Introduction: Aesthetics, Poetics, Rhetoric, Soccer

Ridvan Askin, University of Basel
Catherine Diederich, University of Teacher Education St. Gallen
Aline Bieri, University of Basel

The Aesthetics, Poetics, and Rhetoric of Soccer brings together several closely related discussions that have remained distinct for the most part so far: the philosophical discourse on the aesthetics of sport in general and that of soccer in particular, the cultural studies (broadly conceived) discourse on soccer culture and the politics of its representation, and the discourse on the rhetorical and discursive strategies taken up in and around soccer as predominantly discussed by linguists and literary scholars.[1] In doing so, this book not only wishes to contribute to the respective discussions in these specific discursive fields, but also aims to provide a forum for dialogue and interdisciplinary debate. Accordingly, it provides exemplary discussions of soccer in relation to the book's three titular concepts from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Contributors to the volume hail from philosophy, literary and cultural studies, linguistics, art history, and the creative arts. At the same time, the concepts of the aesthetic, the poetic, and the rhetorical inform each individual essay's argument and provide thematic foci. Let us briefly sketch in which way these central concepts are employed throughout the volume.

Beginning with the concept of the aesthetic, three salient senses in which this notion has been taken up in the context of discussions of sport and, more specifically, soccer can be observed. The first of these is the sense in which the notion of the aesthetic is employed in philosophy or theory of art. Arguably, this is in agreement with the more general discourse on aesthetics ever since, roughly, the end of the nineteenth century, which indeed understands aesthetics as the branch of philosophy concerned with the theorization of art (Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel's *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* [1975] is the reference point and model here). Ever since the philosophy of sport came into its own as a specific field of study in the mid-1960s (Kretchmar, 1997, pp.193–196), this is the sense of aesthetics that has been at the forefront in discussions of sport and aesthetics. The central question in this debate focuses on whether sport can be properly understood as art.[2] A related discourse emerged from this debate on sport's relation to art, revolving around whether the aesthetic dimension is in fact central to sport and, by implication, soccer.[3] Those who believe this to be the case but either reject or at least remain agnostic vis-à-vis the stronger claim that sport is art, usually still employ aesthetics in the sense of theory of art. In this vein, these scholars discuss features that make sport and soccer an enjoyable and pleasurable experience, whether they are primarily concerned with the active practice or the passive consumption of sport. Questions of beauty, creativity, genius, imagination, skill, drama, spectacle, and play are at the heart of these discussions.[4] Emily Ryall's and Adam Kadlac's contributions to this volume certainly belong in this category. While Ryall continues and expands her discussion of why soccer is rightly called "the beautiful game,"[5] Kadlac introduces a new angle to the question by taking his cue from youth soccer,

scrutinizing what this less orderly and less structured way of playing might tell us about the beauty of the game, ultimately providing us with what one could call a contextualist account of soccer beauty.

In a second sense, aesthetics refers to artistic, filmic, and literary representations of sport and soccer, that is, modes of representing sport and soccer that are deemed to be particularly aesthetic. Scholarship in this vein is legion in cultural studies, covering all kinds of sport from antiquity to today and dealing with a variety of topics and issues ranging from questions of race, class, and gender to national identity, from mythography to the athletic body itself, to name but a few.[6] In the present volume, Daniel Haxall adds to this discourse by engaging with contemporary soccer art and its negotiations of national identity. David Kilpatrick, in turn, addresses the mythographic dimension of literary representations of the soccer manager and how these might be understood as projecting viable models for a future to come.

A third and, to our mind, particularly interesting and promising sense of aesthetics operative in thinking about sport and soccer is that of aesthetics as *aísthēsis*. This sense goes back to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's coinage and definition of aesthetics not merely as theory of art but also and predominantly as "science of perception," "lower-level epistemology," and "science of sensuous cognition" (Baumgarten, 1954, §116; Barnouw, 1988, p.324).[7] Baumgarten gives the senses their due in our striving for truth: While the senses only allow for clear and confused cognition over and against the clear and distinct cognition of reason—the senses lack the power to make distinctions—they give us the concrete, material plenitude and richness of things, something abstract and rational thought misses out on (Baumgarten, 2007, §617, §560, §564). Basically, *aísthēsis* denotes pure perception or intuition. It seems that scholars are increasingly taking recourse to this sense of the aesthetic in their discussions of the aesthetics of soccer. For example, Kreft has recently argued that "to play a (soccer) game a kind of visionary approach produced by our imagination is needed" (2015, p.125). Arguably, this sense of the aesthetic is, at least implicitly, also present in the first sense sketched above: Whenever someone discusses skill, creativity, a given player's ability to 'read the game,' or—the most blatant example—genius, they are taking implicit recourse to something like Baumgarten's notion of "sensuous cognition" (this, then, is also true of Ryall's and Kadlac's contributions to this volume). Hardly anyone believes that the decisions and choices athletes and soccer players make, often within fractures of seconds, are the result of a deliberate, conscious, and rational weighing of available options; rather, they are bodily, intuitive decisions—sensuous cognition indeed. Given that most (though, depending on one's favorite definition, not necessarily all) sports primarily consist of series of bodily movements in space and time, such accounts promise to get at the heart of the matter. In this vein, the aesthetic becomes not just one aspect among others that might be important for discussions of sport, but the most central and essential issue. Besides Baumgarten, a plethora of theorists and philosophers of perception, intuition, or *aísthēsis* could serve as potentially fruitful resources here. The early Friedrich Nietzsche with his account of the Dionysian in art as presented in the *Birth of Tragedy* and phenomenological accounts such as Martin Heidegger's and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's have already been proposed by scholars such as Mumford (2012), Gumbrecht (2006), Kilpatrick (2010a), Edgar (2015), and, most recently, Tuncel (2017). In the present

volume, Simon Critchley, too, takes recourse to Heidegger in his discussion of the Heideggerian *Augenblick*, the creation of the very moment of vision as it plays out in soccer. Of course, phenomenology with its focus on the body and lived experience has always been a preferred resource for philosophers of sport, at least ever since Drew Hyland's classic *The Philosophy of Sport* (1990). The pragmatist approach as advocated by Elcombe (2012) and approaches based on what has become known as everyday aesthetics as championed by Kreft (2014) also belong here. But many new pathways open up once one understands aesthetics as *aísthēsis*, not the least of which might be a return to thinkers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: With its emphasis on intuition, imagination, and genius, the romantic tradition—the *locus classicus* of aesthetics as *aísthēsis*—promises to be a veritable treasure chest in this respect.

Since in the romantic understanding intuition, imagination, and genius invariably denote faculties, capacities or activities, the aim of which is to tap the very source of the powers of creation, this brief foray into romanticism brings us right to the second concept in our triad: poetics. Etymologically, poetics—derived from the Greek term for "to make," *poiein*—denotes the discipline concerned with the creation, production, and formation of something. Any poetics of soccer must then distinguish and contend with those features that make soccer possible in the first place: What are the constitutive elements of soccer? Asking this question brings us right back to the question of aesthetics we started with, as many of these constitutive elements concern the players' proper employment of their body and their senses. Similarly, whenever we watch soccer with an eye to its constitutive elements, we discern precisely those features that we already pointed out above: players' specific skills in relation to the appropriate command of their body resulting in certain bodily movements, anticipation of the game flow, and the capacity to envision a given situation and act in the blink of an eye, to name but a few. What distinguishes an aesthetics of soccer from a poetics of soccer in this sense is mostly a question of perspective, emphasis, or directionality: While aesthetics is always concerned with questions of *perception*, whether they pertain to a certain set of judgments concerning the beauty or lack of beauty of the game in general, of a particular game, or maybe just a certain play or even just one specific bodily movement, or to the players' own *aisthetic* powers, poetics is concerned with the very same phenomena from the point of view of their *production*. How does a certain player wield their *aisthetic* powers, their vision of the game, in order to literally create a new situation on the pitch, to set up a goal, or to fool an opponent and dribble past them? Similarly, where aesthetics qua discourse of the beautiful or pleasurable focuses on the perception of beauty and the feeling of pleasure, poetics zooms in on their very production. Analogous to how such an aesthetics of soccer might enlarge its categories to include the ugly, the monotonous, the boring, and possibly even the zany (Saito, 2015; Moller, 2014; Ngai, 2012), a correlative poetics of soccer might want to inquire into the very conditions of the emergence of ugliness, boringness[8], and so on. Steffen Borge and Mike McNamee recently introduced the notion that soccer is a "constructive-destructive sport" (2017, p.250), a description they suggest best captures soccer's "inherent structure" (2017, p.253), which comprises both "creating or inventing ways to score" and "preventing or hindering the other team from scoring" (2017, p.250). In this vein, aesthetic judgment of a given game will depend on the relation and ratio between the constitutive constructive and destructive features and

actions it displays. When the destructive capacities of two teams cancel out their respective constructive forces to such a degree that the latter are barely noticeable, the result will arguably be boringness in Moller's sense of the term. But boringness might well also result from too big an asymmetry between the constructive and destructive capacities of two teams, when one team overcomes the other team's destructive efforts too easily while simultaneously succeeding in quenching its constructive attempts. From the point of view of a poetics of soccer, one might then ask how this imbalance or too much balance between the constructive and destructive forces on the pitch came about in the first place. Is it due to a better employment of game vision and the correlative distribution of bodies in space? Or maybe the soccer genius of one or two particular players is responsible? Or the inverse is the case, and the result is due to stupidity rather than genius? This is indeed one of the questions Philip Schauss asks in his contribution to this volume, in which he draws on Erasmus' protagonist goddess in *The Praise of Folly* as an example for the categorization of various forms of stupidity in order to characterize and define stupidity as it occurs in and around the soccer arena. While Schauss is interested in stupidity, Kristof K. P. Vanhoutte turns his attention to narcissism, which he detects as the very condition of possibility of a specific kind of rivalry, namely that between derby fans, subsequently extending this analysis to fandom in general.[9] Drawing on Freud's theory of the 'narcissism of minor differences' and Sara Ahmed's theory of emotions, he singles out derby fans' constant negotiations of love and hate or proximity and distance based on narcissistically cherished minor differences as the source of the overloaded affect that is necessary to sustain their rivalry. Both Schauss and Vanhoutte scrutinize a (potentially) constitutive element for the respective phenomenon in question, soccer and the discourse on soccer in Schauss', and derby fandom in Vanhoutte's case. While Schauss adds a new angle to the poetics of soccer, Vanhoutte contributes to the discussion of what one might call a poetics of fandom.

A second, narrower but more widespread sense of poetics is that of the discipline engaged in the analysis and categorization of the constitutive elements of literary works and genres. The classical point of reference in this context is of course Aristotle's *Poetics* (2006). While Kilpatrick has already ventured to propose a poetics of soccer in light of the Aristotelian categories of *muthos*, *ethos*, *dianoia*, *lexis*, *melos*, and *opsis* elsewhere (Kilpatrick, 2010b), casting soccer games as performances analogous to those of drama, poetics in this literary, though not necessarily Aristotelian sense, is taken up in the present volume by Cyprian Piskurek in his discussion of fictional and fictionalized soccer managers that range from the depiction of the veteran manager in Michael Corrente's film *A Shot at Glory* (2000) and in the satirical comedy film *Mike Bassett: England Manager* (2001) to the fictionalization of esteemed managers such as Bill Shankly in David Peace's novel *Red or Dead* (2013) and the fictional manager as private eye in Philip Kerr's literary soccer trilogy *January Window* (2014), *Hand of God* (2015a), and *False Nine* (2015b). Piskurek's analysis of the figure of the soccer manager not only provides a counter-reading to Kilpatrick's interpretation of Peace in our volume. By means of discussing a range of examples, he also presents us with the first steps towards a poetics of the fictional soccer manager.

We could then say that investigations into the poetics of soccer contribute to an understanding of soccer as the product of a certain production process, defining and delimiting inherent

constitutive elements and relations. On the one hand, if one follows Kilpatrick in taking Aristotle's classic, which serves to carve out the constitutive elements of literature,[10] as a blueprint for a poetics of soccer, then actual soccer becomes truly poeticized. On the other hand, we have numerous examples of fictionalized soccer in soccer fiction.[11] On a meta-level, this seems to speak to an affinity between the fiction frame and the soccer frame, both of which allow for creativity, dynamism, and unpredictability, but also rely on sets of specific elements which combine to produce the respective whole.

Interestingly enough, Aristotelian *lexis* poses the greatest difficulty for Kilpatrick in his poetics of soccer. Indeed, he writes that "speech-acts aren't an essential aspect of the game, so one might reasonably conclude that the constituent element *lexis* is inapplicable" (2010b, 87, italics in original). He goes on to propose tactics as the true "language" of soccer, though this remains metaphorical and a mere analogy (as Kilpatrick himself admits; see also his essay in the present volume). Eva Lavric and Jasmin Steiner in their contribution to this volume, however, show that *lexis* in the sense of language form, is indeed a fundamental element of soccer as they zoom in on a host of rhetorical and linguistic strategies that players employ when communicating on the pitch. Their work builds on a previous collection of studies on *The Linguistics of Football* (Lavric et al., 2008). Seeing the pitch as a multilingual work place for the players and everyone involved in running a soccer team, Lavric and Steiner provide us with a survey of the diverse linguistic strategies players use to communicate with each other. Specifically intriguing in this context is their examination of multilingualism, as Lavric and Steiner point to the fact that in any multilingual work place the usual linguistic strategies sometimes fail with interactants thus having to find non-verbal, symbolic, and other innovative semiotic strategies to effectively communicate with each other on and off the pitch.

This brings us to our third concept, rhetoric. It is no coincidence that we arrived at this concept by means of a discussion of *lexis* in Aristotle's *Poetics*, as *lexis* is also one of the fundamental terms operative in his *Rhetoric*.[12] That the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* are closely connected is commonplace in scholarship. Some scholars have even argued that the *Rhetoric* constitutes rhetoric itself as a *poietic* discipline, concerned with the production of persuasive speech.[13] In this vein, both the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* are concerned with the artistic composition of a given work, with the difference between them boiling down to one of purpose. This is the line along which the two disciplines of poetics and rhetoric subsequently developed: In poetics, the purpose of the artistic composition lies in the creation of pleasure or enjoyment for the audience, whereas the purpose of rhetoric lies in the persuasion of an audience (Kennedy, 2001, p.13320). Poetics would then primarily be concerned with how the elements of a given text come together to produce a certain experience, and rhetoric with the effective use of language and argument for the sake of persuasion. In this sense, rhetoric denotes the "the systematic practice of persuasive communication strategies" (Ilie, 2006, p.574).

According to Aristotle, such persuasion can be achieved by appealing to the three means of persuasion, *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*: *Ethos* refers to the speaker's character, to what endows them with credibility and authenticity, *pathos* concerns the emotional effect the speaker has on the audience, and *logos* denotes the argument itself (Rapp, 2010; Murphy, 2006, p.579; Rapp,

2002, pp.355–366; Aristotle, 1991, I.2, II.1, II.20–22). But the section that is most important for our purposes here, the very section that contains a discussion of *lexis*, only begins when Aristotle turns his attention from content to form, or from argument to style in book three: It is not enough for a speaker to know *what* to say, but the speaker must also know *how* to say it (1991, III.1). This is indeed the aspect that many modern theories of rhetoric build on, including, for example, more pragmatic and semiotic approaches and what has become known as stylistics (Lotman, 2006; Toolan, 1998; Leech and Short, 1981). In the vein of this modern tradition, we understand rhetoric as the function of linguistic strategies in particular and larger semiotic and discursive strategies in general and their effect on a given audience. How is something talked about? What specific techniques are used in communicating certain contents and achieving certain effects? How and to which end is the audience affected?

There is a range of contexts with regard to soccer in which rhetoric in this sense comes into play, for instance the linguistic and semiotic strategies used to talk about the game and its players in the media, the broader public, and, ultimately, overall culture. Considering Kennedy's distinction between "a broader view of rhetoric as a persuasive tool of political speaking and discursive writing (…) [and] a narrow view of rhetoric as a linguistic or literary phenomenon, largely limited to the use of tropes and figures in written language" (2001, pp.13319–13320), the essays in this volume adhere less to the broader notion of a persuasive tool and more to the narrower understanding concerning the specific use of language, with the added caveat that they do not restrict themselves to written language. On the contrary, as the contribution by Thomas Messerli and Di Yu testifies to, rhetorical strategies are often multimodal in nature, combining purely linguistic elements with other elements such as the visual and the auditory. But if we substitute Kennedy's understanding of a broader view of rhetoric with that of larger, cultural semiotic strategies, and if we accept soccer as a cultural form of expression, then questions of style in soccer would indeed fall under the rubric of a rhetoric of soccer (in this sense, Kilpatrick's suggestion to understand tactics as the *lexis* of a poetics of soccer no longer seems merely metaphoric).[14] Availing themselves of such a broader notion, Michael O'Hara and Connell Vaughan in their essay in this volume present a historically informed discussion about the notion of style with respect to soccer in Ireland and its relation to the rhetoric of national politics. In other words, they link the rhetoric of Ireland soccer to the rhetoric of Irish politics, showing that the discourse on *how* the national team scores a goal and achieves success is intricately linked to the rhetoric of Irish independence, the Irish national state, and Irish national identity. Kennedy's narrower view on rhetoric, in turn, solicits questions such as: How is soccer talked and written about? What are the functions of specific rhetorical techniques when talking or writing about soccer, especially, but not exclusively in soccer media coverage? What role does language form actually play on the pitch, in the communication amongst players and, by extension, amongst players, coaches, and staff?

Apart from Lavric and Steiner, several more contributions to our volume take recourse to rhetoric in this sense. Blanka Blagojevic in her contribution presents a close-analysis of two soccer-themed travel narratives, investigating the function of the rhetorical strategies of *idealization* and *debasement* employed by the two authors Simon Kuper and Jonathan Wilson in order to depict the state of soccer in post-1989 Eastern Europe. By analyzing how soccer in

Eastern Europe is written about in the authors' travelogues Blagojevic also sheds light on British and Western European post-1989 discourses about Eastern Europe more generally.

Jan Chovanec's and Thomas Messerli and Di Yu's essays in this collection are devoted to the media rhetoric surrounding soccer, scrutinizing the function of specific rhetorical means with regard to soccer media coverage.[15] Chovanec focuses on the specific linguistic strategies used to report scandals zooming in on David Beckham's famous text sex affair as covered in online newspapers as a test case. Messerli and Yu are concerned with the rhetoric of soccer-related humor in social media, more specifically with multimodal strategies that are used to create and also react to humor on soccer-themed Twitter and Instagram accounts.

Minimally, these contributions show that *lexis*, that language form and style, indeed plays a crucial role in soccer, both in communication on and off the pitch. But we think they also emphasize that an analysis of soccer language and communication and what could be called a stylistics of soccer significantly enrich the somewhat more wide ranging discourses on the aesthetics and poetics of soccer. In the end and taken together, the contributions to our volume show that while they remain distinct areas of inquiry, the aesthetics, poetics, and rhetoric of soccer are nevertheless inextricably entwined.

References

A Shot at Glory. 2002. [Film]. Michael Corrente. dir. UK: Butcher's Run Films, Eagle Beach Productions.

Aristotle. 1991. *On rhetoric: A theory of civic discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Aristotle. 2006. *The* poetics *of Aristotle: Translation and commentary*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Barnouw, J. 1988. Feeling in enlightenment aesthetics. *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*. **18**, pp.323–342.

Bateman, A. 2009. *Cricket, literature and culture: Symbolising the nation, destabilising empire*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Baumgarten, A.G. 1954. *Reflections on poetry / Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Baumgarten, A.G. 2007. *Ästhetik [Aesthetica]*. Mirbach, D. ed. Hamburg: Meiner.

Best, D. 1978. *Philosophy and human movement*. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Borge, S. and McNamee, M. 2017. Football and philosophy. In: Hughson, J., Moore, K., Spaaji, R. and Maguire, J. eds. *The Routledge handbook of football studies*. London: Routledge, pp.245–254.

Briley, R., Schoenecke, M.K. and Carmichael, D.A. eds. 2008. *All stars & movie stars: Sports in film and history*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.

Edgar, A. 2013a. The aesthetics of sport. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*. **7**(1), pp.80–99.

Edgar, A. 2013b. The beauty of sport. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*. **7**(1), pp.100–120.

Edgar, A. 2015. Football and the poetics of space. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*. **9**(2), pp.153–165.

Elcombe, T.L. 2012. Sport, aesthetic experience, and art as the ideal embodied metaphor. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*. **39**(2), pp.201–217.

Erasmus, D. 2003. *The praise of Folly*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Farred, G. 2008. *Long distance love: A passion for football*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Feezell, R. 2006. *Sport, play and ethical reflection*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Feezell, R. 2010. A pluralist conception of play. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*. **37**(2), pp.147–165.

Fuller, L. ed. 2006. *Sport, rhetoric, and gender: Historical perspectives and media representations*. New York: Palgrave.

Gerhardt, C. 2014. *Appropriating live televised football through talk*. Leiden: Brill.

Gumbrecht, H.U. 2006. *In praise of athletic beauty*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Hegel, G.W.F. 1975. *Aesthetics: Lectures on fine art, 1835–1838*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Huggins, M. 2015. The visual in sport history: Approaches, methodologies and sources. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*. **32**(15), pp.1813–1830.

Huggins, M. and O'Mahony, M. 2011. Prologue: Extending study of the visual in the history of sport. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*. **28**(8-9), pp.1089–1104.

Hyland, D.A. 1990. *The philosophy of sport*. New York: Paragon.

Ilie, C. 2006. Rhetoric, classical. In: Brown, K. ed. *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Elsevier, pp.573–579.

Kennedy, G.A. 2001. Rhetoric. In: Baltes, P.B. ed. *International encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences*. Oxford: Pergamon, pp.13317–13323.

Kerr, P. 2014. *January window*. London: Head of Zeus.

Kerr, P. 2015a. *Hand of god*. London: Head of Zeus.

Kerr, P. 2015b. *False nine*. London: Head of Zeus.

Kilpatrick, D. 2010a. Nietzsche's arsenal. In: Richards, T. ed. *Soccer and philosophy: Beautiful thoughts on the beautiful game*. Chicago: Open Court, pp.37–46.

Kilpatrick, D. 2010b. Poetics and the beautiful game. *Aethlon: The Journal of Sport Literature*. **27**(1), pp.79–89.

König, J. 2005. *Athletics and literature in the Roman empire*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Kreft, L. 2012. Sport as a drama. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*. **39**(2), pp.219–234.

Kreft, L. 2014. Aesthetics of the beautiful game. *Soccer & Society*. **15**(3), pp.353–375.

Kreft, L. 2015. Aesthetic imagination in football. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*. **9**(2), pp.124–139.

Kretchmar, R.S. 1997. The philosophy of sport. In: Massengale, J.D. and Swanson, R.A. eds. *The history of exercise and sport science*. Champaign: Human Kinetics, pp.181–201.

Lacerda, T. and Mumford, S. 2010. The genius in art and in sport: A contribution to the investigation of aesthetics of sport. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*. **37**(2), pp.182–193.

Lavric, E., Pisek, G., Skinner, A. and Stadler, W. eds. 2008. *The linguistics of football*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr.

Leech, G. and Short, M.H. 1981. *Style in fiction: A linguistic introduction to English fictional prose*. London: Longman.

Lotman, M. 2006. Rhetoric: Semiotic approaches. In: Brown, K. ed. *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Elsevier, pp.582–589.

McGowan, L. 2017. Football and its fiction. In: Hughson, J., Moore, K., Spaaji, R. and Maguire, J. eds. *The Routledge handbook of football studies*. London: Routledge, pp.222–235.

Mike Bassett: England Manager. 2001. [Film]. Steve Barron. dir. UK: Artists Independent Productions, Film Council, Hallmark Entertainment.

Moller, D. 2014. The boring. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. **72**(2), pp.181–191.

Müller, T. 2007. *Football, language and linguistics: Time-critical utterances in unplanned spoken language, their structure and their relation to non-linguistic situations and events*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr.

Mumford, S. 2012. *Watching sport: Aesthetics, ethics, and emotion*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Murphy, J.J. 2006. Rhetoric: History. In: Brown, K. ed. *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Elsevier, pp.579–582.

Nietzsche, F. 1968. *The birth of tragedy.* In: Kaufman, W. ed. *The basic writings of Nietzsche*. New York: The Modern Library, pp.1–144.

Ngai, S. 2012. *Our aesthetic categories: Zany, cute, interesting*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Peace, D. 2013. *Red or dead*. London: Faber and Faber.

Platchias, D. 2003. Sport is art. *European Journal of Sport Science*. **3**(4), pp.1–18.

Potts, L.J. 1968. *Aristotle on the art of fiction: An English translation of Aristotle's* Poetics *with an introductory essay and explanatory notes*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Rapp, C. 2002. Einleitung. In: Aristoteles, *Rhetorik*. Rapp, C. ed. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, pp.167–383.

Rapp, C. 2010. Aristotle's rhetoric. In: Zalta, E.N. ed. *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. [Online]. Stanford: CSLI. [Accessed 5 October 2017]. Available from: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2010/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/

Ryall, E. 2015. Good games and penalty shoot-outs. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*. **9**(2), pp.205–213.

Saito, Y. 2015. Aesthetics of the everyday. In: Zalta, E.N. ed. *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. [Online]. Stanford: CSLI. [Accessed 5 October 2017]. Available from: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/aesthetics-of-everyday/

Tadié, A., Mangan, J.A. and Chaudhuri, S. eds. 2014. *Sport, literature, society: Cultural historical studies*. London: Routledge.

Toolan, M. 1998. *Language in literature: An introduction to stylistics*. London: Hodder Arnold.

Tuncel, Y. 2017. The aesthetic and ecstatic dimensions of soccer: Towards a philosophy of soccer. *Soccer & Society*. **18**(2-3), pp.181–187.

Vanhoutte, K.K.P. 2010. Playing the derby. In: Richards, T. ed. *Soccer and philosophy: Beautiful thoughts on the beautiful game*. Chicago: Open Court, pp.231–240.

Womack, M. 2003. *Sport as symbol: Images of the athlete in art, literature and song*. Jefferson: McFarland.

Wood, D. 2017. *Football and literature in South America*. London: Routledge.

---

[1] We would like to thank Philipp Schweighauser for his engaging, attentive, and critical feedback on an earlier version of this introduction. We are also grateful for the valuable input we received from the participants at Wake Forest University's Beautiful Game Workshop in July 2017.

[2] For an earlier contribution that rebuts this view, see David Best's highly influential monograph (1978). For a more recent paper defending the view, see the article by Dimitris Platchias (2003). Tim L. Elcombe (2012, pp.202–204) provides a brief historical overview of the debate.

[3] Again, Elcombe (2012, pp.204–206) provides a short and crisp overview of this discussion before presenting his own take on the issue.

[4] Andrew Edgar's and Elcombe's recent articles are pertinent here (Edgar, 2015; 2013a; 2013b; Elcombe, 2012). On the aesthetics of watching sport, see also the books by Stephen Mumford (2012) and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (2006), with the former providing a discussion in light of analytic philosophy and the latter working from a continental perspective. Teresa Lacerda and Stephen Mumford (2010) discuss the notion of genius in conjunction with that of creativity in relation to sport in their jointly authored essay on the topic. Lev Kreft provides an account of sport as dramatic spectacle (Kreft, 2012) and argues for the centrality of the imagination with respect to sport and, particularly, soccer (Kreft, 2015). For a sustained discussion of the notion of play in the context of sport see Randolph Feezell's essay and book (2010; 2006). That several of the essays cited in this introduction were actually published in two recent special issues on the aesthetics of sport and soccer in two of the leading journals in the field testifies to the reawakened interest in and the timeliness of the topic.

[5] Ryall draws and builds on an earlier essay on the issue (Ryall, 2015).

[6] Some recent exemplary publications include an edited volume on the cultural history of sport and literature (Tadié et al., 2015), a historically oriented collection of essays on sport and film (Briley et al., 2008), a book on cricket and literature (Bateman, 2009), a personal account about race, fandom, and soccer (Farred, 2008), a monograph on athletics and literature in the Roman Empire (König, 2005), an edited collection on sport, gender, and rhetoric (Fuller, 2006), a monograph on the portrayal of the athlete in art and literature (Womack, 2003), and a book on soccer and literature in South America (Wood, 2017). The recently diagnosed visual turn in sport history also belongs here (Huggins 2015; Huggins and O'Mahony, 2011).

[7] "Lower-level epistemology" and "science of sensuous cognition" are Barnouw's translations of Baumgarten's original Latin: "AESTHETICA (theoria liberalium artium, gnoseologia inferior, ars pulchre cogitandi, ars analogi rationis) est scientia cognitionis sensitivae" (Baumgarten, 2007, §1).

[8] Moller (2014) is keen on distinguishing the property of boringness from the psychological state of boredom.

[9] Vanhoutte revisits and builds on an earlier study on the derby in his contribution (Vanhoutte, 2010).

[10] While it is true that Aristotle himself only sought to describe the elements and effects of tragedy, his treatise is seen as providing the basis for drama and drama theory, for narrative and narrative theory, and, ultimately, for literature and literary theory at large. No doubt this is due to the fact that Aristotle singles out *muthos* (fable, plot) as the most important element in his classification. This also explains why L.J. Potts in his translation opted to render the *Poetics* under the title *Aristotle on the Art of Fiction* (Potts, 1968).

[11] For a recent overview on soccer fiction, see Lee McGowan's essay (2017).

[12] Aristotle actually refers back to his discussion of *lexis* in the *Poetics* at the end of the first chapter of book three of the *Rhetoric*. While the whole of book III, which deals with *lexis* in oratory, is relevant in this context, chapter 1 distinguishes the use of *lexis* in poetry or literature from that in oratory (Aristotle, 1991, III.1).

[13] Christof Rapp discusses this issue in his extensive introduction to his German translation of the *Rhetoric* (Rapp, 2002, p.170). See also his entry on the *Rhetoric* in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2010).

[14] In such a framework, the rhetoric of soccer would indeed form part of a more encompassing poetics of soccer.

[15] While these two contributions deal with two specific aspects of soccer media coverage, another interesting aspect concerns live commentary. Worth mentioning in this regard are the works of Torsten Müller (2007), who focuses on the respective moment an utterance is made in relation to the extra-linguistic event it is commenting on, and Cornelia Gerhardt (2014), who analyzes families' discourses about soccer while watching the FIFA World Cup on TV.