish there was a rhetorical choice.

In examining both "Polo Grounds" and the "Romance del campeonato," I have tried to vindicate the necessity of a modicum of factuality to make works of literary art comprehensible and facilitate the willing suspension of disbelief, but I am far from conflating literature with the facts of life, in either sense of the term. Indeed, it frequently is irresponsible to use a poem to determine the sexual (or other) proclivities or attitudes of its author, especially in the absence of supporting biographical data. It would, however, be licit to use the poem as a key to the author's psychological make-up in her or his role as a poet. I don't do this here because my focus is on the poems and the worlds they engage with, not on the men who wrote them. It clearly would be irresponsible to deny, when analyzing a poem, the significance of a clear rhetorical pattern in that poem. And the rhetorical patterns not just of the "Romance," but of Blanco's welcoming speech certainly are clear, as is the relevance of that speech to his poem.

There is irony in my calling this unscientific postscript a "concluding" one. I favor both/and responses and try to avoid either/or questions. I

don't even like Kierkegaard, most likely because, as I've said, I have trouble understanding him. I shy away from the conclusive, and so my endings seldom are consummated. Rather than conclude, I engage in the act of concluding, except when, as in chapter 2, I go back to my beginning.

Still, for all my lack of hard—in both senses of the word--conclusions I believe I have contributed to the clarification of some difficult questions, even if I have not answered them. In doing so, I believe I also have clarified the texts that give rise to the questions. I also hope that I have brought attention to some little known or forgotten works and that I have approached these and other works in uncustomary ways. My claim for the legitimacy of the literary discussion of baseball hardly is original. Writers from John Montgomery Ward and Wenesclao Gálvez y Delmonte to A. Bartlett Giamatti and Roberto González Echevarría, to name only a few, have advanced and embodied the same claim. I have tried to add my bit of individual talent to their tradition. And to the tradition of Mel Allen, Red Barber, and Buck Canel. *Y ahora, pasen la bola.*

Oakland, California

October 22, 2011

70th anniversary of La hazaña del siglo

WORKS CONSULTED

Abel, Allen. "The Age of Magic: The Tragic Figure of Louis Van Zelst Gave an Entire City Reason to Believe." *National Post*. 14 Oct 2003. Web. 16 Jan 2004. <<http://www.nationalpost.com/components/printastory/printstory.asp?id=8F4079DE-B77D-4E3>>.

Acevedo, Ramón Luis. "La mitificación de Roberto Clemente como héroe fundacional en un poema nicaragüense." *Revista del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña*. 2nd ser, 13 (2006): 45-57. Print.

---. "La mitificación del astro boricua, Roberto Clemente, como héroe fundacional en la poesía nicargense." *Decenio*. 4.8 (May 1999): 3-10.

Adams, Franklin P. "Baseball's Sad Lexicon." *Baseball: A Literary Anthology*. Ed. Nicholas Dawidoff. New York: Library of America, 2002. 20. Print.

Albizu Campos, Pedro. *La conciencia nacional puertorriqueña*. Ed. Manuel Maldonado Denis. Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1974. Print.

---. *Habla Albizu Campos/Albizu Campos Speaks: The Historic Speech of September 23, 1950, Commemorating the Rising at Lares*. Brooklyn: Paredon, n.d. LP and print.

Alegria, Fernando. *Walt Whitman en Hispanoamérica*. Mexico City: Studium, 1954. Print.

Aitken, Thomas Jr. *Poet in the Fortress*. New York: New American Library-World, 1964. Print.

Alemian, Ezequiel. "Historia crítica del libertinaje." Rev. of *Cuentos y relatos libertinos* ed. by Mauro Armiño. *Clarín* (Buenos Aires). Rev. Ñ. 3 Aug 2011. Web. 7 Aug 2011. <http://www.clarin.com/m/literatura/Choderlos-de-Laclos-Godard-dAucour-Marques-de-Sade-Cuentos-y-relatos-libertinos_0_529147284.html>.

Alexander, Charles C. *John McGraw*. New York: Viking, 1988. Print.

---, *Ty Cobb*. New York: Oxford UP, 1984. Print.

Alfonso, Jorge. "Historia: Béisbol amateur cubano: Amplitud del horizonte (II)." Web. 20 Nov 2008. <<http://www.cubasi.cu/beisbolcubano/historia/amplitud-del-horizonte-II.htm>>.

Alonso, Dámaso. *Estudios y ensayos gongorinos*. Madrid: Gredos, 1995. Print.

Amigos del foro. Web. 12 Aug 2011. <<http://amigosdelforo.es/web/2007/01/17/el-raton-perez/>>.

Angell, Roger. *Once More Around the Park: A Baseball Reader*. New York: Ballantine, 1991. Print.

Anon. *Lazarillo de Tormes and El Abencerraje*. Intro. and notes Claudio Guillén. New York: Dell-Laurel Language Library, 1966. Print.

Anon. *Poema de Mío Cid*. 10th ed. Ed. Ramón Menéndez Pidal. Madrid. Espasa-Calpe-Clásicos Castellanos, 1963. Print.

Antero Núñez, José, and Alfredo Méndez. *Años dorados del baseball venezolano: 1927-1945*. Caracas: Jan, [1992?]. Print.

---. *Oro y glorias del béisbol venezolano*. Caracas: Jan, 1991. Print.

Argy, Stephanie and Alex Boehm. *Gandhi at the Bat: A Baseball Fable*. Mental Slapstick. 2006. DVD.

Asinof, Eliot. *Eight Men Out: The Black Sox and the 1919 World Series*. New York: Henry Holt, 1987. Print.

Associated Press. "Fidrych, 54, Dies in Apparent Accident." 14 Apr 2009. Web. 20 May 2010. <<http://sports.espn.go.com/mlb/news/story?id=4065778>>.

Asturias, Miguel Angel. "Andres Eloy Blanco, alto poeta de hoy." *París 1924-1933: Periodismo y creación literaria*. Ed. Amos Segala. Nanterre: Col. Archivos, 1988. Print.

Atlas, James. *Delmore Schwartz: The Life of an American Poet*. New York: Farrar, 1977. Print.

Aub, Max. *Conversaciones con Buñuel: Seguidas de 45 entrevistas con familiares,, amigos y colaboradores del cineasta aragonés*. Madrid: Aguilar, 1985. Print.

Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey. The Complete Novels of Jane Austen*. New York: Modern Library, n.d. 1063-1207. Print.

Avery, Todd. "The Girls in Europe is Nuts Over Ball Players": Ring Lardner and Virginia Woolf." *Nine*. 13.2 (2005): 31-53. Print.

Barber, Red. *1947 When All Hell Broke Loose in Baseball*. New York: Da Capo, 1982. Print.

Barber, Red and Robert Creamer. *Rhubarb in the Catbird Seat*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1997. Print.

Barazarte, Julio. "1941 el año dorado." *Ultimas noticias*. (Caracas). 16 Sept. 2991, Web. 22 Oct. 2008. <http://www.ultimasnoticias.com.ve/ediciones/2001/09/16_aniv/p80n1.htm>.

Barzun, Jacques. *God's Country and Mine: A Declaration of Love Spiced with a Few Harsh Words*. New York: Random, 1954. Print.

"Base-Ball. The New-York Club Again Defeats the Philadelphia League Team," *New York Times* 12 August 1883: 2. ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851-2007). Web. 30 Dec 2010.

Baseball Almanac. "Career Leaders for ERA/Career Leaders for Earned Run Average," Web. 10 Jan 2008. <<http://www.baseball-almanac.com/pitching/piera1.shtml>>.

---, "John Ward Stats." Web. 7 June 2011. <<http://www.baseball-almanac.com/players/player.php?p=wardjo01>>.

---."New York Giants." Web. 13 Aug. 2007. <<http://www.baseball-almanac.com/teaams/giants.shtml>>.

---. "1942 New York Giants Schedule." Web. 11 July 2007. <<http://baseball-almanac.com/teamstats/schedule.php?y=1942&t=NY1>>.

---. "Phil Rizzuto Quotes." Web. 14 Oct 2011. <http://www.baseball-almanac.com/quotes/quorizz.shtml>.

---. "Roy Campanella Quotes." Web. 20 July 2011. <http://baseball-almanac.com/quotes/roy_campanella.quotes.shtml>.

"Baseball Games. New-York Badly Beaten." *New York Times* 1 Oct. 1884:5. ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851-2007). Web. 12 April 2011.

Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum 2009. Tokyo, 2009. Print.

Baseball Page, The. "Benny Kauff." Web. 31 Mar 2007. Web. <<http://thebaseballpage.com/players/kauffebe01.php>>.

Baseball Reference. "Bob Ferguson," Web. 13 August 2007. <<http://baseball-reference.com/f/fergubo0.shtml>>.

---. "Manuel Maldonado." Web. 22 August 2011. <http://www.baseball-reference.com/minors/player.cgi?id=maldon001man>>.

---. Play-by-play of 1st game of the 1954 World Series. Web. 26 Nov 2010. <<http://www.baseball-reference.com/boxes/NY1/NY1195409290.shtml>>.

---. "Silvio García." Web. 14 June 2011. <http://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/Silvio_Garcia>.

---. "The Star-Spangled Banner." Web. 28 June 2011. <http://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/The_Star_Spangled_Banner>.

Baseball Reliquary. *The Shrine of the Eternals: 2009 Induction Day. Pasadena, CA, 19 July 2009*. Pasadena: Baseball Reliquary, 2009. Print.

Bate, guante y pelota: Análisis e historia. 1. 1. Print.

Beichman, Janine. *Masaoka Shiki*. Boston: Twayne, 1982. Print.

Bean, Billy and Chris Bull. *Going the Other Way: Lessons from a Life in and out of Major League Baseball*. New York: Marlowe, 2003. Print.

Bellow, Saul. *Humboldt's Gift*. New York: Viking, 1975. Print.

Beisbolista fenómeno, El. Dir. Fernando Cortés. Perf. Adalberto Martínez Resortes, Oscar Pulido, Aurora Segura, Pedro El mago Septián. 1951. Galindo Hemanos. Videocassette.

Benardete, M.J. and Rolfe Humpries, eds. . . . *and Spain Sings: Fifty Loyalist Ballads* Adapted by American Poets. New York: Vanguard, 1937. Print.

Berg, Ken. "Smokey Joe Wood, Professional Baseball Player and Teacher of University Baseball[,] an Athlete, a Sportsman, and a Gentleman." Web. 12 July 2011. <http://independent.academia.edu/KenBerg/Papers/449979/Smoky_Joe_Wood_pitcher_Boston_Red_Sox_1908-1915_-_outfielder_Cleveland_Indians_1917-1922>.

Berkow, Ira and Jim Kaplan. *The Gospel According to Casey: Casey Stengel's Inimitable, Instructional, Historical Baseball Handbook*. New York: St. Martin's, 1992. Print.

Beverage, Richard E. "Tony Lazzeri: Baseball's First 60-Homer Man." *Baseball Research Journal*. 20 (1991): 18-19. Print.

Bielawa, Michael J. "James Joyce "U.p. at Bat: Symbolism in *Ulysses*' 'Nausicaa.'" *Nine: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture*. 14:1 (Fall 2005): 144-151. Print.

Bjarkman, Peter C. "Bridge to Cuba's Baseball Past." *New York Times* 14 Aug 2011: SP Y 9. Print.

---. *A History of Cuban Baseball, 1864-2006*. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2007. Print.

Blackmur, R.P. "Notes on Eleven Poets." Rev. of *Five Young American Poets*; *Land of Unlikeness* by Robert Lowell; *The Walls Do Not Fall* by H.D.; *Beast on View* by Muriel Ruckeyser; *The Summer Landscape* by Rolfe Humphries; *The Wedge* by William Carlos Williams; *The Winter Sea* by Allen Tate; and *Nevertheless* by Marianne Moore. *Kenyon Review*. 7.2 (Spring 1945): 339-352. 12 Oct 2010. JSTOR. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4332608?seq=1>>.

Blanco, Andrés Eloy, "Discurso en el Estadio Nacional de Caracas para saludar a nombre el pueblo de Venezuela, a los patriotas que ganaron en Cuba el campeonato mundial de baseball amateur. Obra dispersa e inédita, Comp. Rafael Angel Rivas Dugarte. Caracas: Ediciones de la Comisión presidencial del centenario del natalicio de Andrés Eloy Blanco, 1997. Vol. 7 of OC. 11 vol.: 296-302. Print. (Footnote attributes text to *Ahora* (Caracas) 9 Nov. 1941.

---, *Poesía*. Sel. and prologue, Domingo Millani. Appendix, chronology, bibliography, Rafael Angel Rivas Dugarte. Ed. José Ramón Medina. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1996. Print. 1996.

---. "Romance del campeonato." *El libro de béisbol: Cien años de pelota en la literatura venezolana*. Comp. Federico Pacanins. Caracas: El Nacional, 1998: 296-302. Print.

Bleiberg, Germán and Julián Marias, dir. "Romance." *Diccionario de literatura española*. 3rd ed., corr. and augmented. Madrid: Rev. de Occidente, 1964. Print.

Block, David. *Baseball Before We Knew It: A Search for the Roots of the Game*. Lincoln, NB: U of Nebraska P, 2005. Print.

Bloom, Alexander and Wini Breines (eds). *Takin' it to the Streets: A Sixties Reader*. New York: Oxford UP, 2003. Print.

Bloom, Harold. *The Anatomy of Influence: Literature as a Way of Life*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2011. Print.

Borelli, Stephen. *How About That! The Life of Mel Allen*. Champaign, IL: Sports Publishing, 2005. Print.

Borges, Jorge Luis. "El espantoso redentor Lazarus Morell." *Historia universal de la infamia*. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1962). 17-29. Print.

---. "El ruiseñor de Keats." *Otras inquisiciones*. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1960). 165-169. Print.

---. "Kafka y sus precursores." *OI*. 145-148. Print.

---. "Magias parciales del 'Quijote.'" *OI*. 65-69. Print.

---, "Sobre el doblaje." *Discusión*. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1961). 177-179. Print.

Boswell, James. *The Life of Samuel Johnson LL.D.* Ed. Edward G. Fletcher. Vol. 1-2 of 3. New York: Heritage, 1963. 3 vols. Print.

Boris, Martin. *Once a Kingdom: The Life of Maurice Schwartz and the Yiddish Art Theatre*. The Museum of Family History. Web. 30 Sept 2011. <<http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/mschwartz-ok-ch24-27.htm>>.

Bouton,, Jim. *Ball Four: My Life and Hard Times Throwing the Knuckleball in the Big Leagues*. Ed. Leonard Shecter. New York: Dell, 1976. Print.

Boutwell, Jane. "The Talk of the Town: Gotham," *The New Yorker*, 7 Aug. 1965: 19. Print.

Bowering, George. *Baseball: A Poem in the Magic Number 9*. Toronto: Coach House, 2003. Print.

---. *Baseball Love*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2006. Print.

Boyd, Brian. *Vladimir Nabokov: The American Years*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991. Print.

Brito, Carlos. *Pica y se extiende*. Caracas: Letras, 1994. Print.

Brooks, Cleanth. *The Well Wrought Earn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1947. Print.

Burns, Ken, dir. *Baseball*. [Alexandria, Va.] : PBS Home Video, 1994. Videocassette.

Calatrava hijo, Alonso. *Obituario de voces caraqueñas*. Caracas: U Católica Andrés Bello, 1999. Print.

Calderón de la Barca. *La vida es sueño*. Ed. Augusto Cortina. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe - Clásicos Castellanos, 1964. Print.

Callejo, Alfonso and María Teresa Pajares. *Fábula de Polyfemo y Galathea y Las Soledades: Textos y Concordancia*. Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1985. Print.

Camacho, Francisco. "Andrés Eloy Blanco: Periodismo, modernidad, y política en la Venezuela de la primera mitad del siglo xx." *Revista universitaria de investigación y diálogo académico*. 5.3. (2009): 20-35. Web. 9 May 2011. <<http://w.w.w.conhisreml.iuttol.edu.vez.>>.

Cámara venezolana de la industria de la radiodifusión. "Historia de la radiodifusión en Venezuela." 14 Jan 2010. Web. <<http://www.camradio.org/documentos/historia>>.

Cannon, Carl M. "Untruth and Consequences." *The Atlantic*. Jan.-Feb. 2007. Web. 7 June 2010. <<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2007/01/untruth-and-consequences/5561/..>>.

Cárdenas Lares, Carlos. *¡Play Ball!, Vida y Anécdotas de Roberto "Tarzán" Olivo*. Caracas: Fondo Editorial Cárdenas Lares, 1991. Print.

Carrasquel, Alfonso "Chico." See Socorro, Milagros

Carter, Thomas F. "The Manifesto of a Baseball-playing Country: Cuba, Baseball, and Poetry, in the Late Nineteenth Century." *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 22.2 (Mar 2005): 246-265. Print.

Casas, Edel, Jorge Alfonso, and Alberto Pestana. *Viva y en juego*. Havana: Ed. Científico Técnico, 1986. Print.

Cashman, Terry. *Passin' It On: America's Baseball Heritage in Song*. Sony, 1995. CD.

Castañeda, Aleix and Edelmis Anoceto Vega. "La juerga beisbolera." *La jiribilla*. 127 (2003) Web. 4 Jul 2006. <http://www.lajiribilla.co.cu/2003/n127_10/127_.02.html>.

Castro, Américo. *De la edad conflictiva*. Madrid: Taurus, 1961. Print.

Cátedra de Radio Oswaldo Yepes. *Estamos en el aire: 18 temas de la Cátedra de Radio Oswaldo Yepes*. Caracas: Libros de El Nacional, 2002. Print.

Chacón, Jorge Alfonso. "La visita de Babe Ruth a Cuba ," Web. 21 Jan. 2008. <http://www.1800beisbol.com/baseball/Deportes/Beisbol_Cuba/La_Visita_de_Babe_Ruth_a_Cuba/>.

Cervantes, Miguel de. *Don Quijote de La Mancha*. Madrid: RAE, 2005? Print.

Churchill, Winston. "Topics of the Times: Text of Winston Churchill's Radio Address." (Associated Press). *New York Times* 2 Oct 1939: 6. Print.

Codina, Norberto. "El cuento no se acaba, hasta que no se termina: En ocasion del tercer aniversario del Centro Cultural Dulce María Loynaz." Web. 11 Feb 2009. <<http://www.cubaliteraria.cu/revista/laletradelescriba/n67/articulo-9.3.html>>.

---. "Lezama Lima: 'El pelotero bizantino.'" *UNEAC: Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba*. Web. 24 Mar 2011. <http://www.uneac.org.cu/index.php?module=columna&act=columna_autor&id=134>.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria*. London: Dent, 1939. Print.

Colmenares del Valle, Edgar. *Léxico del béisbol en Venezuela*. Caracas: Ediciones Centauro, 1977. Print.

---, "La productividad metafórica del léxico deportivo en Venezuela."

Revista nacional de cultura. 294-295 (July-Dec 1994): 99-118. Print.

Coloma, Luis. *El Ratón Pérez*. Web. 11 Aug 2011. <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/36558/36558-h/36558-h.htm>>.

Concha, Jaime. *Vicente Huidobro*. Madrid: Júcar, 1980. Print.

Cooper, Elizabeth. "Dances About Spain: Censorship at the Federal Theatre Project." *Theatre Research International*. 29.3. (2004): 232-246. Print.

Cooper, T. *Lipshitz Six, or Two Angry Blondes*. New York: Penguin-Plume, 2006. Print.

Cornford, John. "Full Moon at Tierz: Before the Storming of Huesca." *The Oxford Book of War Poetry*. Ed. Jon Stallworthy. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008: 230-232. Print.

Cowley, Malcom, ed. *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*. New York: Viking Compass, 1967. Print.

Cruz, Sor Juana Inés de la. *Poemas Madrid* : Torremozas, 1995. Print.

Cruz T., Manuel S. de la, "Manolo de la Reguera, verdadero narrador." *El nuevo diario* (Managua). 17 May 2000. Web. 20 Dec 2010. <<http://archivo.elnuevodiario.com.ni/2000/mayo/17-mayo-2000/opinion/opinion7.html>>.

DRAE. 22nd ed. 2001. Print.

Darío, Rubén. *Poesías completas*. Ed. Alfonso Méndez Plancarte. Madrid: Aguilar, 1954. Print.

---, *Selected Works*. Ed. Ilan Stavans. Trans. Andrew Hurley, Greg Simon, Steven F. White. New York: Penguin, 2005. Print.

Dawidoff, Nicolas, ed. *Baseball: A Literary Anthology*. New York: Library of America, 2002. Print.

---. *The Catcher Was a Spy: The Mysterious Life of Moe Berg*. New

York: Pantheon, 1994. Print.

Dawson, James P. "57,305 See Giants Lose to Dodgers When Dimout Stops Ninth Inning Rally," *New York Times*. 4 August 1942: 22. UMI. Microfilm.

Deane, Bill. "Catching Up with Vic Wertz's 1954 World Series Drive: Willie Mays' Catch of Cleveland Slugger's Deep Fly was Outstanding Regardless of How Far the Ball Actually Traveled." *Baseball Digest*. 64.8 (Oct 2005): 46-47. Web. 19 Nov. 2010. <<http://webebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=3&hid=9&sid=4b9c24b6-fa2d-4ac91%40sessionmgr10&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbG12ZQ%3d#db=f5h&AN=18098073#db=fh&AN=18098073>>.

Di Salvatore, Bryan, *A Clever Base-Ballist: The Life and Times of John Montgomery Ward*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000. Print.

Díaz Rangel, Eleazar and Guillermo Becerra Mijares, *El béisbol en Caracas*. Caracas: Círculo de Periodistas Deportivos, 1985. Print.

Dickson, Paul. *The Dickson Baseball Dictionary*. 3rd ed., ed. and augmented by Skip McAfee, New York: Norton, 2009. Print.

--- *The Hidden Language of Baseball: How Signs and Sign-Stealing Have Influenced the Course of Our National Pastime*. New York: Walker, 2003. Print.

Dinneen, Mark. *Culture and Customs of Venezuela*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001. Print.

Dracula: The Legacy Edition. Universal, 2004. DVD.

DuPlessis, Rachel Blau and Ann Snitow, eds. *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women's Liberton*. New York: Crown, 1998. Print.

Durocher, Leo and Ed Linn. *Nice Guys Finish Last*. New York: Simon, 1975. Print.

Eight Men Out. Dir. John Sayles. MGM Home Entertainment. 1988.

DVD.

Elias, Robert. "Davis Forum: The National Pastime and the American Dream: Baseball as Cultural Mirror." University of San Francisco, 1998. Photocopied course syllabus.

---. *The Empire Strikes Out: How Baseball Sold U.S. Foreign Policy and Promoted the American Way Abroad*. New York: New Press, 2010. Print.

Eliot, T.S. *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967. Print.

---. *Selected Poems*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1964. Print.

--- "Tradition and the Individual Talent." *Selected Essays*. New ed. New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1964. 3-11. Print.

Ellman, Richard. *James Joyce*. New York: Oxford UP, 1959. Print.

--- and Robert O'Clair, eds. *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*. 2nd ed., New York: Norton, 1973. Print.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "The Poet." *The Complete Prose Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. 5th ed. London: Ward, Lock, 1891. Print.

Emslie, Bob. "A Letter From the Files: The official umpire's report on the Merkle 'Bonehead incident,'" *The Baseball Research Journal*. 22 (1993): 32. Print.

"Encyclopedia of Baseball Catchers—Left-Handed Throwing Catchers, Web. 15 May 2007, <http://members.tripod.com/bb_catchers/catchers/catchleft2.htm>.

"Encyclopedia of World Biography --- Tennessee Williams." Web. 11 Oct 2010, <<http://www.notablebiographies.com/We-Z/Williams-Tennessee.html>>.

Eng, Jonathan. *Opening Day: The Story of Jackie Robinson's First*

Season. New York: Simon, 2007. Print.

Erickson, Hal. *The Baseball Filmography: 1915 through 2001*. 2nd ed., Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002. Print.

Febles, Jorge. "Martí frente a dos deportes anglosajones: antagonismo conceptual y traducción hermética en algunas Escenas norteamericanas." *Hispania*. 83. 1. (Mar. 2000): 19-30. Web. 19 Aug 2010. JSTOR. < <http://www.jstor.org/stable/346110>>.

Fecher, Charles A. "'Introduction.'" *The Diary of H.L. Mencken*. New York: Random, 1991.

Fedler, Fred. *Media Hoaxes*. Ames, IA. Iowa State UP, 1989.

Felleman, Hazel ed. *The Best Loved Poems of the American People*. New York: Doubleday, 1936.

Ferlenghetti, Lawrence. "Baseball Canto." *Open Eye, Open Heart*. New York: New Directions, 1973. Print.

Fernández, Iván. "Los Héroes del 41 y el Salón de La Fama del Béisbol Venezolano: Iván Fernández, y la memoria que no puede morir..." Web. 9 Aug 2011. <http://www.gentiuno.com/articulo.asp?articulo=4698>>.

Fernández, José Manuel. Conversation in the offices of the Comercial Services Department of the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, May 2008.

Fernández Retamar, Roberto. "Pío tai (Al comenzar el campeonato de pelota de los escritores y artistas)". *A quien pueda interesar: Poesía, 1958-1970*. Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1970. 88-89. Print.

Fiedler, Leslie. "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!" *Partisan Review*. 15. 6. (June 1948): 664-671. Print.

Fields, W.C. "The Temperance Lecture." *W.C. Fields on Radio*. Columbia. LP.

Figueredo, José S. *Cuban Baseball: A Statistical History, 1878-1961*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003. Print.

Figueroa Williams, Bernabé. See Williams, Bernie.

Filichia, Peter. *Professional Baseball Franchises: From the Abbeville Athletics to the Zanesville Indians*. New York: Facts on File, 1993. Print.

Fishberg, Dave. "Van Lingle Mungo." *Baseball: A Literary Anthology*. Ed. Nicholas Dawidoff. New York: Library of America, 2002. 394-395. Print.

---, "Van Lingle Mungo." *Baseball's Greatest Hits*. Rhino, 1969. Tape recording.

Folsom, Ed. *Walt Whitman's Native Representations*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. Print.

Fowler, H.W. and F.G. Fowler. *The King's English*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. Print.

Frankenberg, Theodore Thomas. *Billy Sunday: His Tabernacles and Sawdust Trails: A Biographical Sketch of the Famous Baseball Evangelist*. Columbus, OH: F.J. Heer, 1917. Print.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*. Trans. and ed. A.A. Brill. The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud. New York: Random, 1966. 181-549. Print.

Friendly, Jonathan. "Columnist Helped Reagan of Debate." *New York Times* 9 Jul 1983: 12. ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851-2007). Web. 26 Dec 2010.

Frost, Robert. "Perfect Day – A Day of Prowess." *Sports Illustrated*. 5, 4 (July 23, 1956): 51-53. Print.

---. *Selected Prose*. Ed. Hyde Cox and Edward Connery Lathem. New York: Macmillan, 1974. Print.

Gálvez y Dalmonte, Wencesalo *El base-ball en Cuba: Historia del base-ball en la Isla de Cuba, sin retratos de los principales jugadores y personas más caracterizadas en el juego citado, ni de ninguna otra*. Havana: Imp. Mercantil de los herederos de Santiago S. Spencer, 1889. Harvard College Library Imaging Services. Microfilm.

Goya, Francisco de. *El juego de la pelota a pala*. Web. 17 Nov. 2011. <http://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/galeria-on-line/obra/el-juego-de-la-pelota-a-pala/?no_cache=1>.

“Gandhi at the Bat—Teaser.” Youtube. Web. 7 June 2010. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7aT0rxpvtVQ>>.

García Lorca, Federico. *Epistolario completo*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1997. Print.

---. *Libro de poemas ; Primeras canciones; Canciones; Seis poemas galegos. Obras completas*. 4th ed. Vol. 2. Buenos Aires: Losada, 1944. Print.

---. *The Poet in New York and Other Poems*. Tr. Rolfe Humphries. Into. José Bergamín. New York: Norton, 1940. Print.

---, *Poeta en Nueva York. Conferencias. Prosas varias*. 6th ed. Vol. 7. Buenos Aires: Losada, 1957. Print.

García Riera, Emilio. *Historia del cine mexicano: Epoca sonora. Vol. 3*. Mexico City: Era, 1971. Print.

---, *Historia documental del cine mexicano: Epoca sonora. Vol. 4*. Mexico City: Era, 1972. Print.

---, *México visto por el cine extranjero. Vol. 3*. Mexico City: Era – Universidad de Guadalajara, 1988. Print.

Gardner, Martin. *The Annotated Casey at the Bat: A Collection of Ballads About the Mighty Casey*. New York: Bramhall House, 1968. Print.

Garner, Bryan A. *A Dictionary of Modern Legal Usage*. 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001. Print.

Garner, Joe, Bob Costas (Narration), and George Foreman (Forward). *And the Fans Roared: The Sports Broadcasts that Kept us on the Edge of our Seats*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2000. Print and CD.

Gay, Timothy M. *Tris Speaker: The Rough-and-Tumble Life of a Baseball Legend*. Lincoln: U of NB, 2005. Print.

Gehrig, Lou. Untitled speech delivered at Yankee Stadium, 4 July 1939. Lou Gehrig Official Web Site, Web. 1 Aug 2008. <<http://www.lougehrig.com/about/speech.htm>>.

“General, The.” Web. 31 Mar 2007. <<http://rjbuffalo.com/the-general.html>>.

Giamatti, A. Bartlett. *A Great and Glorious Game: Baseball Writings of A. Bartlett Giamatti*. Ed. Kenneth S. Robson. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin, 1998). Print.

---. *Take Time for Paradise: Americans and Their Games*. New York: Summit, 1989. Print.

Gilbert, W.S. and Arthur Sullivan, *The Pirates of Penzance*. ‘Definitive’ Edition of the Libretto.” Prepared by Ian. Bond. Web. 6 May 2011. <http://math.boisestate.edu/gas/pirates/html/bond_intro.html>.

Gilliver, Peter. “Billy Sunday: A New Source of “Oxen of the Sun.” *James Joyce Quarterly*. 44.1 (2006): 133-135. Web. 26 Dec 2010. Project MUSE.

Gilman, Richard and Michael Paul Novak, eds. *Poets, Poetics, and Politics: America’s Literary Community Viewed from the Letters of Rolfe Humphries. 1910-1969. With biographical essay by Ruth Limmer*. Lawrence, KS: UP of Kansas, 1992. Print.

Gmech, George, ed. *Baseball Without Borders: the International Pastime*. Lincoln: U of NB, 2006. Print.

Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela. "Archivo Musical. (Recitales) 55 años sin los Angelitos Negros." Web. 2 Mar 2011. <<http://www.rnv.gov.ve/noticias/index.php?act=ST&f=50&t=128128>>.

---. Web. 3 Mar 2011.<<http://www.gobiernoenliena.ve/venezuela/perfil-deporte1.html>>.

Goldman, Liela H. *Saul Bellow's Moral Vision: A Critical Study of the Jewish Experience*. New York: Irvington, 1983. Print.

Goldstein, Warren. "Inside Baseball." *Gettysburg Review*. 5 (1992): 418-422. Print.

Gómez Masjuán, Miguel Ernesto. "La tarde fatídica de La Tropical." Habana Radio. Web. 25 Feb 2011. <http://www.habanaradio.cu/singlefile/?secc=19&subsecc=19id_art=20070530112633>.

Góngora, Luis de. *Soledades de Góngora*. Ed. Dámaso Alonso. Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1927. Print.

---. *The Solitdues: A Dual-Language Edition with Parallel Text*. Trans., foreword, and notes Edith Grossman. Intro. Alberto Manguel. New York: Penguin, 2011. Print.

González, Javier. *El béisbol en Venezuela: Un siglo de pasión*. Caracas: Biblioteca Nacional, 1996. Print.

González, Lola. "Góngora según Quevedo: breve relación de una historia injuriosa." *Scriptura*. 5 (1989): 17-30. Web. 5 Aug. 2011. <http://www.raco.cat?Index.php?Scriptura/article/viewFile/94216/42516>>.

González Barradas, María Elena. "Los apodos en el léxico del adolescente venezolano." Web. 25 feb 2009. <http://www.upel.edu.ve/congreso2008/planillas/ponencias/maria_elen_a_gonzalez.doc>.

González Echevarría, Roberto. *La gloria de Cuba: Historia del béisbol*

en la isla. Trans. Miguel Sales and Roberto González Echevarría. Madrid: Colibrí, 2004. Trans, corr. and rev. of *The Pride of Havana*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999. Print.

---, "Literatura, baile y béisbol en el (ultimo) fin de siglo cubano," *Encuentro de la cultura cubana*. 8/9 (Spring-Summer 1998): 30-42, Web. 9 July 2008. <<http://www.cubaencuentro.com/revista/revista-encuentro/archivo/8-9-primavera-verano-de-1998>>.

---, "The Master of Modernismo." Rev. of *Rubén Darío: Selected Writing* ed. by Ilan Stavans. *The Nation*. 282.6 (13 Feb 2006): 29-33. Print.

---, "Peloteros cubanos. Tres testimonios," *Nueva sociedad* 154 (Mar-Apr 1998): 87-100. Print.

---. *The Pride of Havana: A History of Cuban Baseball*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999. Print.

"Good Times Never Seemed So Good for Red Sox Fans." Web. 22 Oct. 2011. <<http://www.bostonspastime.com/sweetcaroline.html>>.

Gould, Stephen Jay. *Triumph and Tragedy: A Lifelong Passion for Baseball*. New York: Norton, 2003. Print.

Gourevitch, Philip. "Introduction," *The Paris Review Interview*. Vol. 1. (New York: Picador, 2006). Print.

Graber, Ralph S. "Baseball in American Fiction." *English Journal*. 56.8 (Nov. 1967): 1107-1114. Print.

Graczyk, Wayne. Conversation in the Seibu Kyujo-mae station of Seibu Railways after the Seibu Lions-Nippon Ham Fighters game. 8 Sept. 2009.

Greenberg, Eric Rolfe. *The Celebrant*. Lincoln, NB: U of NB, 1993. Print.

Greenberg, Richard. *Take Me Out*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2003. Print.

Guillén, Jorge. *Notas para una edición comentada de Góngora*. Ed. Antonio Piedra and Juan Bravo. Valladolid: Fundación Jorge Guillén – U de Castilla-La Mancha, 2002. Print.

Gutiérrez, Daniel, Efraim Alvarez, and Daniel Guitiérrez, hijo, eds. *La enciclopedia del béisbol en Venezuela*. Vol. 1. Caracas: Fondo Editorial Cárdenas Lares, 1997. 2 vols. Print.

Guttman, Allen. "The Belated Birth and Threatened Death of Fair Play." *Yale Review*. 74.4 (Summer 1985). 525-537. Print.

Hall, Donald. *Fathers Playing Catch With Sons: Essays on Sport (Mostly Baseball)*. New York: Farrar, 1998. Print.

Hall, Roger Lee. "True Story of 'Goin' Home:' From Bohemia to Boston." Web. 3 Sept. 2010. <<http://www.americanmusicpreservation.com/nemusic4.htm>>.

Hamburger, Phillip. "Report From Tokio." "The Talk of the Town." *The New Yorker*. 20,5 (18 Mar 1944) 22-23. Print.

Harris, Mark. *It Looked Like For Ever*. New York: McGraw, 1979. Print.

Hart, James D. *The Oxford Companion to American Literature*. 4th ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1965. Print.

Hazaña del siglo, La. Caracas: Fundación Universidad Internacional Lola de Fuenmayor, 2002. Print.

Hemingway, Ernest. *A Farewell to Arms*. New York: Scribner's, 1957. Print.

---. *The Old Man and the Sea*. New York: Scribner's, 1952. Print.

Heisenberg, Werner. *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science*. New York: Harper, 1962.

Heredia, José María. *Antología herediana*. Ed. Emilio Valdés y de

Latorre. Havana: Consejo Corporativo de Educación, Sanidad y Beneficencia, 1939. Print.

---.*Poesías*. Sel., Waldo Leyva. Havana: Letras Cubanas, 1980. Print.

Hernández, Rafael. "Cachita.." Rafael Hernández, Margarita Romero, and Wello Rivas. *Recordando*. RCA Camden serie para coleccionistas. LP.

Hernández, Ramón "El abulón" and Jorge "El biólogo" Hernández. *El brillo del diamante: Historia del béisbol mexicano*. Mexico City: Editorial de la Universidad Veracruzana-Ficticia, 2004. Print.

"Héroes del '41, Los." Web. 18 "feb 2009.

<<http://www.museodebeisbol.org/salonfama/heroesdel41.html>>.

Hirsch, James S. *Willie Mays: The Life, The Legend*. New York: Scribner, 2010. Print.

"Historia de Venezuela para nosotros: Venezolanismos históricos."

Web. 29 feb 2009. <<http://www.fundacionempresaspolarg.org/nosotros/historia/venezolanis.html>>.

Historia del béisbol dominicano: Desde los orígenes. Producer and director Miguel Vásquez. 2006. MV Films. DVD .

Historia del béisbol mexicano, I: La gran epopeya, 1847-1950. Producer Enrique Krauze. Clío, 2003. Videocassette.

Historia del béisbol mexicano, II: Brillo y sombra del diamante: 1950-2003. Producer Enrique Krauze. Clío, 2003. Videocassette.

"History of Japanese Baseball, A." The Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. Web. 11 Nov 2007 <<http://english.baseball-museum.or.jp/showcase/storage/history.html>>.

Hodelín Tablada, Richardo. "José Martí. De la cárcel a España, enfermedades y sufrimientos." Web. 11 Dec 2008
<http://www.uvs.sld.cu/humanidades/plonearticlemultipage.2006-08-15.7480657408/jose-marti-de-la-carcel-a-espana-enfermedades-y->

sufrimientos>.

Housman, A.E. "To an Athlete Dying Young." 1922. *A Shropshire Lad*. New York: Dover, 1990. Print.

Hughes, Pat. *Red Barber: Play-by-Play Pioneer*. Baseball Voices, Hall of Fame Series. CD.

Huidobro, Vicente. See Concha, Jaime.

Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. Boston: Beacon, 1955. Print.

Humphries, Rolfe, *Collected Poems*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1965. Print.

---, "Jeffers and Pound." Rev. of *The Double Axe and Other Poems* by Robinson Jeffers and *The Pisan Cantos* by Ezra Pound. *The Nation*. 25 Sept 1948: 349.

---. "Latin and English Verse: Some Practical Considerations." *The Classical Journal*. 54.2 (Nov.1958): 63-69. 19 Nov 2007 < <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0009-8353%28195811%2954%3A2%3C63%33ALA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-D> >.

---, "On the Creative Imagination." *The Nation*. 9 Oct 1943: 411-412.

---, "Polo Grounds." *The New Yorker*. 22 August 1942: 22.

---, "Polo Grounds." MS. Rolfe Humphries papers. Box 5. Folder 36. Amherst College.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Urbana, IL: U of Illinois P, 1978. Print.

Huyke, Emilio E. *Los deportes en Puerto Rico*. Sharon, CT: Troutman, 1968. Print.

Infante, Pedro. "Pénjamo." *Canciones consagradas*. Peerless. LP.

“Inflation Calculator, The.” Web. 9 Jan 2009. <<http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>>.

Insitituto Cervantes. Web. 12 Aug 2011. <<http://cvc.cervantes.es/actcult/raton/protagonistas01.htm>>.

International Broadway Data Base. “*Adelante*.” Web. 10 Mar. 2007, <<http://ibdb.com.production.asp?id=12474>>.

International Movie Database. “*Dumbo*.” Web. 19 Aug 2011. <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0033563/releaseinfo>>.

Jackson, Jesse. “Jackie Robinson Eulogy.” Web. 7 Sept 2010, <http://www.baseball-almanac.com/players/p_robij5.shtml>.

Jackson, Richard. “Center Field.” Johnson, Don, ed. *Hummers, Knucklers, and Slow Curves: Contemporary Baseball Poems*. Urbana: U of Illinois, 1991. 62-63. Print.

---, E-mail to me. 10 Mar 2010.

Jamail, Milton H. *Full Count: Inside Cuban Baseball*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Ill. UP, 2000. Print.

---. *Venezuelan Bust, Baseball Boom: Andrés Reiner and Scouting on the New Frontier*. Lincoln: U of NB, 2008). Print.

James, Bill. *The Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract*. New York: Villard, 1986. Print.

Johnson, Lloyd and Miles Wolff, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball: The Official Record of Minor League Baseball*. Durham, NC: Baseball America, 1993. Print.

Johnson, Marguerite and Terry Ryan. *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature: A Sourcebook*. London: Routledge, 2005. Print.

Johnson, Samuel. *Lives of the English Poets*. Sel. and ed. by Robert Montagu. London: Folio Society, 1965. Print.

Jolley, Harmon. "Memories: Remembering 'They Cut Down The Old Pine Tree.'" Web. 3 June 2011. <http://w.w.w. chattanooga. com/ articles/article_59728.asp>.

Jorrín, Enrique. "Miñoso al bate." Perf. Orquesta América. 20 grandes éxitos. Panart, 1985. LP.

Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. London: Folio, 1966. Print.

---, *Ulysses*. New ed. corr. and reset. New York: Modern Library, 1961. Print.

Juan Manuel, Don. *El Conde Lucanor o Libro de los enxiemplos del Conde Lucanor et de Patronio*. Ed. José Manuel Blecua. Madrid: Castalia. 1971. Print.

Kahn, Roger. *The Head Game: Baseball Seen from the Pitcher's Mound*. New York: Harcourt, 2000). Print.

Kalmar, Bert and Harry Rubin, *Duck Soup*. Additional dialogue by Arthur Sheekman and Nat Perrin. Web. 23 Feb 2011. <http://www. script-o-rama. com/ movie_ scripts/ d/ duck-soup-script-transcript-marx.html>.

Kashatus, William C. *Lou Gehrig: A Biography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004. Print.

Keats, John. *Complete Poems*. Ed. Jack Stillinger. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982. Print.

Keith, Larry. "An Infusion of Fresh Dodger-Blue Blood: Being his Team's First New Manager in a Quarter-century Has Put Tom Lasorda in Seventh Heaven. And He Prays He Can Guide L.A. to First Place." *Sports Illustrated*. Web. 23 Jan 2009. <<http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2008/magazine/02/20/lasorda.flashback/>>.

Kirsch, Adam, "Cloudy Trophies: John Keats's Obsession with Fame and Death." Rev. of Posthumous Keats: A Personal Biography, by Stanley Plumly. *The New Yorker*. 7 July 2008. Web. 17 Mar 2010.

<http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2008/07/07/080707crbo_books_kirsch> ,

Kitaj, R.B., John Ashbery, Joe Shannon, Jane Livingston, and Timothy Hymann. *Kitaj: Paintings, Drawings, Pastels*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986. Print.

Klein, Alan M. *Sugarball: The American Game, the Dominican Dream*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1991. Print.

Kolin, Phillip C. "Tennessee Williams and the South." Rev. of Tennessee Williams and the South by Kenneth Holditch and Richard Freeman Leavitt. *Mississippi Quarterly*. 61.3 (Summer 2003): 466-469. Print.

Krich, John. *El Béisbol: Travels Through the Pan-American Pastime*. New York: Atlantic Monthly, 1989. Print.

Lanctot, Neil. *Negro League Baseball: The Rise and Ruin of a Black Institution*. Philadelphia: U of PA. Print.

Lapesa, Rafael. *Historia de la lengua española*. 5th ed. corr. and enlarged. Madrid: Escelicer, 1962. Print.

Lardner, John. "That Was Baseball. The Crime of Shufflin' Phil Douglas," *The New Yorker*. 32.12 (12 May 1956): 136+. Print.

Lardner, Ring. *You Know Me Al: A Busher's Letters*. New York: Macmillan—Collier, 1991. Print.

Lasorda, Tommy and David Fisher. *The Artful Dodger*. New York: Arbor House, 1985.

Lawrence, D.H. *Studies in Classic American Literature*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday – Anchor, 1951. Print.

---, *Women in Love*. New York: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

Lawrence, David. Conversation in the O.co Coliseum, Oakland, CA, during the Tampa Bay Rays-Oakland Athletics game. 26 July 2011.

---, E-mail to me. 3 Aug 2011.

Leñero, Vicente and Gerardo de la Torre, eds. *Pisa y corre: Béisbol por escrito*. Mexico City: Alfaguara, 2005. Print.

León, Víctor. *Diccionario de argot español y lenguaje popular*. Madrid: Alianza, 1988. Print.

Lepore, Jill. "Untimely: What Was at Stake in the Spat Between Henry Luce and Harold Ross." *The New Yorker*. 86.9 (19 April 2010): 109+. Print.

Lesch, R.J. "Jeff Tesreau" in SABR (Society for American Baseball Research), The Baseball Biography Project. Web. 8 Feb 2010. <<http://bioproj.sabr.org/bioproj.cfm?a=v&v=1&bid=993&pid=14079>>.

Leventhal, Josh. *Take Me Out to the Ballpark*. Additional sections by Jessica MacMurray. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal, 2000. Print.

Lewis, Michael. *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game*. New York: Norton, 2003. Print.

Lezama Lima, José. *La Habana*. 2nd ed., rev. and amplified. Presentation Gastón Baquero. Prologue José Prats Sariol. Madrid: Verbum, 2009. Print.

Lighter, J.E., ed. *Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang*. Vol. 1 of 4. New York: Random, 1994. Print.

Lipscomb, Herbert D. "Rolfe Humphries: Classicist and Poet," *The Classical Journal*, 39. 6 (Mar. 1994): 343-351. Print.

López, Félix Julio Alfonso. "José Martí y el juego de pelota en los Estados Unidos." *Opus Habana*. 9.1 (2005): 52-57. Web. 11 June 2006. <http://opushabana.cu/noticias.php?id_brev=457>.

---, "Juego (no tan) perfecto: El béisbol en la más reciente cuentística cubana." *El caiman barbudo*. Web. 15 May 2006. <<http://www.caimanbarbudo.cu/caiman333/paginas/beisbol133.htm>>. Reptd. as

introduction to Miguel Terry Valdespino and Francisco García González. *Escribas en el estadio*.

López, Víctor José. “La radio, el béisbol y la nación.” Oído en La chata. 13 Dec 2008. <http://vitolopez.blogspot.com/2009_07_01.archive.html>.

López de Ayala, Pedro. *Libro Rimado de palacio*. Ed. Kenneth Adams. Madrid: Cátedra, 1993. Print.

---. *Rimado de palacio*. Web. 18 Mar 2011. <<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/rimado-de-palacio--0/html/>>.

López Ortiz, Miguel. “‘Caravan’ cumple 70 y ‘Cachita’ está alborotá...” Web. 29 June 2011. <http://www.prpop.org/noticias/may07/caravan_may11.shtml>.

Lorca, Federico García. See García Lorca, Federico.

Loreto, Luis. *Entre gigantes de piedra*. Valle de Sartenejas, Baruta, Edo. Miranda, VZ: Eccionoccio-U Simón Bolívar, 2005. Print.

Los Angeles Dodgers. Press release. 5 February 2009. Print.

Lowes, John Livingston. *The Road to Xanadu: A Study in the Ways of the Imagination*. Boston: Houghton, 1964. Print.

Lowry, Phillip J. *Green Cathedrals: The Ultimate Celebration of All 273 Major League and Negro League Ballparks Past and Present*. Lebanon, IN: Addison Wesley, 1992. Print.

Lucretius. *The Way Things Are: The De Rerum Natura of Titus Lucretius Carus*. Trans. Rolfe Humphries. Intro. Burton Feldman. Notes George K. Strodach. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1968. Print.

“Major League Umpires All-time Roster,” 10 July 2007, <http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/official_info/umpires/all-time_roster.jsp>.

Malamud, Bernard *The Natural*. New York: Farrar, 1952.

Maly, Ron and John Holway. "Chet Brewer, Des Moines, 1984." *Des Moines Register*. (1 Apr 1984). Web. 18 Dec 2008. <<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=19840401/SPORTSII/50623028>>.

Manchester, William. "The Last Years of H.L. Mencken." *Atlantic Monthly*. 236.4. (Oct 1975): 82-90. Print.

Manrique, Jorge. "Coplas por la muerte de su padre." Ed. Blecua, José M. *Floresta de lírica española*. Vol. 1. 2nd ed., corrected, and enlarged. Madrid: Gredos, 1968. 60-72. Print.

Marañón, Gregorio. *Don Juan: Ensayos sobre el origen de su leyenda*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1976. Print.

Marrero, Rogelio. E-mail to me. 15 May 2010.

Martí, José. *Cartas escogidas: Visión íntima*. Sel. and prologue Daisy Cué. Ed. Oriente: Santiago de Cuba, 1995. Print

---, Untitled article dated 28 June 1888. *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), 25 Aug 1888. "En los Estados Unidos." OC. 13. (ed. Havana: Ed. de Ciencias Sociales, 1991: 337-345. Print.

--- "Nuestra América." OC. 6. 2nd ed. Havana: Ed. de Ciencias Sociales, 1975: 15-27. Print.

Martínez Aceves, Germán, "¡Aficionados que viven con intensidad la destrucción del lenguaje! (Los comentaristas: admirados, imitados, pero nunca objetos de investigación)," XVI Encuentro de la Asociación Mexicana de Investigadores de la Comunicación, Web. 24 Mar. 2007. <<http://www.idiomaydeportes.com/amic21.htm>>.

Marx Brothers, The. *The Marx Brothers: The Original Voice Tracks From Their Greatest Movies*. Decca, LP.

Mathewson, Christy. *Pitching in a Pinch or Baseball from the Inside*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1912. Print.

Mayer, Bob. "Turn Back the Clock: Former Catcher Wes Westrum

Recalls Career with Giants." *Baseball Digest*. 60. 11 (Nov 2001): 82-85. Print.

McCarthy, Mary. "Settling the Colonel's Hash." *Harper's Magazine*. 208:1245 (Feb 1954): 68-75. Print.

McCaw, R. John. "Daphne, Apollo, and Homo Ludens in Luis de Góngora's Soledad Primera." *Symposium* 52. 2 (1998): 85-92. Print.

McDonald, David. "No Ordinary Backstop." *The Ottawa Citizen*. 8 Aug. 2010. Web. 11 Dec 2010 . <<http://www2.canada.com/ottawacitizen/news/sports/story.html?id=f9b0f2a2-bdf2-45.cb-ac84-b2e1bf84ac.1d>>.

McGimpsey, David. *Imagining Baseball: America's Pastime and Popular Culture*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2000. Print.

Mead, William B. *Baseball Goes to War*. Washington: Farragut, 1985. Print.

Melville, Herman. *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*. Ed. Hershel Parker. New York: Norton, 1971. Print.

Mencken, Henry Louis. *The American Language: An Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States. Supplement II*. New York: Knopf, 1956. Print.

---. *A Choice of Days: Essays from Happy Days, Newspaper Days, and Heathen Days*. Ed. Edward L. Galligan, New York: Random, 1981. Print.

Méndez, Rubén. "Pénjamo." Web. 27 May 2011. <<http://www.fomentar.com/Mexico/Cancionero/detalle.php?id=1265&inicio=60&orden=verso&asc=0>>.

Miller, Robert L. "Letter From the Publisher." *Sports Illustrated*. 62,15 (15 April 1985): 4. Print.

Miñoso, Orestes. See Minoso, Minnie.

Minoso, Minnie and Herb Fagen. *Just Call me Minnie: My Six Decades in Baseball*. Champaign, IL: Sagamore, 1994. Print.

“Misa del deporte arriba a su sexagésima tercera edición,” Web. 16 Jan. 2008. <[http://www/vtv.gob.ve/VTV\(reload\)/detalle.php?s=3&id=1817](http://www/vtv.gob.ve/VTV(reload)/detalle.php?s=3&id=1817)>.

Mitchison, Naomi. “O Lucky Thessaly!” *Black Sparta: Greek Stories*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1928: 26-56. Print.

Molina, René. “Cuba y Venezuela decidirán su empate en un solo juego, el martes.” Library of Congress Photoduplications Service. Microfilm.

---. “Venezuela ganó la cuarta serie mundial de base ball amateur.” *Diario de la Marina* (Havana). 23 oct 1941:15. Library of Congress Photoduplications Service. Microfilm.

Moore, Marianne. *The Complete Poems*. New York: Macmillan, 1981. Print.

---, *Selected Poems*. London: Faber & Faber, 1935? Print.

Morales, Edel, ed.. *La estrella de Cuba (Inventario de una expedición)*. Havana: Instituto Cubano del Libro, 2004. Print.

“Mysteries.” *The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth and Religion*. 2003. Print.

Nabokov, Vladimir. *Novels 1955-1962*. Notes, Brian Boyd. New York: Penguin – Library of America, 1988. Print.

Nash, Ogden. “Line-Up for Yesterday: An ABC of Baseball Immortals.” *Sport*. 6. Jan 1949: 32-33. Rpt. in Nash, *Versus*. Boston: Little, 1949. 67-71. Print.

National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. Web. 26 Dec 2008. <http://www.baseballhalloffame.org/hofers/detail.jsp?playerfld=492563>>.

---, Web. 28 June 2011. <http://exhibits.baseballhalloffame.org/baseball_enlists/dominates.htm>.

Navarro [Tomás], Tomás. *El español en Puerto Rico: Contribucción a la geografía lingüística hispanoamericana*. Río Piedras, EDUPR, 1948. Print.

Negro League Baseball Players Association. "Leroy 'Satchel' Paige." Web. 3 May 2011. <http://www.nlbpa.com/paige__satchel.html>.

Netanyahu, B[enzion]. *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*. New York: Random, 1995. Print.

New Crown Japanese-English Dictionary. 4th ed. Tokyo: Sanseido, 1981. Print.

New York Yankees. *2002 Yankees Information Guide*. New York: Ballash Press, 2002. Print.

Newbolt, Henry. "Vitaï Lampada." *Poems: New and Old*. London: Murray, 1913. 78-79. Print.

Novak, Michael Paul. "Love and Influence: Louise Bogan, Rolfe Humphries, and Theodore Roethke." *The Kenyon Review*. N.S. 7.3 (Summer 1985): 9-20. Print.

Oliver, Phil. "Baseball, Transcendence, and the Return to Life." William A. Simmons, ed. . *The Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture: 2001*. 291-303. Print.

Official Rules of Major League Baseball. Chicago: Triumph, 2010. Print.

"Old-Timers Cavort in Barrow's Honor." *New York Times* 14 May 1950. Sports section: 1+. Web. 29 Sept 2011. <<http://www.nytimes.com>>.

Oleksak, Michael M. and Mary Adams Oleksak. *Béisbol: Latin Americans and the Grand Old Game*. Grand Rapids, MI: Masters, 1991. Print.

Oliver, Myrna. "Cesar Romero, Suave Star for Over 60 Years, Dies at 86: Hollywood: The Actor's Career Spanned Stage, Films and TV. He Remained Socially Prominent in Retirement." *Los Angeles Times*. 3 Jan 1994. Web. 21 June 2011. <<http://articles.latimes.com/keyword/cesar-romero>>.

Onions, C.T., ed. with the assistance of G.W.S. Friedrichsen and R.W. Burchfield. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*. New York: Oxford UP, 1967. Print.

Orovio, Helio. *Cuban Music from A to Z*. Durham , NC: Duke UP, 2004. Print.

---. "El deporte en la música cubana." *La jiribilla*. 190 (Dec. 2004). Web. 18 May 2011. <http://www.lajiribilla.cu/2004/n190_12/190_08.html>.

Orwell, George. "My Country Right or Left." *Folios of New Writing*. 2 (Autumn 1940). Rptd. In Orwell, *Facing Unpleasant Facts: Narrative Essays*. Ed. George Packer. Orlando: Harcourt, 2008. Print.

Otero Silva, Miguel. "El matrimonio de Andrés Eloy." Efraín Subero, ed. *El humorismo venezolano en verso*. Vol. 4 of 4. Caracas: Ford Motor de Venezuela, 1988. 473-475. Print.

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Tr. Rolfe Humphries. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1963. Print

Oxford English Dictionary. Web. 14 Dec 2009. </dictionary.oed.com>.

---. Supplement. Ed. R.W. Burchfield. Compact ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987. Print.

Pacanins, Federico. *El libro del béisbol: cien años de pelota en la literatura venezolana*. Caracas: El Nacional, 1998. Print.

Pacheco, Tony. *Anectotario del baseball profesional cubano*. Miami: Federación de peloteros profesionales cubanos, 1993? Print.

Padrón, Ricardo. "Against Apollo: Góngora's Soledad primera and the Mapping of Empire." *Modern Language Quarterly* 68.3 (2007): 363-393. Print.

Padura, Leonardo and Raúl Arce. *Estrellas del beisbol*. Havana: Abril, 1989. Print.

Pallone, Dave with Alan Steinberg. *Behind the Mask: My Double Life in Baseball*. New York: Viking, 1990. Print.

Patchin, Kenneth. *Selected Poems*. New York: New Directions, 1957. Print.

Paz, Octavio. *El signo y el garabato*. 2nd ed. Mexico City: Mortiz, 1986. Print.

Peña, Horacio. *Poema a un hombre llamado Roberto Clemente*. Managua: Editorial Unión, 1973. Print.

Perdición de los hombres, La. Dir. Arturo Ripstein. Vanguard Cinema. 2000. DVD.

Pérez, Francisco. "Para Rumbiar." *Poetry*. Sept. 2009: 442+. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 10 May 2011.

Pérez, Leoncio. "Andrés Eloy Blanco[:] El mejor amigo de la República Española." *Andrés Eloy Blanco Valoración multiple*. Ed. Efraín Subero. Vol. 4. Caracas: Senado de la República de Venezuela, 1998. 217-219. Print.

"Peter." "De la serie mundial: Jugo de limón." *Diario de la Marina* (Havana). 22 Oct 1941. Library of Congress Photoduplication Service. Microfilm.

Peterson, Richard. *Extra Innings: Writing on Baseball*. Urbana: U of IL, 2001. Print.

Pettavino, Paula J. and Geralyn Pye. *Sport in Cuba: The Diamond in the Rough*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh, 1994. Print.

Pichel, Daniel R. "A paso de conga." *La prensa* (Panama) . 27 Nov 2005. Web. 30 Dec 2008. <<http://mensual.prensa.com/mensual/contenido/2005/11/27/hoy/opinion/415629.html>>.

Pietri, Pedro. "Puerto Rican Obituary." *Puerto Rican Obituary*. New York: Monthly Review, 1973: 1-11. Print.

Pietruszka, David, Matthew Silverman, and Michael Gershman. *Baseball: The Biographical Encyclopedia*. New York: Total - Sports Illustrated, 2000. Print.

Pinkerton Trimpi. "Play Up! Play Up! And Play the Game!" *Sewanee Review*. 16.3 (Summer 2008): 477-480. Print.

Pindar. *The Odes*. Trans. C.M. Bowra. New York: Penguin, 1969. Print.

Plutarch, "Theseus." Internet Classics Archives. Web. 15 Jan 2011. <<http://classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/theseus.html>>.

Poetry Foundation, The. "Biography. Delmore Schwartz: 1913-1956). Web. 14 Oct 2011 <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/delmore-schwartz>>.

"Polo Grounds Historical Analysis," Web. 19 May 2007, <http://baseball-almanac.com/stadium/st_polo.shtml>.

Pound, Ezra. *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*. New York: New Directions, 1995. Print.

Price, Simon and Emily Kearns, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth and Religion*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003. Print.

Prince, Carl E. *Brooklyn's Dodgers: The Bums, the Borough, and the Best of Baseball, 1947-1957*. New York: Oxford UP, 1996. Print

Puebla, Carlos. "Varadero." *Canción Protesta: Protest Song of Latin America*. Paredon. 1970. LP.

Ramírez, Alfonso. *Biografía de Andrés Eloy Blanco*. Caracas: Ediciones

de la Comisión presidencial del centenario del natalicio de Andrés Bello, 1997. Print.

Ramos, Alí, *Todos fueron héroes*. Caracas: Ministerio de Información, 1975. Print.

Rangel, Domingo Alberto. Prologue to Simón Sáez Mérida. “Hay hombres que luchan toda la vida.” Web. 21 Apr. 2009. <<http://www.nodo50.org/ellibertario/PDF/simon.pdf>>.

Raskin, Willie, George Brown, and Edward Eliscu. “They Cut Down the Old Pine Tree.” Web. 3 June 2011. <<http://www.mudcat.org/@displaysong.cfm?SongID=7257>>.

Reagan, Ronald. *An American Life*. New York: Simon, 1990. Print.

Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la lengua española*. 22nd ed. 2 vols. Madrid: Aguilar, 2001. Print.

Rebolledo, Izvet. “Béisbol criollo listo para Juegos del ALBA.” Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Deporte, 13 Apr 2009. Web. 1 Dec 2009. <http://www.mppdeportes.gob.ve/portal2009/noticias-mindeporte/101-beisbol-criollo-listo-para-juegos-del-alba>>.

Reed, Lou. “Sister Reyes,” Web. 18 July 2008, <<http://www.yard-work.org/?p=688>>.

Regan, Jack and Will E. Stahl. “Willie’s Brother’s Demise.” Joseph Wallace, gen. ed. *The Baseball Anthology: 125 Years of Stories, Poems, Articles, Photographs, Drawings, Interviews, Cartoons, and Other Memorabilia*. New York: Abrams, 2004: 118.

Reichler, Joseph L. ed. *The Baseball Encyclopedia: The Complete and Official Record of Major League Baseball*. 7th ed., rev., updated, and expanded. New York: Macmillan, 1988.

Richards, I.A., *Coleridge on Imagination*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1960.

Rickey, Branch.. *Branch Rickey's Little Blue Book: Wit and Strategy From Baseball's Last Wise Man*. Ed. John J. Monteleone. New York: Macmillan, 1995. Print.

Rielly, Edward J. "Baseball Haiku: Basho, the Babe, and the Great Japanese-American Trade." William A. Simmons, ed. *The Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture: 2001*. 246-259. Print.

Riley, James A. *The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1994.

Ritter, Lawrence S. *The Glory of Their Times: The Story of the Early Days of Baseball Told by the Men Who Played It*. New enlarged ed. New York: Vintage – Random, 1985.

Robinson, Ray. *Iron Horse: Lou Gehrig in His Time*. New York: Harper, 1991. Print.

Rodríguez, Joselito, dir. *Aangelitos negros*. Perf. Pedro Infante, Emilia Guiú, and Rita Montaner. Rodríguez Hermanos. 1948. Film.

Rodríguez Juliá, Edgardo. *Peloteros*. San Juan: EDUPR, 1997. Print.

Rogers, Will. *Reflections and Observations*. Ed. Bryan B. Sterling and Frances N. Sterling. New York: Crown Trade Paperbacks, 1982. Print.

Rogosin, Donn. *Invisible Men: Life in Baseball's Negro Leagues*. New York: Atheneum, 1985. Print.

Rosen, Aaron. *Imagining Jewish Art: Encounters with the Masters in Chagall, Guston, and Kitaj*. London, U.K. : Legenda, 2009. Print.

Rosenblat, Angel. *Estudios sobre el habla de Venezuela: Buenas y malas palabras*. Vol. 1, Caracas: Monte-Avila, 1987. Print.

Roth, Phillip. *The Great American Novel*. New York: Random, 1995.

Print.

Ruck, Rob, "Three Kings Day in Consuelo: Cricket, Baseball, and the Cocolos in San Pedro de Macorís, *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, 13 (1994). Rptd. in *Sport in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Ed. Joseph L. Arbena and David G. LaFrance. Wilmington DE: Scholarly Resources – Jaguar, 2002. 75-89. Print.

---, *The Tropic of Baseball: Baseball in the Dominican Republic*. New York: Carroll & Graff – Richard Gallen, 1993. Print.

Rucker, Mark (photographs) and Peter C. Bjarkman (text). *Smoke: The Romance and Lore of Cuban Baseball*. Kingston, NY: Total Sports Illustrated, 1999. Print.

Ruth, Claire and Bill Slocum. *The Babe and I*. New York; Avon, 1959. Print.

Runyon, Damon. *Guys, Dolls, and Curveballs: Damon Runyon on Baseball*. Ed. Jim Reisler. New York: Carroll & Graff, 2005. Print.

Russell, John. "Art View; Into the Labyrinth of Dream with Kitaj." *New York Times* 16 Mar 1986. Web. 29 April 2011. <<http://www.nytimes.com/1986/03/16/arts/art-view-into-the-labyrinth-of-dreams-with-kitaj.html>>.

Salaün, Serge. *El cuplé (1900-1936)*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe-Austral, 1990. Print.

San Francisco Giants. *2007 Giants Media Guide*. Walnut Creek CA: Diablo Custom Publishing, 2007. Print.

Sánchez, Luis Rafael. *La guaracha del Macho Camacho*. Buenos Aires; Ediciones de la Flor, 1976. Print.

---. *La importancia de llamarse Daniel Santos: Fabulación*. Hanover, NH: Ediciones del Norte, 1989. Print.

Schechter, Gabriel. *Victory Faust: The Rube Who Saved McGraw's Giants*. Los Gatos, CA: Charles April, 2000. Print.

Schott, Tom and Nick Peters. *The Giants Encyclopedia*. Champaign, IL: Sports, 2003. Print.

Schwartz, Delmore. *"In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" and Other Stories*. Ed. James Atlas. New York: New Directions, 1978. Print.

---, *"Successful Love" and Other Stories* (New York: Persea, 1985). Print.

Schwarz, Alan. E-mail to me. 3 June 2010.

---. *The Numbers Game: Baseball's Lifelong Fascination with Statistics*. New York: Thomas Dunne-St. Martin's, 2004.

Schwarz, Jack. Letter to Rolfe Humphries. 2 Sept 1943. Rolfe Humphries papers. Box 5. Folder 36. Amherst College.

Scorecard. *Sports Illustrated*. 22 April 1996. Web. 22 July 2011. <<http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1008003/index.htm>>.

Secades, Eladio, "Todo ha terminado. Venezuela campeón." *Diario de la Marina* (Havana). 23 Oct. 1941. Library of Congress hotoduplications Service. Microfilm.

Sedley, David, "Lucretius." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Web. 8 Nov. 2011. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/lucretius/>>.

Seymour, Harold and Dorothy Jane Mills. (Originally attributed exclusively to Seymour). *Baseball: The Early Years*. New York: Oxford UP, 1989. Print.

Sheldon, Ron. Producer and director. *Bull Durham*. MGM. 1988. DVD.

Shelly, Percy Bysshe. *Poems*. Sel. Isabel Quigly. London: Penguin, 1956. Print.

"Simply Baseball Notebook." Web. 24 Mar. 2007. <<http://www.z.lee28>>.

tripod.com/therest/id29.html>.

Socorro, Milagros. *Alfonso "Chico" Carrasquel: Con la V en el pecho*. Caracas: Fundarte-Alacaldía de Caracas, 1994. Print.

Skolnik, Richard. *Baseball and the Pursuit of Innocence: A Fresh Look at the Old Ball Game*. College Park TX: Texas A&M UP, 1994. Print.

Smith, Curt. *The Story Tellers: From Mel Allen to Bob Costas: Sixty Years of Tales From the Broadcast Booth*. New York: Macmillan, 1995. Print.

---. *Voices of Summer: Ranking Baseball's 101 All-Time Best Announcers*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 2005. Print.

Snyder, Brad. *A Well-Paid Slave: Curt Flood's Fight for Free Agency in Professional Sports*. New York: Penguin-Plume, 2007. Print.

Sowell, Mike. *The Pitch That Killed*. New York: Macmillan, 1991. Print.

Stallworthy, Jon, ed. *The Oxford Book of War Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

Staudohar, Paul D. "Tinker to Evers to Chance: Poetry in Motion." *Nine: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture*. 14.1 (Sept 2005): 114-129. Print.

Stevens, Bob. "Jesus Alou Fails to Save Giants; Cards. L.A. Win." *San Francisco Chronicle*. 11 Sept. 1963. "Sporting Green" 1. Print.

Stump, Al. *Cobb: A Biography*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin, 1994.

Sublette, Ned. *Cuba and its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo*. Chicago: Chicago Rev. Press, 2004. Print.

"Symbol of the Cuban People Known as Liborio. The." Liceo cubano. Web. 21 Dec 2007. <<http://www.liceocubano.com/Eng/HoyLiceo/Simbolos-1.asp?Id=3>>.

Tejera, Josefina. *Diccionario de venezolanismos*. Caracas: Academia Venezolana de la Lengua, 1983. Vol. 1 of 3. Print.

Terrell, Carroll F. *A Companion to The Cantos of Ezra Pound*. Berkeley: UC P, 1993. Print.

Terry Valdespino, Miguel and Francisco García González, eds. *Escribas en el estadio: Cuentos cubanos de béisbol*. Intro. Félix Julio Alfonso López. Havana: Unicornio, 2007. Print.

This, Craig. “The Curious Case of Sidd Finch’ and For Love of the Game: The Perfect Game as Mythical Literature.” William A. Simmons, ed. *The Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture: 2001*: 167-183. Print.

Thomas, Robert McG. “Red Barber, Baseball Voice of Summer, Is Dead at 84.” *New York Times* 23 Oct. 1992, Final late ed., B7. UMI. Microfilm.

Thoreau, Henry David. *The Journal*. Ed. Bradford Torrey and Francis H. Allen. New York: Dover, 1962. Print.

Thorn, John and Pete Palmer with David Reuther, ed. *Total Baseball*. New York: Warner – Baseball Ink, 1989. Print.

Tirso de Molina. *El burlador de Sevilla*. Ed. Américo Castro. *Comedias. I*. 7th ed. Madrid: Espasa Calpe – Clásicos Castellanos, 1963. Print.

Tomlinson, Janis A. *Francisco Goya: The Tapestry Cartoons and Early Career at the Court of Madrid*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989. Print.

Tootle, Jim. “Bill Veeck and James Thurber: The Literary Origins of the Midget Pinch Hitter.” *Nine: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture*. 10.2 (Spring 2002): 110-119. Print.

Torres, Ana Teresa. “Literatura y país: Reflexiones sobre sus relaciones.” *Literatura venezolana hoy: Historia nacional y presente urbano*. Ed. Karl Kohut. Frankfurt: Vervuert, 1999. Print.

Torres, Angel. *La leyenda del béisbol cubano*. Miami: Review Printers, 1996. Print.

Tovar Bracho, Carlos. “Béisbol por radio en Venezuela – 1950/1997.” *Bate, guante y pelota: Análisis e historia*. 1.1 (May 1997): 82-89. Print.

Tuck, Jim. “Nezahualcoyotl: Texcoco's Philosopher King (1403–1473).” Web. 25 Dec 2010. <<http://www.mexconnect.com/articles/298-nezahualcoyotl-texcoco-s-philosopher-king-1403%E2%80%931473>>.

Turkin, Hy and S.C. Thompson, *The Official Encyclopedia of Baseball*. 2nd ed. rev. New York: A.S. Barnes, 1959. Print.

United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. 992 F.2d 1143: United States of America, Plaintiff-appellee, v. Rafael Sanchez and Luis Sanchez, Defendants-appellants. Web. 22 Aug 2011. <<http://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F2/992/1143/45092>>.

Updike, John. “Baseball.” *Endpoint and Other Poems*. New York: Knopf, 2009. Print.

---. *Collected Poems 1953-1993*. New York: Knopf, 1993. Print.

---. “Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu.” *The New Yorker*. 36.36 (22 Oct 1960): 109-131. Print.

Valiño, Omar. “Gracias por el béisbol.” *La jiribilla*. Web. 14 Oct 2011. <http://www.lajiribilla.co.cu/2001/n29_noviembre/proscenio.html>.

Van den Heuvel, Cor and Nanae Tamura, ed. and tr., *Baseball Haiku: American and Japanese Haiku and Senryu on Baseball*. New York: Norton, 2007. Print.

Veeck, Bill with Ed Linn, *Veeck—As in Wreck: The Autobiography of Bill Veeck*. New York: Putnam's, 1962. Print.

Vené, Juan. E-mail to me. 11 Dec 2009.

---. *Las mejores anécdotas del beisbol*. Caracas, Ediciones B, 2008. Print.

---, *El poder: Un coctel de sexo, política y risas con su toque de béisbol*, Caracas: Vaprobia, 1990. Print.

Venezuela al bate: Orígenes de nuestro béisbol, 1895-1945. Dir. and script Carlos Oteyza. Bolívar Films. 2002. DVD.

Verlaine, Paul. "Art poétique." *La Bonne Chanson. Jadis et naguère. Parallèlement*. Louis Forestier, ed. Paris: Gallimard, 1979: 56-57. Print.

Vernon, Peter. "It's Just Not Cricket: Cricket as Metaphor in Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day*." Web. 25 Oct 2010. <http://against-the-day.pynchonwiki.com/wiki/index.php?title=Cricket_in_Against_the_Day>.

Vidal, Gore. "Forward." Marion Elizabeth Rodgers, ed. *The Impossible H.L. Mencken: A Selection of His Best Newspaper Stories*. New York: Doubleday – Anchor, 1991. xvii-xxxv. Print.

"Virtual Hall of Fame's Official Statement Regarding Joe Jackson," Web. 13 August 2007, <<http://blackbetsey.com//jjstate.htm>>.

Vizcarrondo, Fortunato. "¿Y tu agüela aonde ejtá?" Web. 22 July 2011. <<http://www.poesiabreve.com/fortunatovizcarrondo.html>>.

Voigt, David Quentin. *American Baseball: From the Commissioners to Continental Expansion*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1983. Vol. 2. Print. 3 vols.

---. *American Baseball: From Gentlemen's Sport to the Commissioner System*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1990. Vol. 1. Print. 3 vols.

Waltman, Franklin M. *Concordance to Poema de mío Cid*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1972.

"War & Baseball." *Time*. Web. 12 July 2007. <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,796038.00.html>>.

Ward, John Montgomery. *Base-ball: How to Become a Player*. Philadelphia: Athletic Publishing, 1888. Rptd. with forward by Mark Alvarez, Cleveland: Society for American Baseball Research, 1993. Print.

---. "Is the Base-Ball Player a Chattel?." *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*. Aug. 1887. 17 Mar 2011. Web. <<http://baseballchronology.com/Baseball/History/1887-JM-Ward-Chattel.asp>>.

Werner, Donald H. "A Triptych After Keats." *Elysian Fields Quarterly: The Baseball Review*. 12.4. (Special issue 1994): 9. Print.

Westbrook, Deanne. *Ground Rules: Baseball and Myth*. Urbana, IL: U of IL P, 1996. Print.

Week-End in Havana and That Night in Rio. Curtain Calls. LP.

Whalen, Thomas J. *When the Red Sox Ruled: Baseball's First Dynasty*. Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2011. Print.

Whiting, Robert. *You Gotta Have Wa*. New York: Macmillan, 1989. Print.

Whitman, Walt. *Leaves of Grass*. New York: Modern Library, n.d. Print.

---"Song of the Open Road." 2 Jan 2008. Web. <http://www.Princeton.edu/~batke/logr/log_082.html>.

Will, George. *Men at Work: The Craft of Baseball*. New York: Macmillan, 1990) Print.

Williams, Bernie, Dave Gluck, and Bob Thompson. *Rhythms of the Game: The Link Between Musical and Athletic Performance*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2011. Print.

Williams, William Carlos. *Spring and All*. New York: Frontier, 1970. Print.

Williamson, Chet. E-mail to me. 11 Oct. 2008.

---, "Gandhi at the Bat." *The New Yorker*. 59. 18. (20 June 1983): 30-31. Print.

Woods, Gregory. *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1981. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. "American Fiction." *Collected Essays*. Vol. 22, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967). 111-121. Print.

Wordsworth, William and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*. Ed. R.L. Brett and A.R. Jones. 2nd ed., London: Routledge, 1991. Print.

Zang, David W. *Fleet Walker's Divided Heart: The Life of Baseball's First Black Major Leaguer*. Lincoln: U of NB, 1991. Print.

Zerpa, Gabriel. "Los circuitos en la history." Web. 22 Oct. 2008. <<http://beisboldelbueno.blogspot.com/2005/11/los-circuitos-en-la-historia.html>>.

Zoss, Joel and John Bowman. *Diamonds in the Rough: The Untold History of Baseball*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska, 2004. Print.
