

# **Into the Wind:**

## **An Exploration of Australian Soccer Literature**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the genre of Australian soccer literature by way of a close textual analysis that draws on the inter-related literary theories and practices of genre and reflexivity. It contends that this marginal literature pertaining to a still relatively marginal sport might counter-intuitively provide an excellent framework for examining key aspects of Australia that are frequently missed in scholarly analyses, as well as popular discourses around what it is to be Australian. More specifically, this thesis argues that Australian soccer literature provides vital insights into the rich, complicated, intersecting, and continuously changing lives of the individuals and groups that make up Australia. In short this thesis demonstrates the important role played by Australian soccer writing and its contribution to Australian soccer culture. In addition, the thesis details how Australian soccer literature ties into, reveals, and complicates Australian notions of identity, ethnicity, and gender, among other aspects of Australian cultural life.

The thesis begins with a discursive overview of scholarly perspectives on sport and culture that gives a sense of what is at stake in writing about sport, paying particular attention to the frequent tensions and antipathies that exist between sport and literature. Then follows a literature review which situates sport and literature in global and Australian contexts, as well as analysing what constitutes Australian soccer literature, and how this has been categorised in the past. The ensuing methodology chapter defines Australian soccer literature, how it is collated, what is absent, and the difficulties of finding obscure materials. The methodology chapter also analyses the different writers who are included in this genre, including their soccer backgrounds, their motivations for including soccer or not including it. The bulk of the thesis then follows, with chapters four through eight analysing the ways in which ethnicity and gender are discussed in the various primary texts. Chapters four, five and six discuss the nuances and subtleties of ethnicity as they are explored in Australian soccer literature, with a particular focus on the depiction of Anglo-Celtic Australians, British-Australians, and those Australians not considered part of mainstream Australian identity. Chapters seven and eight consider matters of gender, focussing on the striking lack of direct participation by women in Australian soccer, and the ground-breaking and yet still often conservative world of girls and young women as depicted in Australian soccer literature.

## **Doctor of Philosophy Student Declaration**

I, Paul Mavroudis, declare that the PhD thesis entitled “Into the Wind: The Rediscovery of Australian Soccer Literature” is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

**Signature:**

**Date:** 8 January 2018

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This work is dedicated to the South Melbourne Hellas Soccer Club.

## **Glossary**

Football – an umbrella term for team sports which, to varying degrees, involve kicking a ball in order to score points; also the shorthand used by various codified versions of football when discussing themselves. See the “necessary preface” section for the confusion created when multiple codes of football inhabit the same cultural spaces.

Soccer – the code of football formally known as association football.

Young adult literature – works of literature written for, and marketed to, young adult audiences.

Australian soccer literature – creative works of literature which depict either in depth or in fleeting moments of: A) soccer as it is experienced in Australia, whether by Australian or non-Australian writers; B) soccer as it is experienced in countries other than Australia, as written by Australians.

## A Necessary Preface

For Johnny Warren

An Australian football (soccer) legend

– Deborah Abela (2005a, p. i)

It's the same game. It's just a name.

– Paloma Mendez (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer, 2007, p.)

In Australia, there are few more highly contested terms than the word “football”. Defining what is meant by “football” matters because football and its meanings are important. More than most nations, Australia has defined itself by its sporting prowess, as well as its desire to both watch sport and participate.<sup>1</sup> (Nicholson & Hess 2007, p. 28)

Depending on the contextual mix of class, ethnicity, geography and other social and cultural considerations, usage of the word “football” in Australia could apply to any one of Australian Rules football, rugby league, rugby union or soccer. Furthermore, usage

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<sup>1</sup>That being said, participation numbers and the nature of that participation across all sports and leisure activities should be viewed with a healthy dose of scepticism. Those numbers and even the notion of Australia as a sporting nation, are increasingly being used not for the sake of measuring how active Australians are, but rather directed towards efforts to leverage that interest for the commercial goals of various sporting bodies.



of the word “football” may be used to exclude one or all of the others from being considered as “football”. This causes problems in the lay sphere, where the need to create distinctions is often set against the desire to achieve or maintain cultural hegemony. But even those in the academic sphere run into the problem of football nomenclature, however inadvertently. For example, Richard Giulianotti states that:

Football is one of the great cultural institutions, like education and the mass media, which shapes and cements national identities, throughout the world.  
(Giulianotti 1999, p. 23)

Yet while Giulianotti writes with a global audience in mind – the assumption that “football” refers to Association football does not always parse in nations like Australia where that code has generally been referred to as “soccer”.<sup>2</sup>

What is considered to be the correct or common usage of the word “football” within Australia once depended largely on geography, and to a certain extent it still does. (Cashman 2010, p. 38) A key concept in understanding the divergences in Australian football culture lies in Ian Turner’s theory of the “Barassi line” – the purported geographical divide between those in Australia who follow Australian Rules football and those who follow rugby league. (Turner 1983, p. 290) Historically, those in the states of New South Wales and Queensland would most likely take “football” to mean rugby league, while residents of Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia would use the word “football” to refer to Australian Rules football. In the case

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<sup>2</sup> For more on the tensions between the global prestige of (Association) football and its more complicated status in Australia see (Kampmark 2017). As noted in the previous footnote however, how the popularity of the football codes is measured is a “science” whose methods have yet to be settled.

of rugby union, a game whose popularity is largely the preserve of the upper and upper-middle classes of Sydney and Brisbane, its relation to the football naming debates seldom figures as an important factor. (Hay 2006b, p. 168) For its part, while soccer is still the best known term in Australia for the game formally known as “Association football”, the game has gone by a variety of names – official, unofficial, and derogatory – throughout its Australian history, “Wogball” being the most well-known of these belittling terms.<sup>3</sup>

In recent years, Turner’s theory of Australian football geography has been increasingly seen as problematic. Scholars contest the validity of Turner’s assertion, as well as questioning the origins and spread of the various codes of football played by Australians.<sup>4</sup> (Hess & Nicholson 2007, pp. 43, 6) A less discussed problem with the “Barassi line” however is that it tends to marginalise, if not outright ignore, the cultural and geographic position of soccer in Australia. As Tara Brabazon observes, “Soccer moves inside and outside the boundaries of the nation”.<sup>5</sup> (1998, p. 56)

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<sup>3</sup> In Australia “wog” is a derogatory and often offensive term for a migrant or child of migrants from southern Europe and the Middle East. Buck Clifford Rosenberg notes for example that soccer in Australia “had long been termed ‘wogball’ and designated un-Australian, despite it being the most popular participatory football code in Australia”. (Rosenberg 2009, p. 246)

<sup>4</sup> However, Hunter Fajak and Stephen Frawley argue that the “Barassi line” still makes cultural sense, especially when looking at the contemporary television ratings and media landscapes for the Australian Football League and National Rugby League. (2013, p. 102)

<sup>5</sup> Malcolm MacLean and Russell Field use the “Barassi line” as a departure point for talking about the complex identities that disrupt notions of simple national types. (2014, p. 284) In a nation divided by a strict sectarianism within the terms of its dominant football codes, a concept such as the “Barassi line” conversely provided a solid theoretical platform for creating the sense of a “natural” state for this division. Soccer in Australia, because it exists outside the theoretical limitations and cultural assumptions of a “Barassi line” binary, seriously disrupts dominant national ideas about Australian sporting culture, as well as deeply embedded notions of federalism and state identities.

While soccer has never been the dominant code of football in any Australian state or territory, it has been arguably the second-most popular code of football across Australia as a whole. (Mavroudis, P 2013, p. 498)<sup>6</sup> The ignoring of soccer by scholars focused on the concept of the “Barassi line” has seen the limiting effects of this simplistic binary obscure the existence of soccer’s followers in Australia. Moreover, the existence of soccer and the capacity for its followers to undermine the social and cultural hegemonies of rugby league and Australian Rules are not often taken into account.

This has been further complicated by the rise of the kind of football fans who take an interest in more than one football code, casting aside some or all of the cultural prejudices that come from following one particular code.<sup>7</sup> It has also been complicated by the fact that the names of the top leagues of each code – such as the AFL (Australian Football League) for Australian Rules, or NRL (National Rugby League) for rugby league – have in some cases become the term by which some supporters identify the sport. This is especially the case in states or regions where a particular football code is not the dominant version of football in the local sporting culture.

The relatively recent change of soccer’s official name to *football* by the sport’s governing body in Australia, Football Federation Australia<sup>8</sup> (AAP 2004) has created further confusion. It has also provoked a sort of fervour among the governing bodies

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<sup>6</sup> Buck Clifford Rosenberg for instance notes that soccer is the most popular football code in Australia by participation. (2009, p. 246)

<sup>7</sup> Despite the decline of the “Barassi line” in both the lay and scholarly fields since its creation by Ian Turner, it still has a popular resonance. This is especially the case in the ways the various football codes are treated by print and broadcast media.

<sup>8</sup> Previously known as “Soccer Australia”.

of the other football codes, as well as their adherents in both the media and lay spheres, about who has the most legitimate claim to the word “football”. (Rosenberg 2009) For those with little interest in sport, or who hold an abject hostility to football whatever the code, these may come across as quaint or utterly pointless discussions. Yet the debates are indicative of the importance of football in Australian culture.

For the sake of clarity, this thesis will unapologetically employ the use of the term “soccer” as well as the use of names other than “football” for the other codes. As Joe Gorman explains about his decision to use the word “soccer” in *The Death and Life of Australian Soccer*:

I use the word “soccer” deliberately. Of all the things this book seeks to do, understanding the past is the most important. The lexical shift from soccer to football that occurred in 2004 might have brought us in line with the rest of the world, but it betrays our own history.<sup>9</sup> (2017, p. 6)

Likewise, the names of the various football competitions and organising bodies will not be used as de facto titles for the different football codes. The reader should be aware though, that within the primary and secondary texts discussed in this thesis, many different usages of the word “football” will occur, based upon the particular contexts of those works.

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<sup>9</sup> On the soccer vs football naming issue, the late soccer broadcaster Les Murray placed the onus of the matter onto external parties, claiming that soccer people always wanted to call their game “football”, as if soccer is a “slave” name with no dignity of its own. (2006, p. 277) I strongly disagree with Murray’s position on this matter.

While I wish that it were possible to refer to the various football codes discussed in this thesis by their distinct names, it will not always be possible to do this. In the case of soccer, this is in part due to the large chronological span of the extant works being analysed, which covers works going back about a hundred years. There is also the matter of the political and cultural motivations of the various writers, who are often as emotionally invested in the “naming debates” as any fan, often being football fans in their own right.

This thesis will also inevitably be seen through the prism of someone born and raised in the state of Victoria, and especially the city of Melbourne. As the birthplace and cultural centre of Australian Rules football, this creates its own lens for examining soccer in an Australian context. Rather than attempt to rise above the morass of differently lived experiences, and while seeking to be as even-handed as possible, I will not pretend that the prism in which I have grown up in does not exist.<sup>10</sup>

In summary, during the course of this thesis there will be inevitable slippage in the usage of the terms “football” and “soccer”. Rather than consider these slippages to constitute a cardinal academic sin against the consistent use of key terms, the reader should see those moments as existing within the context of the work as a whole, and the multi-faceted culture that it seeks to interrogate.

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<sup>10</sup> For further discussion on how this battle of rhetoric plays out among Melbourne sports fans, see (Rosenberg 2009, p. 251).

## Chapter 1: Everywhere But Nowhere (A Marginal Game Via a Marginal Field)

On one day in the week servants regained the dignity of human beings, and stood again on a level with their masters.

– Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (Pieper 1952, p. 54)

...by studying a people's ceremonies of leisure one may get closer to understanding them.

– Ken Inglis (Inglis 1999, p. 86)

A marginal and marginalised sport played and watched by marginal and marginalised people. Historically, this has been the manner in which Australian soccer has been viewed from both within and outside its constituency. Because of the stereotyped demographics which engage in soccer in Australia – the “sheilas, wogs and poofers” refrain made famous by the soccer commentator Johnny Warren<sup>11</sup> – soccer's place in Australian culture has seen it become “the shadow game of Australian sport”, to deploy the phrase coined by Ian Syson. (2012) Syson often goes further in describing what he sees as the marginalisation of soccer in Australia. In his article “Is Australian Soccer

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<sup>11</sup> Warren even made it the title of his autobiography. (Warren, J, Harper & Whittington 2002)

the Game That Never Happened?” Syson describes the game’s place in Australia’s cultural consciousness like this:

Australian soccer is a game on the edge, literally and metaphorically.

Australian soccer is a game on the edge of attention.

Soccer sits on the edge of history in Australia.

Australian soccer is a game on the edge of legitimacy. (2012)

This marginalisation is at the heart of understanding the place of soccer in Australian culture, as well as the people who participate in the game. When describing the problem from the point of view of ethnicity, Australian soccer’s most important marker of cultural marginality, Joe Gorman observed that:

Australian soccer’s great national question is whether immigrants and ethnic<sup>12</sup> communities should have the right to run their own affairs, rather than assimilating into pre-existing district clubs and institutions. For this reason, the game has always been pegged to debates around citizenship, identity and multiculturalism. Soccer in Australia is never just soccer. Soccer’s national question is Australia’s national question. (2017, p. 5)

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<sup>12</sup> The term “ethnic” is often used as a substitute for “race” in Australia. (Stratton 1998, p. 11)

While Gorman limits his inquiry to concepts of foreignness, his overall point – that if one wishes to understand Australia one should head to the seemingly marginal world of soccer – is a broadly applicable one.

The recent boom in the popularity of soccer in Australia is considered by some critics to be the first time that the increase in the game's popularity is independent of any concurrent effects of mass migration. (Hay 2011, p. 847) This phenomenon has opened up new avenues for exploring soccer's social place in Australia, its influence on Australian culture, and whether internal demographic changes are reflective of broader shifts in Australian culture. After having been dominated by the theme of migration for so long, Australian soccer scholars have recently branched out into several diverse areas, including: the social relationships between supporters, police and governing bodies; (Warren, I & Hay 2009) the topography of the sport; (Street 2013) the early history of the sport in Australia; (Syson 2013) explorations of women's involvement in the game; (Downes 2015) analysis of masculinity; (Carniel 2009) the relationship of Australian soccer to Asia; (Brawley 2012) and the cultural and financial implications of the sport's new found professionalism. (Lock, Darcy & Taylor 2009) Despite this recent increase in the diversity of topics being researched, the literary sphere, including soccer writing in general, remains neglected.

More specifically, those scholars exploring soccer in Australia have continued to neglect the even more marginal world of Australian soccer fiction, and literature more generally. Missed in this elision is the opportunity to use the broader marginality of soccer to interrogate Australian history and notions of Australian identity and life. This thesis will contend that the marginal literature pertaining to a still relatively marginal sport – Australian soccer – might counter-intuitively provide an excellent framework



for examining key aspects of Australia that are frequently missed in scholarly analyses, as well as popular discourses around what it is to be Australian. More specifically, this thesis will argue that Australian soccer literature provides vital insights into the rich, complicated, intersecting, and continuously changing lives of the individuals and groups that make up Australia.

The previous work undertaken in this area was largely exploratory in nature. The primary goal was to amass information about the extant works dealing with Australian soccer – assumed to be a tiny number – and work from there. In the course of that research however, it became apparent that works dealing with Australian soccer were far more prevalent than this writer and those before him had assumed.

That work however merely scratched the surface of what could have been achieved in discussing this field. The point of this thesis is to go beyond mere annotation of the available source materials. Annotation is a crucial step in the process of establishing the relevant works as a genre of writing in its own right, but also as a genre that is worth a critic's time in analysing and adapting to further use. Without annotated collections, genres such as sports-writing or more specific and specialised genres within that field of inquiry become that much more elusive, and prone to being considered less worthwhile. For a historically marginalised cultural pursuit such as soccer in Australia, these fleeting moments are noteworthy. Even the briefest mention of soccer in a work substantively or predominantly about other issues, at the very least acknowledge soccer's existence, along with the cultural framing of the sport within the text and by extension Australian culture.

In that sense, bibliographic works such as Tim Hogan's on Australian Rules football, (Hogan 2005, 2017) Peter Seddon's on soccer in the United Kingdom (1999) or the

AustLit database's cataloguing of works such as these are crucial phenomena. Annotated bibliographies however can only go so far in establishing meaning. They can proclaim on behalf of a nascent or hitherto undiscovered genre that it exists, but without closer readings to establish the context in which major works, individual extracts, and fragments exist, an annotated bibliography may come across as a monolith.

Important as annotated collections are to the historiography of sport and literature, the study of literature demands that we go further. One thing which annotation struggles with, no matter how comprehensive, is in registering those stray and fleeting passages in primary texts which while useful in identifying trends or cultural tics, are left out of annotated works because of their brevity and/or relative marginality in relation to the broader themes of the given text.<sup>13</sup>

As part of the largely dormant and undervalued field of study encompassing sport in Australian literature, the opportunity to write at length about soccer in Australian literature in particular provides the opportunity to satisfy two personal desires. The first is to bring more attention to the corpus of Australian soccer literature, and Australian sporting literatures as a whole. The second is to create a place for the discussion of Australian soccer as it appears in literature, alongside the discussion of more obvious commentary on the game contained in the news media, biographies, and broader histories. The broader argument is that in a self-declared sporting nation, there should

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<sup>13</sup> Such analysis also forces us to deal with what may be considered problematic texts, such as Paul Henderson's young adult novel *Macbeth, You Idiot!* (Henderson 2009). Its strangeness lies in making out as if soccer has been a long-standing tradition at an elite Australian private school.

be room for the creation and discussion of literary sporting materials alongside everything else, and that without such efforts our sporting discourses are incomplete.

This thesis is also fuelled in part by a certain modest insecurity on the part of the author. Can a love of sport be reconciled with a love of literature? While there is no literal barrier preventing someone from enjoying both, their combination is often difficult. Those who love sport and literature are encouraged to keep these two interests apart even in friendly company. In *The Death and Life of Australian Soccer*, the sports journalist and historian Joe Gorman described me in the following manner:

He was always an unusual kid. With his thick glasses and pale skin, he wasn't a typical 'wog boy' or Aussie. He studied literature at university, read voraciously, and became an avid contributor to the "bitter" versus "new dawn" debate, an incredibly niche online version of the "old soccer, new football" split. (2017, p. 317)

My soccer playing career was limited by my having glasses, and by the prejudices of those who had me stereotyped as an intellectual, and thus of no use to them on the sporting field. Even in more friendly environments, when I have sought to combine my two passions, or at the very least bring discussion of each into the domain of the other, the most common responses are confusion or boredom. This thesis seeks to explore the space where these two passions, Australian soccer and literature meet.

In a world where the presentation of news and entertainment, including sport, are in a constantly accelerated hyperbolic state – whetting our insatiable appetites for the “next big clash”, before reporting the aftermath and starting again before the dust has settled from the previous contest, let alone been understood – sporting literature offers the

opportunity for a necessary dose of respite. Creative writing on sport allows the reader to take their time in analysing and reflecting upon theoretical and imagined moments in time, especially when it performs elongated and reflective forms of interrogative analysis. While the obsession within the “real” world of sport is to pin down the specific and supposedly irrevocable truths as presented by results and statistics, literature provides other avenues of investigation. These include examining the general truths of sport, as well as hypothetical scenarios relating to sporting participants, and the social sphere that sport is a part of, along with the culture it creates and maintains.

This thesis is a literature thesis; its focus is on Australian literature which includes major, minor, and fleeting references to soccer, and likewise on texts from around the world which discuss Australian soccer. But this thesis is also informed by the field of cultural studies, which appreciates the complementary insights that can be made when using an interdisciplinary approach to research questions. Thus there are also references to historical, sociological, and demographic work, among others, which help set the collection and analysis of the literary works within a broader setting.

Not all the literature studied in this thesis is geared towards making overt attempts at rewriting the nation’s political and social identity through soccer. Those focused on the effects of multiculturalism may well fall more readily into that sphere of texts which seek make comment on notions of citizenship, belonging and the evolution of Australian culture. Others, more grounded in memoir and stories of individuals, may mostly reflect on an individual’s struggle with issues of belonging. Others still may include soccer as merely one of many incidental devices of narrative or setting in order to fill in the spaces of the characters’ lives. But all three of these groups, by virtue of

their engagement with an Australian soccer experience, add to the literature and scope of what Australian soccer literature has to say about the game's cultural status in Australia, and the ways in which that has changed. Elena Pavlides says of her own work that "even though this book is primarily situated in the area of literary studies, because of its mediated interaction with political and social discourse, it also has a foothold within cultural studies, Australian studies and cultural history." (2013, pp. 8-9) Because of Australian soccer's propensity to interact with so many fields simultaneously, while this thesis is primarily a literature thesis it also unavoidably becomes somewhat of an interdisciplinary project. No study of Australian soccer can avoid falling into this scheme.

A number of interrelated questions need to be asked before discussing the texts that constitute soccer literature. Namely, why are Australian literary texts that cover sport so marginal? And what does soccer literature offer scholars seeking to understand something of the culture and social relations of a nation? At issue here are matters of tensions between sporting cultures and the academy, the multi-layered politics of sport, and the relationship between sport and literature. This chapter will explore these questions and issues, and in so doing will set the scene for the literature review which follows in the second chapter. The aim here is not to resolve the place of sport in Australian life, but rather to take a discursive path through a variety of scholarly perspectives on sport and culture that gives a sense of what is at stake in writing about sport. More importantly, it begins the process of exploring how literature on Australian sport, and soccer in particular, can help us better understand Australian society and its dynamic cultures.

## Why sport?

There seems to be confusion and discomfort – sometimes both at once – about how important sport is in Australia. As a clue to part of what is disconcerting about the social and cultural place of sport, Paul Gillen makes the point that although it was making its way there, sport was not at the centre of culture when the Australian colonies were established. (1995, p. 413) Gillen argues (via a quotation from Jean-Francois Lyotard) that as sport has moved itself into the centre of things, so too has our conception of modernity become couched in the language of sport, competition, games, numbers, and results instead of dialogue. In other words, rather than being engaged with and critiqued as a contingent historical development (like say dancing or music), sport and its vocabulary has been naturalised into something that can seem monolithic, overwhelming, and, for many people, alienating.

Mainstream sporting culture itself, with its erroneous and over-extended notions of “tradition”, also plays a role in presenting its existence as the indelible and immovable norm that is somehow outside the realm of politics. Hence the common refrain from those seeking to obscure sport’s inherent political qualities is that “sport and politics do not mix”.<sup>14</sup> The result is also a paradoxical experience, seeing the trivial treated as serious and the serious as trivial. (Gruneau 1983, p. 20) Richard Gruneau notes in this paradox that there is often an omission of the fact that sport is highly structured, with rules and conventions that must be adhered to. (1983, p. 21) Such positioning ends up being closer to Jean-Marie Brohm’s argument that sport is the antithesis of play,

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<sup>14</sup> Eric Anderson argues that sport is a privileged part of western society that manages to avoid due scrutiny due to the belief that its existence provides a fundamental good to society. (2010, p. 1)

without liberation, but rather a figurative prison of time and constraint. (Gruneau 1983, p. 35)

Yet by making such assertions about sport, critics like Brohm run the risk of preventing ordinary people from having any sense of agency in their motivations for participating in sport. (Gruneau 1983, p. 37) Brohm's assertion that "only bourgeois sport exists" (1978, p. 40) signifies a broader idea of sport that on the surface seems hard to justify. Is a child practicing a sport really taking part in the will of a repressive cultural machine by forfeiting play for mechanical learning? (Brohm 1978, p. 41) By writing it in this way, does Brohm diagnose the "problem" completely via a middle-class aesthetic rather than a working-class one? Brohm acknowledges that sport is not a homogenous concept, and that small scale and large are not morally or practically equivalent. (1978, p. 103) In such a situation, both fictional and non-fictional literature which engages with sport can discuss the upper echelons and the lowest, surpassing mainstream histories and journalism whose emphasis still tends to be on elite sporting enterprise.

John Bale agrees with Brohm that sport promotes "dubious notions of fair play and patriotism", and that sport provides a form of social control. (2008, p. 2) But the question of where "play" ends and where "sport" begins is for some a diversion from more important issues.<sup>15</sup> Bale remarks that he has no real interest in adding to the definitions of what sport is, because it is a complex and confusing affair, despite "play" and "sport" being "philosophically, ideologically and fundamentally different". (2008, p. 1) In addition, the notion of the professional athlete "working at play" complicates

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<sup>15</sup> There is of course, much more that can be discussed in terms of play. See for example, the edited collection of MacLean, Russell, and Ryall (2015).

matters, as do notions of “seriousness”, in part because individual participants and spectators of professional sport will vary in applying their own individualised definitions and values in this matter.

Sporting contests and experiences that fail to reach a mass media, cultural and experiential edifice serve quite different purposes to sporting experiences which take place on a smaller and less elite scale. These smaller sporting events are by their nature more personal and more ordinary, providing a sort of democratic accessibility that does not necessarily exist in the professional sporting sphere. As Tara Brabazon argues, to “reduce sport to ‘mere’ consumption or globalization is to dismiss the political negotiations that are possible through language, bodies and behaviour”. (Brabazon 2006, p. 2)

Stephen Alomes contends that the cultural dominance in Australia of popular sports over both the arts and sciences fuels considerable resentment. (2001, p. 37) It is understandable that at least some resentment of sport’s cultural hegemony exists within “intellectual” fields of human endeavour, whose members feel that they are deprived of funds, attention and respect at the expense of brute physicality and cloddishness. Though that resentment may have valid bases, it does not diminish the importance of sport to understanding modern society. Among other things, “sport is a particularly useful site for examining the changing and complex interplay of race, nation, culture and identity in very public contexts”. (Taylor, Lock & Darcy 2009, p. 26)

Those who defend the value of sport and the idea that sport could even be a form of art, often find themselves seeking “intellectual” and “aesthetic” grounds on which to justify these opinions. (Neville Turner 1992, p. 164) In an emblematic example, the journalist and literary novelist Malcolm Knox argues:



Sport is as meaningful and worthy a field of endeavour as painting or music. In Australia, because sports have been so dominant in our culture, there's a real reaction against it in the community. The arts is all about being anti-sport. (2012, p. 126)

But Knox is also quick to remark that "Prejudice against sport is as silly as prejudice against the arts." (2012, p. 127)

The difficulty of discussing sport as a legitimate intellectual topic also exists in academia. Bernard Whimpress believes that academic snobbery is a reason for historians arriving tardily to sport.<sup>16</sup> (1992, p. 3) Jeffrey Hill asserts that although sports studies have successfully made their way into academia, there is still uncertainty, even from sports scholars, about how much social importance should be attributed to analysing sport, especially compared to other social phenomena. (2006, p. 13) As the sports historian Roy Hay observes:

Many authors have argued that sport is socially conservative and some of us have argued that it has very little social leverage compared with other forces or elements in society. Despite our impressive obsessions with sport, we are governed much more by employment, family, religion and other belief systems, and social status. (2006a, p. 73)

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<sup>16</sup> This lateness also provides a clue as to why journalism is so prominent in recording sports history – while other fields of inquiry remained disinterested, sporting journalists were there at the beginning of modern sport, and have maintained that close proximity ever since.

Richard Cashman accepts the notion that even some sports scholars believe that sport is ephemeral, and is only able to inhabit so-called “low” culture. (2002, p. 2) In part the acceptance of the ephemerality of sport is because writing about sport has often been seen as a practical affair. This idea of ephemerality contributes to the situation whereby sports journalists become the chief mediator between the sport and the public. (Booth 2005, p. 200) Hill argues that in this context, the study of autobiographies and novels – in other words, more literary efforts – have been seen as less relevant than news reporting. (2006, p. 17) Cricket writer Gideon Haigh notes another aspect of the problem: because sport is given its own section in newspapers, it is sectioned off from other aspects of life. (Case 2012)

Nevertheless, while sport and art may be separate fields of human endeavour, they overlap at the point where they become part of culture. (Cashman 2002, p. 3) People are aware of sport’s existence, even if they themselves hold no interest in it. As Dominic Malcolm observes, “people might not like sport, but they know what it is”. (2012, p. 3) Sport’s ubiquity is also undeniable:

Sport is a pervasive cultural form which is not only obvious in the vernacular landscape but also of importance economically and in terms of planning and land use change. (Bale 1994, p. 2)

In the case of the Australian experience of sport, the study of sport also provides an avenue into exploring suburbia, that part of the nation where most Australians live. Sport can be a leisure activity watched and participated in, but it can also create a distinct mark on the urban landscape. Sporting venues are more than just benign sites of athletic pursuit – they reflect a community’s ideology, culture, history, and aesthetics. (Bale 1994, pp. 12-3) These sites, as with other human constructs, are

designed to control, regulate and mediate the bounds of human expression. The fixed public nature of sporting sites lends itself perfectly to discussions of social coercion and conformity. That these sites, which exist in almost every Australian community, are largely ignored in Australian fiction reveals a blind-spot in our cultural consciousness. The existence and proliferation of sporting grounds, and people's proximity to them, are an important feature of the Australian landscape.

Sport also provides an opportunity for individuals and communities to engage in shared experiences. This is important in contexts where sport remains a constant, while other social, cultural and political forms are in a state of flux and evolution. (Nauright, Bale & Møller 2003) Sport is such an important aspect of Australian life, that to ignore literary contributions on sport is to ignore an important avenue of discourse. Every week – and not just on weekends – thousands of people participate in sport. Sporting participation and affiliation intersects with questions on the sovereignty of bodies, and the complex interactions that sport has with family life, gender, and ethnic identity.

Texts which frame the social challenges performed by protagonists and antagonists alike as being limited to the sport itself, perform a sort of self-deception; that sport is an apolitical construct, different and existing apart from wider society. In the case of soccer, this kind of analysis is even more important, as Australian soccer literature frequently discusses the lives of otherwise marginalised groups – such as people from non-English speaking backgrounds, female athletes and children, (Mavroudis, P 2013) – groups that form communities which exist both within a regionalist/nationalist context, but which also subvert it geographically.

Singling out *Australian* soccer and *Australian* reactions to soccer (such as Frank Hardy's musings on his experience of Soviet soccer in the 1950s) means that issues of geography also come into play. How does Australian soccer literature locate the game, physically, socially and historically? And how does that compare to the journalistic, historical (including biographical) and scholarly work on Australian soccer? Ken Goodwin, in his analysis of the nature of Australian literature, makes reference to the differences that emerging writers from migrant and Indigenous communities have made to the geographical and topographical understanding of Australia and its literature. (Goodwin 1986) That point of difference between geography and topography is also crucial when looking Australian soccer. Geographically, in the more metaphysical sense of finding and establishing soccer's broader social and cultural place in Australia. Topographically, in the sense of describing the physical locations and environments in which the game exists. In addition, the following passage by Goodwin could, with some poetic licence, easily encompass the plight of Australian soccer in its struggle to gain recognition against overwhelming odds:

Whatever its theme Australian literature in its characterisation and its own literary characters is in large measure a literature of persistence, endurance and repetition almost beyond endurance. (Goodwin 1986)

## **Sport and the arts**

Like other football codes, soccer is centred on the control of a defined physical space. This is especially true of codified forms of football, which provide strict parameters in

which the participants seek to achieve their goal of winning a match. Literature may seem to have no obvious end goal equivalent to the winning of a match and fewer fixed rules than those provided by football. Yet at a primal level literature is also a vehicle for the expression of the possibly innate desire to control space and demonstrate command of the form via praxis.

This desire to control space manifests itself in literature and sport in the physical realm – the control of a field, the mastering of ink and paper – but also in cultural, temporal and communal spaces. Sport seeks to conquer the cultural sphere of importance via its ubiquity – and in the Australian context, arguably already has. This ubiquity is achieved via relentless coverage in the news, as well as its imposing and tangible impact on physical landscapes, from the mighty stadiums constructed for its most important contests, to the large tracts of land given over to fields and stadiums directed towards more participatory forms of sport.

The competition for cultural relevance in the physical and cultural spheres between sport and literature (or the arts more broadly) has created a possibly symbiotic relationship. Sport's visible conquest of mainstream physical and cultural spaces has allowed the arts to stake out their own identity as the master of the inner world, a world which provides a sense of self-gratification as well as elitism. This in turn creates a separateness between the two fields that obscures even the possibility that they may share similarities. As Bale asserts: "Rather than seeing the *modern* sport archetype as theatre, it is sport *per se* which is theatrical." (1994, p. 85)

Bale's analysis nevertheless acknowledges the existence of these kinds of ambiguities created by the spatial particularities of modern sport. (1994, pp. 94-5) Of all the arts, it seems to be easiest to compare sport to theatre and the dramatic arts in that they

both share the conceits or frameworks of a limited theatrical space, a limited amount of actors confined to that space, and a narrative which begins at one point and which ends at another. Bale notes the difference between “sight” and “spectacle”, via his emphasis on theatre and sporting audiences’ engagement with what is being presented in front of them. (1994, p. 85)

Sport and theatre share spatial similarities – for example the emphasis on the stage as being geographically and conceptually separate from the audience. (Bale 1994, p. 88) Yet crowd interference in soccer (for example) demonstrates that those lines are artificial; they exist only when they do, and only because of the agreement of spectators not to breach the framework of that artifice. At any given moment the artifice can be broken, and the audience can become one with the stage in a more meaningful and direct way than merely cheering for one team or another.

A literary or dramatic understanding of the functions and representations of sporting performances is necessary to understanding the ways in which sport exists beyond surface level aspects such as match results. This includes the social meanings, the myths, the quasi-religious aspects, and the roles of the actors and audience. Literature about sport allows us to deal with the effect of post-modernity on sport. If the idea is that sport is no longer taken seriously, and that it is increasingly viewed through a post-modern, irony-laden lens, (Hughson, Inglis & Free 2005, p. 101) then it is possible that literature provides a useful way for people interested in sport to contend with these issues. This is because writers deal with the issues which emerge from sport with different aesthetic approaches, ranging from cloying sentimentality, to trenchant sincerity, to the drollest irony.

There is also a bodily aspect to sport and theatre that abstract theoretical analyses fail to take into account. (Morissette 2014, p. 383) While literary and theatrical analogies are not like for like, they share enough common ground in their ability and potential to offer new forms of interrogation into the nature of sport. For example, Stephen Mosher says that our society “forms its aesthetic ideas about sport through familiarity with theatre and literature”, (1988b, p. 57) while also claiming that literature is the best artistic medium for discussing sport, because both sport and art are invested in “the aesthetic function of telling a story”. (1988b, p. 57)

Western (and Australian) cultures venerate sport because it is an activity which is spontaneous, expresses ideas and ideals through action, with results that can be measured empirically. (Fotheringham 1992, p. 1) On the other hand, theatre is supposed to be artificial, contrived, relying on the verbal rather than action. Literature may be seen as possessing even more extreme versions of the aforementioned attributes because of the solitary nature of that pursuit. John Hughson, David Inglis, and Marcus Free note that “by its very nature, sport is about physical activity and human movement, and textual studies of culture do not adequately come to terms with the intrinsic dynamism of sport”. (2005, p. 2)

Richard Fotheringham points out that even as the two fields borrow linguistic and descriptive terms freely from each other (Fotheringham 1992, p. 3), in modern Western culture they are seen as diametrically opposed. The discourse seems to frame the coupling as “sport versus the arts” as opposed to “sport and the arts” or “sport and drama”. This has not always been the case. (Fotheringham 1992, p. 21) In the Anglo-Celtic world, sport (athleticism) and drama (performance) were often presented together, and presented to audiences who had an interest in both and presented by

patrons who felt likewise; in addition, the two fields saw this cooperation as mutually beneficial. (Fotheringham 1992, pp. 21, 3, 9-30)

In colonial Australia, smaller populations worked against the economic and social interests of segmenting audiences, and thus sport and drama had a mostly easy relationship. (Fotheringham 1992, p. 3) As the population has increased and the segmentation of different “markets” has grown to be more profitable, it has been easier for the economically and socially stronger sporting field to move away from being aligned with the arts. Yet these notions are not fixed; for instance Tony Ward notes that presently there is significant overlap between attendees and interest at varied sporting and cultural events. (2010, p. 51) Nevertheless, as Fotheringham observes, theatre may provide one of the few public forums where the Anglo-male hegemony in Australian culture can be challenged. With sport being such a core part of that hegemony, there is a logic to the sidelining of sport as a topic of dramatic interest.<sup>17</sup> (Fotheringham 1992, p. 207)

While this anti-sport sidelining gives a voice to people outside of the Anglo-male hegemony, it also reinforces the marginal place in the culture for those groups outside of it. Furthermore, such anti-sport attitudes create a cultural blind-spot which ignores sport and the effects sport has (both positive and negative) for women and people of non-English-speaking backgrounds. Similarly, this kind of anti-sport ideology also devalues the experiences of those people from outside the Anglo-male hegemony with an interest in sport. This creates its own miniaturised hegemonic framework, which is

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<sup>17</sup> Fotheringham also puts forward the idea of a cultural division between sport (male and physically oriented) and theatre (female and intellectuality oriented). (1992, p. 21)



counterproductive to the goal of giving those groups access to the discourses of the dominant culture. Yet whatever similarities they may have to each other, sport and art are not culturally equivalent. Neither are all sports equivalent to each other in terms of their cultural importance.

### **Why soccer?**

Part of the argument contained here is that soccer is more important to Australian culture than for which it has been given credit. Moreover, it has been largely ignored because the people who participate in it are considered less important. The experience of so many is missing because social and cultural commentators, including scholars who should know better, have frequently ignored soccer. When we look at Australian soccer literature we hear the voices of many different and marginal groups whose experiences and cultures have often been elided.

Soccer in Australia needs to be understood from the points of view of the people and communities who participate in it, and in the case of Australian soccer literature, the people who produce the work. While sporting clubs across the world are formed for a variety of social, cultural and political reasons, for those involved with soccer in Australia, there is often an unavoidable overlap of politics and culture, which often find soccer's followers at odds with the Australian mainstream:

There is no better place to confound any generalization about the relationships between minority groups and sport in society than the experience of such groups in Australian society in relation to the round ball code of football. (Hay & Guoth 2009, p. 823)

This is the strength of Australian soccer; as the typical outsider sport in Australian culture, analysis of its people, culture, and its attempts to fight against and acquiesce to the demands of the mainstream allows us to examine both the mainstream culture and that which exists outside of it. When this is done through the lens of Australian soccer literature, extra layers are added to the complexity of this experience. Soccer gets less attention from the mainstream than other sports because it is deemed an un-Australian game. When soccer does get attention, so much of it is framed in the terms of its strangeness. This thesis cannot buck that trend, because much of the material it looks at agrees with that assessment. It also cannot buck that trend, because of the fact that soccer *is* a strange game in Australia. What it is possible to do, is to re-centre soccer's participants, especially those who belong to ethnic minorities.

The production of sport is inseparable from those who produce its meanings. In *Sport in Australian Drama* Fotheringham demonstrates the fringe nature of both migrant Australians and of soccer when it comes to the literature of Australian sport. Fotheringham acknowledges there were few writers outside of the male Anglo-Australian hegemony in mainstream theatre (1992, p. 206). Furthermore, modern mainstream Australian theatre tends to neglect all sport. While discussing David Martin's *The Young Wife* and Richard Barrett's *The Heartbreak Kid*, Fotheringham sees in the latter text an echoing of the struggles that both soccer and ethnic Australians have faced in their quest to participate equally in Australian life (1992, p. 208). In this way, fiction also allows us to develop new insights into our sporting culture, as well as culture in general. As Alexis Tadié notes, while "sport studies have investigated the relationships between sport and society, education, gender class, etc.", viewing sport through its depiction in literature allows us to view sport as it exists in culture. (2012b, p. 1653)

John Hughson, David Inglis and Marcus Free refer to Hoggart's references to working class "sports of local interest", such as "darts, pigeon racing and bowls" being included in the sport pages alongside "football, cricket and horse racing", sports with a national prominence. (2005, p. 31) What impact or importance does this have then on soccer? If soccer is depicted as being a "minor" sport, even in eras when it is not minor, does this not undervalue that community's sporting interest in the ways that class specific interest may under or overvalued? For example, Hughson contends that the "football stadium has provided a public forum for the expression of the collective frustration arising from class relations." (2005, p. 33)

Australian soccer's ethnic dimension provides another nuance to this argument, because while the ethnic and migrant communities are treated collectively as the "other", they are treated like this despite the different classes included in this. Ethnicity becomes a class layer or caste of its own in Australian culture, one defined beyond such issues as material wealth, control of the means of production, or media influence, but rather through their overall proximity – or just as often lack thereof – to Australia's hegemonic cultural centre. Furthermore, women have also been a minority of those participating as players, though they have often been highly influential behind the scenes in many football clubs. (Hay & Guoth 2009, p. 824)

Dominic Malcolm notes the proximity of feminist critiques of sport to Marxist critiques of sport, especially insofar as the production of sport generally excludes women; that sport disproportionately allocates resources to male sport participants; and that women's unpaid domestic labour is a fundamental element of that exclusion and discrimination. (2012, pp. 70-1) Can sport ever play a genuine oppositional role, or is it always destined to reinforce conservative and counter-revolutionary values? Brohm

does not think that sport can be anything other than a reinforcer of conservative values, arguing that the increase in women playing “male” sports will not actually liberate women, but rather just reinforce the patriarchal ideological orientation of the system. (1978, p. 182) Jennifer Hargreaves, however, criticises Marxist theorists of sport, like Brohm, who deny those involved with sport any sense of autonomy or agency. (Hargreaves 1994, p. 17) Hargreaves goes on to discuss the limits of hegemonic control within sport, suggesting that even though there may be dominant groups and ideologies contained within sport, they are not the only extant forms of sporting organisation and cultural practice.. (1994, p. 22)

Malcolm observes that sport has been seen by some feminists as a means of liberation, with segregated, female-only sporting teams providing both benefits and drawbacks to female athletes. Women’s sports may take women away from the exaggerated forms of violence and aggression found in male sporting teams. They may also provide women with the opportunity to create a different cultural milieu. Jim McKay also notes that “genders are not mutually exhaustive and monolithic categories” and that some “feminine and masculine norms are hegemonic while others are subordinate”. (McKay 1991, p. 52) These categories are also part of a dynamic system of plural identities including race, age and class. (McKay 1991, p. 53) Yet this segregation serves to maintain the implied superiority of male team sports, and does little to change the negative aspects of male sporting cultures. (Anderson 2010, p. 123) Indeed, these kinds of ideologies presuppose that sporting cultures which include overt displays of aggression or competitiveness instead of cooperation are inherently male in character. As Hughson, Inglis and Free also observe:

The study of sport sees sport as a particularly masculine domain, at least within certain quarters and in certain sports, at least regarding Hoggart's work. Social realities or not, these kinds of discussions exclude women and their experiences. (2005, p. 34)

But how do you research and write about this when women are seldom the public face of a club, when their background work is all performed away from the centre or out of the limelight?

### **Sport and play**

The answer to that question lies at the heart of another genre, that of writings produced by members of the working class. A clue as to why some writers would feel the need to write about ostensibly trivial matters such as the fates of obscure Greek-Australian soccer clubs may lie in the following extract from Michael Ondaatje's novel *In the Skin of a Lion*:

It was not just the pleasure of skating. They could have done that during the day. This was against the night. The hard ice was so certain, they could leap in the air and crash down and it would hold them. Their lanterns replaced with new rushes which let them go further past boundaries, speed! romance! one man waltzing with his fire . . .

To the boy growing into his twelfth year, having lived all his life on that farm where day was work and night was rest, nothing would be the same. (1988, p. 22)

In this work, a boy named Patrick witnesses the pure and unfettered expression of emotion of hard-working loggers who are skating for reasons beyond a glib notion of leisure. Indeed, their skating in the dark reminds us of the fact that people are more than the sum of their ethnicities, working histories, education levels, gender, or any such notions. It is possible that the truest parts of themselves are those which are expressed outside of who they are considered to be during their working lives. Play is neither vocation nor work; rather, it is the thing we choose to do to express ourselves in our time of leisure. (Gruneau 1983, pp. 23-4) As the German Catholic philosopher Josef Pieper observed:

Culture depends for its very essence on leisure, and leisure, in its turn, is not possible unless it has a durable and consequently living cultus, with divine worship. (1952, p. 17)

While Pieper was mostly concerned with the opportunity for contemplation afforded within a religious context, it is possible to adapt his theory towards the opportunity to form communion (whether with humanity or nature) with that felt by many during their sporting endeavours, as spectators or participants.

Adapting Pieper's theories of leisure to a sporting context throws up some interesting questions. What of those whose sporting endeavours are work as well as leisure? If leisure allows people to be joyful to the extent that they forget where they are, losing themselves in the moment, is this then an individual experience rather than a collective one? Pieper seems to argue that it can be, indeed it is preferable when it is experienced collectively but what happens when there is work needed to be done in order to create the circumstances of that worship? In the example of soccer, at a low level people may perform such duties as marking lines, serving in the canteen, or

collecting gate money, as an expression of love for the game, even while their efforts enable only a select group of people to participate on the field as players.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, there are times when work is necessary in order for others to perform leisure. We must ask then whether a woman working in the role of a housewife or mother is doing so purely out of love or sacrifice, or out of a sense of duty to a partner. A plausible answer is that women can escape the matter of work via soccer so long as they are included as willing participants and not as co-opted adjuncts making male on-field participation possible.

When leisure becomes work, does its nature change? Does increased professionalism actually transform sport from a matter of leisure into work? That sentence seems to suggest that it is a self-evident fact – and yet many professional footballers enjoy their work. Perhaps only the training regimes are work, whereas the play itself is leisure? Are the people in the stands the only people at a game of professional football who are enjoying leisure?<sup>19</sup> Pieper rejects both a romantic, ethereal view of leisure, as well

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<sup>18</sup> It is possible to argue though that in these cases of sports fans volunteering and sacrificing their time to create the opportunity of play for others, that there is the establishment of a collective sense of leisure.

<sup>19</sup> Even while asking these somewhat open-ended questions, it is important to note that sport is sometimes a form of leisure, but not always. Sport, when included as a subset of “games”, is characterised as a “rule oriented activity” and a “goal oriented activity”, (Suits 2007) which can see sport set apart from other forms of leisure. Karl Spracklen however notes the difficulty in categorising what is and is not a sport, as well as noting the difficulty of categorising sport in relation to the concepts of games and leisure. (Spracklen 2011, pp. 28-9) In addition, questions of “seriousness” which arise in critical materials on sport, while manifest in direct and incidental ways in the various texts of Australian soccer literature which will be analysed in this thesis, are nevertheless largely beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice to say that the depictions of soccer in Australian soccer literature encompass alternately and/or simultaneously aspects of leisure, sport, games, and play. Most important in this thesis is the act of participating in soccer itself, not necessarily the particular mode of activity that participation in soccer falls under.

as the view that leisure should be a reward for work, that a Sunday or lunch break is reduced to a device by which someone can be called upon to work once more:

The liberal arts, then, include all forms of human activity which are an end in themselves; the servile arts are those which have an end beyond themselves, and more precisely an end which consists in a utilitarian result attainable to practice, a practicable result. (Pieper 1952, p. 34)

The various constitutions of play and work in sport have important consequences. It is entirely possible that players, as workers, merely become functionaries of an industrial system. In other words, there is a tension between the enjoyment of soccer or sport as an end in itself and those who drive (work) towards something else. Pieper goes on to ask, “can a man develop to the full as a functionary and a ‘worker’ and nothing else; can a full human existence be contained within an exclusively workaday existence?” (1952, p. 36) In this and in other portions of his essay Pieper is hinting towards the ability of people to express themselves freely and by extension, creatively, in ways that merely functional work will never or can never allow.

Hughson, Inglis and Free observe that “sport offers individuals an important means of individual expression”, even while their own interest lies more in the “collective experience of sport”. (2005, p. 3) Yet that approach is by its nature a restrictive one, ignoring the symbiotic relationships between individuals and collectives within sport. Team sports are experienced on both individual and collective levels, and it is impossible to separate one from the other without losing something intrinsic to the understanding of the whole. With particular regard for the primary literary materials examined in this thesis, the tension between individuals and collectives cannot be



ignored.<sup>20</sup> Australian soccer literature is well placed to examine the battle of individuals to exert their will within Australian soccer and its adjunct spheres of influence. Apart from the innate conformity of team sports, this includes the struggle against the dominant communities and social hierarchies within the game, and their proclivity to demand conformity.

### **What happens when people are excluded**

In nations where sport is a fixation, those who have no interest in sport or who actively reject sport are excluded from a key part of the national conversation. Persons excluded from sport (either as participants or spectators) are excluded both culturally and physically. McKay says “that sport both shapes and is shaped by relations of power among people who are members of class, gender and racial groups”. (1991, p. xi) He notes the belief of some Australians that even if Australian society is not egalitarian, sport allows people to transcend those inequalities. (1991, p. 2) He goes further, claiming that “sport is frequently cited as *the* exemplar of Australia’s purportedly egalitarian character”. (1991, p. 1)

Apart from being informed by the concept of hegemony, McKay’s analyses of sport also assert a level of reflexivity – as we analyse the way in which different hegemonic constructs affect sport, the nature of those constructs and effects on sport change. In this analysis McKay notes that pre-existing power structures act on sport, but that sport

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<sup>20</sup> As well as the tensions between individuals and other individuals, and between collectives and other collectives, along with the hierarchies that they exist in.

is also culturally powerful enough to also shape what is hegemonic. Rather than sports having a fixed meaning, or at least a narrow range of meanings, it is actually something which communicates a large variety of ideas to those who follow it. (Hill 2006, p. 15)

Sporting literatures allow us the opportunity to conceptualise the existence of marginal lives within mainstream ideas of sport, while also providing us the opportunity to examine the nature of that marginality. Sporting literature delves into the nuances and complexities of the often under-acknowledged experiences of ordinary people. Literature which includes sport reveals a deeper truth that people belong to more than just one social category, whether that category is class, ethnicity, or one of many ways of being male or female. Sporting literature shows that the common depiction of amorphous ethnic castes or broad gender experiences are an illusion. As Hay and Guoth note, “Analysis which stops at the level of national ethnic groups in Australia is seriously deficient.” (2009, p. 824)

Such limited points of view are antithetical to Australian life, and the complicated lives of the individuals and groups that make up Australian society. While Australian soccer literature should not automatically be used to make broad judgements about the motivations of any of Australian soccer’s constituencies,<sup>21</sup> we should not pre-emptively discount the value of using literary sources as a means of identifying social, historical or cultural trends within those demographics. As Francesco Ricatti and Matthew Klugman observe:

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<sup>21</sup> As opposed to the particular individuals being written about in any of the given examples of Australian soccer literature.

Sport can provide an illuminating lens for analysing the experience of migrants, because not only are sports sites of individual, regional, national and transnational identities, they can also facilitate social inclusion or, conversely, become sites of exclusion. (2013, p. 470)

Australian soccer literature can often rescue, or house, points of view or examples of behaviour that have been ignored by academic or media writing on the game's participants and spectators. Even in cases where literature's claims to historicity are questionable, the attitudes included in literary texts provide insights into the attitudes towards sport held by writers and the kinds of people they were writing about. As Supriya Chaudhuri asserts, "literature is not historical evidence, but it is material that should be of profound interest to the historian". (2012, p. 1817) For many characters in the literature being examined in this thesis, sport and culture are inexorably linked to the point of being symbiotic. Robert Lipsyte, in his introduction to the American edition of CLR James' cricket memoir *Beyond a Boundary*, notes that: "Sport is no sanctuary from the real world because sport is part of the real world, and the liberation and the oppression are inextricably bound." (James 1983, p. xii)

The segregationist nature of sport – gender against gender, race against race, and insider vs outsider, also runs counter to many progressive social initiatives addressing inequality. Even as traditional notions of gender and race relations are being reformed, sport often remains the final frontier, obsessed with discrimination and difference, and resilient to other forms of social progress. Critics of sport, whether they come from high culture (literature and the arts more generally), the left, or from conservative

viewpoints<sup>22</sup> often miss the importance of sport's embeddedness in everyday lives. The tendency of those people critical of sport to overlook sport's place in Australian lives leads to two extreme responses. The first response sees the creation of a privileged space for sport, withholding critiques that would be applied in other areas of public life. The second response dismisses the worth of sport entirely, neglecting its centrality to the lives of large parts of our culture. Either way, the public discourse suffers.

Scott Kretchmar says that "by isolating sport from other things that matter, we expose it to unfair scrutiny and the strong cultural biases that would elevate mind over body, intellectual education over physical education, and value-driven labors over unnecessary play." (Kretchmar 2017, p. 13) This refers to elite sport but also sport's embeddedness in space, and place, including suburbia, along with the dreams, fantasies and joys of people interested in sport. These meanings in and of sport are akin to the affective dimensions which are so crucial to literature. An analysis of social space destabilises the binary of place and space because place refers not merely to a specific location but also to the social relations that constitute it. (Lobo 2009, p. 98)

This thesis does not claim that sport or soccer performs an overall social good, nor is this thesis interested in judging sport's merits. Suffice to say that there are several different opinions on the matter, including on the ways in which such benefits – should they exist – are actually measured. (Hassan & Brown 2014, pp. 6-7) Australian soccer

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<sup>22</sup> Tatz and Booth echo McKay by asserting that sporting nationalists do not understand the "dynamic nature of communities" which contain people and sub-groups with different and diverse social and political affiliations. (2000, p. 167)

literature aimed at children and young adults, much in the same way as other sporting texts in Australia, tends to agree that sport is a force for social good. The emphasis is on socialisation, friendships, fitness and fun. Those texts aimed at an adult audience tend to be more ambivalent about the matter, but this also depends on the particular contexts of the novel and its own aims.

What this thesis will show are the ways in which literature on soccer can reveal the complexities of this and related subjects. As a work of wide-ranging scope, it will occasionally be prone to focusing less on issues that at times may seem integral to the discussion. In part this is because of what I consider to be the pioneering and novel aspects of the work, especially the way in which sports literatures have been ignored academically in Australia. What this thesis seeks to do is to make sure that literature on sport is actually considered, providing a launching pad for future research.

The centring of soccer as it appears in Australian literature, and on how Australian soccer appears in literature more broadly, is also one of the reasons why this thesis does not go into too much depth on certain matters. The thesis' focus on marginality means, for instance, that the depiction of overtly hegemonic experiences of soccer and sport – such as that experienced by naturally athletic and sporty boys – is put to one side, in order that the focus rests on marginal experiences.<sup>23</sup> The focus is on the almost essential marginality of the genre – in its creation, in its conception, in its characters, and in its embodiment in a game that must constantly fight for cultural relevance. Australian soccer literature exists largely outside of the control and concern

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<sup>23</sup> The depictions of such characters is, nevertheless a worthwhile pursuit in its own right.

of mainstream soccer media debates. Those writing within the genre have more freedom to discuss a broader range of issues, while also having a higher likelihood of being ignored. The focus on literary writers and fiction writers enables the discussion on sport to be widened.

### **Thesis structure**

Following this introduction, this thesis is arranged in a straightforward manner. The literature review in chapter two situates sport and literature in global and Australian contexts. It also includes analysis of the mutual antipathies of the sporting and literary worlds, as well as elaboration on the makeup of what constitutes Australian soccer literature, and how this has been categorised in the past.

The literature review is followed by a methodology chapter, which describes how this thesis seeks to define Australian soccer literature, how it is collated, what is missing/absent, and the difficulties of finding often obscure materials. The methodology chapter also analyses the different writers who are included in this genre, including their soccer backgrounds (if any), their motivations for including soccer or not including it. There is also discussion of the discursive exclusivity some Australian soccer fans want to build around the game. The bulk of the thesis then follows, with chapters four through eight analysing the ways in which ethnicity and gender are discussed in the various primary texts.

Chapters four, five and six discuss various aspects of ethnicity as they are explored in Australian soccer literature. Chapter four focuses on the depiction of Anglo-Celtic Australians in the primary texts, and the ways in which Australian soccer literature

displaces that demographic from its status as the hegemonic centre of Australian culture. Chapter five deals with British-Australians, exploring the ways in which soccer sees them fit (or not) within the parameters of Anglo-Celtic Australian culture. Chapter six looks at the depiction of Australians not considered part of mainstream Australian identity, in this case mostly migrants and descendants of migrants from continental Europe. That chapter also includes discussion of the evidence about historical trends in Australian soccer which can be elicited from the primary works.

Chapter seven moves on to discuss the issue of women's participation in Australian soccer, or rather the lack of direct participation, with most of the women in Australian soccer literature being involved in at best roles ancillary to men and children participating in the game. Chapter eight discusses both the ground-breaking and yet still often conservative world of girls and young women as depicted in Australian literature, as they challenge the supremacy of male hierarchies but also find themselves subsequently conforming to extant notions of masculinity and femininity.

The conclusion summarises what has come before, but it also reiterates the gaps which exist within the genre of Australian soccer literature. It also projects the hope that this thesis will lead to further and more diverse discussions not just on Australian soccer, but on sport as a whole as it relates to Australian literature and the arts.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review will discuss the ways in which different academic disciplines address – and more often fail to address – literary works dealing with sport. Focusing on the Anglophone world<sup>24</sup>, this chapter will discuss how the United States is at the forefront of work looking at the nexus of sport in literature, how the British are catching up, and how Australia lags well behind despite its self-description as a sporting-mad nation. There will also be discussion of how oftentimes the assumptions of those who rhetorically ask why there is a paucity of Australian literature dealing with sport creates a self-defeating scenario: being unaware of what sport literature exists in Australia, and not knowing how to look for sports literature which is assumed not to exist anyway, they assume there is little to be found and discussed.

This chapter will also look at the difficulties that various academic disciplines, such as history and sociology, have in reconciling the use of literature within their fields. It will also discuss the cultural frameworks which sustain silo mentalities when discussing the nexus between sport and literature, including the antipathy of the literati towards sport, as well as the antipathy of the sporting towards literature.

Finally, this chapter will assess the extant soccer writing produced in Australia as related to this thesis, both in terms of secondary materials (histories, biographies, analyses of the state of writing on Australian soccer), as well primary materials – in

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<sup>24</sup> For material outside the English-speaking world, see the work of David Wood on football literature in South America. (Wood 2017) Wood notes the lack of critical material relating to sport and literature in both Latin America and South America. (Wood 2017, p. 2) Wood also tackles the common assumption that there is far less football/sport literature than is often given credit for.



this case, a survey of the literary materials encompassing the genre of Australian soccer literature.

### **Sport, fiction, and the reticence of the academy**

Mike Huggins and Mike O'Mahony claim that the "visual representation of sport has remained firmly on the periphery of visual studies". (2012, p. 6) The depiction of sport in literature in literary studies is likewise a poor cousin. Though Doug Booth claims that sports historians have begun to take seriously items such as "paintings, lithographs, posters", (Huggins & O'Mahony 2012, p. 6) Bob Petersen makes the point that there is still a reluctance by sports historians to study what he calls "imaginative literature" dealing with sport. (2013, p. 1) Meanwhile Susan Bandy asserts that those sports historians who have used sport literature in their work have tended to use it augment their work rather than as a source material in its own right. (2016, p. 1579)

Booth notes that while some sports scholars have begun importing "literary and linguistic analysis" into their interrogation of sport, (Booth 2005, p. 19) this is based within a broad spectrum of opinions and approaches on the interaction of history and fiction. These range from approaches which see history and fiction as having complementary functions, to those which hold that the integration of fiction with history debases the latter. (Booth 2005, pp. 76-7) At the heart of the matter are the ontology of literature and the potential for fiction to disrupt traditional histories. (Booth 2005, p. 78)

The use of fiction by sports historians and historians in general draws a broad range of responses. For all historians, especially those reticent to concede any ground in this matter, at stake is the issue of control. Any ground ceded to the importance or usefulness of literature in writing history or towards historical debates creates the

possibility of disempowering rigid notions of history and scholarship. It is an argument that emphasises the meeting and crossover points of academic disciplines, and which sets as its enemy the silo mentality. It is also arguable that within this humanities-based reticence to tackle sport, the protection of disciplinary turf goes along with the preservation of a hard-won elitism. Sport being utterly common, because of both its ubiquity and its social status, it is beneath the literary scholar to engage with sport.

The compilation, annotation, study, and even awareness of sport's place in Australian literature lags well behind comparative Anglophone disciplines in the United States and the United Kingdom. This is true even within the scholarly field of Australian literature itself. This is despite arguments put forward by critics such as Robert Dixon that "Australian literary studies is neither pure nor autonomous: it exists in relation to a series of distinct though overlapping domains that together make up the total field of knowledge production in the humanities". (2004, p. 28)

In the Australian context, an apparently sports-mad country<sup>25</sup> has only meagre offerings available when it comes to analyses of sport literature. The chief resource in this field is Richard Fotheringham's *Sport in Australian Drama* (1992), now almost thirty years old. Despite some exceptions – including compendiums such as *The Best Ever Australian Sports Writing: A 200 Year Collection*, (Headon 2001) which includes more non-fiction than fiction or poetry, and Barry Andrews' seminal essay "The Willow

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<sup>25</sup> Whether the notion of Australia being a sports-mad country is true or merely a stereotype, it is a notion that holds cultural importance. (Hallinan & Hughson 2009, p. 1)

Tree and the Laurel” (1979) – Fotheringham’s work exists almost as disciplinary isolate.

By comparison, the overlap between sport and literature in an American context has a more substantial lineage, including its own specialist sports literature journal, *Aethlon*. Sports literature has also been covered in scholarly works such as Christian Messenger’s *Sport and the Spirit of Play in American Fiction* (1981) and Michael Oriard’s *Dreaming of Heroes* (1982) and *Reading Football* (1993). Messenger’s purpose in analysing sport in literature is based on the premise that:

The representative sports action in fiction flows from the author’s confidence in his subject and in his certainty that sport is where millions of Americans seek and gain knowledge of their own physical natures. Americans also gain insight into their own emotional and spiritual natures through expression of a varied play spirit that cannot always be bound by sport itself. (Messenger 1981, p. xi)

Oriard agrees with Messenger, affirming that “sport offers the writer the ideal microcosm for analysing and criticising these American characteristics”. (1982, p. 8) Sport even offers specific advantages to the writer of experimental fiction. No human activity is more thoroughly regulated and ordered than sport, so the author’s imagination can strain against this natural order of the material to produce a controlling tension. (Oriard 1982, p. 8) Michelle Nolan for example posits that sports literatures provide the opportunity of discussing the internal lives of athletes. (Nolan 2014, p. 5)

But even here there are conceptual and procedural obstacles to compiling and analysing sports literatures. In *Ball Tales: A Study of Baseball, Basketball and Football Fiction of the 1930s through 1960s*, Nolan discusses the way in which the studies of

sports literature as a category exist in isolation, with the history of sport literatures being at best a fragmented one. (Nolan 2014, p. 3) Because sports literatures have seldom been taken seriously as a valid area of study, a comprehensive study of sports literatures is difficult. In addition, because of the low and/or common nature of many of the works in which Nolan is interested – in particular pulp fiction – it can be difficult to attain academic validity for the study of these works. For sports pulps the problem is compounded by their being a poor cousin to their detective and science fiction counterparts. (Nolan 2014, p. 4) The net result is that as a standalone field of study, sports literature is both marginal and obscure – marginal culturally, and obscure in terms of its primary texts, often made up of disposable work such as pulp magazines. Anthony May has noted the “distinction made by some theorists between ‘high’ and ‘low’ forms of culture is unhelpful to anyone attempting to analyse cultural production.” (May 2016) These ideas fit in well with the notion of soccer’s marginal place in Australian culture, mirroring the marginal place of Australian soccer literature itself within the broader discourse of Australian soccer. It is also an acknowledgment that sport is widely considered to be a “low” pursuit. Thus the intended curatorial approach of this thesis seeks to be ecumenical, with loose regard for notions of high and low art

Like the Americans, the British also have texts which focus on such things as collating the representation of soccer in literature, film and related cultural mediums (Seddon 1999), or analysing anti-sport attitudes (Bale 2008). Of particular note is the work of Steve Redhead on the collection and analysis of British hooligan memoirs. Redhead discusses the birth and mainstreaming of the football hooligan memoir in Britain as a

genre of work in its own right.<sup>26</sup> (Redhead 2015, pp. 22-3) Redhead looks at the way English football hooligan memoirs act as a repository of male football fandom. (Redhead 2015, p. 23) But these memoirs also act as a working-class (Redhead 2015, p. 56) bulwark against both mainstream journalism covering hooliganism, but also against the views of sociologists (Redhead 2015, p. 1) and the emergence of works by members of bourgeois *soccerati*, such as Nick Hornby. (McGowan 2011, p. 37)

Nevertheless, Hill asserts that the study of sporting literature is stronger in the United States than it is in Britain. (2006, pp. 18-9) While Hill does not examine Australian work, at least some of the reasons he provides for the paucity of scholarly work on British sporting literatures are relevant to an Australian context. Among these are the prevalence of single subject specialisation – in other words, a faculty silo mentality<sup>27</sup> – as well as the difficulty some historians have in knowing how to write about and assess sporting literature. (Hill 2006, p. 20)

Historians, even those sympathetic to using literary sources in their research, are also generally loathe to treat literary texts as being on the same level of respectability as historical texts. A literary text may perform a reflective historical function – giving the reader a summary or sense of what a given time-period was like – but as a creative construct, for many historians literary and creative texts do not share the same scholarly validity. (Hill 2006, pp. 22-3) They do not treat historical texts as creative

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<sup>26</sup> The content and its compilation bears more than a surface level of similarity to Michelle Nolan's work on American sports pulps.

<sup>27</sup> Having said all of that, this thesis is not interested in settling these arguments. The study of Australian soccer literature – as much as this writer is of the belief that it is a valid area of study in its own right – can be of much use not only to historians, but also sociologists, demographers, gender theorists and numerous other academic disciplines. The use of sporting literature in non-literary fields may not be central to a particular area of research, but the use of it can provide nuance to arguments, as well as providing prompts for divergent research ideas.

works in their own right, and refuse to acknowledge the often blurred conceptual boundaries between historical and literary texts. Nor do they recognise that literary texts themselves both reflect and shape the ideas of their contemporary audiences. (Hill 2006, p. 25)

Robert Rinehart goes further, making the point that all histories are fiction, because they are all “created by someone”. (2010, p. 274) Literature however remains so far outside the realms of history that it bears almost no relation to it. And if sports historians consider their work as embodying a niche subset of history, where does that place literatures that are concerned with sport? Rinehart observes:

that scholars whose fundamental unit and terrain are the body and the realm of sensory knowledge and understandings, values and affect, should be in the vanguard of exploratory work where exploration into and dissemination of value and affect are experimental—utilizing methods and lenses such as fiction or poetry. But, with a few exceptions, we really aren’t doing this. This is not simply a way or representation; it is also a worldview that captures a manner of thinking, a strategic creativity, a poetic sensibility. (Rinehart 2010, p. 185)

Rinehart goes on to note that the academic field itself (in his case sociology) limits itself to such clinical, definite procedures that it marginalises other modes of thought and analysis.<sup>28</sup> (2010, p. 186) But neither should literature on sport be limited only to

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<sup>28</sup> Alan Bairner notes the cautious recent approaches of historians of sport towards employing literature in their work have yet to be made by sociologists. (2015, pp. 1-2) The fact that novels are not “empirically” true is beside the point; Bairner argues that they could be true, and that is where the value of their insights could be of use to sociologists, along with literature’s ability to provide hitherto unconsidered research trajectories. (2015, p. 12)

a documentary role; (Chaudhuri 2012, p. 1817) its ability to interrogate sport's place in culture should be cast as a core strength. Literature does not act solely as an instrument of record with regards to sport. It also contributes to the understanding of sport, playing an active role in shaping our production of sport. (Smith, SR 2015, p. 1832) It offers a form of liberation from mainstream and codified ways of thinking about soccer in Australia. At its best, Australian soccer literature may be able to provide the Australian game with the means of being comfortably itself that often eludes it in the public sphere.

Hill argues that the potential exists for literary texts to be used as historical documents, not only in a passive sense,<sup>29</sup> but in an active one as well in that they can produce meanings for their contemporary audiences as well as those of future generations. (Hill 2006, pp. 26-7) Hill goes on to observe the importance of:

seeing the novel as a cultural artefact that is itself capable of producing “reality” in the same way as other historical evidence. It is endowed with an *ideological* function in the sense that the novel contains meanings that contribute to its readers’ understanding of society and their own place in it. (2006, p. 27)

As an example of this, W. F. Mandle argues that the repetition of tropes, settings and formulas in the horse racing novels of the Australian writer Nat Gould, provide valuable material for historians. (1988, p. 11) Mandle further notes of Gould's work that “it is not

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<sup>29</sup> In the sense that literary texts take the form of passive cultural products of their time.

only for their picture of racing that we can use the novels. A whole society formed a backdrop to his horse-dramas". (1988, p. 18)

Finding sport literature in Australia is a cause made more difficult when even those looking for it make careless assumptions about what does and does not exist. For instance David Headon, who has compiled compendiums of Australian sports-writing, claims that while "a small number of number of Australian sports do have a solid creative literature (horse-racing, cricket, Australian Rules, Olympic endeavour and perhaps Rugby and Rugby League) the vast majority do not". (2001, p. xiii) These are attitudes repeated through the years, often with a lamenting tone. Barnaby Smith asks why we are "waiting for the first great Australian sporting novel to be written," contending that "Australia lacks a tradition of novels with sport as a theme". Where they do exist, Smith says there is "nothing like their prevalence in British and particularly American literature, and strikingly few considering how ingrained sport is in our national discourse and collective psyche".<sup>30</sup> (Smith, B 2015)

It is an assumption however which has a long legacy itself within Australian culture. The *Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature* mentions sport only twice, once in Richard Fotheringham's contributor biography (Webby 2000, p. x), and once when noting the lack of a poet laureate. (McCooley 2000, p. 169) T. Inglis Moore says that sport "is a dominant interest of the Australian people, but its expression in literature is negligible". (1971, p. 17) Further disadvantaging sporting literature's claims to "seriousness" are its association with young readers; in the most extreme of these

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<sup>30</sup> A notable exception would be Frank Hardy's novel *Power Without Glory*, which includes copious references to various sports and their centrality to Melbourne's social, business and political cultures.



cases, the value of sporting literatures are reduced to the function of a remedial tool for struggling or disinterested readers, especially boys. (Hardy, K 2014) Similarly the literary merits of sports novels targeted to the young adult market may be dismissed in equal measure by the comment that “it is only a sports book” or “that it is a good book despite being about sport”. (Crowe 2001, p. 131)

Critical texts dealing specifically with Australian soccer literature are few and far between. Roy Hay and Bill Murray make brief allusions to that field in their “State of Play” article of 2006 as part of *The World Game Downunder* collection of articles, but make just one reference to an Australian soccer literature text, David Martin’s novel *The Young Wife* (2006). In the same collection, Nick Guoth’s analysis of Australian soccer writing also neglects to include literature as part of the field of Australian soccer writing. While Guoth’s emphasis on the hard work put in by amateur soccer writers in their roles as historians, statisticians, reporters and commenters is laudable, the omission of literature from that analysis leaves a gap in the relevant field of knowledge.

When multicultural theory meets literature, and is used to analyse soccer, this combination is able to reveal how the practice of multiculturalism – a loaded term full of diverse meanings and applications – is played out in practice in Australia. Despite its usefulness as a term, “multiculturalism” is also an unsatisfactory one, veering as it does between different models. These include: *pluralist* models, where multiple ethnic cultures exist side by side, with no dominant central culture; *assimilationist* models, where different ethnic groups may maintain their own cultures, so long as they do not disrupt the hegemonic or dominant culture; *active*, where displays of ethnic diversity are encouraged, possibly by the state; and *passive*, where the intention is that marginal ethnic groups integrate into the dominant central culture.

Tracy Taylor, Daniel Lock and Simon Darcy observe that:

Historically, visible minority ethnic communities in Australia were subject to widespread systemic discrimination under the banner of government policies promoting cultural purity, assimilation, integration and even multiculturalism. (Taylor, Lock & Darcy 2009, p. 25)

This is an acknowledgment of the systemic nature of discrimination against ethnic minorities in Australian culture, even in cases where the authorities believed that they were promoting diversity. It is worth noting that one of the premises of this thesis is that Australian soccer literature is able to show the ways in which these normally marginal communities find ways of discriminating against other ethnic groups, or non-conformist members of their own group. Multiculturalism then is also a problematic term because who is “ethnic” is always in flux. It also differs from year to year, and place to place.

Michele Lobo refers to the processes where we come to use the term “ethnicity”, as one which is a development of former categorisations such as “race” or “tribe”. (Lobo 2009, p. 75) While an imperfect categorical structure, ethnicity is at least more democratic if one accepts the premise that it includes not only definition and classification from outsiders, but also a measure of self-description from the relevant ethnic group. Such a framework provides at least the veneer of negotiation about what constitutes a particular ethnicity’s boundaries.

Lobo refers to the Weberian process whereby rather than ethnicity merely being a subset of class interactions, ethnicity and class interact in such a way to create variable, moving boundaries. (Lobo 2009, p. 78) This is important because one of

Australian soccer literature's strengths is that it shows the world of the migrant in Australian society as containing its own structures of class, gender and other divisions, which exist alongside and parallel to those of mainstream Anglo-Australia.

Inevitably, it comes down to the question of "visible minorities":

this chain of signification around difference as modernity and European civilization has, in the Australian context, allowed the Anglo-Celtic descendants of the settler colonizers to construct their English ethnicity as European modernity and civilization against the differences not only of the indigenous peoples and also those in the surrounding Asia-Pacific but, as well, and paradoxically, those "multicultural others" many of whom in the wake of post-war migration came precisely from what is traditionally cited as continental Europe or the West. Those NESB (non-English speaking background) Europeans are situated in this relay as being outside European modernity and part of subaltern subjects who remain in need of enlightenment and civilization. (Thompson 1999, p. 10)

Asserting Australian soccer's multicultural character therefore in such a manner as to reduce it to a niche "ethnic" spectacle or pastime, neglects the experience of those of a British or Irish heritage. For Sneja Gunew, if:

the designations "ethnic" or "multicultural" are to have any real intellectual purchase they would need to include the specific cultural traditions of those whose ethnicity currently remains invisible, that is, the English (including the Welsh, Scots, etc.) and the Irish. (1994, p. xii)

This thesis hopes rectify that discrepancy, by reasserting the “ethnic” character of British migrants to Australia, alongside a similar reassertion of ethnicity for Anglo-Celtic Australians who have otherwise subsumed or lost their ethnic identity due to being the majority ethnic group in Australia. It is a recognition that Anglo or British identities, as they exist in Australia, are not uniform. (Gunew 1994, p. 47)

This reassertion of suppressed ethnicities (Thompson 1999, p. 11) is also important in Australian soccer historiographies and commentary, which often restrict the construct of ethnicity to people of non-Anglo backgrounds. When discussing the place of multiculturalism in Australia, it is important also to include the process of the excising of Britishness from the Australian idea of nationhood, and the impact that had in particular on white Anglo-Celtic Australians of British descent. Curran and Ward describe this as, “the tension between a consciousness of a nation’s *origins* on the one hand, and its ever changing *identity* on the other”. (2010, p. 231)

Located outside this study of Australian soccer literature are the works of writers writing about soccer in languages other than English, which largely exist outside the scope of such studies. This is in part because the languages themselves will eventually cease to be spoken and read by those affiliated to those languages. As English remains the *lingua franca* of Australian culture and commerce, and with the children and eventually grandchildren of non-Anglo migrants assimilating and having no need for their linguistic inheritance, the works of writers which have been produced in languages other than English are destined to become even more obscure. By not being represented in their own words or languages, people of non-English speaking backgrounds become disembodied from their depictions.

This is not because these works have an innate lack of relevance or ability to provide insight into Australian soccer culture; on the contrary, these works have great potential in revealing subaltern experiences. Apart from the persistent monolingual nature of Australian literary cultures, the home countries from which these languages and cultures have come will become less interested in the fates of the diasporic communities which they have spawned. Those who stayed behind cannot relate to the world the migrant writer has ended up in, while those whom the diaspora creates in turn have little use and even less access to the keys (in the form of suitable language skills) to unlock the meanings of those writings.<sup>31</sup>

This is a problem on several fronts. Most notably, it lies in the importance of scholars being able to access and analyse non-English language creative works in Australia, providing insights into the lives of migrants, but also the development of languages away from places where they hold official status.<sup>32</sup> In relation to the study of non-English languages and the people who spoke and wrote in them, Deborah Chellini observes that local, Australian adaptations of non-English languages differ from “official” languages on several levels. This includes the absorption and adaptation of English words independently of how this may occur in the “home country”; the varying literacy levels of a writer of a non-English language migrant background; the class of

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<sup>31</sup> This already exists as a problem in another form. In many of the stories about “ethnics” in Australian soccer literature, very little “ethnic” or non-English parlance is used. At times one assumes the conversations between certain characters in certain situations are taking place in a language other than English, but one can never be sure.

<sup>32</sup> The following chapter on the thesis’ methodology includes further discussion of the difficulties in sourcing non-English materials in this field.

said writer; the environment; and dialect issues associated with these matters. (Chellini 1996, pp. 87-8)<sup>33</sup>

Even as interest in sport and multiculturalism became part of the mainstream of academic discourse, soccer often remained on the edges of those discussions, where it was considered at all. Murray and Hay are particularly critical in their overview of the absence of soccer in many early discussions of multiculturalism. (2006, p. 171) Even now, soccer has difficulty in being included in the scholarly conversation around the makeup of the Australian national character. For example, in his collection of papers *Sport in Australian National Identity*, (2010) Tony Ward refers to sculling, swimming, tennis, league, union, yachting, rules, bowls, and cricket, but omits soccer.

Equally, scholarly discussions on soccer in Australia perhaps reached the stage where the issues of ethnicity and multiculturalism became too dominant – especially in the way soccer historians examined the game’s past and present issues. This pushed other possible areas of analysis of soccer toward the academic margins. Multiculturalism, as a state policy, is not the same as multiculturalism as it is played out on the ground level. Jon Stratton makes the point that ordinary people do not merely play out these cultural battles in mimicry of official government policy. (Stratton 1998, p. 36) He also notes that, unlike the silo mentality of government departments or cultural theorists who separate ideas such as ethnicity from notions of gender and class, these notions intersect with and influence each other. (Stratton 1998, p. 36)

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<sup>33</sup> Though Chellini’s main interest in her paper is Italian-Australian writing, her arguments can be adapted to any non-English speaking migrant group producing writing or language in Australia.

## The antipathy of the literati toward sport

Patrick White and I never had a lot in common but one thing we had in common

– he said “sport has addled the Australian consciousness” and I think it has.

– Paul Keating (Hirst 2007, p. 103)

Sport in Australia faces a backlash from some in the Australian intelligentsia who “lament sport’s place in the national psyche at the expense of more cultured pursuits”. (Toohey & Taylor 2009, p. 2) David Headon notes that sport in Australia has not always elicited praise from the literary community. (Headon 1991, p. 79)<sup>34</sup> An example of the former can be seen in the poem “At a School Athletics Day” by the major Australian writer David Malouf. (1970) Malouf’s narrator laments the fact that high school students are wasting time throwing javelins instead of discussing *Hamlet*. Fotheringham suggests that the contemporary discourse of which Malouf was a part saw sport and theatre as irreconcilable pursuits, even though both areas borrowed linguistic elements from each other (1992, p. 1) Fotheringham asserts that the roots of that mentality go back at least 100 years in Australia, quoting a passage from a poem by HCJ Lingham:

Australian natives are too much inclined

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<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, Headon quotes a Henry Lawson passage as supporting evidence of such attitudes. (Headon 1991, p. 80) Tony Ward does the same, but with a different Lawson passage, which illustrates the point that even those members of the literary community like Lawson, who had an affinity for the lower classes, could be frustrated by their obsession with sport.

To honour muscle at the expense of mind (1992, p. 2)

It is a sentiment apparent in other examples of Australian literature. In the following passage from her debut novel *Monkey Grip*, Helen Garner finds a clear means of delineating the worlds of the majority of the working class and their intellectual (albeit also working class) counterparts:

We got off the bus in Melbourne at 6 o' clock on a Saturday evening. Cars waving blue and white streamers were cruising down Victoria Street as we walked up it carrying our two string bags.

“What is it?” asked Gracie, bewildered.

I stared about me in confusion, still slow from the orchard.

“You fuckin' bewdy!” bellowed a drunk in a t-shirt, leaning out of passing car and pointing at my blue and white striped jumper.

“They are people who believe in *football*”, said Gracie with disdain. “And you have got on, one of those – what is it? – Richmond jumpers”. (2009, p. 146)

The cutting joke in this passage is twofold. First, the narrator is wearing a jumper with blue and white stripes, the colours of the North Melbourne Football Club, not the Richmond Football Club. Second, the disdain for Melbourne's sporting culture is placed into the mouth of a six-year-old child, rather than the mouth of an adult. However precocious the child may be, it is unreasonable to expect that child to make such a cutting comment on Melbourne's fixation with Australian Rules football. While



the Australian cultural environment helps nurture such ideas, intellectualist anti-sport sentiments have their own independent, global histories.

Notable among these intellectuals is the Italian cultural critic and semiotician Umberto Eco, whose varied thoughts on soccer were collected into a single collection by Peter Pericles Trifonas. (2001) Trifonas believes that a cultural critic such as Eco is useful because he is willing to move beyond the boundaries that “serious intellectuals”<sup>35</sup> have set up between academic life and public life. (2001, pp. 12-3) According to Eco, sport is entropic. (Trifonas 2001, p. 44) It follows that sport creates a static, controlled, centralised form of alleged social non-conformism, creating no product except for the hypothetical three points. Sport has become an escape (even if illusory) which is made “necessary” as a break from the crushing routine of work under late capitalism.

Eco further asserts that the intermediary in creating this form of adherence to an entropic form of “rebellion” is the sports media, which controls the way the message is presented, while also reinforcing the primacy of the role of sport in society. (Trifonas 2001, pp. 57-8) Eco diagnoses the problem of the intellectual and the sport lover existing in two different discursive moments:

I don't like the football fan because he has a strange defect; he cannot understand why you are not a fan yourself, and he insists on talking to you as if you were. (Trifonas 2001, p. 45)

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<sup>35</sup> Trifonas' term.

The sports fan and the anti-fan are members of two different linguistic or semiotic species which cannot communicate together. This is illustrated by Eco's hypothetical discussion between a fan and anti-fan:

“So what about Vialli, eh?”

“Sorry, I must have missed that.”

“But you're going to watch the game tonight, aren't you?”

“No, I have to work on Book Z of the Metaphysics, you know? The Stagirite.”

“Okay, you watch it and see if I'm right or not. I say Van Basten might be the new Maradona. What do you think? But I'd keep an eye on Aldaiz, all the same.”

(Trifonas 2001, p. 46)<sup>36</sup>

That visible signs of movement, whether through direct involvement as a participant or spectatorship, are able to transcend linguistic barriers could be another reason some intellectuals feel threatened by sport.<sup>37</sup> Sport's avoidance of language gives it a relative immediacy, whereas some intellectuals revel in obtuseness. It could also be that sport is better at borrowing linguistic and semiotic elements from literature than literature is able to borrow from sport. Sport is therefore more effective at creating and

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<sup>36</sup> Despite his feigned ignorance and/or disinterest in football, Eco's eye for detail means that he gets the details of his hypothetical discussion (such as the comparison between Van Basten and Maradona) mostly right.

<sup>37</sup> Simon Castles has noted, that for “the novelist who follows the old dictum ‘write what you know’, elite-level sport is not often top of the list. The portrait of the young artist often finds him or her in the library or sitting dreamily under a tree, rather than at the wicket wielding a Slazenger.” (2015, p. 176)

practicing myth, narrative, storytelling, and providing moral lessons. If that is the case, then what is literature to do with itself?

A more straightforward analysis of why antipathy towards sport may exist, even among sport-loving intellectuals, can be found in this passage from an online review on John Bale's *Anti-Sport Sentiments in Literature: Batting for the Opposition*:

There is a certain irony, I find, being totally dependent on sport for my living – I teach sports studies, I research sports history, I recognise sport as one of the basic organising practices of contemporary society, as a major industry and hobby activity, as economically important, and as a fundamental element of many people's lives – and I don't like it: in short, I am deeply ambivalent about the source of my means of existence. Sport in the daily world bores me, it exploits its workers in hideous ways, it is responsible for serious social and economic inequality on a global scale, it dehumanises its participants, and is in many ways deeply anti-intellectual. ("Malcolm" 2011)

While suggesting that sport has a deleterious effect on modern society, the review nonetheless acknowledges the massive role sport plays in global culture. The apparent democratic nature of sport is one of the reasons for sport's ubiquity. Eco notes that where in other social fields (finance, environment, science) a lack of expertise forces lay people to the margins, football allows a much higher degree of democracy in its discourse. Eco also notes that the self-declared anti-sport intellectual

may also hold an antipathy to sport due to his or her ineptitude since childhood at playing sport.<sup>38</sup> (Trifonas 2001, pp. 23-4)

As the noted filmmaker and football fan Pierre Paolo Pasolini noted, “football is culture”. (Scalia 2009, p. 41) If Pasolini's assertion is true, it is irrelevant whether someone is for or against the prominence that sport has in contemporary culture. Indeed, we are faced with particular problems if we ignore this maxim. If the artistic and intellectual communities wish to avoid addressing sport in any way, whether out of ignorance, jealousy or hostility, this predilection creates an intellectual environment with a massive thematic hole, effectively ostracising itself from the broader community and its interests. In his 1926 piece “Emphasis on Sport”, Bertolt Brecht argues that the intellectual disdain for sport and popular culture is a damaging point of view to take for an intellectual. (1977, p. 7) Cutting themselves off from this major social enterprise may give intellectuals a short term feeling of smugness, but in the long term it estranges the intellectual establishment from one of the world's most crucial forms of cultural expression. In addition to this, an argument against those who consider the mass hysteria of sport to be a form of “false consciousness”, is that the sporting arena has been the setting for revolution, political protest and social defiance. (Giulianotti 1999, p. 16) To acknowledge that sport is such an important aspect of global life, and by extension Australian life, means that literary contributions on sport are an important avenue of discourse on the subject. Soccer is not the only sport to suffer from a lack of creative literary works. For example the literary critic Simon Castles seeks to

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<sup>38</sup> John Bale notes Sven Lindqvist's point that art is often drawn or born from sporting failure. (2008, p. 10)

understand the paucity of Australian cricket novels, especially in comparison to the ubiquity of baseball novels in America:

Why is a game so central to our culture and history so absent from the pages of our fiction? Why do our novelists keep cricket at such a distance? (2015, p. 174)

Booth makes note of the importance of baseball fiction to baseball culture in the United States, and its ability to “say things about America that other genres simply cannot capture”. (Booth 2005, p. 79) Castles diagnoses the root cause of the antipathy as stemming from a sense of jealousy mixed with injustice, that sport – and mostly a very limited form of sport – is exalted above all other pursuits:

But more than lack of interest or insight on the writer’s part is perhaps something like antipathy. Not toward cricket itself, but rather what it represents – a sports-mad nation where arts and letters get short shrift and always have done. A land where the sportsman (and it is usually a man) is hero and the artist is a perennial outsider. The Australian novelist may feel, with some justification, that writing about cricket or footy is like colluding with the enemy. (2015, p. 176)

For Castles, “sport in novels is rarely just sport; it is a way of writing about something else”. (2015, p. 178) It is possible that an influential segment of the Australian literary community (including both writers and audiences) do not understand, or perhaps even refuse to countenance the idea that sport can have deeper meanings than merely the storefront level of action. In contrast, Hughson is critical of the view that sporting culture is consumed passively by its followers. (Hughson 2013, p. 1) In the case of soccer, Australian soccer literature is a valuable (and undervalued) tool in the arsenal

of those who both wish to create and develop sporting culture as well interrogate it from outside or within. In seeking to justify the importance of overcoming the silo mentality usually on display within academia, Alexis Tadié argues that the:

football trope in literary fiction enables the writer to explore the workings of modernity... through a meditation on the aesthetics of the game and on the complex nature of readership/spectatorship, football fiction prompts a reflection on the nature of modernity, nationalism, class and gender. (2012a, p. 1776)

Regardless of their ability to influence mainstream Australian opinion, if those in the literary sphere choose to ignore sport and its place in Australia, the cultural narrative will be dominated by those involved with sport. This is important because of the increasing sophistication with which various sports governing bodies seek to define themselves as being indispensable parts of the national character, by use of literary motifs such as narrative and subtext. Leigh Boucher notes that a:

crucial element in the nationalization of the AFL has been an intensification of the entanglement of the league with the ideals and emotions of Australian nationhood. (2015, p. 1551)

Boucher's example above shows one sport's attempt to become synonymous with the idea of Australian nationhood. One result of this action is the attempt to create a sociocultural environment where sport is seen as politically and culturally neutral, a fundamentally absurd position to take which collapses under even the slightest interrogation.

Soccer, because of its demographics and history, has a much harder task of becoming an integral “natural” part of Australian culture. In its attempts to enter the mainstream, it has done so in part with the motivation of achieving the status of being an apolitical field of interest. One of the main criticisms directed at soccer in Australia was its highly charged political nature, which runs counter to the well-worn lie that “what happens on the field, stays on the field”, which emphasises the supposed cultural neutrality of sport in wider culture. Australian soccer literature is a marginal literary genre, in a marginal literary field – sports fiction – talking about a sport with a historically marginal level of mainstream respect in Australia. If a sport like cricket – whose cultural status within Australia is as close to being hegemonic as any field of Australiana – struggles to have meaningful literary work produced about it, what chance for other sports, especially culturally marginalised ones like soccer?

Marxist critics of sport have long been critical of sport’s tendency to create a sense of false consciousness among the working class, referring as many others do, to variations of sport’s quality of being an opiate of the masses. (Brohm 1978, p. 7) Sport’s reliance on a “mystical conception” of itself creates an image of sport that is ahistorical, and perhaps even outside of history. (Brohm 1978, p. 178) However not all critics embrace the “opiate of the masses” trope, finding it simplistic. (Giulianotti 1999, pp. 15-6) Bale for example acknowledges the potential of sporting affiliation and attention to be classed as a form of “false consciousness”, which may be patronising to those who are described as such. (1994, p. 121) McKay is also critical of the faulty use of sport as “false consciousness”. He claims that “sport is too important to explain away as false consciousness, an opiate, or bread and circuses for the masses.” (McKay 1991, p. 176)

But while McKay critiques the bluntness of Marxist critics of sport by those such as Brohm and Hoch, (1991, p. 159), he also misses or chooses to avoid addressing the point that sport is attractive to participants and spectators alike for the joy that it brings. Reducing that sense of joy to a modernised version of the “opiate of the masses” quip or a notion of false consciousness misses the base point – sport is fun. Klugman argues that the corporeal experience of sports, especially of sports supporters, is often ignored in sports studies. (2012, p. 161) In particular, the embodied pleasures of sport tend to be elided. (2012, p. 177)

The weaknesses of Marxist anti-sport arguments stem in part from critics such as Brohm focusing on top-level elite sport, justifying this as the main drawcard of the drive towards mass and leisure sport. (Brohm 1978, p. 5) But the motivations for participating in sport vary from not only from nation to nation, and class to class, but also from person to person. The pre-industrial Anglo-pastoralism of cricket provides a different rationale for play compared to the industrialised and ordered notion of baseball.

McKay wants sport changed, and that process involves what he calls “demystifying sport”. This involves getting students in schools to talk about the myths around sport in order to challenge long held assumptions about reactionary values. (McKay 1991, p. 163) Sport literatures would be a natural fit for such discussions, especially when dealing with the over-prevalence of nostalgia in sporting ideology. (Cashman 2010, p. 3) Cashman also notes that nostalgia is in effect a conservative device deployed by people in order for them to feel culturally secure about a changing world. (Cashman 2010, p. 3) Nostalgia is also an important part of mainstream historical writing about sport. The fondness for past champions and their successes are written in part to be



reassuring to us in their shared experience of achievement.<sup>39</sup> Australian soccer literature however frequently challenges notions of nostalgia. It does in part by focusing on the present (the characters as yet have no fixed future), but mostly via the undermining of the communal aspect of the sporting experience. By writing on the forms of exclusion experienced by participants and spectators alike, from both the mainstream and soccer dominant cultures, Australian soccer literature provides a different line of questioning within the cluttered field of Australian sports-writing.

The other side to being marginalised is the sense of belonging – a sense that Cashman argues is central to sport:

Even more than the team, the club is the core unit of sport. Belonging to a particular team or joining a club either as a player or supporter is a point of primary allegiance for many sports followers. (Cashman 2010, p. 6)

Moreover, as Cashman notes, it is vital to address the ideological elements of sport:

Ideology is a central element of organised sport and serves many purposes. It provides a moral basis justifying some sports while undermining the character of others. It defines the social purpose of a particular sport, demarcating sport as a territory occupied by a specific class or gender and creating the broader culture in which a sport functioned. (Cashman 2010, p. 8)

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<sup>39</sup> While an athlete or team may be literally the ones achieving the feats on the field or in the relevant arena, those watching and cheering (whether in person or at home) also feel that they have shared in the experience.

The elements of race and ethnicity can be added. These are particularly relevant to the history of soccer in Australia and those of its followers.

### **Antipathy of the sporting toward literature**

One obstacle in using literature to examine sport is that a large majority of sports-writing is either functionary or created to fill a news and entertainment gap. It is not that that kind of writing, whether a match report, press release or light interview material, cannot be written well. However space, style and function necessitate the telling of those sports stories in precise and often formulaic ways – formulas that we take for granted, and to which we expect the writers to conform. These formulas then become the intellectual template for how we interpret sport in all its forms.

This becomes more problematic when sports journalists write not only while loving their chosen sport, but writing while being in love with particular athletes, typically the “stars” and “champions”. This kind of unchecked romanticism leads directly towards two problems – first, an inability to do one’s job properly as a journalist, and secondly, a removal of the writer and the writer’s audience from the socio-cultural impact of the sport. This may be why some sports followers feel threatened by literature on sport, or even merely sports-writing with a literary proclivity: it has the potential to rationalise, explain and challenge the assumptions that sport holds about itself, especially ideas about its organic nature.

Literature provides a different way of mediating the written sporting experience. Often non-commercial in intent,<sup>40</sup> sport literature does not have to fit into the established commercial narratives of most sports-writing.<sup>41</sup> In that sense, sports fiction has a chance of fulfilling the somewhat lost ideal of sport needing to provide “more room for silence and imagination as one watches, reads, plays or indulges in make-belief”. (Booth & Tatz 2000, p. xv) In this context, sports fiction and literature are concurrently potential circuit breakers that exist outside the corporatized, commercialised, self-congratulatory and self-perpetuating machine of Australian sports-writing.<sup>42</sup>

Sports literature also has the advantage of being able to exist “out of time”. Where sports journalism for example is built almost entirely of and for its moment, sport literature has the ability to write outside of those confined moments of time. Thus a short moment – a cricket stroke, a big mark, or a swan dive – can become an elongated or extended passage of time. Morissette argues that modern sports coverage is already a preconceived and narratively predictable affair, belying its own sense of self as being unpredictable. (2014, p. 390) Literature on sport is not necessarily subject to these corporate whims. Nor does it need to focus exclusively on sporting content that can generate a fiscal return.

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<sup>40</sup> Though not always; these imperatives will vary across the spectrum of sports literature. Mass produced works of sport literature for a young adult audience for example will likely have a higher degree of commercial intent compared to poems published in small literary presses.

<sup>41</sup> Most sports journalism whether consciously or otherwise, plays an advocate role not only for particular sports, but also for the dominant sporting leagues and organising they are writing about. There has been a historically symbiotic relationship (albeit one possibly threatened in modern times by digital disruption) between sporting bodies which rely on favourable and positive journalism to promote their product, and sporting journalism which relies upon sports with a broad commercial appeal on which to write about.

<sup>42</sup> Though literature also has its own self-sustaining mythologies, and in the case of literature on sport, a tendency on the part of some writers to denigrate sport at the expense of the arts.

The similarities between elite professional sport and theatre only go so far though, with Morissette being critical of the way that:

the beliefs and interests enacted and reproduced by the different “actors” involved in the sporting scene converge reinforces the impression of the alleged universality and naturalness of the mainstream worldview. (Morissette 2014, pp. 390-1)

Sports literature, or literature about or including sport, can exist outside of the hyper-factual and narrow boundaries of mainstream sports-writing. This non-reliance upon “objective” truth sees literature provide room for writing from fans and amateurs, as well as writing about social, historic and emotional dimensions, and countless digressions not immediately accessible within the confines of most writing on sport.

Some writers disagree with the notion that the sports novel (as an example of sports literature) is of much, if any, value. Nick Hornby, the writer of the acclaimed soccer memoir *Fever Pitch*, says this about football novels and by extension all fiction writing on sport:

I’ve never particularly wanted to read a football novel. Like most football fans, I suspect, I wouldn’t believe in a Melchester Rovers, nor in a player I’d never heard of. And I’m not sure what the POINT of such a book would be. Real-life sport already contains all the themes and narratives you could want. (McGowan 2011, p. 11)

While it is possible to argue with Hornby's position, many would instinctively agree with him.<sup>43</sup> Hornby is an intellectual who is also a sports fan, rather than an Eco-esque anti-fan. His position novelist outside of the narrow boundaries of resistance to sports literature explored in earlier examples. Against Hornby's hostile attitude towards sports fiction, is a more interesting and open-ended premise put forward by Doug Booth and Colin Tatz: that sport itself is a fiction "not as real, let alone more real than life itself". They balance this idea against their acknowledgement that "sport is an important lens or mirror for examining the larger ideas and issue in a human society". (2000, p. XII) To bluntly excise fiction and literature from those discussions is also counter-productive: one might ask, what better means to discuss the fiction of sport than sports fiction itself?

## **Writing on soccer**

### **Secondary sources**

Book length works on Australian soccer which are more accessible to the general public tend to fall into forms such as the biography and autobiography. These are

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<sup>43</sup> The writer Alex Broun seems to agree with Hornby: "One reason that people haven't written novels about sport is that all the great stories are actually true. There's very little left over, you'd have to write something fantastical'. (Smith, B 2015) There is also the counter-argument, written in a letter that has become a well-known internet meme claiming that "I'm sick of sports commentators saying 'you couldn't write a script like this'. If people can write scripts about dystopian futures in which life is in fact a simulation made by sentient machines to harness humans' heat and electricity as an energy source, they can probably write ones about Gary Taylor-Fletcher scoring a last-minute equaliser against Stoke." Somewhat ironically, Alison Kervin in her instructional guide *Sports Writing* classifies Hornby's creative memoir *Fever Pitch* as belonging to "fiction". (1997, p. 125)

The novelist Martin Amis, writing on this subject in 1981 and thus long before the taste for intellectual soccer writing had fully developed, took a self-deprecating and slightly self-loathing slant: "Intellectual football-lovers are a beleaguered crew, despised by intellectuals and football-lovers alike, who regard our addiction as affected, pseudo-proletarian, even faintly homosexual. We have adapted to this; we keep ourselves to ourselves – oh, how we have to cringe and hide!" (1981)

usually limited to the experiences of Australian soccer players who have both spent considerable time playing for the men's national team, the Socceroos, as well as much time playing for clubs in overseas competitions. These books include Paul Wade and Kyle Patterson's *Captain Socceroo* (1996) and Matthew Hall's *The Away Game* (2000). There are also state-specific histories, such as Chris Hudson's work on Tasmanian soccer, (1998) Philip Mosely's work on New South Wales soccer, (2014) and Richard Kreider's Western Australian soccer history, *Paddocks to Pitches* (2012). There are also a limited amount of club histories such as Peter Desira and Richard Curmi's *Green Gully Soccer Club: 50 years*, (2006) and Egilberto Martin's *Juve! Juve!* (1990), as well as an assortment of works dealing with specific elements of Australian soccer history, such as the history of Aboriginal involvement in the game (John Maynard's *The Aboriginal Soccer Tribe*). (2011)

In 2006, Roy Hay and Bill Murray contended that writing on all football codes in Australia had been subject to a boom, and while writing on soccer had also shared in that increase of attention, critical material on the sport was still at a nascent stage of development. (2006, p. 167) At the time, histories of the game in Australia were more often dependent on the efforts of amateurs rather than those who may have had a foot in academia. (Murray, B & Hay 2006, pp. 167-9) Yet the history of writing on the football codes in Australia had seen soccer emerge as something of a poor cousin who profited less from the boom than the other major codes. Hay and Murray further asserted that unlike the other codes, soccer lacked its own champion or identifiable writer in the journalistic profession. (2006, p. 168)

Due to the often-limited column inches afforded to soccer in mainstream news sources, it has learned over time to become self-sufficient in the production of its own

writing. As the waves of post-World War II migration created new commercial opportunities for soccer on the field, media productions dealing with soccer increased. This increase was in the mainstream and specialist English language news media, both in the press (such as those publications put out by soccer's governing bodies), but also in the ethnic/non-English language press which serviced the needs of newly arrived migrants, which also saw the creation of specialist sports newspapers such as Melbourne's Greek language sporting newspapers the *Athletic Echo* and *Athletic Flame* during the 1950s.

Since Murray and Hay's overview, the game's status and culture have seen significant changes.<sup>44</sup> Like the game itself, scholarly writing on Australian soccer is also in the middle of a boom, with scholars moving beyond the "ethnic question" to take up a range of discussions including economics, marketing, architecture, governance, and police and security operations at both major and minor stadiums.<sup>45</sup> Yet this boom has not extended to a consideration of literature that engages with soccer. At the end of their overview, Murray and Hay provided a bibliography soccer as a springboard for further reading. The sections include theses, government reports, specialist soccer newspapers and magazines, academic journals, yearbooks, collections, journal articles, chapters in general reference publications, biographies and autobiographies, club histories (listed by state), and coaching manuals. While not an exhaustive list, it contained just one reference to an Australian literary text dealing with soccer – David Martin's *The Young Wife*. (2006, pp. 173-86) Even as Murray and Hay put forward the

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<sup>44</sup> An update to that piece is sorely needed.

<sup>45</sup> As listed in the introduction.

possibility of critical material being written using more esoteric angles, the potential for literary depictions of soccer in Australia appeared to be as far away from the centre of those future discussions as is possible. And so far this has proved to be the case.

### **Primary sources**

Extant antipathy exists between sport and the literary worlds, as demonstrated in the introduction to this thesis. While analysis of sport has managed to find a place in academia, the crossover between the literary and sporting fields remains limited. As serious sports-writing has come to be better appreciated in Australian culture, soccer has struggled to be considered as part of that milieu. For example, in the mid-1990s, the non-fiction sports-writing collections sponsored and published by Carlton and United Breweries included a relative breadth of sports, as well as writing on women and indigenous athletes. In the 1996 and 1997 editions, soccer was reduced in both cases to representation by a single entry in the photography section. One was Mark Miller's photo of small children playing a competitive match of sorts, in their innocence; the other was Hamish Blair's photo of the then overseas-based Socceroo Robbie Slater, drenched in rain.

As if to highlight the marginality of soccer within the consciousness of Australian mainstream sporting culture, in the 700 plus page compendium *The Best Ever Australian Sports Writing: A 200 Year Collection* (Headon 2001) there was apparently room for just one piece that deals with soccer, Adrian Caesar's "Action Photo" (2001). A poem, it was more interested in the meeting point of sporting grace and poetry, and by extension sport and art as a whole rather than any illumination of the particularities of the Australian soccer experience:

but there is always another Saturday



when nightmare can turn to dream

and with the brusque cut-inside

he delivers the perfectly weighted

through ball or times the finish

to perfection and so for a moment

beyond himself, aspires to poetry. (Headon 2001, p. 615)

The absence of soccer is not a conspiracy of omission. Rather it acknowledges that for many years soccer was considered so outside the realms of even “serious” Australian sports-writing that it could not force its way into collections and almanacs where other relatively marginal sports such as surfing or marathon running or New South Wales private school rugby received coverage.<sup>46</sup> Attitudes towards soccer and soccer writing since then have improved – the game has moved closer towards mainstream acceptance, and Australian soccer books are now seen as worthwhile publishing investments – but the inclusion of just one, obscure piece of writing as an exemplar for an entire sport demonstrates the obstacles that soccer has had to overcome.

Australian soccer as it appears in literature actually has a far longer and more diverse history and presence than for which it has been given credit. Rather than the lone text

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<sup>46</sup> It is also worth noting the absence of similarly high-participation but low media profile or commercially outlier sports such as netball from these kinds of collections.

listed by Hay and Murray, there exists a range of materials, including novels, short stories, poetry, plays, scripts and unpublished manuscripts of all the above. Furthermore, the work of Lee McGowan (2011) – which attempts to create an English language taxonomy of soccer literature – shows how works of Australian soccer literature fit into the genre of literary soccer writing as it exists outside of Australia.

These primary source materials are the key element of this research. The extant plays, poems, novels, short stories, memoirs and travel writing form a substantial collection of material. This thesis deals with Australian works that engage with soccer, as well as works from non-Australian sources that engage with soccer in Australia. This approach has two immediate outcomes. First, it allows that the experience of soccer by Australians is one that can and does exist outside Australia. Second, it accepts that because a global game is played in Australia, the observations by foreigners of soccer as it exists in Australia provide a different perspective on that experience. This is especially important if those foreign writers belong to a culture where soccer is not a marginalised sport. While the game of soccer itself is a global one, with the same standardised rules, the circumstances in which soccer operates, as well as the socio-cultural function it performs, may vary considerably between nations and even between regions.

This thesis also demarcates boundaries as to the types of materials in which it is interested. Foremost among the materials to be covered are the extant novels, plays, poems and short stories aimed at adult audiences, as well as many that are aimed at young adult audiences. Attention will also be paid works aimed at children, with an emphasis on works aimed at young adult and older child audiences. Chris Crowe observes that the difficulty in defining young adult literature lies at least in part in the

difficulty of defining what a young adult is. There is a nebulous quality to what the age category means, which is only exacerbated when taking into consideration the term's proximity to books; where once there was a definite border between children's and adult literatures, modern definitions are now increasingly blurred. (Crowe 1998, p. 120) Michael Cart notes that even before the scope of the field settled down by the beginning of the 21st century, the category of "young adult" had existed in what could at least be thought of as prototypical forms; these forms had developed over the preceding decades in tandem with broader ideas of what a young adult or child or teenager was, as well what books aimed or intended for those audiences should look like. (Cart 2001, pp. 95-6)

For his part, Crowe defines young adult literature as "all genres of literature published since 1967 which are written for and marketed to young adults". (Crowe 1998, p. 121) is the definition that this thesis will choose to follow. Crowe's point of works "written for and marketed to young adults" is crucial; it implies a specific, tailored intent from writers, as well as an assumption about the audience and its tastes and interests. Furthermore, the development of young adult literature is also tied to reflexive ideas of negotiation – that is, an essential element of writing and reading young adult literatures is the process of defining and resisting the field's terms.<sup>47</sup>

The larger number of works dealing with soccer targeted at Australian children provides an interesting counter-point to the purported marginality of soccer writing in works aimed at other demographics; this is especially the case for those works aimed

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<sup>47</sup> This bears some similarities to the ways in which the production of football hooligan memoirs are a negotiation of what it means to be a football hooligan. (Redhead 2015, p. 58)

at female audiences. While Chris Crowe notes the paucity of sports literatures written for girls, (Heinecken 2015, p. 24) the extant sport and soccer literatures in young adult literature still dwarfs that which is aimed at adult audiences. Attention is also paid to fleeting mentions of soccer in works substantially about other themes, in the hope of both “rescuing” these passages for future researchers but also because this relies on bibliographic and annotative roots. Andy Harvey observes that while the temptation is to focus on texts with a literary quality and bemoan the lack of the same when it comes to studying sport in literature, popular novels are “a valuable and often underutilised source” for examining sporting histories. (Harvey 2013, pp. 132-3) This thesis contends that the arguments should go further, beyond the distinction between the high and low forms of writing, but also toward the personal and the unpublished. Furthermore, this thesis seeks to extend that interest into asking why a writer would choose to include soccer instead of any other sports into their texts – from genres as disparate as migrant literature, young adult fiction and even chick lit.<sup>48</sup> The relationship of those texts to the reader is an essential element of the study of literary texts. Along with the potential of literary texts themselves to destabilise monolithic social narratives, readers as individuals will also have an individual response to the work. (Booth 2005, p. 200)

This thesis is for the most part uninterested in coaching manuals, biographies, autobiographies, and club histories, except where such texts illuminate or relate to issues brought up in the core literature. It has room for memoir which can often be interpreted as containing scope for a more imaginative or creative response to real life

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<sup>48</sup> A pejorative term, but one that is in common use.

events. Klugman, for example, notes the value of analysing memoir as part of sport history and sociology, such as when using the work of Patrick Mangan, (Klugman 2012, p. 175) but there are also literary aspects which need to be considered. These writers, when writing memoirs, note that there is an aspect of their work which pertains to literary rather than merely biographical relevance.

Soccer in Australian literature exists as far back as the 1890s.<sup>49</sup> Prior to World War 2, there are few mentions of soccer in Australian literature, the main source of which is the poetry of Charles Hayward. The only other notable mention of soccer prior to the Australian soccer boom caused by mass immigration from continental Europe is contained in *The Earth Cries Out*, a 1948 novel by Harold C. Wells set in the Newcastle coalfields. This novel contains one of the few known literary depictions of soccer as it was experienced in Australia that was entirely normalised, without any sense of cultural or social marginalisation of the game or its participants.<sup>50</sup>

*The Earth Cries Out* is an outlier in terms of literary depictions of Australian soccer, at least in how it avoids marginalisation entirely. The players and supporters depicted provide no indication that this is not the main game of the community, or that it has a sense of being a foreign game. And even though Dick, the novel's chief protagonist,

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<sup>49</sup> Though that piece is possibly an importation of a British piece published in Australia; the poem in question indicates no Australian context. ('POETRY' 1892) Furthermore, as with reportage of football games of the time and even earlier, it can often be difficult to ascertain which code of football is being referred in a particular piece of writing. It is possible that there are even earlier examples of poems (for example) about soccer in Australian literature which are unclassifiable as such because of the lack of clarity within the relevant works.

<sup>50</sup> That is likely to change as more archival news publications from Australian soccer strongholds such as the Illawarra region become digitised. For example, a recent (re-)discovery of Australian soccer literature is that of a doggerel poem on a soccer match between Woonona and Balgownie in 1923, including reference to the star player "Judy" Masters and the Aboriginal athletic all-rounder Bondi Neal. ("L.R." 1921) The fact that poem is doggerel is of little to no reference to this thesis; the more important criteria is representation.

is shunned by his work colleagues for taking up the offer of a promotion in the mine, this animosity is not transferred across to the soccer field. It shows us what soccer, and depictions of soccer in Australian literature, could have been like had the game been more widely considered as an ordinary part of Australian culture – and not as has subsequently been done, as either a counter-cultural or sub-cultural pursuit.

The first Australian novel to deal substantially with Australian soccer was 1962's *The Young Wife*, by the Hungarian-Jewish émigré writer David Martin. (1966) In *The Young Wife*, Criton, one of the main characters, is an accomplished soccer player who falls foul of local politics via the soccer field. Following this novel, aside from a slight mention in Nino Culotta's *They're a Weird Mob* (1964), it was left to Martin again to use soccer as an integral part of a story, when he included two stories – “The Full-Back” and “Who Says A Must Say B” – in his *Foreigners* collection. (1981) At least for those works aimed at adult audiences, the emphasis from this point onward became clear, that soccer was a foreign game to Australia, played and watched by foreigners, mimicking the dominant discourse of soccer's portrayal in the public domain. (Mavroudis, P 2013) Subsequent long-form works, such as Richard Barrett's play<sup>51</sup> *The Heartbreak Kid*, (1988) and Peter Goldsworthy's novel *Keep It Simple, Stupid*, (1996) emphasise the social disconnect that is a symptom of playing or supporting soccer in Australia, albeit from differing contexts.

Apart from these major texts, as well as substantial references in other texts, such as Adrian Deans' *Mr Cleansheets* (2010) and Tony Wilson's *Making News* (2010), from

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<sup>51</sup> And later film (Barrett & Jenkins 1993), which also included a substantial soccer narrative.

the 1980s onward there were also a series of poems and short stories which referenced soccer in some way. While some of these were substantially about Australian soccer, such as Dina Dounis' poem "Soccer at Middle Park" (2011) and Mick Bocchino's poem "On Hearing That Italy Had Won the World Cup", (1985) other writers were content merely to use soccer as a setting or cultural touchstone.

Young adult and children's literature forms the bulk of Australian soccer literature. It shows the second and third generation of migrants playing soccer partly or mostly because they enjoy the game. The influence of ethnicity and tradition persists however, even if there are conflicting ideas as to whether these characters consider themselves to be Australian or some sort of hyphenated variation thereof. This sense of generational soccer continuity applies much more for male characters as opposed to female characters. Male ethnic playing participation is predicated upon gaining (or resisting) the approval of Anglo-Celtic mainstream Australia; female participation is predicated first on getting permission to play, or seeking the approval of (or resisting) male dominated Australian sporting cultures. The most important aspect is that Australian soccer literature exists, and that it exists in a large enough quantity so as to offer scholars the opportunity to use it as a research tool in its own right. How one defines and collects that material is the subject of the next chapter.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will discuss how the examples of Australian soccer literature contained within this thesis have been found and categorised, as well noting the ways in which some Australian soccer literature falls outside the scope of conventional methods of discovery. This chapter will also discuss the ways in which some groups within Australian soccer seek to prevent those they consider to lack a sufficient amount of soccer credibility from writing about soccer, and how Australian soccer literature provides an outlet for “soccer outsiders” to comment on soccer in Australia. The chapter also looks at questions and theories of genre and literature, indicating that although traditional theories of genre as they are applied to sports literature are useful, Australian soccer literature’s existence as an anti-genre complicates such comparisons.

The key methodological problem for this thesis lies in the difficulty of separating the genre of Australian soccer literature from its creation – in other words, separating the fact of its collection and curation, from the act of curating it in the first place. This is an act which has been performed in relative comprehension three times – once by Lee McGowan, once by the AustLit database, and once by this writer. In the process of establishing the lead up work for this thesis, in the form of an honours thesis and subsequent academic journal article, I had unknowingly created a genre, even as McGowan was creating a larger one at the same time.<sup>52</sup> Is Australian soccer literature, as created by me, now a subset of McGowan’s larger football (soccer) fiction project?

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<sup>52</sup> Neither of us being aware of the concurrent work being done by the other person.



The answer partly lies in John Frow's theory of genrification, the notion that genre is not a stable process but rather, in quoting the American film director Robert Altman, "not the permanent *product* of a singular origin, but the temporary *by-product* of an ongoing *process*". (Frow 2013, p. 149) As Charles Bazerman observes:

genres are not just forms. Genres are forms of life, ways of being. They are frames for social action.... They are locations within which meaning is constructed. Genres shape the thoughts we form and the communications by which we interact". (Bawarshi 2000, p. 358)

The implication here then is that genre is an active process, and that the examination of the primary texts in this thesis is inseparable from their collation into a genre. The analytical and collative methodologies necessarily perform a reflexive exercise. As Anis Bawarshi states, "genres shape us as we give shape to them, which is why they constitute our activities and regulate how and why we perform them". (Bawarshi 2000, p. 358)

There have been two key attempts to generically define Australian soccer literature. The more major of these is the existence and function of the AustLit database, with the second major attempt to define the genre of Australian soccer literature being my previous work on this topic. In that work, I sought an analytical and historical context for literary works which deal in some way with Australian soccer. It is worth keeping in mind that:

Whether or not the body of sport fiction constitutes a "genre" should not detract from its important function. Whether or not a particular piece of sport fiction qualifies as a representative of this "genre" may unnecessarily narrow the

scope of those novels, short stories, and poems that seek to broaden our understanding of sport. (Mosher 1988a, p. 83)

McGowan asserts “that the body of football fiction is most often dismissed either outright or as a flawed element of Football Writing (which is itself, a subsection of the more amorphous genre of Sports Writing)”. (McGowan 2015, p. 77) He follows this up by calling attention to the drawbacks of some of the surveying work, such as that by Peter Seddon, for their failure to “draw out the generic features of the works” they seek to cover, focusing instead on the reason why such work is “disproportionately scarce in relative comparison to non-fiction football works”. (McGowan 2015, p. 77)

In his search for a “pragmatic, theorized and academically rigorous definition” for the field of football fiction, (McGowan 2015, p. 77) McGowan rejects the emphasis of critics such as Seddon, whose surveys often refer to works with minimal references to soccer. Instead, he prefers an adaptation of Brooke Horvath and William Palmer’s view on sports fiction that “a football novel should offer insight that other forms of football writing or analysis cannot.” (2015, p. 77) To that end McGowan defines football fiction as work “which relies on football” as a “substantive element” of its use of “narrative, voice, structure, setting and/or character development”. (McGowan 2015, p. 77)

At a surface level, the genealogical framework made by McGowan is a useful tool for situating Australian soccer literature as a subset or descendant of football fiction. Problems soon emerge however when attempting to apply the genre rules applicable to football fiction in Britain (McGowan’s main focus) with that of soccer literature in Australia. In Britain, soccer is a game which is at the centre of the popular sporting culture, whereas soccer has led a culturally marginal existence for most of its Australian history. The cultural marginality of soccer in Australia is reflected in the way

in which the game has been covered – or more often, *not* covered – in the media, as well as in fiction and other creative works. While the game’s profile has improved considerably in recent times – though how much, and to what end is open to conjecture – it is still not a game that exists at the centre of Australian national identity.

While taking into account McGowan’s concerns about creating coherent and consistent genre rules for football fiction, this thesis rejects the utility of that approach, in part because of the particular cultural position of soccer in Australia. The marginality of the game – combined with the marginality of sports literature in Australia – has created the situation where marginal and minimal references to soccer in Australian literature are the norm, while works which use soccer as a key driving force for narrative or character development are comparatively rare.

Thus for this thesis, the sport – in this case soccer – contained in the various examples of the literature is more important than dogged attempts to shoehorn texts into a genre. The marginality of the game is inseparable from the marginality of its written depictions. Focusing only on works which contained substantive elements of soccer would see a crucial element of the Australian soccer experience obscured.

This thesis also uses a broad definition of the term “literature”. The reasons for this are as follows. First, unlike the field British football fiction referred to in McGowan’s work, Australian soccer literature is comparably finite. Because of the breadth of work that McGowan is surveying, deeming it appropriate to rely at least in part upon on Franco Moretti’s “distant reading” approach, whereby a genre with a large quantity of works can be analysed for its development of trends. (McGowan 2015, p. 78) In this thesis however, the limited extant work available which is classifiable as belonging to Australian soccer literature – as well as the brevity and the fleeting quality of

references to Australian soccer - means that a close reading approach is more appropriate. Such an approach allows for a more flexible approach to be taken with regards to assessing the themes and trends which have developed in Australian soccer literature. This aligns with Carolyn Miller's argument that "a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish"; (Chandler 1997, p. 4) in the case of Australian soccer literature, this action is the discovery of marginal characters in marginal texts, for the purposes of adding discursive nuance to discussions on Australian soccer. It is also an acknowledgement that "literary texts are produced and exist independently of genres; genres function only as critical apparatuses". (Bawarshi 2000, p. 345)

Second, a strict distinction between a "sports novel" and a "novel or literature with sport" is unhelpful for this thesis. Snippets of sport in a text that is otherwise very much not about sport are important in their own right, as long as they inform the reader about the way sport functions in the novel's broader construction of its socio-cultural universe – this is justification enough for these works must be taken into account. With Australian literature producing relatively few novels for adults with an overt sporting theme, and fewer still with a soccer theme, it is impractical to rely upon those few texts – and their young adult and children's counterparts – in order to create a "definitive" genre, one with rigorous boundaries, especially when the addition or even a handful of texts would significantly alter the profile of the genre. In summary, the specific conditions of Australian literature and Australian soccer conspire to make a more *ersatz* approach to "genrification" both practical and necessary.

It is not disputed that writing in a genre requires an understanding of its conventions. However, Australian soccer literature to a large degree defies conventions, because it

is not framed by traditional notions of genre; the writers of Australian soccer literature are often unaware of other works which fall into a genre they do not realise even exists. The exception may be authors writing sports and soccer texts for young adult and children's audiences. But Australian soccer literature as a subset of football fiction, which is itself a subset of sports writing, is not in a position which we can use to establish hard and fast genre rules – the genre exists almost entirely within the bounds of this thesis, as created for the purposes of analysing seemingly disparate works with either extensive or minimal soccer references as they apply to broader issues/themes in the discourses of Australian soccer and its participants.

Australian soccer literature as constructed here also exists outside the frameworks of audiences. Much like Australian soccer literature's writers, audiences are not aware of the putative genre of Australian soccer literature. Therefore the ways in which established genres may work in tandem with their audiences does not necessarily apply in the same way here. In some respects then, the genre of Australian soccer literature exists as *anti-genre*, remaining outside audience consciousness, and its practical deployment as a genre at this stage largely deployable only to academic discussions. It is also an acknowledgement that texts can and do participate within multiple genres simultaneously. (Devitt 2000)

The primary sources used for this thesis are the various plays, poems, novels and short stories dealing with Australian soccer. Though it includes some references to unpublished or informal (eg, fan made) material, the use of these is rare and exceptional. As this thesis's focus is on written texts, this thesis is interested in only one work of cinema, which is an adaptation of a key written text; other filmic material is outside the scope of this thesis. This thesis is also not concerned with oral fictions

and traditions, such as the creation of songs, chants and crowd banter that occurs at soccer matches. That kind of material – malleable, of the moment and usually conducted without much thought for posterity and preservation – falls outside the parameters of the written, fixed storytelling that this thesis focuses on. Thus while I am interested in that field as a possible future area of research, it falls outside the scope of this work.

### **AustLit and the limitations of relying on databases**

Without the existence of the AustLit database, research into Australian soccer literature would be impossible to conduct with sufficient thoroughness. The AustLit database is a scholarly bibliographic database<sup>53</sup> which catalogues Australian literature, as well other literature that includes a significant element of its narrative about Australia. AustLit also catalogues scholarly and critical materials related to Australian literature, in addition to reviews, film adaptations, and other materials. The database is a tremendous research tool,<sup>54</sup> but despite its usefulness, it holds limitations, shortcomings, and flaws. The following section includes discussion about

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<sup>53</sup> Though Kerry Kilner notes that “AustLit is more akin to a National Dictionary of Biography, which provides enhanced details on authors’ lives and careers, alongside a full list of associated works”. (2005, p. 89)

<sup>54</sup> It is worth keeping that whatever drawbacks AustLit has, it has been an indispensable part of this project, and a database I cannot help but promote to anyone with the slightest interest in Australian literature. As Kerry Kilner and Kent Fitch observe “AustLit is a major Australian cultural heritage database and the most comprehensive record of a nation’s literary history in the world”. (2017, p. i89)

some of the problems that come with a reliance on an electronic database such as AustLit.

### **Funding and copyright**

Some of AustLit's limitations exist largely outside the control of its ability to manage them. Because it is a publically funded project, AustLit "is challenged by tight budgets and uncertain funding streams". (Osborne & Allan 2012, p. 20) It is to be expected that structural and logistical limitations such as limited staffing and funding have an impact on the breadth and depth of the database. As important as staffing and funding constraints are in the operation of such a database, inherent problems occur in a digital database compiled by human beings by accessing and assessing print records manually. There are undoubtedly procedural guidelines in place to instruct and guide AustLit's database compilers, but eventually a human database editor must make a human decision about how to categorise a work, as well as decide which themes are the most relevant.

As the vast majority of material that the AustLit database seeks to compile exists in a print format, additional limitations also apply. These include the fact that most Australian literature is in print format, not digital, and that most of it is still under copyright or in a situation where copyright ownership is uncertain. This makes projects such as the scanning and digitisation of Australian literature extremely difficult, without taking into account the often prohibitive costs of high quality digital scanning with text recognition and the online hosting of such materials.

### **Monolingualism**

The problems of manual compilation are compounded when annotating and analysing texts in languages other than English. While AustLit does a commendable job in

covering such materials, non-English language literature is probably the largest lacuna in its database. This brings me to a personal example of the kinds of omissions in AustLit's database.

During the course of my research I have rarely if ever spoken of my thesis work with my family. At some point during a discussion with my parents however, my father (Athanasios Mavroudis) had mentioned that he had had a poem published in the Greek language newspaper *Neos Kosmos* dealing with a season's struggles of his preferred soccer club Heidelberg United Alexander. I had known and read some of my father's poems in the past, as well as having been aware of the fact that he had had several poems published in *Neos Kosmos*.<sup>55</sup> Yet he informed me only recently that he had also had a soccer poem published in that newspaper, and that he had also received a double pass to a Heidelberg United match from a member of Heidelberg's committee who had read and been moved by the poem.

Unfortunately, my father's poetry archives are neither complete nor in good order. The extant works consist of a couple of scattered notebooks with drafts and re-drafts, but very rarely any news clippings of the poems in their final, published forms. Furthermore, my father's memory is not what it once was, and the exact year he had his poem on Heidelberg United's struggles published in *Neos Kosmos* remains unknown. I conducted a search through the microfilm archives at the State Library of Victoria, canvassing the most likely years, but to no avail. The only evidence then that we have of this poem at present is an early and undated draft found as loose sheets

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<sup>55</sup> See Appendix B for further discussion on my father's poetry background, as well as two complete examples of soccer poems he wrote.



in an exercise book, containing a title and two stanzas. (Mavroudis, A date unknown)

The following is the Greek original, followed with my translation:<sup>56</sup>

**Στον Μέγα Αλέξανδρο**

**To Alexander the Great**

Μεγάλε μου Αλέξανδρε

My Great Alexander

με πίκρα το δηλώνω

I write this with bitterness

πως ήμαι Αλεξανδρινός

That I am an Alexandrian

ποτέ δεν μετανιώνω.

I never regret it.

Τις τελευταίες χρονιές

The last few years

που σε ακολουθάω

In which I've followed you

ποτέ δεν μούδωσες χαρά

You've never given me joy

στο σπίτι μου να πάω.

When I return to my home.

Austlit's failure to cover poems published by *Neos Kosmos* means that an interesting strain of literature is missed. The importance of cataloguing such works is manifold.

These include:

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<sup>56</sup> Transliteration by Paul Mavroudis. Translating and adapting even such a limited fragment sees much lost in translation. First, without proper context, it could be mistaken for a poem about the historical figure Alexander the Great of Macedon, rather than the Heidelberg United Alexander soccer club, which is known in Greek as Μέγα Αλέξανδρο, literally "Great Alexander". Second, though the language of the poem is simple and straightforward, the rhythmic qualities are such that it would take a far more skilled translator than myself to work the translation to a place where it would resemble the cadences of the Greek source.

- Taking into account the potential and often probable limited formal education of many of the poetry contributors;
- Acknowledging *Neos Kosmos*' status as the largest Greek-language newspaper in Australia, based in a city with one of the world's largest Greek speaking populations;
- Cataloguing the concerns and interests of a segment of society – in this case first generation Greek migrants – whose presence is otherwise undervalued or ignored in a culturally and linguistically Anglo-centric society;
- Noting the fact that *Neos Kosmos*, essentially a Greek-language paper of record for Melbourne's Greek community, continues to publish poems in its correspondence pages alongside more traditional letters to the editor.

The continuing emphasis on a monolingual mode of expression in Australian literary culture and in Australian culture more broadly, means that the scope for finding, analysing, evaluating and appreciating works in languages other than English is remote. This is amplified when second languages or multilingual proficiency are couched in terms that are purely economic; that the primary reason for learning a non-English language in Australia is for the purposes of commerce. Under this paradigm, any attempt to learn or use a language other than English for purposes outside of commerce – whether for cultural or academic reasons, or merely as a hobby – are considered elitist or trivial.

Thus Spanish language works such as “Para vos, West Brunswick” (de Paul 1981) – a poem about a championship winning season of a minor suburban Uruguayan-Australian soccer club – will remain obscure beyond even the probably predetermined levels that are expected of these works. At the same time, while the club ceased to

exist in the mid-1980s, the poem is extant. Apart from statistical asides and short articles on the club's results, it might be the only remnant artefact of the club's existence and fleeting importance to its small constituent community.

### **Digital disappearances**

While digital databases, by virtue of their seeming ease of use and ubiquity of access, are designed to provide a reassuring sense of permanence compared to their fragile material forebears, they are not immune from other forms of archival degradation. This is especially the case with regards to software and website updates. While they may substantially improve database performance, capacity, and reach, these updates can have important consequences for researchers and the completeness and quality of the database as a whole. The following paragraphs provide several examples of how an AustLit database upgrade led to the disappearance of entries which were once part of the database.

Previously when searching for soccer on the AustLit database, author entries for the writers Walter Pless and David Alejandro Fearnhead were found. These entries no longer exist. This is problematic on several levels. First, it reveals a degree of incompleteness to AustLit's database, given that one of its aims is to include literature about Australia as much as it is to include literature by Australians.

In the case of Fearnhead's novel *Bailey of the Saints* (2011)<sup>57</sup>, such an absence is incongruous. This is because of its previously having been part of the AustLit database, as well as its inclusion of content which covers the protagonist's experience of playing soccer in Australia; indeed, it has more Australian content and references to Australia than does the conceptually similar *Match Fixer* by Neil Humphries (2010), a text which *is* included in the AustLit's database. The absence of Pless' author entry and his two short stories in the AustLit database – after having originally been a part of it – showcases a different set of problems. Pless' two examples of soccer fiction have little if anything to do with Australian soccer, even from the point of view of examining non-Australian soccer through the lens of an Australian.<sup>58</sup> The problem with the absence of Pless' work lies in the personage of Pless himself. Pless' involvement in Tasmanian soccer spans decades, across a range of disciplines. He has been a player and coach, and for the past thirty years has been Tasmania's most persistent and dedicated soccer journalist, a vocation which has included photography, history, and the collection of statistics. The AustLit database's neglect in failing to re-index Pless' fiction is hardly a capital offence, nor does it lessen Pless' journalistic legacy within his field. Aside from failing to uphold AustLit's own database parameters, it removes an element – however minor – that adds nuance to Pless the person and his involvement and interest in the game.

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<sup>57</sup> Which focuses on a down on his luck English soccer player, who has found himself playing for the New Zealand franchise in Australia's A-League competition.

<sup>58</sup> One of the two stories is about a schoolboy and his team's loss in an important match. The other, more interesting story, is a sci-fi tale set in the future, where due to the destruction of soccer as a spectator sport due to hooliganism and corruption, soccer fans prefer to attend virtual matches, displaying holographic reconstructions of classic matches from the past.

## Inconsistencies in categorisation

Sometimes AustLit also suffers from treating the same literary texts published in different formats in entirely different ways. This can be caused by something as simple as arbitrary decisions of classification. An example of this is David Martin's *Foreigners* collection of short stories. Within that collection, there are two stories which are clearly soccer stories, yet only one of those is listed as such; the other story is not even listed as being part of the collection at all, the result of a reformatting in mid-2013 of the entire database. Likewise, entries which are still extant in the database which were once described as being about soccer, are now under the catch-all keyword of "football", such as Thomas the Rhymer's (pseudonym of Charles Hayward) "A Ten-Thousand Pounder", a poem about the Scottish soccer player Hughie Gallacher. (R. 1925)

Another example of cataloguing inconsistency is the happy accident<sup>59</sup> of my discovery of Michael Sala's 2012 memoir-novel<sup>60</sup> *The Last Thread* (2012b). *The Last Thread* contains three main references to soccer. The first is in the opening section, where a young Michaelis (Michael) and his elder brother Con are playing football in the Netherlands during the late 1970s, with their then semi-estranged father, Phytos. Phytos boasts about his one-time footballing prowess back in the army in Cyprus. Con, despite his youth, is able to keep up with his father, though the younger Michaelis struggles. (Sala 2012b, pp. 10-1)

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<sup>59</sup> One calls the discovery of this work "happy", because while the book is worthwhile on its own literary terms, it is also a happy discovery because the novel contains material that is useful to this thesis, even if only in the most circumspect kind of way.

<sup>60</sup> Sala never makes it clear how much or what parts of his book are real or fictitious, and never explains the meaning of what the blurb calls "his fascinating life in fiction".

The second reference to soccer occurs upon Michaelis and Con's return to The Netherlands from Australia (having migrated to the latter, and returned because of their mother's unhappiness), where Con takes up soccer once again, having apparently played other sports when in Australia. Con quickly becomes the best player in his side, idolising the Dutch star player Johann Cruyff, and filling the room with football posters. (Sala 2012b, p. 100) There is also unhappiness, because Phytos goes to watch the games not to watch his son Con per se, but as we learn later on in the novel in order to sexually pursue young boys – in this case Con's teammates. (Sala 2012b, p. 200)

Apart from Michaelis' brief description of Con absentmindedly kicking objects in a Newcastle street as an adult (Sala 2012b, p. 205), at no point do we see Con play soccer in Australia, despite its relative ubiquity in Newcastle, where Michaelis and Con spend much of their youth. Con prefers cricket and the extended bouts of solitude provided by surfing and spearfishing. These references to soccer are, in the context of a 240 page novel, merely fleeting, with little direct relevance to the Australian soccer experience. Yet the process of finding this book and its soccer references also highlights the possibilities and shortcomings of using databases to find references to what we may call Australian soccer literature.

The soccer references in *The Last Thread* were not found in a database, but rather by a serendipitous chain of events.<sup>61</sup> AustLit's database for this extract of the novel

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<sup>61</sup> Outside the offices of Victoria University staff members Footscray Park campus, staff often leave unwanted or excess copies of literary journals and magazines for students to take for free. One day I had picked up a 2012 edition of the Australian literary journal *Kill Your Darlings* from outside one of those offices. Later, opening to a "random" chapter entitled "Bergen Op Zoom", (Sala 2012a) I saw reference to soccer by an Australian writer – this turned out to be the first chapter in the then yet-to-be published *The Last Thread*.

contains no reference to soccer in its indexing, despite it being a key theme of the relevant extract. The unconscious biases of those compiling the database have created a situation where soccer, even where it is central to a given text, is deemed unimportant.

### **Falling through every crack**

Apart from the AustLit database, occasionally items, or more usually brief references to soccer, have been found by accident or serendipity. For example, in David Williamson's classic play about Australian Rules football, *The Club*, there is the following brief moment where the young recruit Geoff is speaking with Jock, one of the club's powerbrokers:

**Jock:** You did some nice things last week. Not one of your best games but you did some nice things. Glorious mark you took in the second quarter. You just seemed to go up and up.

**Geoff:** I felt like Achilles.

**Jock:** Who's he?

**Geoff:** A Greek guy who could really jump.

**Jock:** [*nods*] Some of our new Australians could be champions if they'd stop playing soccer and assimilate. (1978, pp. 43-4)

Such passages, where they exist in literature, are perceived to be of such minor relevance to the texts in comparison to the other themes, that they are omitted from AustLit's indexing. These sorts of marginal references to soccer and its participants

are just as crucial to the discussions on the social place of Australian soccer and its participants. For those who belong to soccer, the experience and display of marginality is markedly different to those outside of it, whether this is due to the latter existing outside of any sporting culture or because they are interested in sports with more acceptable mainstream associations. The discovery of a poem dedicated to the famed Australian soccer broadcaster Les Murray, by his poetic namesake, the poet Les Murray, was made via an even more convoluted process than that undergone in the discovery of the soccer references in *The Last Thread*.<sup>62</sup>

These are just some of the examples of Australian soccer literature which are unclassified because of their obscurity or otherwise fleeting mentions of soccer. But the four mentions of soccer in A.L. McCann's novel *Subtopia* (2005, pp. 45, 153, 7, 60), though they are entirely incidental and irrelevant to the main thrust of the novel, still provide a level of insight into soccer's connection to Australian culture, and the awareness or otherwise of such by Australian writers or those writing on Australia. McCann's depictions of soccer in 1980s Germany – played on cobblestones by the children of Turkish immigrants, or a match absentmindedly playing on a television in the background – are both an example of the skewed point of view of the tourist/narrator, but also of the ways in which even in its “native” state soccer can appear otherworldly. Who knows how many ephemeral, yet-to-be and probably never-to-be-indexed moments such as these exist?

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<sup>62</sup> See Appendix A for a longwinded discussion on the complicated process of finding that poem.



## Omission by cultural blind spot

The limitations of bibliographic databases, digital or otherwise can be discussed *ad nauseam*. Sometimes though, the limitations surrounding discussions of soccer in a literary manner come directly from the writers themselves. In that vein we have the example of the famed Australian expatriate novelist Peter Carey, and his short travel memoir *Wrong About Japan*, in which Carey and his American-raised son Charley visit Japan in order to explore that country's manga and anime culture. It is not until over halfway through the book until Carey reveals that he and his son are travelling through Japan during the 2002 soccer World Cup, which was being co-hosted by Japan.

During a visit to the offices of Kodansha Comics in order to conduct an interview on the Japanese cultural phenomenon of *otaku*, Carey notes that during the conversation that

the staff of Kodansha, so earnestly at work only minutes previously, erupted into wild cheering. Yuka<sup>63</sup> did not blink an eye. And although salarymen in offices all over Tokyo had abandoned their posts to watch Japan battle Tunisia, she was far more interested in drawing a fat teenager with a schlumpy T-shirt and a bad complexion. (2004, p. 81)

Whether Carey's neglect of the cultural impact of the World Cup was deliberate – he may have considered it a distraction from writing about the purpose of their trip – or whether the omission was merely accidental, Carey made an editorial and cultural decision about the World Cup's lack of importance. That this omission occurs in a book

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<sup>63</sup> The Kodansha employee Carey was interviewing through a translator.

centred on the quest to find the “Real Japan” provides an instructive example of how cultural assumptions work, even as Carey seeks to overcome his own preconceptions about Japan. The near complete omission of the 2002 World Cup from Carey’s journey creates both a momentary schism in the narrative – as portrayed by the suddenly raucous salarymen – while also commenting on one Australian intellectual’s accidental interactions with soccer. Where writers like Frank Hardy, Ian C. Smith and Tony Wilson have to various degrees sought to interact with soccer as experienced outside Australia, Carey’s experience offers another kind of angle.

The overall effect of these limitations and shortcomings is to create a situation where a thesis such as this one comprises not only a literature review – whereby the author surveys and evaluates the field of work he is interested in – but also an alternative literature review. More specifically, it creates a literature review clamouring to discuss everything that is missing from a database or from the relevant primary source field as a whole. While focusing on material that exists, it also obsesses over those materials which do not exist, what may exist, and what is yet unknown and undiscovered.

This analysis of AustLit has demonstrated that the idiosyncrasies of database compilers have a noticeable impact on how and whether a work is catalogued. The consequences of a single literary work on Australian soccer being categorised may not be significant. But if the non-categorisation or mis-categorisation of one work is joined by another, and then another, not only do potential researchers suffer, but the conceptual possibilities of the category or sub-genre as a whole are also distorted. For a genre like Australian soccer literature, its sense of conceptual possibility is one of its great strengths, a strength which has the potential to upend our complacencies either as sports fans, or people hostile to sport. Omissions from the database record,

whether due to systematic limitations, predetermined biases, or through inconsistent application of indexing, place a limit on what the vocational or casual researcher may be able to find.

Nevertheless, AustLit's usefulness to a range of approaches of studying Australian literature far outweighs its drawbacks. Without a tool like the AustLit database, much less effective methods for finding and analysing examples Australian soccer literature would be employed. The result of this curatorial work has mitigated one of the main challenges of this thesis – finding the primary source material. It is a problem that has already been substantially solved. The AustLit database, which collects and categorises Australian literature, has therefore been the main source of works dealing with soccer.<sup>64</sup>

The use of this database, while essential to the task at hand, is also problematic. This is because of the state of play of the database, which is a continual work in progress, but also because of the individual predilections of the AustLit editors, who may or may not categorise a particular text as a “soccer” text, because they may feel that the soccer content is either minimal, or unimportant

This reinforces the point that soccer's absolute marginality in some Australian texts and its absence in other contexts as a key argument of this thesis, that soccer in

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<sup>64</sup> One improvement to AustLit that would be relatively easy to implement would be to add an option to search by “recently added”, so that researchers can more easily find updates to categories that they frequently check on.

Australia is marginal, its references in Australia literature are marginal, and that these are not a coincidence.

A database such as AustLit, run on a limited budget, does remarkable work – but even when it can provide the service of showing an author’s thematic fancies, it cannot always offer firm evidence or instruction as to what the relevant writer’s motivation for obsessing over a particular subject may be. The same goes for “distance based” analyses which do not inspect the content of the texts themselves beyond a simple aggregation. The background to my father’s soccer poetry, even were it to be catalogued in some way, is almost impossible to glean from a database search.

### **Discursive exclusivity**

One of the more difficult topics when broaching the question of marginality in Australian soccer literature is the motivations of some of the writers themselves to write about soccer in their creative works. This is especially the case for those of whom it could be said to have questions over their perceived credibility when writing about Australian soccer. This question is problematic not just because of the difficulty of measuring a near-arbitrary list of criteria; it is difficult because much of the material written by non-soccer people about Australian soccer exists outside the kind of work this thesis seeks to cover – primarily novels, short stories, poetry and memoir writing.

Much of what has been written on Australian soccer has been written by non-soccer followers. The vast majority of that material has been quasi-journalistic commentary which is either utterly dismissive of Australian soccer or, at best, acknowledges the game’s virtues but with a series of what the writers deem to be necessary caveats. These caveats usually involve an insistence that soccer will never be able to take up the cultural positions held by the other more “Australian” football codes. This and other

historical insults and prejudices – both those expressed merely as ideology, and those affecting the practicalities of running soccer in Australia – have seen soccer’s supporters develop an unusual mode of defensiveness when it comes to defending their game. This defensiveness can manifest itself in a paranoid style of discourse which seeks out hidden insults in even the most innocuous statements of those considered not to be fully supportive of Australian soccer. The result is a never-ending desire of a segment of the Australian soccer public to test the credibility of every commentator in Australian soccer, not based on the merits of a writer’s given arguments, but instead based upon the writer’s background.<sup>65</sup>

Such journalism, while not the focus of this thesis, nevertheless showcases one of the problems facing Australian soccer literature: that of soccer-writing credibility or authenticity as the final and least obvious form of discrimination when it comes to the question of marginality in Australian soccer literature. Questions of ethnicity and female participation, while difficult problems to deal with for Australian soccer, have at least been thoroughly acknowledged both within the game and outside of it as providing barriers for keeping people both in and out of the game. However the sense of discursive exclusivity within Australia soccer, though palpable, is seldom spoken of. Having frequently found itself on Australia’s cultural margins, soccer has become used to the sloganeering directed towards it from supporters of other sports and the Australian cultural mainstream.

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<sup>65</sup> This leads not only to inter-codal skirmishes, but also often to bizarre and ultimately counter-productive arguments between different demographics about who has the best interests of Australian soccer at heart.

One outcome of this rhetoric is the attempt to define soccer as being un-Australian, by associating it with qualities which are assumed as not belonging to the Australian national character. It links into the historic difficulty of defining what it is to be Australian; as Lynette Russell has observed "it is impossible to describe what Australian-ness is in terms other than what it is not". (1994, p. 2)

In response to those perceived slurs, Australian soccer supporters have built up their own arsenal of arguments to defend their game and its place in Australia, often making counter-arguments about aesthetics and the merits of cosmopolitanism. At the more extreme end these arguments manifest themselves in fiercely exclusivist terms, leading to the creation of a more monolithic and conceptually limited enemy than the one which actually exists. As Umberto Eco noted in his essay "Inventing the Enemy":

Having an enemy is important not only to define our identity but also to provide us with an obstacle against which to measure our system of values and, in seeking to overcome it, to demonstrate our own worth. So when there is no enemy we have to invent one. (Eco 2012, p. 2)

While Australian soccer clearly does have both ideological enemies and commercial competitors, it is worth keeping Eco's thoughts on inventing the enemy in mind. This is because rather than dealing with the complexity of the ideological differences, there is a segment of Australian soccer support for which any attempt at nuanced analysis of the motivations of soccer's ideological and commercial competitors is tantamount to treason. The motivation then for attacking those enemies is not so much to undermine those other sports, but to bind together soccer's supporters in rigid ideological agreement, creating the sense and impression of an ideologically cohesive whole. (Eco 2012, p. 18) Defensiveness, under the guise of counter-attack, instead

becomes conformist exclusivity – those who do not accept wholeheartedly the entirety of the ideological direction of the most extreme members find themselves quickly on the outer. As Eco notes during his discussion on the process of creating an enemy, “rather than a real threat highlighting the ways in which these enemies are different from us, the difference itself becomes a symbol of what we find threatening.” (Eco 2012, p. 3)

What to make then of writers who have written extensively in one form or another about Australian soccer, but who have no obvious background in the game? In the case of those writers who have no soccer background and admit as much, there is a choice to be made by audiences. The first option is to take the admitted ignorance on-board and continue reading the work within that framework of understanding. The second option is to disregard outright the value of work produced and classifiable as Australian soccer literature if the depiction of soccer in those texts fails to reach certain (often elusive) benchmarks of authenticity.

For example, in Cath Crowley’s *Gracie Faltrain* series, there are numerous moments when a reader conversant with soccer culture and language will find themselves doubting the legitimacy of the work. Despite Crowley’s assertion that she talked to several school-age soccer players, as well as making her own observations of soccer matches, few of the soccer matches depicted in her novels resemble soccer in a clearly identifiable way. Crowley’s choice of words has much to do with this – her constant reference to “kicking” instead of “shooting” and “passing” create a jarring experience, including when she has Coach say before a training session, “I want to see some solid kicking”. (Crowley 2006, p. 98) “Solid kicking” is an instruction that is so vague as to be almost meaningless. The on-field violence that occurs in the second

novel and the descriptions of the way the players move around the field also resemble Australian Rules football far more than they do soccer. Instead of soccer's structured spread of players, Crowley's players seem to cluster around the ball and each other, resembling more a version of soccer played by young children, where every player follows the ball. The violence in the novels also has the hallmarks of Australian Rules, because no one steps in to stop the behind-the-scenes violence, behaviour which soccer frowns upon. (Crowley 2006, pp. 114-5)

Here then is the crux of Crowley's credibility as a soccer writer. For whatever reason – possibly to centre the narrative on a single group of characters in one location (school) instead of multiple characters across two or more locations (school and assorted soccer clubs), Crowley has decided to make school soccer seem like the pinnacle of the code. (Crowley 2006, p. 22) Yet in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, where the *Gracie Faltrain* trilogy is largely set, school soccer is of at best only minor relevance; club soccer is where most of the game's importance lies.

It seems remarkable for Crowley to ignore the existence of club soccer at all, especially in the northern suburbs where club soccer is strong and girls' teams were relatively plentiful and accessible at the time Crowley wrote her *Gracie Faltrain* series. It is also remarkable that none of the boys play club soccer. All this seems to damage Crowley's narrative and her credibility as a writer on soccer. For those members of her presumed target audience – adolescent and teenage girls – it may not be so much of an issue, with soccer being a lens from which to examine the character of Gracie Faltrain and her faltering attempts at friendship and maturity.

But there may be problems for those readers with a soccer background. While any narrative has the right to invent and maintain its own reality, it also has to convince its



readers of the legitimacy of that invention. The failure to do so may mean that readers will then disbelieve the entirety of the narrative. For sport and literature, there is already distrust from readers that literature can ably convey the feeling and emotion of sport; for soccer in Australia, this is even more the case, because of the lack of knowledge about the game from those outside the game. When Gracie plays a one-on-one soccer game against a boy from another team (Crowley 2006, pp. 64-7) – seemingly played on a full sized pitch, with one goalkeeper each – Crowley’s credibility as a soccer writer reaches a nadir.

What to do though with those writers on Australian soccer who feel the need to provide a curated (and possibly confected) personal history of their involvement in the game? Writing for audiences that demand a certain level of credibility – almost always at least equal to if not greater than the reader’s own imagined sense of knowledge and credibility – any presentation of a lack of complete expertise in the ways of Australian soccer would see the relevant work as being considered fraudulent or worthless.

The reactions to this perception of being away from the centre tend to fall into two broad camps. One is that of the soccer (or perhaps *football*) purist – the Australian soccer supporter who after enduring years of perceived and real oppression of soccer in Australia, finds the heart of soccer’s empire (usually in Europe), and sees soccer as it was (at least in their own minds) intended to be – as a dominant cultural pursuit, and as a sporting *lingua franca*.

Aside from manifesting itself in the guise of the “football” purist, the ideological rhetoric also manifests itself in the form of the exclusivist rhetoric of the initiated. For example, in his foreword to Jesse Fink’s *15 Days in June*, (2007) the story of how Australia’s qualification for the 2006 World Cup supposedly changed the nation’s cultural psyche,

journalist and former soccer administrator George Negus makes several allusions to being part of a special club, that of the football (soccer) lover. Negus makes note of “badge wearing members of the so-called Australian “football family”. (2007, p. x) Remarking on the sudden bandwagon of soccer support in Australia, Negus talks about the notion that prior to 2006 and the Socceroos’ achievement of World Cup qualification, “we lifelong diehards felt we had been walking alone”. (2007, p. ix)

This inference of an almost secret society of soccer followers is a strange line for someone who was on the board of the game’s national organising body during the 1990s to make. Novelist Adrian Deans also makes a similar claim in the prelude of a piece on the night Australia qualified for the 2006 World Cup:

For generations, we poor benighted followers of Australian football have lived in fear and hidden our faces from the world.

Shunned and ridiculed by the mainstream, our tribe has assembled in secrecy – cowering in our caves – whispering the prophecy that one day The Giant would awaken and sweep the infidels from their lofty positions. (Deans 2012)

Deans admits his Sydney North Shore upbringing may have something to do with this sense of marginalisation. But his omission both in this piece and in his novel *Mr Cleansheets* of the existence of thriving soccer cultures elsewhere in Australia, highlights both the different ways soccer and its adherents are marginalised across Australia, but also the ways in which an individual experience can incorrectly be equated with the whole.

One logical conclusion with regards to this kind of thinking is that “real” football (soccer) culture exists outside of Australia. Fink notes, in a telling example, that even the foremost icon of Australian soccer, Johnny Warren, was reticent in calling Australia a soccer nation, with Warren believing that true soccer culture existed somewhere else. (2007, p. 13) If it is true that even Warren struggled to recognise the value of the nativist and possibly unique soccer culture that was right in front of him, what chance then that many Australian soccer followers would have in not being influenced by that point of view? The result of such attitudes is that in both direct<sup>66</sup> and indirect<sup>67</sup> ways, Australian soccer has seemingly always carried an inferiority complex about itself – that it would rather conform to the ideas of how soccer was played overseas, than adapt an overtly Australian ethos, even one which it had developed itself by virtue of its haphazard history.

Negus, Deans, Fink, Warren, and other commentators all note that the global and cosmopolitan nature of soccer is at odds with the provincialism of Australian sport, including soccer as it was played in Australia. (Fink 2007, p. 21)<sup>68</sup> Moreover, Fink lauds as “sensible” the tendency of Australian soccer fans in the past to opt for scraps of overseas football on television instead of attending local soccer played by ethnic social clubs. (Fink 2007, p. 11)<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Playing styles, organisation, and international relevance.

<sup>67</sup> “Appropriate” cultural attributes, and traits

<sup>68</sup> For a highly self-conscious example of this self-described “cosmopolitanism”, see George Negus’ 1996 description of himself as a “besotted ‘Europhile’” (Negus 1996), which fits in well with the idea among those of both the political left and right about soccer’s cosmopolitan and global nature.

<sup>69</sup> There is a certain level of irony here regarding this notion: the probably accidental inference is that soccer in Australia actually had a quintessential Australian quality that no one seems to have recognised.

For those of a left-wing political persuasion such as Negus, being part of the “football family” is also a likely indicator that you as a football fan will be more tolerant of other cultures and generally hold more progressive political views. For Negus, “the world game” allows Australians a truer means of expressing a civic or international identity, identifying Australianness as something other than that which is put forward by “xenophobes” and those “questioning multiculturalism”. (2007, p. x) Still, Negus’ motives and interpretations of civic and social inclusiveness with regards to Australian soccer have also come into question. Writing in his *Sydney Morning Herald* column in August 1996, the late Johnny Warren took aim at the attempts of Soccer Australia (the then governing body of Australian soccer, of which Negus was a board member) to “de-ethnicise” Australian soccer in order to create what Negus and Soccer Australia chairman David Hill considered a more inclusive image:

The ethnic purging attempted by Soccer Australia was nonsense, as I said in the column that I wrote in the *Herald* on Tuesday. No other sport would countenance such a move on one of their members.

I can speak with authority on this issue because of my long-term involvement in the sport. Unlike SA commissioner George Negus, I have lived all my life in soccer<sup>70</sup> and have experienced first-hand the passion and commitment of the people who are now being threatened with expulsion.

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<sup>70</sup> Note Warren’s blunt attempt to undermine Negus’ soccer loving credibility, by making a claim to superior longevity in the game, but also by virtue of that longevity emphasising Warren’s intimate involvement at the game at all levels, including an enduring proximity to those soccer followers at the grassroots.

I played with St George, a club of Hungarian origin. I was there when members passed the hats around the stands to raise money to build the club which in 1974 provided eight players for Australia's only successful World Cup campaign. These are people who should be treated with respect not disdain. (1996, p. 48)

Negus responded to the attack which, unsurprisingly, he took as a personal affront to his integrity:

To attribute racist and discriminatory attitudes to people involved – including myself – is a low, black act and probably actionable. (1996)

Negus then goes on to say:

Anyone who interprets as racist and discriminatory attempts by Soccer Australia, David Hill or anyone else to "Australian-ise" – as distinct from "de-ethnicising" – the world game by spreading its influence and attraction as far afield as possible in this country, has either missed the point entirely or has his own curious agenda. (1996)

What Negus meant when he claimed that he and Soccer Australia wanted to Australianise the game was to make it accessible to more Australians regardless of their ethnic background. In this piece Negus alleges that it is the insular ethnic communities themselves which are being discriminatory, who by virtue of holding onto their traditional club names, colours, chants and customs, create nearly insurmountable barriers for soccer supporters outside of specific ethnicities to support soccer in Australia.

Negus' interpretation of multiculturalism, that different ethnic communities should discard rigid protectionist tendencies in pursuit of maintaining one's culture, in order to come towards an "imagined middle", is typical of the direction Australian multiculturalism and by extension Australian soccer have taken. This is opposed to a more pluralist model with no pre-dominant cultural centre.

It is within this broad historical context in which Fink talks about World Cup qualification being used by some politicians as evidence of the vindication for multiculturalism – but also notes that just two months later the Cronulla riots questioned that notion. (2007, pp. 4-5) As much as left-wing commentators could see a vindication of multiculturalism due to the diverse ethnic and cultural make-up of the Socceroos and their supporters, right wing commentators and politicians were also able to see a vindication of assimilation to their cause. For example, speaking to the conservative Sydney Institute on the matter of Australian citizenship, then federal treasurer Peter Costello made the following remarks on the nature of the Socceroos crowd:

I was reminded of this recently when watching the Socceroos play in the World Cup Qualifier against Uruguay. A television commentator was moving amongst the crowd that was lining up to come into the ground. He came across an elderly woman with a heavy accent. He asked her where she came from, and she replied, I come from Uruguay to Australia twenty years ago. The reporter said, So you're barracking for Uruguay. The woman was outraged. No! she yelled back at him. I go for Australia! and looked incensed that he would think otherwise. Whether she went on to say Australia is my country I can't be sure but that is what she meant. (2006)

Costello's assertion here is part of a politically conservative worldview, that adopting citizenship is not merely the exchange of one passport for another, with no shift in a person's cultural or social attachment.

Expanding on Negus' idea that the increased popularity of soccer is indicative of the levels of social progress made by Australia, Fink sees Australia's fumbling attempts at greatness on the soccer field – often falling short – as emblematic of the failure of social progress on such issues as the republic, reconciliation and environmentalism. (2007, p. 6) Fink also addresses the patronising idea that “middle Australia had embraced the Socceroos”; patronising in the sense that regardless of the increased media and sponsor profile the Socceroos gained, soccer had already crossed into the mainstream.<sup>71</sup> (2007, p. 8) Nevertheless, Fink accepts the notion that in order to move forward, such narrative tropes have to be deployed. (2007, p. 9)

The other response is more conservative. These reactions range from those writers who are compelled to acknowledge soccer's global pre-eminence (against both their own prior judgements and cultural assumptions), to those writers who are transfixed by the exoticism of the experience of being in a country where a marginalised or even culturally non-existent pastime in Australia is seen in its supposed “native” state. For commentators such as Garry Lyon, after a lifetime spent within Australian Rules football culture, first as a player and then as a pundit, the experience that he and his game are not at the centre is humbling:

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<sup>71</sup> At least insofar as junior players were concerned

But the reality is the centre of the sporting universe does not lie here in Melbourne at the MCG, even on the last Saturday in September, as has been my somewhat naive perception for all these years.

And that can be a sobering conclusion to arrive at until you experience the phenomenon that is the World Cup. (2006)

On numerous occasions during his travelogue *Australia United*, Tony Wilson explores the nature of the relative credibility of those who became part of the Socceroos' supporter bandwagon following Australia's drought breaking qualification for the 2006 World Cup. Among those are the members of the AFL and NRL *Footy Show*, which were seen by some soccer fans as part of the archetypal anti-soccer media brigade.<sup>72</sup>

Within the creative works on soccer as experienced by Australians, the most extreme example of the pent up rage at soccer's cultural mistreatment from other sports comes late on in *Mr Cleansheets*. In the lead up to the FA Cup final, Eric Judd comes into contact with a soccer-hating Australian sports reporter sent over to the United Kingdom by commercial media to report on the event. Greg Beaufort, is described by Eric as "an ex-rugby international and one of those arseholes from the Australian media who hate and fear football and never lose an opportunity to slag it off". (Deans 2010, p. 472) Beaufort's interview with Eric, which begins with a soliloquy bemoaning the inexplicable popularity of soccer with the English public despite (in Beaufort's view)

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<sup>72</sup> Sam Newman, one of the hosts of the *AFL Footy Show*, was spat on while attending a party in Germany, after being heckled with "get off the bandwagon" and "what are you doing here now?" (Wilson 2006, p. 75)



the inherent dullness of the game, leads to Beaufort's comment about soccer only being played by "sheilas, wogs and poofers". (Deans 2010, p. 473)

In this case Deans' politics get too ambitious in his attempts to defend the toughness and validity of soccer as a sport and spectacle. While journalists like Beaufort have certainly existed in Australia, the kind of rhetoric that Beaufort puts forward is both wildly unprofessional and out of kilter with the public relations standards of the current age. If Beaufort (and Deans) had stopped there, it might not have jagged so much; but Beaufort is later seen in the tunnel at Wembley Stadium on FA Cup final day, making further reference to soccer being a game enjoyed by "florists and shirt-lifters". (Deans 2010, p. 497)

Beaufort's over-the-top rhetoric is even more remarkable when considering what and who Deans has failed to put in as a counterpoint. Considering the unlikely achievement of non-League Bentham United reaching the FA Cup final, let alone with a 40 year old Australian goalkeeper, it is strange that Deans fails to include a mention of a journalist sympathetic to soccer such as one working for SBS, Australia's most soccer friendly television network which has covered soccer for close to forty years. While there is one brief allusion to soccer already being mainstream in Australia made by Eric, the emphasis is still on how soccer has failed to make any inroads into Australian culture, denied access to mainstream respectability by boorish philistines such as Greg Beaufort.

Such strict parameters on who is "qualified" and allowed to discuss Australian soccer would quickly scupper a thesis like this. While the soccer backgrounds of the writers included in this study of Australian soccer literature is a necessary element of this thesis, it is possible to place too much emphasis on notions of soccer credibility. The

result of such a restrictive approach would be that many of the more interesting writers and texts would be omitted; that part of the point of analysing Australian soccer literature is to go beyond the usual suspects of Australian soccer writing means that the inclusion of writers of perceived lesser or dubious soccer credibility is essential.

A study of the personal soccer history of David Martin, the writer this thesis puts forward as the most interesting and pioneering writer on Australian soccer in literary formats, reveals further complications with attempts to prove or disprove a writer's credibility when writing about soccer. In *My Strange Friend*, Martin's autobiography which runs the gamut of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century's social and political upheavals, soccer has only a small part to play. However, the insights provided in these fragments reveal a man whose interest in soccer seems at best peripheral despite his own close proximity to the game through various stages of his life.

In his youth in Germany during the 1920s and 1930s, Martin mentions that he and his twin brother Rudi felt compelled to at least attempt to become competent footballers out of a sense of duty to their football fanatic father, but "we behaved as if we liked it, but it was not what we were cut out for". (Martin, D 1991, p. 15) The footballing involvement of Leo, Martin's father, was cut short soon after by the Nazis. (Martin, D 1991, p. 16) Later, after arriving in Britain during the late 1930s, Martin would accompany Leo to Arsenal's matches at Highbury – but these affairs are mentioned only as part of a collection of recreational options open to Martin including restaurants, cinemas, dancing, and prostitutes, most of which Martin seems far fonder than football. (Martin, D 1991, p. 134)

It is difficult to know what to make of both Martin's seeming lack of interest in soccer – insofar that his mentions of it in his autobiography are fleeting and dismissive – while

also taking into account the moment in Martin's autobiography where he equates himself with "Criton, the football loving artist" of *The Young Wife*. (Martin, D 1991, p. 261) Martin is someone who clearly recognised the importance of sport to the lives and recreational affairs of European migrants in his adopted of Australia, and was also by his own fleeting account of the affair "a committee man of a leading Melbourne club". (Martin, D 1991, p. 262)<sup>73</sup>

Do these contradictory biographical details undermine the believability of Martin's works dealing with soccer, or are these merely the concerns of a soccer supporter? Would a credible soccer background for Martin mean as much to a non-soccer supporter? Peter Goldsworthy, author of the novel *Keep it Simple, Stupid*, as well as at least one short story,<sup>74</sup> one poem,<sup>75</sup> and some general commentary on soccer in Australia has an extensive soccer background,<sup>76</sup> but this is seldom if ever brought up in reviews of his soccer novel *Keep it Simple, Stupid*. Yet for Goldsworthy, this was a

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<sup>73</sup> Curiously, Martin refuses to mention the relevant club. While the natural suspicion is that he was attached to the Jewish backed Hakoah club of Melbourne, the extant evidence is not clear on the matter. A short review of *The Young Wife* from the September 21<sup>st</sup> 1962 edition of *Soccer World* also fails to shed any further light on the matter. ('Soccer Featured in Aust. Novel' 1962)

In addition to all of this, during a review of the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games for the left-cultural magazine *Overland*, Martin acknowledges that while watching the soccer quarter-final between England and Bulgaria, that he mistook the Bulgarians playing in white for the English team and vice versa, and that the Bulgarians' easy win (6-1) was evidence against an English football revival. There are further mistakes in the article which Martin does not seem to be aware of – first, that the English team is in actuality a Great Britain representative outfit, made up by coincidence solely of Englishmen. Second, that the Great Britain side was made up mostly of amateur players, and not the best talent of England's professional ranks, while the Bulgarian team was in all likelihood made up of amateurs in name only, being funded by the Communist state apparatus. (Martin, D 1957, p. 16)

<sup>74</sup> "The Bet", published as part of Goldsworthy's collection of short stories, *Gravel*. (Goldsworthy 2010)

<sup>75</sup> "Trick Knee", published as part of Goldsworthy's poetry collection *This Goes With That*. (Goldsworthy 1991)

<sup>76</sup> Goldsworthy had played soccer for most of his life, even undertaking a knee operation to resume playing after "retiring". He had also coached junior teams at a high level and with some success, and his experiences at various South Australian soccer clubs has influenced his writings on soccer. (Goldsworthy 2011)

key motivation for writing that novel as “No-one seemed to have written about that world of the ethnic club, and I always enjoyed it”. (Goldsworthy 2011)

Kate Heidke’s credentials as a soccer expert can also be brought into question. Her digression into junior soccer politics in *What Kate Did Next* seems on the surface to be odd, given that soccer grading is taking place at an under 9 level. (Heidke 2010, pp. 55-6) At that age, it seems absurd verging on wrong that the character of Mardi would threaten to take her son Ben to another club. So are these details even right? It would seem that rotation and giving every child a go would be the natural state of affairs at what would be considered sub-junior level soccer. (Heidke 2010, pp. 242-3) If Heidke’s main interest, however, is in describing the spectrum of vanities suffered by upper-middle-class mothers, the fact that the soccer particularities of her novel may not be spot on seems less than important.

More important for the socio-cultural purposes of this thesis is the fact that Heidke decided on soccer of all the sports that she could have chosen; as did Martin, Goldsworthy, Crowley and most of the other writers. Though the credibility of any author as an authoritative commentator on soccer may be questioned by some, the use of soccer in their works is the more important aspect. The fact that they are or may be considered as outsiders, while needing to be taken into account, is only part of the framework of understanding their contributions to the genre of Australian soccer literature. The irregularity of their commentary – in style, setting and origins – is one of the commendable and noteworthy aspects of Australian soccer literature. Voices normally not heard from in mainline discussions of soccer in Australia have both room and agency to opine.

The opposite of that trope – writers who may be expected to cover soccer in their work, but who do not – is also worth discussing. One could for example interpret the near complete lack of soccer in the works of Christos Tsiolkas as a sign that Tsiolkas' credentials (or reputation) as the foremost writer of the multicultural (read: non-Anglo-Celtic) Australian experience are diminished by its omission. Soccer makes only fleeting appearances in Tsiolkas' novels. In *Loaded*, the protagonist Ari notes that when his older brother Peter moved out, he left his soccer posters behind (Tsiolkas 1998, p. 6);<sup>77</sup> meanwhile in *The Slap*, the adolescent girl Connie, recently arrived in Australia from Britain, kicks a stray soccer ball back to a group of boys. As noted in previous work on the matter, when looking at that one notable example of soccer in Tsiolkas' fictional oeuvre:

The question of cultural adaption emerges not through the viewpoints of the participants, who are mostly male high school students, but rather from that of a spectator, Connie, a teenage girl who has grown up in England. Connie becomes aware of her own cultural “otherness” when she corrects herself when thinking of the game as “football” instead of “soccer”. During the game, a stray pass heads in her direction, and when she kicks the ball back towards the game, the boys whoop in astonishment at her huge and unexpected kick; another layer of “otherness”, that of gender, is added to her feelings of displacement. The “otherness” of the game is further reinforced by other characters in the other brief mentions of soccer – one of the characters wears

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<sup>77</sup> It possible to infer from these slimmest of fragments a symbolic leaving behind of overt displays of ethnicity in order to please Janet, Peter's progressive/alternative Anglo-Celtic Australian girlfriend.

an Olympiakos Pireaus T-shirt; Connie's friend Richie, after hearing of Connie's monumental kick, asks if she "bent it like Beckham". Both these scenes reinforce the imported notion of the game – even the boys' soccer match is being played on an oval, not a rectangular field. The game is an intruder. (Mavroudis, P 2013, p. 491)

In some of his memoirist writings, Tsiolkas acknowledges his own strained relationship with soccer and sport in general. Writing for *The Bulletin* in December 1999, Tsiolkas detailed his personal difficulties with sport – centred on his lack of competence to play competitively, the perceived incompatibility of his homosexuality with sport, as well as his nascent intellectualism, with the hyper-masculine heterosexual ideals of those involved with sport. Amid those concerns however, Tsiolkas also reveals how and why soccer played little importance in his early life, except as a marker of the past and his family's foreign origins:

Dad tried valiantly to get us kids into soccer but we weren't interested: no one talked about soccer at school, you couldn't watch it on the television. We were Australian kids. Aussie rules won us over. (1999, p. 148)

These points of difference between the generations are further emphasised by the apparent experience of Tsiolkas' father at Australian Rules matches:

All the family ended up supporting Richmond and Dad dutifully took us kids along to Punt Road oval to watch the matches<sup>78</sup> – even though he understood nothing of the game and missed the precision and skill of soccer. (1999, p. 148)

Returning to the same material in 2016, Tsiolkas is more expansive on his move away from and discomfort with soccer:

I didn't have the physique or the talent for soccer. It is a sublime game, still the most balletic of the football codes. But Aussie Rules was an easier game to play, especially for an overweight kid. (Tsiolkas 2016, pp. 90-1)

So there was an aspect of the difficulty of playing soccer that put Tsiolkas off; but he also goes on to explain that Australian Rules football was also a difficult sport to play for him, both for his lack of ability but also due to his homosexuality. So where does the crucial ideological break with soccer come in to play, as opposed to sport as a whole? Tsiolkas says:

Soccer, during that first wave of post-World War II immigration, was staunchly ethnic. My dad was South Melbourne Hellas. But my friends were Serb and Croat, Turkish and Italian as well as Greek, and so our tribe became Richmond.

Maybe that, more than any other reason, made footy our game in the way that soccer could never be. Not back then.<sup>79</sup> We would all meet on the corner of

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<sup>78</sup> There is an interesting, probably unintentional error here. Richmond, the club that Tsiolkas supported, ceased playing matches at the Punt Road Oval ground at the end of the 1964 Victorian Football League season. Tsiolkas himself was born in 1965. It is unclear what caused the error here.

<sup>79</sup> Tsiolkas unfortunately does not elaborate on what changes have occurred since that would provide for a different outcome today.

Punt Road and Bridge Road, sling our arms around each other, make our way across the park to the MCG and barrack unanimously for one side, our side, Richmond. That ardent support for football, as well as our sharing of the English language, marked us out as different from our parents: it made us Australian. (Tsiolkas 2016, pp. 91-2)

Where in other, similar situations, migrant children may have found soccer to have provided the sense of connection and bonding across mono-cultural barriers, Tsiolkas and his friends find that a connection to soccer only serves to isolate them from each other, and to mainstream Australian culture as a whole. A blunt but otherwise eloquent allusion to the outsider status of soccer during this time is made the Australian rock band The Drugs in their song “Was Sport Better in the 70s?”<sup>80</sup>

We loved our football

We played it on weekends

And we didn't play wogball

Cos we wouldn't have any friends (2002)

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<sup>80</sup> The song is a knowing parody of both music oriented towards television sporting highlights packages (the accompanying music video for the song is a montage of the same), and also nostalgia for the supposedly “purer” sporting ethos of a previous age. More importantly, the song was recorded in Australian Rules, rugby league, and cricket versions, covering all the main bases of mainstream Anglo-Celtic Australian sporting interests.



The attitude of *The Drugs* and Tsiolkas lies in stark contrast to the recollections of Rita Zammit, a friend and travelling companion of writer Tony Wilson during the 2006 World Cup, who is quoted in Wilson's World Cup travel memoir *Australia United* as saying:

The bond between us through this game just surpasses anything. And it will be the same with Santo and any other Italian-Australian you'll meet here. We didn't have cricket and tennis. It didn't belong to us. This was the code that brought all of us together. All ethnics. (Wilson 2006, p. 155)

Tsiolkas' omission of soccer from his works may then be seen as the means by which he understands the (migrant) Australian sporting experience. Having omitted soccer from his own life, he has proceeded to omit it from the lives of his characters, even as he goes about describing in depth almost every other aspect of the migrant and diasporic experience – among which are included the spiritual, vocational, sexual and inter-personal. Though the omission of soccer as a subject of note in his work perhaps stems from Tsiolkas' own adolescent experiences:

My parents, like so many migrants decided to flee the inner city and in Year Eight I ended up in a school where only a handful of us came from Southern Europe. Asia or the Balkans. Soccer was wog-ball and nobody played it.<sup>81</sup> (2016, pp. 94-5)

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<sup>81</sup> It is worth noting that while during his time in the inner city and among fellow migrant children, Tsiolkas and his peers make a collective if not quite conscious decision to choose Australian Rules over soccer, that in the outer suburbs the decision is essentially made for him (and everyone else) by the apparent lack of any soccer culture at all.

This omission comes with its own costs. Tsiolkas is able to acknowledge these costs within the broader scope of the pose of the sport-hating intellectual, a pose which Tsiolkas acknowledges he took during his adolescence in both his 1999 and 2016 pieces on the matter:

At this new school my best friends were girls not boys, and we all shared an antipathy towards sport. Sport was for dickheads and conservatives. (2016, p. 95)

I came back to footy when I realised that the poses I had taken on were just as riddled with contradiction and hierarchy as was the locker-room banter of the jocks – if not more so. If footy was macho, then the language of the bookworms was elitist. I'm talking about class here, and it was a lesson I had to learn the hard way. I listened to sneering conversations about footballers and sports fans and realised the people being insulted were my uncles and best mates, my friends and relations.<sup>82</sup> (1999, p. 150)

But while Tsiolkas is able to identify the way his teenage disavowal of sport as a whole and Australian Rules football in particular took place – and which saw him separate himself from a large part of mainstream Australian society – he does not detail how his rejection and later omission of soccer served to separate him from migrant communities beyond the simple generation gap; whereby first generation European migrants are interested in soccer, and their children in Australian Rules football:

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<sup>82</sup> It is worth comparing this with Jo Case's point about how it is fashionable to be anti-sport in the arts. (Case 2012)

I fell deeply and reciprocally in love with a boy who barracked for St Kilda. His immigrant father, just like mine, preferred soccer, *real* football, to Aussie Rules.<sup>83</sup> (2016, p. 98)

Taking a path like Tsiolkas' omission of soccer in his work to the extreme, the noted Greek-Australian poet Pi O ignores soccer and sport almost entirely. This blind-spot is an unusual feature of a writer so closely associated with the lives of European migrants in inner Melbourne during the 1970s and 1980s. Despite so many of his phonetically obsessed "language of the street" poems being less interested in the content rather than the form and style of those speaking, one cannot simply ignore the ideas present in the voices of the characters that Pi O seeks to represent. That many of Pi O's poems are supposed to be reflective of the day-to-day concerns and interests of migrant men in and around the Fitzroy area of the 1970s and 1980s, the absence of soccer in these discussions can, and should be viewed as extremely problematic.

In his one (known) poem dealing overtly with soccer, the either derisively or ethno-phonetically titled "Soccer", Pi O can still manage to deal only indirectly with the game. The poem's protagonist is working in a café on a Saturday afternoon, when the shop's main clientele, Greek migrant men, get up and leave in order to go to a soccer match between the Greek backed Hellas and the Italian backed Juventus:

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<sup>83</sup> Looking further back into Tsiolkas' work, these omissions, contradictions and barriers of understandings also emerge briefly in Tsiolkas' second novel, *The Jesus Man*. In it, Chinese-Australian Soo-Ling is unable to grasp the importance of Australian Rules football to her Fitzroy supporting boyfriend, the half-Greek, half-Italian Tommy. Tsiolkas emphasises Soo-Ling's feeling of complete alienation as an Asian spectator during one of her rare visits to a Victorian Football League match with Tommy during the late 1980s.

At about

one o'clock

the whole shop got up

and went to the soccer; Juventus

v Hellas (out at

Royal Park) cars and

car-doors slamming outside

like pigeons

on a roof. (1989, p. 110)

The protagonist then spends the majority of the poem describing his world as affected by existing outside the importance of soccer. A scant few customers enter the shop during the duration of the soccer match, and the street outside is also largely quiet. That Pi O's protagonist uses the time off to begin his nascent journey into becoming a poet is of some relevance here – once again the Australian notion of the (creative) intellectual separating themselves<sup>84</sup> from the coarse sport loving working class. The

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<sup>84</sup> Or perhaps feeling socially and culturally marginalised by not only his probable dislike of soccer, but also his inability to leave his post as a worker.

return of the men to the café after the game sees the return of normality to the world, as the men begin ordering coffees, soft drinks and filling the shop with noise.

For Pi O, the time during the match itself is experienced almost as if the world has paused; the end of the match and its result is referred to in an almost offhand manner, as a mere footnote:

Hellas lost.

Juventus won. (1989, p. 111)

A footnote and result of almost no consequence to either the poet, or in the poet-protagonist's estimation, to the café's clientele. But how much faith can readers put in the poet-protagonist's view if the interlocutor has what may be an inherent bias against soccer and sport? The words expressed may be truthfully reflective of his own feelings, as well as providing important insights into the lives of first and second generation migrants who are uninterested in sport. But as Pi O is in his own way a record keeper of a specific form of migrant language and dialect as well as both directly and indirectly its thematic content, then the omission of soccer creates a gap in the field that he explores.

Apart from the stricture of running a small café, upon which there is the expectation that it will be open regardless of what goes on outside its walls, the poem's narrator also exists outside the Greek migrant culture because of his lack of interest in soccer. While there is no explicit sense of marginalisation here, the implied forms of being on the margins are plentiful. The unnamed narrator shows no interest in the game, finding himself existing outside the boisterous group of Greek migrants which frequent his

café. The implication also exists that his nascent literary bent will also come to add a barrier between himself and the culture he resides in, even though he is by virtue of his employment as a café proprietor, in the best position to understand and document the existence of this sub-culture.<sup>85</sup>

It is possible however to read too much into these details – after all, why should a writer, any writer, be compelled to be the embodiment of their own text, even one which seeks to be a part of the genre of memoir or at least borrows the qualities of that genre? Should we take these texts to be representative or merely illustrative? Ideally, the representations and depictions of different groups, and the autobiographical aspects contained within Australian soccer literature, should never be taken as a singular voice, but rather as an example. Each piece added to the genre adds nuance to the overall understanding of different demographics.

A portion of the Australian soccer public seems to demand something different however – a sense of purity or authenticity that instinct<sup>86</sup> tells them could not possibly exist in a literary form. That rather than *literariness*, with its potential for deep psychological, social or cultural analysis that may undermine the assumptions of audiences, the demand is for *literalness*, a rigid and conformist re-telling of events.

This often includes an extrapolation, whether deliberate or otherwise, of a singular soccer experience or point of view as being representative of that of the whole. While

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<sup>85</sup> It is arguable here that the historical sub-culture of ethnic soccer in Australia was actually a *sub*-sub-culture. With migrants already existing within a subaltern state in their new country, any of their interests which did not align with the cultural interests of the hegemonic culture become doubly obscure/marginalised.

<sup>86</sup> Or common sense.

it is possible to do this in any form of writing on such matters, in those cases where the emphasis of a writer is on the collective experience, the nuance of the individual experience can get lost, or cast aside in favour of a broad, politically and/or culturally conformist collective. This collective is one which suits the writer's personal views at the expense of a complicating diversity. The examples of Peter Costello's Uruguayan lady, or Tony Wilson's Italian-Australians who have formally and irrevocably pledged their allegiances to Australia in *Australia United*, have few if any counterparts from differing political or cultural angles.

This is one reason why literary attempts at exploring Australian soccer and its cultural sphere of influence are so few and far between – by creating even a notional sense of interpretive distance from the game itself, the sense of authorial and experiential credibility which is seen as the de facto preserve of journalism or the basest levels of “lived experience” is damaged in the minds of potential audiences. Socrates' notion that “the unexamined life was not worth living” never stood a chance when put up against the tastes of the Australian soccer public.

## Chapter 4: Anglophilia, Anglo-Celtic Conformity, and Disruption

This chapter discusses the difficulty of Anglo-Celtic Australians in reconciling their combined sense of Australianness and Britishness with the fact that the predominant British sporting pastime was soccer, a game whose cultural value was largely negligible in Australia. Through an analysis of literary works in which Australians travelled overseas and encountered soccer, a number of viewpoints and reactions are observed, among them politeness, confusion, wonder, and parochialism; but most importantly, in almost every case, there is an attendant disruption to latent notions of the Anglophilia which lurks unacknowledged within Australian culture.

Fay Zwicky's poem "World Cup Spell 1998" (2006) is a playful Homeric allegory of her experience watching the 1998 World Cup<sup>87</sup> final on television. While Zwicky spends most of the poem attributing heroic qualities to Brazilians and Frenchmen, the end of the poem ends in disappointment and hollowness:

Wing this incantation to my heroes

as I sit, couch potato frustrate

in the hollow anglo-saxon silence (Zwicky 2006, p. 67)

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<sup>87</sup> The occasion of a soccer World Cup is an interesting phenomenon in Australian sporting culture. As Hallinan and Hughson have noted: "Indeed, the World Cup provided soccer with occasion to slip its usual marking as "other than Australian", i.e. the marking of soccer as being from elsewhere, as a foreign game, and for this reason existing on the margins of the Australian Anglophone sporting mainstream". (2009, p. 1)



What is the origin of the “hollow Anglo-Saxon silence” that haunts Zwicky? This chapter hopes to go some way toward answering that question, and exploring what Australian soccer literature intimates of the processes and consequences of Anglo-Celtic Australians’ fraught relationship with the so-called world game.

Discussions about soccer and ethnicity in Australia for the most part overlook Anglo-Celtic Australians.<sup>88</sup> Tara Brabazon notes for example that while test cricket matches between England and Australia are part of a cultural dialogue between the coloniser and the colonised, (2000, p. 13) soccer’s marginal place in Australia means that a similar dialogue between Australia and England is much less coherent. This stems in part from Anglo-Celtic Australians having an unusual semi-tethered relationship with their origins, which differs from members of other migrant groups: “Anglo-Australians are both colonizers and colonized, dominating and dispossessing the indigenous population, but remaining colonized by the English.” (Brabazon 2006, p. 129)

During and immediately following the colonial era, Australian identity had a strong cultural, racial and ethnic association with Britain. Later, as the strings of kinship with Britain suffered official and unofficial cuts, Australians of Anglo-Celtic heritage began reimagining themselves as simply being “Australian”. Yet Britain continued to act as a sort of ethno-cultural phantom limb, with Ghassan Hage describing Australian identity as a “modality of Britishness”. (2000, p. 196) Arguing that this identity was modified via the terms of Australian class egalitarianism, Hage cites the chief qualifying factor

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<sup>88</sup> Anglo-Celtic Australian or Anglo-Australian may come across as clumsy definitions or categories, but they are no more or less clumsy than a category such as “Greek-Australian”. Categories like these imply a certain amount of cultural uniformity. If Anglo-Celtic Australian is a clumsy grouping of a diverse group of people, it is at least better and more definite than the vague “Australian”, which carries with it a number of assumptions about belonging and cultural hegemony which deserve to at least having more tangible said about them.

for becoming an Australian as being Anglo-Celtic and white. (2000, p. 198) As Eleni Pavlides notes:

The Australian nation-state is not a static thing, it is as much a discursive practice and imaginative projection as it is a geographic territory and a state and civic polity. Well into the twentieth century, Australians continued to look towards the unreal homeland of Britain to locate Australia imaginatively and morally within the British Empire (and consequently within the natural superiority of the “West”). Even today, the need to claim a British (and hence Western) inheritance appears to be pre-eminent in the nation’s cultural and political discourse. (2013, p. 1)

Instead of disrupting these links to Britain, the waves of post-second world war migration from continental Europe (then Asia, the Middle East, and Africa) served to further naturalise connections between “Australians” and Britain. Pavlides argues that “as Australia’s post-war immigration programme brought in immigrant groups of much greater difference, Anglo-Celtic dissimilarities were subsumed and rendered less obvious”. (2013, p. 4)

The legacy of this and related ideologies means that even under the framework of multiculturalism, Anglo-Celtic Australians maintained the status of being the nation’s cultural hegemony, the keepers of the ethno-cultural balance. (Hage 2000, pp. 118-22) The outcome of this ideology is that Australians of all backgrounds have an aversion to considering Anglo-Celtic Australians as being *Anglo-Celtic* Australians, that is, an ethnic group in its own right. Instead, they are simply deemed *Australians*,

showing how far discussions on multiculturalism and pluralist Australian identity have yet to travel.<sup>89</sup>

One effect of this has been an upsurge in the usage of the phrase “un-Australian” since the 1990s to describe a variety of phenomena located outside hegemonic Anglo-Australian culture. (Pavrides 2013, p. 3) The slurs directed to soccer – of being foreign, effeminate and weak – fit within this collection of purportedly un-Australian characteristics, in the sense that these adjectives describe what is non-Australian about the sport. While on the surface the Anglo-Celtic relationship to soccer seems simple, closer analysis of the literature reveals a number of tensions. Soccer, while culturally out of place in Australia, is not out of place in Britain. This leads to a revulsion of soccer in Australia by Anglo-Celtic Australians, but it is not a revulsion which is extrapolated by necessity to Australian experiences of soccer in Britain.

This chapter covers the experiences of Anglo-Celtic Australians encountering soccer both at home and abroad. It looks at the complications this brings to Anglo-Celtic Australian identity. These ideas will be developed in the subsequent chapters on British-Australians and “ethnic” Australians. Unlike the bulk of the works to be covered in this thesis (novels, poetry, plays, short stories) many of the soccer experiences of Anglo-Celtic Australians have been relayed via letters, diaries, memoirs and opinion pieces. Moreover, many of the depictions of Anglo-Celtic Australians and soccer in Australian soccer literature also take place in non-Australian contexts, especially in

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<sup>89</sup> “Whiteness” in Australian culture remains an underutilised term for identifying the culturally privileged position of Anglo-Australians compared to their “ethnic” counterparts. For more, see (Baranay 2006, p. 122).

Britain. Much of the Australian soccer literature this chapter seeks to cover is, as a result, based around memoir writing and travel writing as a subset of memoir writing.

### **A familiar culture with an unfamiliar game**

Tourism as an agent of cultural change has been undervalued in scholarly circles. (White 2013, p. 1) Regarding the development of a distinct Australian identity which was at least notionally independent of a British identity, Australians were at the forefront of the kind of travel which saw a change of Australians' sense of self in relation to Britain. (White 2013, p. 2) As Andrew Hassam observes:

Departure is conventionally seen as departure from a place, but if we consider the ways in which places are culturally constructed, we can see that departure changes the nature of the place left behind. (2000, p. 90)

Richard White further asserts that as part of this process Australians had come habitually to separate the world into three parts: the English-speaking, British-derived world; the romantic and foreign European continent; and the rest. (2013, p. 4) Most importantly though, Australians “readily identified with the British past, as something [to which] they could connect themselves”. (White 2013, p. 5)

Australian colonial travellers frequently compiled diaries of their trips “home” to the mother country, and the works of several Australian writers who cover sport have their

diaries fit into an ersatz genre of sport travel writing.<sup>90</sup> The tourist path for Australians in Britain was well worn by the time professional sport had come into practice.<sup>91</sup> (Hassam 2000, p. 92) For migrants of the colonial period the evidence suggests that “being British and being Australian were not such mutually exclusive categories as they are assumed to be today”. (Hassam 2000, p. 14) England, especially, seemed familiar to Australians, and so did at least some of the sport taking place. Early Australian sport had an overtly English heritage and aesthetic. (Adair 1998, p. 22)

David Malouf goes further, contending that (modern) sport is an Anglo-Saxon creation and that the values it embodies are both contained within British culture but also disseminated throughout the Empire. (Hirst 2007, pp. 110-1) Malouf also contends that the cricketing teams Australia sent over to England in the 1870s were the first time Britain was compelled to contend with Australia as a single and separate entity, treated differently from its sibling colonies. (Hirst 2007, p. 111) Sports like cricket and horseracing allowed for a comparison between the home country and its colony, but also provided a shared experience – of blood, kinship, and culture.<sup>92</sup> (Hassam 2000, p. 104)

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<sup>90</sup> While Australian “expatriate” writing about soccer would appear to have more than a surface level relationship to travel writing by Australians which includes references to soccer, the seeming lack of such texts – written from the point of view of an Australian permanently residing overseas – is the primary reason why such work is not included in this thesis. It is also the reason why analysis of the genre of expatriate writing has been omitted. Moreover, usage of the term “expatriate” is a term which contains the possibility of the privileging of one kind of migrant over another, as well as what Graham Huggan calls the “morally tainted connotations of extreme individualism and careerism”. (Huggan 2009, p. 6) Huggan also notes that the “term ‘expatriate’ itself may be falling out of usage, and that it is being replaced by more ostensibly up-to-date terms such as ‘transnational’ or ‘cosmopolitan’”. (Huggan 2009, p. 7)

<sup>91</sup> With the necessary caveat that such travel was generally limited to members of the higher social classes.

<sup>92</sup> For more on the possible role that sport purportedly played in the development of Australian identity see Mandle (1973); Stoddart (1986); Cashman (2002); and Booth and Tatz (2000).

The experience of Australians going overseas and experiencing cultures where soccer is by far the most popular sport has become a specialised genre of soccer writing. This is especially the case in recent years as Australians have travelled overseas in large numbers in order to experience soccer phenomena such as the World Cup. Yet this experience of overseas soccer – Australians seeing their own nation as being at the furthest margins of soccer’s global empire – has been at the heart of the Australian soccer experience almost since the sport’s organisational establishment. The importance of travel writing within the context of Australian soccer literature is that these pieces of writing provide the most obvious and overt examples of engagement with soccer itself as an outsider pursuit. These writings also place the Anglo-Celtic Australian in the position of the marginal, a cultural position they are unaccustomed to holding in Australia.

The change of a social identity via travel is dependent on encountering something or someone different from oneself. (Leed 1991, p. 264) Under that framework tourism involves encountering a world that is not ours and a people who are not us. (Jack & Phipps 2005, p. 1) While this is largely true, Australians travelling to Britain often expected the British to be “us”, perhaps more “us” than we were ourselves. Australians heading overseas merely to find another, perhaps more authentic version of themselves, would be surprised upon arriving that no such version of themselves existed. Instead a heightened sense of difference was encountered. When Australians went overseas, they encountered football codes which they found unfamiliar, even if many of the contextual elements, such as boisterous crowds, were familiar. In the case of soccer, which by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century already existed mostly on the margins of Australian sporting culture, the game was already something strange, out of place, and unusual to Australian travellers who encountered it on their travels.

The notion of travel or tourism is more complicated than the simple progression of explorer, traveller and tourist.<sup>93</sup> For example the Australian soldier during World War I, whether of immediate British origin or not, was unlike his contemporary travellers. They were overseas not because they could afford to be, but rather because they had been brought over to perform a duty. That duty, nevertheless, was not forced but was voluntary, and may have included the desire to see the world. The soldiers, though stationed overseas, were largely based in groups of their own cultural makeup. But they would have also interacted with members of other Empire nations, especially the British.<sup>94</sup>

Australian soldiers spread throughout Europe during the Great War provide some of the earliest written correspondence on Australians encountering soccer. These letters from the front, as they relate to the soldiers' experience of soccer, take on different tones. Some are neutral, others mildly enthusiastic, and others dismissive of the merits of the game. (Syson 2014, pp. 2348, 50) Within these letters there is also a variance in discussions about soccer's exoticness versus its ordinariness. (Syson 2014, pp. 2350, 1) These letters have few literary pretensions, but they are important indicators of both establishment and lay opinions of soccer from people who had probably only come into direct contact with the game during their war service. Just as importantly,

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<sup>93</sup> The notion here being that an "explorer" is the first of one's kind to reach a previously "unexplored" realm; that a "traveller" relies on pre-existing knowledge and infrastructure, but is still responsible for the majority of the logistics of his journey; while the "tourist" need not think for themselves whatsoever, there being nothing left to discover and with every element of their destination having been accommodated to their needs by the thousands or millions who have ventured to their destination of choice beforehand. (Williams, CT 1998, p. 48) (Hamilton-Paterson 2006, p. 228)

<sup>94</sup> It is worth noting however that a substantial number of the Australian soldiers were themselves first generation migrants from Britain. More research needs to be undertaken to understand their wartime sporting experiences, and if those experiences differed substantially from their "native born" counterparts.

these letters were also reprinted in news publications back in Australia, contributing (or sometimes not) to the editorial line that soccer was an exotic game.<sup>95</sup>

A much more hostile reaction to an Australian witnessing soccer on his travels was that of George Cathie, a delegate to the Victorian Football League (VFL).<sup>96</sup> In his piece “Australian Game Vastly Superior”, published in the grand final edition of the VFL’s *Football Record* publication in 1934, Cathie (who was also editor of the *Football Record* and a former player), provides his opinion of a soccer match he viewed while on travelling through England:

Whilst in Newcastle I saw the opening match of the soccer season and to say I was disappointed is to put it very mildly. Believe me, soccer is not in the same street as our game and it made me feel proud to belong to an organisation that plays the Aussie code. There was little enthusiasm amongst the crowd, which numbered about 14,000, and the deliberate “kicking-out” was atrocious and a blot on their game.

The full backs are the only players allowed to touch the ball with their hands, and they are afraid, when in possession, to leave the goal by more than 15 yards. Then they punt the ball with a kick which as often as not goes in the opposite direction to where it is intended. What salaries would await some of our Aussie rules full backs if they were to come over here. (1934, p. 5)

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<sup>95</sup> Unfortunately, Syson’s research has not extended to including letters from the front by Australians from entrenched soccer playing districts such as the Hunter Valley and Illawarra regions in New South Wales.

<sup>96</sup> The premier Australian Rules football competition at the time.



Ian Syson, who critiqued Cathie's epistle in a paper dealing with the decline in relations between Australian Rules football and soccer in Melbourne during the 1920s and 1930s, describes Cathie's letter as "fabricated (if not delusional)" (2015, p. 8) and filled with a sort of "self-loathing xenophobia". (2015, p. 9) But if that is the case, it was a self-loathing xenophobia not unheard of in Cathie's hometown of Melbourne. For example, the famed Australian writer George Johnston noted of his youth in Melbourne during the late 1920s that:

The first code of football I played was soccer, but I had to give it up when I was about seventeen because my elder brother dismissed it as a "sissy game" and insisted I should be playing Australian Rules. We were living in Melbourne, the birthplace of "Aussie Rules" and besides, it was tougher.

He made me throw away my shin-pads and for the next few years we played Rules together.<sup>97</sup> (1972, pp. 259-60)

The notion of travel writing, while primarily about Australians experiencing soccer overseas in its "native" habitat, also includes the recollections of those who witnessed touring overseas soccer sides during their visits to Australia. In that sense, the poems of Charles Hayward provide important insights into the attitudes of some of those who witnessed the visits of those touring sides. Hayward, who was then the editor of *The*

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<sup>97</sup> Ironically, the poet Martin Johnston, George Johnston's son, having grown up in England and in Greece became a dedicated fan of the Greek soccer club Olympiakos Piraeus. (Tranter 1993, p. xvii) Johnston also wrote a poem with a slightly obtuse soccer theme, "The Rout of San Romano; or, Arsenal 3 Manchester United 2" (1993, p. 56), which AustLit had catalogued under the unhelpful "football" category.

*Bulletin*, wrote his poems under several pseudonyms,<sup>98</sup> usually as the introductory segment to the “Sporting Notions” section of *The Bulletin*.<sup>99</sup>

Hayward’s extant poems on soccer have rather little to do with the game, preferring to deal with the relative exoticism of the participants. In “The Football Cup”, Hayward remarks on the massive crowd at the first Wembley Stadium FA Cup final. Having, in all probability, not witnessed the event personally, Hayward’s main interest is the novelty of the fervour and size of the crowd, despite the crush of the crowd and the injuries sustained.

From all corners of the land they press,  
  
Disablement defying and distress,  
  
To see West Ham and Bolton boot the ball,  
  
And settle who shall Soccer champions be  
  
For nineteen-twenty-three. (1923)

Hayward shows little interest in the match itself, and no obvious connection to Australia or Australian culture (much less Australian soccer) other than a vague inference that his audience would be interested in what the citizens of the mother-country are up to. Likewise in his poem “A Ten-Thousand Pounder” (1925), Hayward remarks on the

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<sup>98</sup> Among his pen-names were Thomas the Rhymer; “. the R; Midford; Oxmead; Viator; Iford; Pipards; A. H; and Andree Hayward.

<sup>99</sup> Hayward was a journalist who according to his Australian Dictionary of Biography entry “saw verse as an essential ingredient of journalism”. (Bennett 1983)

then novel instance (for an Australian audience, at least) of the record setting transfer fee paid by English football club Newcastle United for the star Scottish forward Hughie Gallacher. Again, it is the novelty and newsworthiness of the account that Hayward is interested in, and not soccer itself – and there is not even the slightest inference of an Australian connection. In “To The Barrackers” (1923) Hayward deals more directly with an Australian soccer match, in this case a tour by a Chinese team of Australia. Yet it is a poem that is again less interested in the game – we know only that it refers to a pending soccer tour – than it is with promoting a heightened level of courtesy from Australian sports followers toward the touring side.

The exoticism of foreign touring soccer teams is never far from Hayward’s mind. In his poem “The Modern Bohemian”, (1927) written during the course of the Australian tour by the Czechoslovakian club Bohemians,<sup>100</sup> Hayward takes on the apparent modern Czechoslovakian obsession with soccer at the expense of the arts and music. Hayward begins by asking:

Where is the Bohemia that we knew

Or dimly in our dreams descried.

The land where poets, painters too,

Convention’s ukases defied (1927)

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<sup>100</sup> And not as erroneously stated in a previous article by this writer, based on Hayward’s travels in Europe.

No indication is made that soccer itself holds any inherent interest for Hayward, only the fact that he thinks the “Bohemians” would be better off pursuing their older, more famous interests. Without having the knowledge that Hayward was writing on a tour of Australia by a foreign soccer club, later audiences who may inadvertently come across this poem would have little basis upon which to assess the poem in its historical context. The same goes for Hayward’s other poem on soccer in Australia, “Chinese Footballers” (1941), which is more or less a rehashing of “The Modern Bohemian” with added racial slurs. As in the “Bohemians” poem, Hayward is commenting on a touring soccer team during their visit to Australia, without any overt mention of such. Most of his interest is on the perceived racial differences between the Chinese and Caucasian races:

Queer to think in bygone ages that their race

had seers and sages

Who the secrets of the heavens could divine.

When our forebears pelt-clad bodies, hunted

for their scran with waddies,

Or accumulated acorns for their swine. (1941).

While Cathie was focused on soccer solely for the purposes of unfavourable comparison to his own game, and Hayward mostly for the exoticism of soccer’s participants, others writers used their fleeting proximity to soccer for different purposes. Frank Hardy’s apologia-ridden *Journey into the Future* (1952) includes

thoughts on three soccer matches he attended during the 1951 Soviet football season. Hardy does not attempt to understand soccer's appeal as a sport,<sup>101</sup> but rather seeks to counter the idea prevalent in the West that Soviet citizens are not allowed to have fun. (1952, pp. 104, 19) Hardy also seeks to emphasise the similarities between football supporters in the USSR with those in Melbourne,<sup>102</sup> even if the codes themselves differ in their rules. Hardy notes the Soviet crowd's disapproval of the referees, their ability to suffer as supporters,<sup>103</sup> their desire for good sportsmanship, as well as their desire for the underdog to triumph (1952, pp. 108, 10-13) as being examples of ways in which football fans in the Soviet Union were of a kind with their Australian counterparts. Speaking with his wife Rosslyn after one of the matches, Hardy's wife asked:

“Well, how was the football?”

“Change the rules and the language and I was at the football in Melbourne”, I replied. (1952, p. 110)

Aside from Hardy's attempts to normalise Soviet society for his Australian audience, this chapter also demonstrates that Hardy is familiar with the sport of soccer prior to his arrival (even if he himself knows little about it) and assumes that his potential audience is also familiar with soccer on at least a base level. While it is possible to

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<sup>101</sup> Though Hardy does seem to appreciate the “system, speed and ball control” of the Army team. (Hardy, F 1952, p. 105)

<sup>102</sup> Though at times it seems that Hardy conflates the Melbourne footballing experience as being indicative of the entire Australian football supporting experience.

<sup>103</sup> Hardy notes here with some delight that the Russian equivalent of the Victorian term for a supporter of a football club, “barracker”, is “sufferer”.

take Hardy's lack of criticism of the sport as being part of the apologetic nature of the book, at no point during his evaluation of Soviet soccer does Hardy seek to denigrate soccer. When the Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens attempts to convince Hardy of the merits of soccer versus Australian Rules football:

"You must try to see the replay, Frank," Ivens said. "I know you don't think the game is a patch on Australian rules but..."

Zana, Hardy's guide and translator, retorts that:

"Oh, he thinks there's nothing like anything Australian" Zana interrupted laughing. (1952, p. 111)

The one time the merits of soccer as compared with Australian Rules is brought up in Hardy's piece, the question is not of which sport is best in Hardy's opinion, but that Hardy's supposed Australian parochialism would prevent him from being able to choose the "non-Australian" option by default.

### **Australians and soccer in its natural habitat**

For many Australians involved in soccer, the English are the cultural stewards of the game wherever it exists, and wherever they go. As a result, it falls upon Australian participants or spectators to either pay deference to the English or prove their worthiness as soccer fans and players by exhibiting such superior knowledge or obsession with the game that the English cannot help but at least show respect, if not quite admiration. In the examples of Adrian Deans' *Mr Cleansheets*, Tony Wilson's *Making News* and Ian C. Smith's "Terrace View", this is complicated however by the

behaviour of the English themselves. The prejudices of English soccer fans and their privileged sense of Empire (linking both colonisation and the spread of soccer worldwide as a by-product of that colonisation), are not always appreciated by Australians.

Those attending or participating in English football culture from outside of it may expect to be able to partake in this culture, and possibly exchange some of their own knowledge and cultural practice. But what happens when the exotic culture one wishes to become involved in refuses to change in order to include outsiders? The Anglo-Celtic Australian in these situations, already nominally locked out of his home soccer culture by his own refusal to demote himself within Australian soccer's cultural hierarchy, also finds himself locked out of English soccer because he is foreign – and identifiably foreign because of the difference in accent.

That sense of “being there” and “in the thick of it” is an essential aspect of the overseas soccer experience. Australians of all ethnic backgrounds hold a reverence for the “purity” of the English game that reflects both a form of the Australian cultural cringe<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> . The Australian “cultural cringe” is an influential theory developed by A. A. Phillips (1950) which describes the tendency of Australians to prefer overseas (especially European) cultural productions over their Australian equivalents. The “cringe” also includes its opposite, the “cringe inverted”, in which a boorish attitude emerges which extols everything Australian over anything foreign.

and reveals a latent Anglophilia.<sup>105</sup> <sup>106</sup> With regards to soccer, Johnny Warren for example refers to Australians' "entrenched Anglophilia", (2002, p. xviii) noting that when Australians take an interest in soccer, it is usually through an abstract and distant interest in English football.

This attitude manifests in Adrian Deans' novel *Mr Cleansheets*, which celebrates the protagonist Eric Judd's relief at finally being involved with "real" football culture. Among Eric's initial favourable impressions upon arriving in England is the fervour of the English soccer supporter scene – albeit a fervour that sometimes leads to violence – compared to the laidback approach of those soccer followers at home. (Deans 2010, pp. 39-41) The different level of coverage devoted to soccer in England compared to Australia also impresses Eric:

I'd managed to pick up a couple of newspapers and couldn't believe how much was devoted to the game; the back eight pages in *The Sun* and the back twelve pages, plus the front page in the *Daily Mail*. You'd get half a page, six pages in from the back in Australia. This was fuckin' paradise. (Deans 2010, p. 39)

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<sup>105</sup> There appear to be few direct references to Australian forms of Anglophilia in academia. What reference does exist in this field tends to revolve around the cultural and political ideologies of conservative Australian prime ministers such as Robert Menzies and John Howard, or to conservative literary attitudes which emphasise the English literary canon over the merits of Australia literature. Though now considerably dated, the most pointed commentary on Australians' latent Anglophilia comes via Victor Callan and Cynthia Gallois, who when talking about Australians' general attitude towards language that "the research that does exist suggests that Australia as a whole will remain a strongly monolingual and Anglophile country. The Anglo-Australian majority still look to Britain and Ireland for much of their cultural inspiration". (1987, p. 63)

A soccer example of this concerns the displaying of the FA Cup trophy in Australia, which led Craig Johnston to note that, "One of the by-products of the exercise was that it illustrated the tremendous respect Australians have for English soccer and such institutions as the FA Cup". (1989, p. 25)



The most absurd moment in Deans' attempt to present Eric as a football purist *par excellence* is when Eric hears the ringtone of a stranger's mobile phone at a music festival play the old theme to *The Big Match*, the iconic<sup>107</sup> tune of the long running British football television programme:

I hadn't heard the "Big Match" theme in donkey's years and was keen to talk to the bloke if he was an old school football type. (Deans 2010, p. 118)

All of which reinforces Eric's preceding thoughts that England and the English language as spoken in England were the home and language of football respectively. (Deans 2010, p. 39) Despite a substantial history of Australian soccer players who had made careers out of playing soccer in England, the emphasis is clear: Australia's soccer culture lacks something important. Absent is that feeling of its being an all-consuming affair. This absence is compounded by the fact that those Australian soccer players who succeed in England earn a professional footballing legitimacy as well as cultural footballing credibility that is elusive if not impossible to attain in Australia. When Eric's dream of playing for Manchester United is shattered without mercy early in the narrative, he feels as if England, and by extension football, has rejected him (Deans 2010, p. 65).

Later, when Eric plays for the fictional non-league side Bentham United, and especially when he plays in the FA Cup – the most romantic and quintessentially English of all football competitions – there is at least some affirmation of Eric's sense of being a

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<sup>107</sup> Since *The Big Match* made use of several theme songs during its run on television, and Deans does not make clear which theme tune is *the* iconic one, this demonstration of one-way Anglophilia becomes problematic.

genuine football creature. Even then he obtains a quality or state of being that is always on the cusp of being taken away from him. In the case of *Mr Cleansheets'* Bentham United, this comes about through the question of Eric's playing legitimacy – Eric's visa does not allow him to work in the United Kingdom, and he obtains a fraudulent British passport in order to play – a situation which threatens the team's unexpected and hard-won success. The matter is resolved when Eric later realises he is eligible to be classed as a dual national, through his mother:

Good God, it had never occurred to me. My ol' mum – Jimmy's sister – they were both Geordies and apparently that meant I was *entitled* to the passport. I felt both elated and stupid – I should have realised that years ago. (Deans 2010, p. 446)

Despite his immediate concerns upon receiving his legitimate British passport that he might lose his Australian status, via his love of football Eric has succeeded in becoming more English than the English.

In *Mr Cleansheets*, the English public are described as being incredibly protective of their football, especially against foreign and in this case Australian influence. This manifests itself in its most extreme forms as protectionist xenophobia. One such strain of anger, from the Cockney cab driver Barney, begins at calling Australia a convict colony. He then changes tack to articulate his resentment about the impact of the French and Africans on English football, and concludes with a rant on being upset that the Australian construction firm Multiplex was awarded the contract for re-building Wembley Stadium, English football's national stadium and a national icon:

Fack's sake mate, we invented the fahkin' game. It's bad enough the Premier League's full o' fahkin' frogs and darkies, but I can't hack the fahkin' Aussies. They ought to stick to fahkin' cricket and rugby and swimmin'. We don' give a fack abaht them sports.<sup>108</sup> Why should they wanna take over football for fack's sake? We even let the cunts rebuild Wembley! (Deans 2010, p. 169)

These views are held among members of the working class, but also among the members of the educated middle class, such as MI5 agent Roger Ransome. While expressed in a different manner from Barney's crass exposition, and while directed towards another purpose – having Bentham United disqualified in order to have Ransome's West Ham United progress to the final – the sentiment is much the same: “Americans in the House of Lords was bad enough, but Australians in the Cup Final?” (Deans 2010, p. 441)

It is part of Eric's purpose in the novel to succeed in spite of the doubts at home in Australia, as well as the doubts of the English themselves. Eric finds the opportunity to teach the English to love football again. He makes a former professional appreciate his time left in the game by getting him off the booze. He convinces a young budding professional to quit smoking in order to improve his game and therefore be more useful to the team. He also introduces tactical and training innovations learned back in Australia. (Deans 2010, pp. 93-4, 255-6)

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<sup>108</sup> This echoes in some respects Stephen Wagg and Tim Crabbe's assessment of the English press' reaction to England's 3-1 loss to Australia on home soil in February 2003. “But, in the various tabloids, Kewell and the emergent football nation he represents are almost nowhere to be seen; instead Australia remains what she is presumed always to have been – a sport-mad country excelling at other sports, but not this one.” (2009, p. 66)

Similar thoughts to Deans' feelings of cultural dissonance are expressed by both the English and Australians in Tony Wilson's novel *Making News*. Its central character, the now-retired Charlie Dekker, is a widely recognised Australian soccer player in England. Early in the novel Charlie recalls the "Shakegate" affair – his snubbing of British Prime Minister Tony Blair's handshake, including Charlie's subsequent denouncement of Blair at the FA Cup final dais on the basis of Blair's support for the invasion of Iraq. He wonders whether he would have had the temerity to perform his protest at the home of English football in the form of Wembley rather than at the Millennium Stadium in Wales, where FA Cup finals were being played until the construction of the new Wembley stadium had been completed:

Charlie wondered if he would have had the courage to do what he did on the Wembley steps with so many politicians and dignitaries, and even royalty, peering over the Prime Minister's shoulder. He'd climbed those steps as a loser when Manchester United defeated Liverpool there in 1996. Even in his disappointment, he'd felt an exhilaration making the climb. He was part of football history, climbing the same steps so many of his heroes had climbed. At Wembley, what he did might have been more daunting, sacrilegious even. (Wilson 2010, p. 27)

In evidence here is the respect held by Australian soccer fans for English football tradition, even when this is not obvious to the English themselves. As an anonymous talkback radio caller rants:

This so-and-so isn't even a Brit, he's a bleeding Aussie. I don't care how good he thinks he is. Get him out of the country. Or, at the very least, he should piss off back to Earls Court and get a job pouring pints. (Wilson 2010, p. 29)

While Charlie implicates Australian Prime Minister John Howard in this debate, and even though that implication is entirely relevant, the hostility from the British tabloid press and talkback radio is clear in its disregard for the facts that Australia is part of this coalition in Iraq.

Not all Australian soccer experiences of British football culture are viewed with the kind of nostalgia exemplified by Deans and Wilson. Set in 1986,<sup>109</sup> “Terrace View”, Ian C. Smith’s short memoir piece about his venture into Anfield’s famous Kop End, is a less pleasant experience. Amid the carnage of Margaret Thatcher’s economic policies on Liverpool’s working class, of which Smith indirectly makes note on several occasions, the sense of desperation among the working class Smith has found himself among is palpable. The isolation felt by Smith and his wife Debra, against Smith’s expectations,<sup>110</sup> is almost as suffocating as the physical crush in The Kop itself. Smith notes that Debra is the only woman in the stand, and the reaction to Smith’s Australian accent, too, from those Scousers nearby further intensifies Smith’s feelings of danger and isolation:

“Good on you, Johnno.”

My sudden shout behind Debra's ear surprised her. A thin youth wedged in front of her managed to twist around and flash us a bitter look.

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<sup>109</sup> Though “Terrace View” was published in 1991, the details provided throughout Smith’s piece – including the 2-0 score line – seem to indicate that this match was played on March 31<sup>st</sup> 1986.

<sup>110</sup> Though Smith never elaborates on why he thinks he will fit in. Perhaps it is because back home in Australia, crowds at football games of the codes he is used to are more used to mixing, as opposed to the rigid segregation of rival supporters in English football.

“Fook off back where yer coom from, yer prick.”

I was uncertain whether the advice was intended for me or the squat footballer industriously limbering up. Further remarks were then directed at Craig Johnston's nationality and alleged inferior ability. And Johnno's playing for his team, I thought. We'd be safer with Merseyside accents.<sup>111</sup> (Smith 1991, p. 48)

That experience is also a far cry from Craig Johnston's narration of his parents' experience watching football in London in the 1950s. Johnston imagines his parents standing on the terraces of Fulham's Craven Cottage ground during their last winter in England. His mother, pregnant with Craig at the time, wondered afterwards: “I never gave it any thought then, but perhaps Craig was already soaking up some of the atmosphere of English football.” (Johnston, C & Jameson 1989, p. 32)

Ian Smith's early reference to the Kop being the equivalent to The Hill area of the Sydney Cricket Ground seems almost quaint. The harsh economic and social conditions, combined with the fierce parochialism of the local supporters, see Smith unable to make even cursory inroads into the local soccer culture. Even his attempts to avoid falling over see him set apart from the rocking and swaying masses who have become accustomed to the collective movement of the terrace. Unlike *Offsider's* Mark Seymour,<sup>112</sup> who felt he was one with the crowds, or Eric Judd who came to earn his

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<sup>111</sup> See also Craig Johnston's reminiscence of watching “Match of the Day” during the early 1970s, becoming further besotted with English football. (1989, p. 47)

<sup>112</sup> See the following chapter for further discussion on this book and its characters.

place within English football culture, Smith is offered no way in by those of the dominant culture, nor can he make a legitimised space for himself within it.

In Smith's example we see a reversal of George Cathie's refusal to immerse himself in the local sporting culture. Cathie found himself almost pre-emptively bored and appalled, self-inhibiting the possibility of a cultural exchange from the outset. But for Smith, who has entered an area both not intended for outsiders and not as yet already subsumed by previous travellers into a tourist destination, the opposite scenario holds true. Smith's attempts at immersion are immediately rebuffed by the locals. Rather than the traveller observing the native inhabitants, the traveller himself becomes the subject, having disrupted the assumed homogeneity of the scene.

In Tony Wilson's 2006 World Cup travel memoir *Australia United*, the two sides of the Australian experience of English soccer culture are on show within a very short space of time. After England defeats Ecuador 1-0, Wilson notes that his friend, the Australian sports journalist Francis Leach, "swore and sank into his chair, clearly unimpressed. I asked him why he liked Ecuador, and he replied that really it was that he disliked England".

I don't so much mind the team; it's their obnoxious, stinking, rude fans. They are the most aggressive, ugly, nasty people. If this is the global village, they should be living in the dunny. They are foul. (Wilson 2006, pp. 158-9)

The ferocity and cruelty of Leach's assessment highlight the fact that as with the English, Australians also have their own ingrained prejudices. For his part, Wilson is kinder – immediately after Leach's tirade he relays the story of three innocent English fans detained in appalling conditions after the intervention of German police after some

other English fans had been performing hooligan acts in the local area. Without lessening the spiteful impact of Leach's tirade, Wilson's relaying of the story of individuals, rather than the mass with which they are affiliated, adds nuance to the depiction of English football fans as coarse, racist, violent and privileged. It is possible that Wilson is informed by the kinds of Australian soccer Anglophilia discussed in this chapter, but unlike Leach, Wilson is able to admire the English mass of soccer support:

Certainly, they do have positives to recommend them. I have spent much of this book patting my fellow Aussies on the back for our sustained and passionate barracking and singing. On that front, the English blow us out of the water. They are louder, funnier, and most of the songs we are using now started off as theirs. (2006, p. 162)

While not equating Australianness with Englishness, Wilson shows the connections between the two nations in a soccer context. Reflecting later in *Making News* upon the complicated relationship between Australians, and Britain and the British, Wilson has Charlie Dekker become the spokesperson for Australia's bid to host the 2018 or 2022 World Cup, at the campaign launch held in London. Charlie is aware that the barbs during the launch aimed at England's bid for the same tournament hosting rights will see him ostracised and harassed by the British press and their reading public:

The only ones who weren't sounding their support were the English press. They'd murder him for this. It was enough of an affront that a bunch of antipodean drunkards regularly beat up on the English cricket team but at least that was a game that the tabloid-reading Brit didn't care about. But this was football. The national obsession. Fancy allowing colonial upstarts to get their



greasy, barbecue-stained fingers all over the greatest event on the planet.  
(Wilson 2010, p. 114)

Charlie also realises that this pantomime antagonism is beginning to feel a bit too close to home. After having married an Englishwoman and subsequently raising his children in England, the notions of national and cultural identity have become more complicated than Charlie Dekker had wanted to acknowledge: “After so many years in the UK, he felt nearly-British”. (Wilson 2010, p. 114)

## **Conclusion**

With so much attention paid to English football, the strangest example of Anglo-Celtic Australian interaction with soccer outside Australia comes in the form of the brothers Marc and P.J. Roberts’ children’s novel *Mr Lees’ Fantastic Football Dream* (2012). Set in Singapore, the novel traces the blossoming soccer career of a Singaporean boy, Jun Yong, from boyhood to earning a professional contract. The narrative points out that Asia and Australia have had relations going back some years, by reminding readers of the Australian presence in Singapore during World War II. (2012, p. 23) The novel also has Jun Yong’s brother attend an Australian boarding school, emphasising the geographic proximity of Singapore and Australia. (2012, p. 43)

One of Jun Yong’s teammates at Geylang United also happens to be an Australian named Clancy. (Roberts & Roberts 2012, p. 73) The Australian players bring to Asian football some broad Australian stereotypes. The Australian under-18 side which plays against Jun Yong’s Singaporean team is described as being much bigger than the local players, but also likely to tire more quickly in the tropical heat and humidity.

(Roberts & Roberts 2012, p. 180) There is also the well-worn idea that on the field Australian players are hard but fair (Roberts & Roberts 2012, pp. 187, 92, 93), but off the field are relaxed and willing to adapt to and learn about the local culture. (Roberts & Roberts 2012, p. 193)

The authors appear to wish to put forward a sense of Australians' better natures, as well as portraying Australia as a natural footballing (soccer) nation. The Australians in this novel are treated little differently from the English or Brazilians in terms of their being footballers. The Brazilians may have a natural flair (Roberts & Roberts 2012, p. 77), while the English have an all-consuming passion for the game (Roberts & Roberts 2012, p. 61), but soccer, as football and sport's lingua franca, creates an opening for people from all over the world.

The only time Australia appears as less than a natural soccer country is when Gary Kinear (a member of the travelling Australian under 18 party who befriends Jun Yong) notes that within the boarding school community where he comes from (and where Jun Yong's brother is studying, albeit at another school) rugby is more popular and more important than soccer. (Roberts & Roberts 2012, p. 193) Moreover, Australian soccer is portrayed without any ethnic fractures or complications, whitewashed to the point where its swarthinness is obliterated by the bronzed blonde stereotype of Australian masculinity. Such depictions, both in their sensitivity to regional Asian cultures and identity, and in their attempt to create a localised and whitened Australian

soccer identity, are a long way from Hayward's depiction of the game during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>113</sup>

Critics such as Miriam Dixson extol the virtues and/or the necessity of the centrality of Anglo-Celtic culture as the coherent centre of Australian culture.<sup>114</sup> Brabazon is critical of such attitudes in Australian culture, later taken up by Australian soccer itself, that Anglo-Celtic Australian stewardship of mainstream culture is necessary for social cohesion. (2010, p. 28) Brabazon further adds gender to the mix, claiming that "the problem is a sporting and cultural framework that naturalizes the behaviour, policies, structures and management styles of white men". (2010, p. 29)

Yet such assertions are made almost in vain. In Australian soccer literature, which in this case is reflective of Australian soccer more broadly, the role of the "steward" of the game or a particular club or team is habitually given to an Englishman or a Briton. One of the results of this process sees the British become the ethnically legitimate public face of the game to mainstream Australia.

In whatever other ways Continental or southern Europeans may have become "white" within Australian culture, especially when compared with more recent arrivals, their participation in Australian soccer and their historic dominance of it at the apparent expense of mainstream Australia (read, mostly white, Anglo-Celtic Australians) has

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<sup>113</sup> Nonetheless, the depiction of east and south-east Asian-Australians in Australian soccer literature is minimal. Only in Stuart Sakarellos' short story "A Boy and his Nemesis" (2011) is there even a brief portrayal of this demographic.

<sup>114</sup> An alternative view is to acknowledge that while Britishness remained a core part of Australians' sense of self, its role now was to provide "a clear cultural marker against which Australians could define themselves" (Curran & Ward 2010, p. 248), especially against the "chill winds of multiculturalism and globalisation". (Curran & Ward 2010, p. 249)

them marked as “other”. Thus we have the conflation of being “Anglo-Celtic” with being Australian. (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2010, p. 30) Alongside those works which portray the British migrant ordeal in Australia, those texts of Australian soccer literature which portray Australian soccer fans trying to become – in their own manner – English, demonstrate continuities in both Australian soccer culture, and Australia’s relationship to its Anglo-Celtic past and present.

On this matter the viewpoint of a politically conservative member of parliament finds itself aligning with the point of view of a self-described progressive. Tony Wilson makes several references to similar misgivings he has about the nature of those with diverse ethnic heritages and the implied purity of their support for the Socceroos during the World Cup. In the following passage, Wilson remarks on the differing attitudes of several Italian-Australians in regards to supporting Australia over Italy in the immediate aftermath of Italy’s controversial victory over Australia in the round of 16:

I find it difficult to understand why second-generation Australians would have supported Italy, but don’t want to put that argument too forcefully for fear of agreeing with Andrew Bolt – The Melbourne *Herald Sun*’s Viceroy of Vitriol.  
(Wilson 2006, p. 169)

While Wilson immediately seeks to temper this view by making the comment that it is only sport, the fact that he has even put forward the quasi-nationalist and assimilationist argument suggests that he fears his true feelings on the matter may fall well short of the progressive ideals he otherwise holds. Historically, Anglo-Celtic Australians have spent a lot of time and effort rejecting soccer in Australia. The argumentative refrains about soccer’s foreignness and its being out of synchronisation with Australian values has been consistent. The game was banished, culturally, by its

association with people outside of and resistant to Anglo-Celtic Australian cultural hegemony. When Anglo-Celtic Australians get a taste for it however, they do not know how to adapt to the fact that they are not the cultural hegemony. Often they choose not to adapt. The racism of the past is now manifest as a racism of now – this is especially troubling for those of the left, whose self-assured self-perception that they are pluralist, tolerant, and cosmopolitan runs into the barrier of their own reactionary ideologies. As Chris Hallinan and John Hughson note, at “the core of Australian soccer’s rejection has been its gritty cosmopolitanism. Remove the grit and we can perhaps accept ethnic diversity.” (Hallinan & Hughson 2009, p. 6)

In Hardy and Smith’s reports we see little-to-no obvious connections the writers may have to Australian soccer. Smith offers little more than his knowledge of Craig Johnston, an Australian footballer playing for what was then one of Europe’s leading clubs. Hardy himself can only tell us that he and presumably his intended Australian audience are aware of soccer.

Hardy and Smith’s emphases are not on the game itself – Hardy leaves one game early due to the incessant rain, and Smith is unable to properly watch the game he has chosen to attend due to his concerns for his and his wife’s safety. They emphasise the similarities and differences between football supporters in general across the different societies, as well as the social conditions which have created the respective supporter culture. Smith, unlike Hardy, is also somewhat pre-disposed to noting the isolation of the players themselves, who have managed to win themselves access to the relative verdant freedom of being on the pitch instead of being crammed in among their former working class peers in the standing areas behind the goals. Where Hardy was keen to note Soviets of all rank being obliged to line up for tickets to important

matches, Smith notices the social privilege of the players – both in terms of their wages, but their topographical privilege. Smith also notes the disadvantage of the poorest supporters crammed in behind the goal ends while the reserved areas are littered with the seats left empty by wealthier supporters who have failed to attend the match.

Both Hardy and Smith are outsiders to the cultures they are describing, even as this results in two radically different narrative styles. Hardy's story is informed by his desire to produce apologia for the Soviet regime, but his acceptance by the Soviet football crowds, in part because of the novelty of him being a foreigner, adds another less sinister element to the tale. Meanwhile Smith, because of the various degrees of social isolation created by being unable to blend in and be accepted by the working class Liverpool crowd, depicts a simultaneously isolated and claustrophobic experience of overseas soccer.<sup>115</sup>

Authorial credibility as applied to Australian soccer and its depictions in literature can be taken to logical extremes. A curious element of Tony Wilson's abstract search for soccer credibility during *Australia United* – and he does meet several Australian soccer supporters who would meet that ideal – is the relative lack of self-critique of his own credibility as a soccer supporter, and therefore by extension as someone who is able to write meaningfully on the game. Admitting that he is a convert to the game

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<sup>115</sup> Smith's failure to feel included among the Scousers on the Kop is of especial interest when compared to Jesse Fink's statement about Australians' at one time preferring to watch overseas soccer as opposed to the ethnically dominated and "exclusionary" clubs of Australian soccer. One wonders whether the geographic distances involved with watching soccer on the other side of the world via the medium of television, possibly helped to obscure the fact that many of the most ardent supporters of those overseas clubs may also hold exclusivist territorial and cultural tendencies.

himself,<sup>116</sup> it is odd to see the way Wilson goes about assessing the relative merits of other Australian soccer supporters in Germany for the World Cup.

Despite firmly placing himself in the category of an Australian soccer fan, Wilson's interest seems limited to the exploits of the national team, without any meaningful exploration to Australian soccer's greater whole. At best, his interest in the local soccer scene<sup>117</sup> is peripheral – sporadic appearances at park soccer aside, (Wilson 2006, pp. 190-1) Wilson provides very little context before 1997 for his own interest in soccer, if that interest even existed. He is however able to admit to the fact that his own failed attempt to become a professional Australian Rules footballer – treating Hawthorn, his boyhood club (and one of the clubs which ultimately rejected him) not as a “passion”, but rather as “an ex-employer”. (Wilson 2006, p. 77) Feeling excluded from Australian Rules, Wilson then happens to fall in love with soccer and the Australian national team. But without that original point of social exclusion, would that change have occurred?

The broader point however is this: whether they are for, against, or merely indifferent to soccer on encountering it in overseas situations, the writers covered in this chapter have their sense of self disrupted when encountering soccer. And when these writers send their message home, they also create the possibility of disrupting their audience's view of Australian identity. Even when presenting the soccer experience and the people who play it as exotic, it does not necessarily follow that people will be repulsed. Indeed, they may find themselves attracted to it.

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<sup>116</sup> Following Australia's elimination from qualification for the 1998 World Cup by Iran. (Wilson 2006, pp. 76-7)

<sup>117</sup> At least as it comes across in *Australia United*.

The quality of being “exotic” lies in its not being normal. Exoticness however is not a marker of true plurality, where things just *are*. The exoticism of soccer is made problematic by an Anglophilia which tends to make the experience of Australians experiencing English soccer culture feel quasi-Australian. They feel less exotic than they would when experiencing soccer in other nations. Craig Johnston provides an affirmation of cultural Britishness seldom encountered in Australia. The affirmation sees a sense of Britishness manifest in Australia in both soccer and within working class culture. This is in contrast to Australian national cultural narratives that see Britishness in Australia as pertaining mostly to a colonial and imperial influence. In relation to sport this means cricket or rugby. Yet Craig Johnston’s attempt to forge a playing career in England did not see him attain a British character overnight. Instead he became aware of the fact that despite his British heritage, he was considered an outsider to the English soccer culture of which he sought to be a part. Johnston even found that communication at its most basic level was difficult. He notes that for “some reason I’d thought that everyone would speak like me.” (1989, p. 56)

Johnston’s experiences fit into a long lineage of Australians heading overseas – especially to Britain – and finding that rather than fitting into the local sporting cultures, they find themselves excluded from those cultures, on the margins.<sup>118</sup> The next chapter will discuss in more depth the notion of what it is to be British and Australian and how those concepts, as seen through the lens of Australian soccer and their relationship to each other have changed over time. The proximity to and dominance

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<sup>118</sup> Johnston gained infamy when he claimed that being asked to play for the Australian national soccer team was akin to being selected to surf for England. (1989, p. 102)



of Australian soccer by non-British migrant groups, as well as the different stages and purposes of British migration, both played their part in how British soccer cultures took root in Australia.

## Chapter 5: “This Very British Pre-occupation”

Via the genre of Australian soccer literature, this chapter discusses two key, yet underappreciated elements of the Australian soccer experience. First, it expands on discussions in the previous chapter of the way in which soccer both subscribes to and eludes the cultural bonds of Anglo-Celtic Australian Anglophilia. Second, the experiences of Australia and Australian soccer’s “forgotten” migrants – the British. It seeks to rescue from historical oblivion the experiences of British soccer players, coaches, and fans who are subsumed beneath the dominant narratives of Australian soccer, whose multicultural emphasis is almost uniformly on migrants from Continental Europe.

Harold C. Wells’ depiction of soccer in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley in his novel *The Earth Cries Out* (1950) is almost entirely Australian. Apart from a stray Scottish accent, the novel contains no direct reference to ethnicity or foreignness. Soccer in *The Earth Cries Out* is a localised *Australian* game. It is neither an imported game, nor one played by imported peoples. Yet the Australian soccer player Craig Johnston’s autobiography *Walk Alone* shows a different Newcastle. A comparison of the two texts suggests that Wells’ depiction of Newcastle coalfields soccer is simplistic.

Johnston’s cultural depiction of Newcastle coalfields soccer acknowledges the ethnic makeup of its participants. Johnston claims the Hunter Valley and the Newcastle coalfields were at that stage the “nursery of the round ball code in Australia” (1989, p. 29) and that soccer in Newcastle was “imbued with the traditions of the British game as fostered by immigrant miners”. (1989, pp. 29-30) It is a tradition which for Johnston is not only a matter of demographic fact, but one to which he also felt culturally connected: Johnston’s paternal grandfather had migrated to the Hunter Valley from

Scotland, and later Johnston's father went to Britain in an attempt to become a professional footballer. In all likelihood, Wells does not need to treat his soccer playing subjects as being from different ethnic groups, even as a matter of minor importance, because in his mind they are ethnically and culturally no different from each other.<sup>119</sup> At the same time, Wells occludes the British character of the mining communities he depicts, whereas Johnston shows an acute awareness of the region's British migrant influence. (Wagg & Crabbe 2009, p. 59)

Such contrasting depictions of a similarly located social and soccer environment<sup>120</sup> demonstrate the limitations of Australian soccer literature in its depictions of the British influence on Australian soccer. Wells' intentional or incidental conflation of the British miners involved in Newcastle soccer with the dominant Anglo-Celtic culture in which they existed, also shows us the complexities involved when attempting to discuss the British, and especially the English, in Australia.

Among the problems in making these analyses are conflations of the notions of Englishness with Britishness; the conflation of Englishness and Britishness with Australianness; and the equation of being Australian with being ethnically or culturally Anglo-Celtic. According to James Curran and Stuart Ward, the notions of England and Englishness have become metonyms for Britain and Britishness. Historically, as an ethno-religious concept, "Britishness" provided the answers to "Australia's need for a

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<sup>119</sup> Though one could make a strong argument that by leaving out the question of ethnicity, Wells ignores an important sociological factor in understanding the British influence on coalmining in Australia, including attitudes towards work and industrial relations.

<sup>120</sup> Even though they are separated by four decades, there is a strong argument for continuities in the social and soccer cultures, which Johnston is at pains to emphasise.

racial and cultural identity”. (Curran & Ward 2010, p. 73) These notions became even more complicated as they broke down, becoming transformed in the messy confines of a society that was becoming more multicultural, ironically mere years after proclaiming itself more British than the British. (2010, p. 12) Australianness, Britishness, and their inter-relationship, are therefore more complicated than has been assumed. However, within the public sphere, the privileged status of British ethnic and cultural identities in Australia – and their assumed uniformity and pre-existing assimilation with “mainstream” Australian culture – makes these identities “ordinary”, as opposed to foreign or exotic. (Moreton-Robinson 2004, pp. 177, 81-82)

The conflation of being Anglo-Celtic with being Australian persists in Australian culture, especially in the discourse of those who seek to promote Anglo-Celtic culture as the glue which binds the nation together within a nominally multicultural or pluralist society. Dixson and other critics argue that ethnic identity in Australia is split between “indigenous, Anglo-Celtic and ‘new ethnic’ Australians”. (1999, p. 18) Such ideological frameworks help us to understand the precise sociological position of more recent British migrants in Australia, while pointing out the gaps where such people may fit, and the process by which they will become a part of the Australian national family. If the first two groups in Dixson’s ethnic triumvirate are in their own very different ways Australian “natives”, and the “new ethnic” a sort of interloper or disruptor, then the Englishman arriving in Australia fits in with neither the pre-existing Anglo-Celtic-Australian culture nor with any of the non-British migrant groups.

At first glance this does not seem so problematic. A number of critics argue that because Australia is notionally founded upon British values, that this has led to the expectation that British migrants should find it easy adapt to Australian life. (Moreton-

Robinson 2004, p. 176) While some British migrants found the migration experience difficult, they nonetheless had certain distinct advantages over other migrant groups. Chief among these was their entering a world in which the customs were not so far apart from those in which they grew up. Moreover having a working understanding and familiarity with the English language, as well benefiting from the privileges of whiteness were clear advantages. (Moreton-Robinson 2004, p. 177)

The assumed superior ability of the British and particularly of the English to adapt to Australian language and customs contributed to the fact that the English did not form enclaves as did other migrant groups. (Hammerton & Thomson 2005, p. 9) The seeming ability of the English as an ethnic or national group to assimilate into Anglo-Celtic-Australian society more easily than their Continental counterparts is no accident. James Jupp emphasises the point of Australia's essential Englishness by observing that the country's core ethnic makeup, including those who claim an "Australian" background, is predominantly English. (2004, p. 1)

These population demographics are a result of Australian government policy for the thirty years immediately following World War II, designed to bring in British migrant stock to Australia in preference to all others. (Jupp 2004, p. 136) Post-war British migration to Australia was linked to the desire of both the British and Australian governments of the time to reinforce the British quality of human civilisation on the Australian landmass. (Moreton-Robinson 2004, pp. 181-2). Concerns were expressed that the British character of Australia was dissipating. (Jupp 2004, p. 137) Within that heavy British migration program 82% of the immigrants arriving from the United Kingdom were English. (2004, p. 132) Until 1996 (when they were overtaken by migrants from New Zealand) more migrants came to Australia from Britain than from

any other country. (Hammerton & Thomson 2005, p. 9) In sheer weight of numbers and in their relative ability to adapt to the pre-existing culture, the British have had a huge impact on Australian culture – even if much of that has been in the form of a brake on potential change.

Yet the other side of the supposedly smooth assimilation of these millions of primarily English immigrants is that their presumed cultural affinity with Anglo-Celtic Australia has rendered them largely invisible as migrants, with Malcolm Prentis dubbing them the “invisible ethnic”.<sup>121</sup> (2008, pp. 2-3) This cultural and social invisibility of the English is also obscured by the way they so easily fall into the trope of being considered the universal subject.

Britons’ broader Australian existence as a collective or collectives remains invisible, except when individual members break out.<sup>122</sup> For the other, non-British migrant groups, it is possible that the opposite is true; that they are visible as a large, amorphous mass, but that their individual experiences remain marginal within Australian mainstream culture. Writing of the Scots in Australia, Prentis notes that “even if individual Scots were indisputably significant, ‘the Scots’ as a group possibly were not”. (2011, pp. 103-4) Part of the invisibility of the Scots as an ethnic grouping in Australia is because of the fact that they are “highly dispersed and highly assimilated”. (Prentis 2008, p. vi) Persistent and consistent migration also complicates

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<sup>121</sup> Recent Irish immigrants have sometimes also been rendered as invisible, but that is beyond the scope of this thesis, in large part because they have a very limited presence in Australian soccer literature.

<sup>122</sup> For the problem of the Welsh within this phenomenon of the invisibility of the British migrant, refer to the “for Wales, see England” syndrome, whereby the Welsh are not merely conflated with the English, but considered almost one and the same. Even the term “Ten Pound Pom” marginalises the Scottish/Welsh component of British immigration during the post-war era.

Scottish identity in Australia; for Prentis, only the English have a bigger problem in such matters. (2008, pp. vi-vii) The Scots, with their sizable Irish-Catholic minority, also differ from each other on the basis of religion. In Australia, Scottish Catholics – like those in Graham Reilly’s *Sweet Time* – quickly became absorbed into the “monolithic” and pre-existing structure of Irish-Catholicism. (Prentis 2008, p. 191)

The “foreign” game of soccer offers critics a chance to explore the tensions around these hidden migrants who were deemed familiar if not quite native. While social histories of post-war British immigration to Australia, such as those by A. James Hammerton and Alistair Thomson (2005), and James Jupp (2004), cover much thematic ground, they largely ignore the sporting interests of British migrants. Jupp, for example, displays little curiosity about the failure of English post-war migrants to take up soccer in the same manner and extent of their continental European or Scottish counterparts. (2004, pp. 175-6) In turn, Hammerton and Thomson mention the ethnic foundations of post-war Australian soccer, but do not discuss the fact that the English failed to form their own clubs in large numbers, especially in metropolitan areas.<sup>123</sup> (2005, p. 332)

Considering the large number of English migrants who arrived in Australia following World War II, they have had remarkably little visible impact on soccer in Australia,

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<sup>123</sup> Following on from (Hay 2011), it is possible to argue that the English and the British have had both an underwhelming *and* an underappreciated and underestimated impact on Australian soccer. In part this is because much of their collective influence existed prior to the post-war soccer boom created by Continental European migrants. It may also be due to much of the collective British influence being located outside major urban centres, as well as their tendency to have their participants – in this case, players and coaches – spread across multiple clubs and institutions instead of clustering together as a self-demarcated group.

insofar as the establishment of clubs is concerned.<sup>124</sup> The Scots have had a far more evident impact:

The Scottish impact on Australian football (“soccer”) has been huge and long-sustained, though less well-recognised. Scots largely founded the game in Australia in the 1880s and sustained it in the doldrums years before 1947, after which they helped the “wogs” revive it. (Prentis 2011, p. 82)

This impact continued well into the Continental European led soccer boom:

In the post-Second World War era, Scotland exported footballers and coaches with great consistency to Australia. Indeed, as late as between 1965 and 1985, more local players were recruited from Scotland than from any other country. (Prentis 2008, p. 83)

The Scots’ influence on Australia was an important part of Australian soccer’s debut on the world’s biggest sporting stage, and that influence continues to this day. “Australia’s World Cup squads in the 1970s and 1980s invariably included three or four Scots-born players. Several still feature in the A-League as coaches and players.” (Prentis 2011, p. 206)

Although largely neglected by scholars, the English have had an immense influence on Australian soccer, contributing innumerable coaches, players<sup>125</sup> and even a dogged

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<sup>124</sup> In terms of being equivalent in numbers and/or success compared to their continental European brethren.

<sup>125</sup> Across many texts in Australian soccer literature, even if they play only a minor role in the narrative, a British player or coach is never too far away. Indeed, in an early draft of *The Young Wife*, Martin changes Minerva’s goalkeeper from being an Australian to being a Scot. In *The Redback Leftovers*, Will’s dad is noted as having played briefly as a professional for Luton Town back in England. (Oswald 2000, pp. 40-1)



working-class playing ethos to the game. As this chapter will show, Australian soccer literature provides a space to consider these issues of the presence and absence of the English and British in relation to not only soccer, but also the intriguing difficulties experienced by those who have never regarded themselves as a minority group. Moreover, it highlights the invisibility of the English as an organising force. The English provide players or coaches, but they are absent as a large supporting or administrative group.<sup>126</sup> Those characters of an English background which do exist, while often conceiving of themselves as ordinary or normal, become unique and lonely when they find themselves within or outside a soccer culture not of their own making.

While the English were content to deal individually with adjusting to their own creation, this was not the case for members of other ethnic-backgrounds, including other Britons, who were being asked to adjust to another cultural paradigm. The use of soccer as a means of communal cultural expression in Australia, as opposed to an expression of Empire, was an idea that people of a colonised nation like Scotland were better placed to understand than the English. The other British groups in Australia were likely already aware of themselves as a minority in Australia, as they were minorities back in Britain itself. In contrast, whether at home or in Australia, the English did “not have any strong sense of being a minority”. (Jupp 2004, p. 200)

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<sup>126</sup> One of the more interesting and obscure examples of English soccer culture in Australian literature is in the young adult novel *Looking for Alibrandi*, which has former English backpackers living on the bottom floor of a terrace house, drinking tea and singing Tottenham Hotspur songs. (Marchetta 2006, p. 10)

## **The “invisible migrants” become visible**

In *The Young Wife* David Martin lists the ethnic soccer groups extant in early 1960s Melbourne as follows: “New Australians – Dutch, Hungarians, Italians, Maltese, Greeks or Slavs – follow their own sports.” (Martin, D 1966, p. 152) In this context, and in the case of his two follow-up short stories featuring soccer, the exclusion of English or British migrants from this list serves an unspoken purpose. Other works assert the agency that many Scots had in the formation of soccer clubs. In Graham Reilly’s novel *Sweet Time*, set in the fictional suburb of Baytown in Melbourne’s western suburbs in 1969, the establishment of a soccer club is instigated largely through the efforts of the Scottish community, rather than the English migrants living in the area. Though there are other ethnic groups involved, including Italians, Maltese, and Greeks, the Scots drive the effort to organise fundraisers and whatever else needs to be done to establish the new club. The few English migrants involved may love the game, but they are not at the centre of establishing the new club. While *Sweet Time* is at pains to stress the breadth of the new soccer club’s membership:

“all those races, skin colours and eating habits in the one room, united in their desire for a better life and the love of the greatest game ever known to mankind.” (Reilly 2004, p. 70)

the novel nevertheless leaves little doubt about who is in charge. Within this broad group of soccer followers Reilly serves up an abundance of compliments about the culinary exploits of the different groups, and the cultural benefits that this smorgasbord of cuisines achieves. Reilly finds room to praise the food of the Italians (Reilly 2004, pp. 66-7), the Maltese, the Vietnamese and even the Scots (Reilly 2004, p. 65), while the English offerings are viewed as unappetising, even by the English themselves:

Alec sighed and, surveying the grim picnic of curried egg sandwiches and fishcakes in front of him, made a mental note to introduce himself to the Italians across the way. (Reilly 2004, p. 67)

But the notion of Englishness and its lack of a relationship to Australian soccer nevertheless manages to find a place within Australian soccer literature, with the isolated and difficult experience of the Englishman depicted in several examples of Australian soccer literature. As with the few English in *Sweet Time*, the English coach Billy Colby in *Keep It Simple, Stupid*, is also revealed to harbour a longing for home and a sense of cultural familiarity – in this case even meteorological familiarity – that he has not found in Australia. During a training session heavily affected by rain, the central character Mack observes that Colby revelled in the rain, “reminded, perhaps, of home”. (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 206) It is implied that even as Colby tries to enforce an Englishness on the club he is coaching, as well as attempting to regain and/or retain an Englishness he has forfeited by virtue of being in Australia, where his attitude and culture (in a soccer context) are not given due deference or acknowledgment, there is an unconscious acknowledgement that Colby, too, is displaced.

In Neil Humphreys’ novel *Match Fixer*, the difficulty of adjustment comes from a geographic and social dislocation common to many migrants. For the English in particular, the sudden realisation that they hold an inferior or non-privileged cultural position within Australian soccer is a difficult notion to adjust to. Indeed their position in the general cultural hegemony is inferior to that to which they are accustomed – even when placed alongside fellow Britons. In *Match Fixer*, Chris Osborne is another English soccer player having found himself exiled from the English football system and

searching for a club in the outreaches of soccer's global kingdom.<sup>127</sup> He finds himself signed up to A-League franchise Melbourne Victory, under the coaching stewardship of another journeyman Briton in the form of Eddie McDonald. Though living in Geelong, some fifty kilometres away from Melbourne, Chris (a Londoner) initially finds Melbourne at the very least aesthetically reassuring in its familiar griminess. "Nevertheless, Melbourne had the scruffy, slightly decaying feel of a city. It smelled like London. Chris liked that." (Humphreys 2010, p. 44)

For Chris, Melbourne feels like home, perhaps even like England, at least compared to sleepy, regional, clean Geelong. This comforting sense of a familiar cosmopolitanism is shattered when Chris arrives at the Docklands Stadium. In a discussion of the cultural status of soccer in Australia compared to other sports with one of the stadium's security guards, the security guard is dismissive of both the crowds and the demographics who attend:

"So what about Melbourne Victory then? I've read they get over 20,000 at every home game. Someone must be watching them?"

"Ah, it's still wogball mate. All the Greeks and Italians and the 'skis' mate. You'll probably be the only one there who isn't a 'ski'."

"A what?"

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<sup>127</sup> See also David Alejandro Fearnhead's 2011 novel *Bailey of the Saints*, which has its protagonist, English footballer Jack Bailey, playing for the fictional New Zealand Saints franchise in the Australian national professional soccer competition, the A-League.

“Every bloody player has a ‘ski’ at the end of their name. They’re all Croats and Serbians and all that. They’re the only ones interested in soccer. Oh and the housewives. The bloody soccer mums love your game. They don’t want their little boys playing the Australian game, a man’s game,<sup>128</sup> and getting hurt in marks and tackles. You’ll have plenty of those housewives at your games.”

“Sounds terrific.”

“That’s Melbourne mate.” (Humphreys 2010, p. 45)

Overcoming the displeasure of the conversation and its implied cultural hegemonies, Chris vowed “never to call his beloved game ‘soccer’ for anyone. Football, *his* football, was the world game. Australia had to get its head out of its arse, not the other way round”. (Humphreys 2010, p. 46)

This approach relates less to promoting Australian soccer’s own attempts to claim ownership over the use of the word “football” in Australia, and more with Chris’ own attempts to impose an English or globalised cultural paradigm on Australian culture. But Chris has less luck with adjusting to the cultural environment created by his fellow Brit, Eddie. After Eddie makes light of Chris’ lack of fitness and the fact that Chris is currently staying in the provincial city of Geelong, Chris responds:

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<sup>128</sup> This reference to soccer not being a manly game would come as a surprise to an Englishman, for whom soccer is closely linked to notions of working class masculinity. A similar situation occurs in Mary Rose Liverani’s migration memoir *The Winter Sparrows*. A Scot who has migrated to Wollongong in 1952, Mary learns that in her new home football did not mean soccer, but rather rugby league. She is further informed by her friend’s boyfriend that soccer was “for women,” and that “Rugby’s a man’s game. You’ve got to be able to take it.” (Liverani 1977, p. 320)

“So is Geelong like Wales then?” he said. “It’s at the arse-end of England and everyone’s a sheep-shagger. They produce a lot of wool in Geelong, too. Maybe that’s how they do it.” (Humphreys 2010, p. 49)

Eddie’s clarification of the fact that he is not Scottish, but Welsh (Humphreys 2010, p. 46) is taken by Chris as evidence of the coach asserting his difference<sup>129</sup> mostly to the effect that Eddie McDonald is “just a little a Welsh bloke with a chip on his shoulder”. (Humphreys 2010, p. 50) In Eddie’s case, we see a more pointed form of Hammerton and Thomson’s view that “Scottish and Welsh migrants vigorously asserted that they were not Poms, and almost invariably recall that the English moaned the most and suffered the worst abuse.”<sup>130</sup> (2005, p. 147)

Osborne the Englishman, who would inhabit at least a superior cultural position in the United Kingdom due to his Englishness, attempts to use that home-grown sense of superiority to his advantage. On the other side of the world, where such things matter less, Eddie is the one with the superior position, holding as he does Chris’ immediate playing and employment future in his hands. When Chris fails to show due deference to Eddie’s authority, via derogatory comments directed at Eddie’s Welsh background, Chris is sacked. As in other depictions of the English interacting with the other United Kingdom nationals on the soccer field, the sense of English superiority and hegemony causes the problems.

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<sup>129</sup> And perhaps in Osborne’s mind, a pointed declaration of *non-Englishness* and *non-Britishness*.

<sup>130</sup> Being “not-English” however did not mean that the Scots in Australia saw themselves as being “ethnic” within the Australian migrant context. (Hay 2011, p. 833)

Being an English soccer player or coach in Australia is difficult, as is being an English soccer fan. The ordeal of being an English soccer fan in rural Australia is recounted in *Offsider*, the soccer memoir of Patrick Mangan, at one time the weekend soccer writer for the *Age* newspaper in Melbourne. In *Offsider* Mangan discusses his transformation from English child migrant to an Australian. The one constant during that process is his love of soccer and his obsession with the famous English soccer club Arsenal. Mangan's arrival in Australia with his family produces a sense of cultural dislocation, despite the "grinning Anglo faces" of the migration brochures. (Mangan 2010, p. 23) Mangan muses on matters of vocabulary: "how could there be different words for the same thing?" (2010, p. 24) and the fact that he is the outsider, an oddity in the rural Victorian town he finds himself in: "unfathomably, it was *me* who seemed strange to *them*."<sup>131</sup> (2010, p. 30)

Though Mangan adapts quickly to the different accents and words used by the locals,<sup>132</sup> he does not acquiesce when it comes to his love of soccer. Though Mangan scarcely has an idea of what soccer or football is, he feels that via letters from his extended family in England<sup>133</sup> and through family folklore that "it became clear that Arsenal FC were an inextricable link with our English past, part of the heart of me I could feel being diluted in the Australian outback". (2010, p. 37) This dilution of identity

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<sup>131</sup> In many ways the rural Australia of *Offsider* comes across as a version of England where the particularities of all things have been altered by mere degrees. The climate aside, everything is largely familiar, but off by just enough to be noticeable in a cumulative way; it is a matter of the totality of a series of incremental differences.

<sup>132</sup> Aligning with Hammerton and Thomson's notion that accent was both a sign of difference and a mark of success. (2005, p. 150) See also Craig Johnston's difficulty with the accents of the British, as an inverse example of expecting to fit in merely because of the shared language. "For some reason I'd thought that everyone would speak like me." (1989, p. 56)

<sup>133</sup> Mangan's grandfather always includes mentions of the fates of Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur in his letters. Mangan's Arsenal supporting uncle Shawn likewise offers even more obsessive details about the travails of his club.

is a major preoccupation for Mangan. He speaks of the north London neighbourhood in which he grew up as being relatively cosmopolitan because of its Irish and Jewish residents, but also remembers an “authentic ethnic Englishness within reach”. (2010, p. 19) For Mangan authentic Englishness was primarily contained in the proximity to the many aspects of English football culture – its grounds, heroes and cultural pervasiveness.<sup>134</sup>

The distance between himself, the fate of Arsenal, and soccer in general forms much of *Offsider's* narrative. The reader is inducted into the young Patrick's soccer world, a parallel football universe of reading *Shoot!* magazine thirteen weeks after it has been published in Britain, watching *The Big Match* a week after it has screened in England, (Mangan 2010, pp. 52-3) or seeing Patrick and his elder brother John's bedroom walls covered in British soccer posters. (Mangan 2010, pp. 46-7)

The dilution of Mangan's sense of Englishness is a gradual process. Some of that process is undertaken via watching the Socceroos. Patrick, John and their father watch Australia play at the 1974 World Cup on television. The beginnings of an emotional attachment to the Socceroos is among the first steps to Mangan's family becoming Australians themselves, though Mangan maintains his emotional distance for many years. (2010, pp. 54-5) Most of the dilution or degradation of Patrick Mangan's sense of Englishness however, is related via his Arsenal and soccer obsessions. When visiting London on holidays as a child, Mangan is quick to note that

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<sup>134</sup>At one point soccer is called “this very British pre-occupation”. (Mangan 2010, p. 40) This is interesting in light of the fact that Mangan's family has not forsaken its Irishness or Catholicism; this tendency to view soccer as an English or British pursuit acts as a conceptual barrier to appreciating the footballing cultures of other nations, or even the fact that football had superseded its reliance on Britain.



“it was still home”. (2010, p. 143) But at a local football match on the same trip, Mangan’s realisation that his accent has changed – “I didn’t sound like I was from England anymore” – alters his personal sense of geography. (2010, p. 146) When Mangan visits London by himself as an adult in the 1980s, the illusion of conceiving of it as home has finally been dismantled.

It had felt like walking into a documentary, a re-creation of childhood set pieces – from *Shoot!* with this week’s date on the cover to the Chase Road house where I was born. Still. I couldn’t mistake it for somewhere I belonged: not these days. (2010, p. 114)

When commenting on the Australian striker John Kosmina’s brief stint for Arsenal in the late 1970s, Mangan notes that for his own sense of identity that it was “a pivotal moment”.

There was an Aussie playing for the Gunners: one of *us* playing for *us*. I’d started off barracking<sup>135</sup> for the club as a link with the past – family, nationality and all that – and it didn’t quite click that Arsenal had taken on a life of its own as a kind of sovereign state, almost completely removed from its British origins. My Englishness had been diluted over the years, but I’d only become more an

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<sup>135</sup> A possibly unwitting but nevertheless telling choice of word; one which is particularly Australian and perhaps even more closely associated with the Australian Rules football following states. Though the word also exists in British English, its use here is typically Australian. Dina Dounis also uses the word “barrack” in her poem on Middle Park, the use of a quintessentially Australian word creating a point of localisation to what is presented as an outlier pursuit.

Arsenal fan, and more of an Australian, during the same period. (Mangan 2010, pp. 188-9)

But that notion of “us” becomes increasingly elusive in *Offsider*. At one point Patrick’s best friend, the Manchester United supporting Mark, leaves Ballarat with his mother to live in England; later they re-emigrate, but Mark has changed. Mark now has an English accent and, more importantly, he has experienced contemporary English culture first-hand. This includes both the emerging punk scene but also “genuine” football culture. (Mangan 2010, pp. 214-5)

Seymour hated being here; having fallen in love in England, and with England, an Australian outpost couldn’t compete. Ballarat didn’t have punk rock, soccer goals with permanent nets, or real snow, while St Pat’s seemed terminally retarded without the presence of girls. He missed Theresa and, and to top things off, before he left the UK he’d had to turn down a ticket to the big game. (Mangan 2010, p. 216)

*Real* soccer was not just a game to be played or enjoyed haphazardly. It was something that could only be experienced authentically as part of an immersive experience, which could only happen within a culture in which soccer exists “naturally”. The contemporary English experience of soccer includes the social, economic, political, and cultural upheavals taking place in England.

Unlike Patrick Mangan, who apart from his Arsenal following had largely lost his Englishness (which is vague, nostalgia driven and naïve at the best of times), Mark Seymour’s sense of Englishness, despite its fleeting nature, is more current and

complete. Without the proximity to that culture and the necessary immersion within it, watching the FA Cup final in Australia comes across as a fraudulent experience:

If his luck had held out he'd have been there in person – Manchester United v Arsenal at Wembley – maybe being pelted with spit, stones or bricks, or perhaps having another scarf swiped from around his neck as a memento of the event. Instead, he was stuck with the sanitised ABC-TV version of the match of the year, the well-meaning but hopelessly Australian presenters speculating about English football and the FA Cup like palaeontologists at a dig. (Mangan 2010, p. 216)

In the lead up to the final between Mark's Manchester United and his own Arsenal, Mangan recognises the anxieties and confusion of identities embodied in the paradox of the "the English sounding Australian and Aussie accented Englishman". (2010, p. 216) Both Patrick and Mark have been irrevocably changed by the experience of migration, with their sense of soccer and its culture is intrinsically connected to that experience.

For Mangan that isolation becomes all-encompassing, an essential part of his identity. Where previously he had been able to photocopy and sell copies of his soccer fanzine to some of his school friends in Ballarat, in the latter stages of *Offsider* the passion for soccer in Australia becomes a hidden-away thing, something to avoid publicly promoting. While attending a boarding school in Melbourne, Mangan calls an English soccer results hotline, and learns that Arsenal have won an important game. Yet he feels unable to express his joy openly, feeling that others would not understand because it is soccer, and because of the Englishness that Mangan attaches to it. "Almost anywhere in the world and under any circumstances, sport was a collective

celebration, but in Australia *not* celebrating was central to the soccer experience.”  
(2010, p. 242)

Mangan struggles to conceive of soccer fandom, madness or obsession existing outside of himself and his conception of Englishness, even though he has come into contact with communities for whom soccer mattered as much as it did to him. Mangan visits Middle Park in 1977 to see his idol Malcolm “Supermac” Macdonald play as a guest for the Greek-Australian backed South Melbourne Hellas. On another occasion he is a match day guest of the Yugoslav affiliated Footscray JUST after having created his own match program for them. Yet the existence of the continental European migrant communities as fellow soccer obsessives, inhabiting another parallel footballing world, seems never to register as such to Mangan.

Mangan’s persistent and obsessive interest in soccer – far more persistent and obsessive than his brother or closest friends – becomes the ultimate measure of his isolation. As everyone else moves on from soccer, Mangan’s uncertainty of where he fits in increases. While contending with the changing nature of his family, school, community, and even sense of citizenship, soccer and Arsenal become Mangan’s lifebuoy. But Mangan’s love of soccer and Arsenal also become an emotional tether, leaving the adolescent Mangan unable to trust leaving the safety of those obsessions:

My family and friends aside, the club was the closest thing to a constant in my life. I’d been to six schools and lived in eight houses in five towns and cities in two hemispheres, and nothing much had seemed to stick. But Arsenal had played their home matches at Highbury since before World War I, a presence as immutable as the laws of science, their red shirts with white sleeves as

inevitable as an annual hammering at Liverpool. And while every day I became less English, they remained resolutely, reassuringly so. (2010, p. 250)

Contributing to Mangan's sense of isolation is the fact that his sense of Englishness is hyper-personal. When discussing an interview he conducted with the then Socceroo captain Paul Wade, Mangan fails to mention or note the parallels between Wade and himself (they were both child migrants from England who loved soccer). (2010, p. 205) Mangan's senses of soccer and himself are so insular that even his moments of sharing soccer with others – as a player, or discussing soccer with his friends, or working as a soccer journalist – seem trivial when compared to the internal experience of supporting Arsenal from the other side of the globe as a measure of the purest form of soccer worship.

Two decades after Mangan's childhood soccer travails, the sense of English migrant exceptionalism in Australian soccer persists. The first book in Neil Montagnana-Wallace and Mark Schwarzer's *Megs Morrison* series represents the travails of Edward "Megs" Morrison, an 11-year-old Liverpoolian who has found himself relocated with his family to the western suburbs of Sydney. It repeats many of the tropes of the English soccer fan in Australia. Megs instinctively feels that by journeying to Australia, he is leaving football behind. Echoing Chris Osborne's vow, Megs himself vows never to call "football 'soccer' like they did Down Under. That just wouldn't be right".<sup>136</sup> (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2007, p. 11)

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<sup>136</sup> The Scots in *Sweet Time* however have little problem in using both "football" and "soccer", and in calling their newly established club the Baytown Soccer Club.

Upon arriving at his new house, Megs puts football posters on his wall (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2007, pp. 17-8) mirroring Mangan's experience. Megs' adjustment to life in Australia as an English child migrant, despite occurring thirty years after Mangan's migration, contains many of the same experiences with language, accent, homesickness and adjustment to a culture where soccer is not the preeminent sport.<sup>137</sup> As Megs struggles to adjust to a new school and making new friends, he comes into contact with a nearby example of the Englishman who has forsaken soccer in his new country. Vincent Braithwaite, his father's new boss, "hasn't been to a game in years". (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2007, p. 12) The way Vincent, Megs and Megs' father talk about soccer during a trip to Bondi Beach<sup>138</sup> bears little relation to soccer as it was being played in Australia:

Even though Vincent regularly made fun of Megs' beloved Liverpool FC, he actually knew quite a bit about football, and along with Mr Morrison, the three of them talked almost non-stop about the game. In fact, they could've been in England if it wasn't for the backdrop of sun, sea and sand. (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2007, p. 84)

Instead of interacting with the Australian children at his new school, Megs sits by himself reading *Shoot!* magazine. Even though the Australian children try to greet and befriend him, he is "aware that his voice sounded different from theirs". (Montagnana-

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<sup>137</sup> The major difference being that Megs comes to find several other children with a near equally zealous love of the game as himself.

<sup>138</sup> It is possible to deem the exact location of this conversation as having little relevance to the point being made, but the nature of Bondi Beach as an iconic/postcard Australian landmark creates further distance for the Englishmen discussing a soccer culture on the other side of the world, oblivious to the surrounding cultural environment.

Wallace & Schwarzer 2007, p. 30) “He knew that he looked different. He was pale-skinned and short, and his uniform was too new, too crisp and too blue”. (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2007, p. 21)

Eventually Megs overcomes these differences in accent, language and even gender – there are girls playing here, whereas at home his soccer group was entirely male – and he is able to join in with the soccer-playing children of the school. He has had to relinquish ingrained beliefs in the superiority of the English way of soccer, acknowledging that the game could be played in other ways. Paloma, one of the soccer kids, lays out the conditions under which the children play soccer at school:

We don't have a proper team because no teacher will coach us and Mr Jackson won't let us play otherwise. But the lunchtime games are still pretty good – and it's still soccer, wherever it's played, huh? (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2007, p. 68)

The matter is laid bare – the circumstances may never be ideal, but the game, whatever it is called, is the most important thing, their common thing. Still, when the school manages to finally create a school soccer team, the “Wanderers” name is transferred from Megs' English junior club to his new Australian primary school team, bringing a part of England with him. (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2007, p. 179)

The arrangement between the children is culturally reciprocal. Each brings something to the game from their own cultural background, creating and contributing to the further “Australianising” of the game. That process of Australianising affects not just the game itself, but also its participants. In the second book of the *Megs Morrison* series, Megs still struggles to adapt to Australia. He sees and experiences so much of this process

of adaptation via the prism of soccer. This is evident when even the differences between the Australian and English climates are seen through a soccer lens.<sup>139</sup> In an echo of Billy Colby:

Megs couldn't really think of a time when it had rained since he'd arrived in Australia, and while it was something he'd boasted about to his friends back home, he was starting to see that it was actually a bit of a worry. The school grounds were really just dust and weeds and had become increasingly dry and bumpy even in the time since Megs' arrival. The ball bounced around like a mine explosion every time it hit the ground, and this made it difficult to play. In fact, sometimes it made you look like a fool. Luckily their pitch for matches was pretty good, but who would've thought that too much sunshine could be a bad thing? Certainly not the kids back in Liverpool... (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2007, pp. 14-5)

As part of adapting to Australian conditions, Megs moves from seeing himself as only English to hedging his bets. His friend Paloma senses this and thinks out loud: "Wonder how long it'll be before you think of here as home, and not England." Megs responds

That's come up a lot lately, and you know what – I reckon I discovered the answer this morning. When I was speaking to a friend in England, I realised. I

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<sup>139</sup> If that constant sunshine is a disappointment to Megs because of the negative effect on soccer fields, it is a disappointment that is in sharp contrast to the promises made to British migrants of earlier generations, who were promised something like near permanent sunshine in Australia, only to experience the rainy southern cities. (Hammerton & Thomson 2005, p. 40)



reckon I've got two homes – one here and one over there. That way, I don't have to choose. (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2008c, p. 67)

At the end of the novel, Megs concedes that despite all his attempts to hold on to his former home and its culture, that “home is here now”. (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2008c, p. 179) It does not mean that Megs has renounced his Englishness. In an echo of Patrick Mangan's on-field nickname being “Arsenal”, Megs' love for Liverpool is such that he has even named his new puppy “Anfield”, after Liverpool's home ground. Yet the cultural immersion that is required to maintain that link is not as strong as it would be back in England. Apart from losing his proximity to Liverpool and English football, Megs has also lost proximity to a culture of immersion. Megs may have advantages over Mark Seymour and Patrick Mangan in being able to use the internet to remain up-to-date, but the same issues of proximity remain. Modern technology cannot replace cultural immersion.

That issue of proximity is temporarily overcome for Megs and his school team when they travel to England for a series of matches and sightseeing, including a match against his former teammates on his old team. But it is not England or his home town of Liverpool which end up best encompassing Megs' sense of belonging. Moments of an almost aesthetic familiarity create feelings of nostalgia. This is best exemplified when the Australian-born children are unenthusiastic on training in the rain at Exeter. As in the case of *Keep It Simple, Stupid's* Billy Colby, Megs is unbothered by it: “You asked before if it feels like home for me being here. Well, today it does”. (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2008b, p. 122)

After arriving in Liverpool, Megs finds that everything seems familiar and that nothing much has changed – in keeping with the relatively short time that Megs has been away

– but conversations about things that have happened since his migration to Australia make it hard for Megs to relate. Likewise, Megs has had experiences, even as recently as the previous day, to which his former friends cannot relate. Megs changes tack again from “home is here now” back to both England and Australia being a part of him. Relinquishment of English identity for Megs is not mandatory.<sup>140</sup> Upon his family’s return to Australia, they continue to adapt to life in their new home by maintaining English elements of their culture and integrating them into the lives of others. They negotiate for their English food traditions to be included as part of the Mendez family Christmas celebrations, (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2008a, p. 14) and even bring in the use of HP Sauce. (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2008a, p. 20)

The final book in the *Megs Morrison* series begins with Megs having a vivid Australian soccer dream, one where he is being brought out along with his Australian friends as child mascots for a Socceroos match: “*I’m even dreaming in Australian*”. (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2010, p. 6) Eventually matters come to a head when Megs finds out that his mother is pregnant, with his thoughts turning to his future little brother’s question of identity:

“We need to become Australian!” Megs blurted out on the way home. “We need to officially be Australian *and* English – all of us.” (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2010, p. 162)

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<sup>140</sup> Nevertheless, it is worthwhile noting that Megs is only a child, and therefore not expected to come up with searching critiques of these questions – including the ways they are further complicated by English regional identities, in particular the strong local identities of northern England.

Megs' concerns include the hope that he can be both English and Australian – with the importance here being that these identities are seen as distinct but not mutually exclusive – but also that his younger brother will not be the only Aussie in the family. In that desire lies an attempt to rationalise identity, but also a strong emotional need to hold on to what he already knows.

## **Conclusion**

The Englishman is most English when he creates a new England far away, in the corner of a foreign field. (Young 2007, p. 2)

The concepts of Britishness, Englishness, Scottishness, Welshness and even Irishness are difficult concepts to coerce into meaningful, static propositions. Hassam argues that Britishness was something developed haphazardly over several centuries, as a result of wars against continental Europeans, as well as the British Empire's colonial expansion, conquest and meeting of peoples who were clearly not like themselves in appearance or custom. (2000, pp. 12-3)

The difficulty of wrangling Britishness into a coherent identity is especially relevant for the way in which the concept of Britishness has become manifest in Australia. The meanings of these concepts have changed repeatedly over the past two centuries, in line with the political, geographical, historical, and scientific trends. These ideas are further complicated when Englishness is used as a synonym for Britain, (Young 2007, p. 2) and when Britishness as an ethno-cultural group actually manifests itself in

Australia.<sup>141</sup> They are also concepts which will only become more complex, both within the island of Britain itself, and in Australia where the nature of British migration – now based around short term backpacker/holidaymakers, and longer term skilled migrants – runs counter to previous models of migration from the United Kingdom.

Despite the way the amalgam of British cultures has developed in Australia, Britishness is not an ethnicity. At its most basic level, Britishness is only a signifier of being a citizen of the United Kingdom, a political entity created by a long dead monarch. (Young 2007, p. 11) Even the attempts to refer to a uniform idea of British civic life are doomed to fail. Such attempts belie the fact that no such thing exists. If it does, it is based on assumptions of class which often do not include the British lower classes.

Howsoever Britishness is defined, the crucial element is the ambiguity of all the related terms when taken out of the relatively straightforward realm of legal or citizenship frameworks. (Young 2007, p. 12)

What becomes clear then is that the terms England, English, British are malleable and shifting terms. They are inventions used to deal with the specific problems of identity, politics, colonisation and self-definition as they have manifest themselves on the island of Britain, and in all those places that the people from the British Isles have colonised or emigrated to. And as often as

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<sup>141</sup> “Britishness” as an ethnicity establishes itself in Australia because very quickly in Australia’s colonial experiment the different British and Irish ethno-nationalist groupings become combined into a singular concept of Britishness.

these terms are used by those who may fall under the categories themselves, the terms are also used as exonyms by other groups.<sup>142</sup>

Perhaps most maddeningly for those seeking clarity on this issue, each constituent part of those who may be called the British feels repressed to a degree by the term, and by the other elements of the Union:

In an era of an intensification of the politics and rhetoric of global-ism, internationalism and devolution it might seem rather late to examine the absence of national identity in a country that historically dominated so many others. And yet the English are persistently, if incoherently, interested in “who they are”. A genre of publishing has grown up around the fascination... the England of these books is variously unknown, lost or sought after. For the English who read about being English also like to be told how hard it is to say who they are. (Featherstone 2009, p. 3)

Australian soccer literature will not be able to solve those problems. It can however reveal the complexity of the British immigrant experience in Australia, and the seeming differences between the experiences of those from England and other “Britons”. It does this by creating a space for British migrants independent of the pre-existing Anglo-Celtic cultural paradigm, the latter into which it is simplistically assumed these migrants will naturally fit. Australian soccer literature can acknowledge the differences between the British and Continental migrant experiences. It can explore the largely

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<sup>142</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, where Mark and Bruno from *Keep It Simple, Stupid* spit out their resentment of the British nationalist identity of the newcomer Watson.

untouched field of inquiry left in the wake of conceiving and writing about British migrants primarily as expatriates, rather than as migrants. Most importantly, Australian soccer literature can reveal the diversity of regional, cultural, class and ethnic identities within Britain, and the ways in which these marginal identities – including an English identity subsumed and conflated under “Britishness” – are able to find a means of being expressed.

Where sociological examinations of British culture have glossed over the sporting, most importantly soccer, interests of British migrants in Australia, Australian soccer literature allows us to see deeply into the way that a love of soccer was maintained and sometimes integrated into Australian life. The body of work that comprises the genre also provides an insight into the difficulties for British migrants in adapting to a culture where they feel their cultural proximity to and expertise in soccer is undervalued. Australian soccer literature also provides examples as to how soccer acts as a mediator in the relationship of the British with other migrant groups.

While the work of Jupp, Hammerton and Thomson largely ignores the interactions between British migrants and their Continental European counterparts, Australian soccer literature puts those interactions at the forefront in its depictions of British soccer fans in Australia. It also goes further, by turning the English into a minority group. They are not the norm by which all other cultures are measured, either within the broader scheme of the “ethnic” dominated soccer scene in Australia or as against the minority Welsh and Scots cultures of the United Kingdom. This literature allows us to see the English as an outlier group, a position that as a dominant political, economic and cultural power they may not otherwise be seen to hold.

Australian soccer literature provides the opportunity to showcase an experience of British migration where British migrants exist either in subordination or in parity with non-British migrants. By participating in Australian soccer, the British migrant forfeits a level of assumed ability to assimilate into the core Anglo-Celtic-Australian culture. This is a fate already predestined to a degree for non-British migrants, regardless of whether they are involved with soccer or not.<sup>143</sup> Sometimes, as in the case of Chris Osborne or Megs Morrison, this refusal to assimilate is pursued doggedly and consciously as a rejection of the assumption that the British migrant can and will assimilate into mainstream Australian culture.

This phenomenon also manifests itself in *Sweet Time*. Those within the fledgling soccer club see and recognise the differences between the different ethnic groups involved, appreciating the demographic diversity. Those outside the club largely see a monolithic foreign entity. Local Australian Rules player Shane McGowan's main objection to the game of soccer is not any of soccer's rules of play or its style – in that sense he differs from those critiques which focus on masculinities and heteronormative senses of affiliation. Instead Shane is mostly focused on the foreignness of the participants and of the game itself. Assimilation is his credo, extending this to the sporting habits of the migrants as well as to their food. (Reilly 2004, p. 81)

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<sup>143</sup> See Roy Jones and Phillip Moore's assertion that "to participate in the sport is to be marked as being probably ethnic and in some way non-Australian." (1994, p. 17)

Shane is so upset by the establishment of a soccer club in Baytown, that he destroys the newly laid surface of the soccer pitch. When asked why he vandalised the field, McGowan responds.

Because... I.... I... dunno. Look, why don't you soccer chocs just play Australian football, like real Australians. If youse wanna play soccer you should stay in your country. This is our country and you should live by our rules, mate, and that's Australian Bloody Rules. Why don't you go back where youse belong, eh, wherever the fuck that is. There's enough wogs in this country. (Reilly 2004, p. 191)

Shane's rant is infantile, going so far as to be made in the old boy scout lodge where he had spent much of his childhood. It is also a rant laden with poor grammar and the flimsiest sense of politics and history. At best it is a semi-coherent wail against change of any sort.<sup>144</sup> Shane's conflation of all the ethnic groups involved with the Bayside Soccer Club into one broad "other" marks him out as uneducated and reactionary, as well as on the wrong side of history. Reilly on the other hand is at pains to discuss the glorious pluralism of the fledgling soccer club's membership; while those outside of it see only "wogs", in this moment the "soccer wogs" invert the gaze of the "other" towards the Anglo-Celtic-Australian, overturning the normal state of affairs.

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<sup>144</sup> At one point Shane is even confused about why the soccer field is not called an oval, in the way that Australian Rules football fields are. The simple answer – that a soccer field is shaped like a rectangle – only serves to remind Shane that even the shape of things have changed, and thus that even that level of certainty is gone. (Reilly 2004, p. 191)



The depictions of the British in the texts which make up Australian soccer literature shed light on the experiences of peoples who, like their Continental European counterparts, are often lumped into a singular, monolithic category. By focusing on the different experiences of Scots and Welsh migrants from their English counterparts, their stories are rescued from the fate of being lumped into a single narrative. But despite its successes, Australian soccer literature only goes so far in highlighting the different demographics of the British who made Australia their home. Some of this is carried over from developments in the United Kingdom itself. Within Britain, the notion of Britishness is further confounded by the tautological assumption of Britishness being the same as whiteness. (Johnson 2002, p. 168) In Australian soccer literature this carries over into Britishness being limited to whiteness. Patrick Mangan sees even the mild demographic diversity of his old London neighbourhood as exotic, while Neil Montagnana-Wallace has Megs Morrison compare the obvious demographic diversity of Australian schoolyard soccer to that of his vanilla Merseyside variant.

The absence of British women and girls from these British narratives is also striking. There are just two notable exceptions. One is Ellyse Perry's coach Ms Beattie, (Clark & Perry 2016, p. 29) while the other is Christos Tsiolkas' Connie from *The Slap*. (Mavroudis, P 2013, p. 491) The importance of Englishwomen's participation in women's soccer in Australia from the 1970s onwards (Downes 2015, pp. 120-1) is absent in Australian soccer literature. While Australian soccer literature overcomes the conflation between the various kinds of Briton, this oversight misses an important niche of British migrants' contribution to and involvement with Australian soccer.

Whatever obstacles the British soccer aficionado faces within Australian soccer literature, the same literature also allows us to see the privileged place afforded to the

English in Australian soccer's hierarchy of footballing authenticity, even in the world of junior grade high school girls' soccer. In *Magic Feet* (the fictionalised account of Matildas' star Ellyse Perry's first high school soccer season, the physical education teacher who runs the inaugural school soccer team is an Englishwoman, Ms Beattie. Where Ellyse asserts that her favourite team is the Matildas, Ms Beattie replies with "I'm an Arsenal fan myself", (Clark & Perry 2016, p. 29) adding another character into the list of English people in charge of Australian soccer within Australian soccer literature, repeating and maintaining hegemonies of authority.

Regardless of the difficulties faced by British and English migrants – in their broader migration experiences and more specific soccer experiences – they are afforded a measure of respect and esteem by Australian culture (and Australian soccer culture) not afforded to members of other, non-Anglo-Celtic ethnic groups. Theirs is a privileged position. It sees them, even as they are outsiders, put upon a cultural pedestal based on a residual meritocracy earned generations ago as the inventors and initial exporters of the game.

Australian soccer literature demonstrates the double-edged exceptionalism carried by British migrants. For the English, their cultural proximity to Australian culture creates something of a bind. The English mix easily enough with Anglo-Celtic Australians, while also remaining aloof. Not seeing themselves as an ethnicity (or more to the point, as part of the minority ethnicities in Australia) they do not mix in with or set up community organisational alongside the other minority ethnic groups.

Meanwhile ethnic communities outside of the English and British, by establishing their own soccer clubs, demonstrated a commitment to Australia that the English and British largely did not. The founding of soccer clubs in Australia, by any migrant group, carry

with it a recognition not only of their own difference to other parts of the Australian community, but also one of permanence. A group that sees its presence in Australia as only temporary would not invest its economic and emotional energies in such a way. While British soccer migrants may have suffered the discomfiture of being treated as a minority by Australian soccer's dominant ethnic groups, they never lost the ability to deal with that discrimination by being able to fall back on and assert the assumed superiority of British soccer. Both in Australian soccer literature and in Australian soccer as a whole culture, that opportunity is rarely afforded to migrants from non-British origins.

The question of the nature of the British in Australia, and Australia's own latent sense of itself as a British nation, is not the primary focus of this thesis. Yet these are questions which must be negotiated, through Australian soccer literature's depiction of the British soccer experience in Australia, and the Australian experience of British soccer culture. This is especially true when studies of post-war British immigrants largely ignore their sporting interests, and when studies of the changing nature of post-war Australia's cultural ties to Britain omit the role of sport in that change almost entirely.

## Chapter 6: Negotiating Belonging in Australian Soccer for “Ethnic” Australians

We are all in the moment of multiculturalism, even those who wish to deny it.

– Christos Tsiolkas (2015, p. 96)

This chapter discusses the relationships between so-called “ethnic” Australians – Australians of a non-Anglo-Celtic background – and soccer in Australia. Rather than the sometimes well-worn and hackneyed tropes of much Australian soccer writing, this chapter will show how Australian soccer literature presents deeper levels of the truth of ethnic soccer experiences from community and individual points of views. It discusses the sense of safety but also crushing threat of conformity found in insular ethnic soccer communities, both on those who enjoy the game but also those who wish to avoid it. This chapter emphasises the way in which Australian soccer was an essential element in the parallel cultural lives experienced by non-Anglo-Celtic communities. Finally, this chapter will discuss the ways in which Australian soccer shows a degree of prescience with regards to the decline of the ethnic soccer paradigm in Australian soccer.

In general, writing about the relationship of ethnicity to soccer in Australia seeks to create monoliths. Terms like *ethnic soccer* and *ethnic clubs* have created the perception of the existence of an almost chthonic force within Australian society. Even scholarly and journalistic analyses which soften their terminologies and use words such as *migrant* instead of *ethnic* nevertheless contribute toward the creation of a view of Australian soccer clubs backed predominantly by people of a non-Anglo-Celtic background as being insular, regressive and conformist. In addition to situations in

which “ethnics” are always observed from the outside – where at best the “ethnic” person becomes a performer for a neutral Anglo-Celtic audience – such analyses provide unhelpful stereotypes.

Francesco Ricatti and Matthew Klugman note that while scholars of migration have taken an interest in the aspects of migrant culture that were used to acclimatise to a new country, these scholars would overlook sport as part of their inquiry. (2013, pp. 469-70) By contrast, those scholars of Australian soccer tend to miss how soccer shaped migrant identities and communities away from the soccer field, except when noting that the soccer club was a sanctuary space. (2013, p. 470) Nevertheless, Roy Hay and Nick Guoth caution that, “even in the most sports-mad minority migrant groups it was relatively rare to find individuals whose lives were more influenced by football than by their employment, families, education, religion or the other aspects of their social existence.” (2009, pp. 823-4)

Migration helps explain some things, but relying on broad brushstroke analysis misses the nuances and complexities of the different interactions, aversions and relationships that people from migrant backgrounds have with soccer in Australia. Australian soccer literature, by being able to focus on small case studies, explores the gaps that academic and media commentary have missed or overlooked, in their quest to create overarching narratives.

Steve Georgakis, for example, observes how little scholarly attention has been paid to Australian Greeks and sport. Instead, scholars have focussed on more “traditional” tropes – church, family, food, and dance – than modern novelties. (2000, p. 2) There is something then to the notion that soccer and soccer clubs are modern inventions, not generally associated by academics with Greekness (for example) in Australia. In

other words, Australian scholars have often liked their wogs to be compliant, quaint and rustic.<sup>145</sup> For Georgakis, the problem is that scholars from both Anglo-Celtic and (other) migrant backgrounds have a shared “oversight”. Namely they:

do not see the Greeks out here playing sport and do not *hear* them talking soccer results in the cafes. (2000, p. 2)

Where scholarly analyses may sometimes fall short, literary works have the ability to fill in the gaps in this regard, as they are able to easily move from documenting a match day experience, to home life, and then to broader community concerns. The term “literary” here refers to films as well as novels, poems, and essays, with Georgakis showing how both *The Heartbreak Kid* and *Never On Sunday* films use soccer to assert certain aspects of Greek culture and sense of self in a manner similar to the deployment of dancing in *Zorba the Greek* and *Head On*. (2000, p. 1)

This chapter builds on the work of Georgakis to explore the way Australian soccer literature sheds insight into the nuanced, manifold place that this “modern” game has played in the lives, cultures, and identities of many of those who migrated to Australia

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<sup>145</sup> As noted in a footnote in the preface to this thesis, the term “wog” is a colloquial and offensive term for migrant Australians from southern Europe and the Middle East (as well as their descendants), used primarily by Anglo-Celtic Australians as a racial slur. It is a word however which has also been reclaimed by some of those who would be normally designated as “wogs”. This makes usage of the word a complicated and sometimes controversial issue. Many of those people who have sought to reclaim the word, find any use of it by non-“wogs” extremely offensive, while some members of those same ethnic communities reject any usage of the word entirely. My usage of the word in this thesis is limited, and mostly intended as ironic or pointed. Nevertheless, within the various examples of Australian soccer literature, the word “wog” is used by several characters to a range of ends, and it is worth keeping in mind that the word’s meaning is heavily dependent on context: who is saying it, who they are saying it to, and where along the spectrum of irony, humour, and offensiveness the conversation is located.

from locales other than Britain.<sup>146</sup> Unlike the previous thesis chapters, the analysis that follows is structured around chronological and historical interpretation. This is because the works analysed in this chapter are much more closely tied to the eras they depict – particular moments of modernity if you like – charting the development of entire communities in post-World War Two Australia.

### **A parallel game for a parallel culture**

The first novel to deal substantially with soccer in Australia was David Martin's *The Young Wife*. Published in 1962, it is a novel which articulates the role soccer plays in the lives of recently arrived migrants in Melbourne in the early 1960s, as well as soccer's place both within that community and broader Australian culture. It also articulates the point about soccer in Australia at that time being both a counter-culture – in that it operated alongside and/or against the sporting interests of mainstream, Anglo-Celtic Australians – as well as a subculture, because it exists as a concern beneath that of the mainstream culture.<sup>147</sup> Martin observes of Melburnians that “their own special code of football draws the largest crowds in the world”, (1966, p. 152) yet contends that these crowds do not include recently arrived continental European migrants:

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<sup>146</sup> Indeed, “modernity” is an important aspect of Georgakis’ criticisms of scholars who prefer to search for an ancient or quaint Greece, as proposed to the experience of Greek modernity. (2000, p. 2)

<sup>147</sup> There is potential for future work on literary and film depictions (such as the Greek-Australian sitcom *Acropolis Now*) of Australian soccer to discuss the ways in which people from non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds use soccer as one of the ways of “ethnicising” Anglo-Celtic Australians, creating the stereotype and identity of the “skip” in opposition to the stereotype and identity of the “wog”.

New Australians – Dutch, Hungarians, Italians, Maltese, Greeks or Slavs – follow their own sports. (Martin, D 1966, p. 152)

While the core of the story is about the difficulties faced by Greek migrants in Australia, as viewed through the entanglements of a select few of these migrants, the use of soccer in the novel is integral to its structure. It provides both a turning point in its narrative trajectory, as well insights into the lives of the broader Greek community, which are not afforded much space in the rest of the novel. Critics and reviewers at the time of the novel's release, while occasionally making note of the soccer sections, usually did so only in passing. Where they did make comment on these sections of the novel, the reviewers noted the sudden stylistic shift of the introduction preceding the main soccer section, which reads more like an essay on sport in Melbourne rather than a seamless narrative exposition of soccer in Melbourne as it related to the novel.

In *The Young Wife*, Criton, an educated young Greek Cypriot migrant, takes up the offer of his workmate and friend Leo Pavoni to play for Minerva, the club of the Italian migrant community. Criton uses his affiliation to an Italian team rather than a Greek one to escape the cultural boundaries created by the claustrophobic Greek community of Melbourne:

but for the rest he would cut himself away from the old associations, he would go on working with his hands, build a house at the edge of the country and look for an uncomplicated Australia girl, simple but interested in life, like Martha, the kind of girl Mrs Kearnan would approve of.

He would play football every week-end with Italians and Australians. (Martin, D 1966, p. 102)



But Criton's decision comes to incense the local Greek soccer and burgher establishment, principally the local Greek oligarchy's chief mischief-maker Alexis Joannidies. Alexis has business and social interests across a range of fields, including the main Greek-Cypriot soccer club Salamis, of which he is both the chief provider of funds and players, as well the prime arbiter of its cultural direction – alone of the clubs in the Melbourne competition, Salamis hires players only from within its dominant ethnic group. Alexis is also associated with right-wing Greek political movements, whereas Criton was associated with the left in Cyprus, as well as being formerly involved with an armed resistance group there. When Criton makes the decision to reject Alexis' offer of playing for Salamis and alongside other Greeks, Alexis' is incensed, and vows what is at that moment in time vague consequences for Criton's transgression:

Alexis' hand dropped and he stood back, looking coldly at his questioner. "Do I have to tell you?"

"Well? What trouble?"

"My dear boy! Don't ask such silly things. I don't want to force you into anything."

How much of Alexis' anger and threats of retribution against Criton come from a genuine hurt at Criton's rejection of his fellow Greeks, as opposed to his feeling

personally affronted due to Criton's rejection of his patronage are unclear.<sup>148</sup> What is important though is that Alexis uses the notion of treason as the basis for his threats:

“All right, I'll tell you. Our people stick together, though some who don't know us imagine we're always at each other's throats. In such matters we are like a family. We don't like Greek boys to spit into our faces. Some day you may need us... Then perhaps we'll remember a few things about you.”

“What things?”

“You know what things. And it could be the police know too.” (Martin, D 1966, p. 114)

When the time comes to select the Salamis team to play against Minerva in the cup competition, Alexis once again makes it clear that soccer is not only a game he wants to win at, but one in which he can use the club as a means of exerting social control over his fellow Greeks:

Alexis was not a selector but Yannis was not surprised to see him; his brother co-opted himself to any committee he liked. (Martin, D 1966, p. 146)

When the discussion at the selection table moves around to whether Criton will have the audacity to play against his fellow Greeks, Alexis is sure that he will not:

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<sup>148</sup> Georgakis talks about the difference in the class system between the Greek migrants and their Anglo-Australian counterparts, noting that wealth was only one factor, and one which was not always as important as networks, patronage, reputation etc.(2000, p. 187) It is an example of the parallel world the migrant, and of what happens when a migrant community both chooses and is compelled by mainstream society to exist outside of the main political and social system.

“I believe he’ll go sick,” Alexis said, drawing at his cigar.

“Why?” Paul Stephanou enquired.

“I would in his place. It would be the decent thing. If he plays against us it will be a provocation.” (Martin, D 1966, p. 146)

Yannis, initially amused by his brother’s fanaticism, now finds himself thinking the while situation absurd:

Everything was unspeakably sordid and petty. What was he doing here, talking about a ball game? Was there nothing more urgent for a grown man to do? (Martin, D 1966, p. 146)

After Criton scores a penalty for Minerva against Salamis, a riot breaks out among the supporters, and Criton is attacked and beaten by members of Salamis’ support with strong connections to Alexis. Criton is marginalised and punished for refusing to play for the “obvious” patriotic choice, but also for the defiance he has shown toward Alexis. Later, when at a committee meeting at Salamis which in part deals with the aftermath of the riot, Alexis succeeds in reinforcing his authority, including at the expense of his own brother, a fellow committeeman:

“To think I encouraged the whoreson!” Alexis said, ignoring the rest round the table. “Nice friends you’ve got! Pavoni and that apostate!” (Martin, D 1966, p. 146)

It is important to note that Criton’s marginalisation at the hands of the Greek-Cypriot community is not due to the playing of soccer itself, but rather due to the decision he

has made within the cultural confines of the sport as it is played in Melbourne at that time. In effect Criton suffers at the hands not of a class system – though there are elements of that in Alexis' attempts to bribe Criton – but from a matter of caste. This is because the threatened retribution that Alexis wishes to visit upon Criton, in the form of revealing Criton's past as a left-wing activist in Cyprus, is relevant only within the Greek community of Melbourne, and no other group beyond that.

In the complexity of community relations and social strata that Criton has found himself in, there is an instance during the pivotal match where Criton has a moment of clarity, rather like Yannis' realisation of the pointlessness and pettiness of the local soccer world:

“What am I doing here?”, he wondered fleetingly. “I'm in Australia, playing football with some Italians. How did I get here? I shall wake up and remember nothing of this.” (Martin, D 1966, p. 157)

In the character of Criton, David Martin saw a Greek version of himself; (Martin, D 1991, p. 262) a leftist intellectual, estranged from his family and on the margins of his own ethnic community, who comes to reject (as well as be rejected by) by the supplanted migrant culture.<sup>149</sup> While Alexis provides the focal point in the novel for Criton's marginalisation within the community, the community itself is also important

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<sup>149</sup>In his autobiography Martin at one point exclaims: “To the grave with tribalism!” and that “there is no nationalism which does not become fanaticism”. (1991, p. 93) This proves to be the case in each of his three stories on Australian soccer.

to the ostracism of Criton both on the field and off it. While Criton's direct opponent for the match, a young Greek lad, initially addresses Criton cordially:

"Ti kannete? – how do you do?"

Criton replied in English that he was well.

"Ime Ellinas," the boys said. "I'm a Greek." (Martin, D 1966, p. 157)

Criton later responds with the playful comment:

"Ime Romios."<sup>150</sup> (Martin, D 1966, p. 158)

Meanwhile in the grandstands and terraces in their thousands, the Greek migrant community, mostly bored and overworked single men, take up the familiar and slightly ironic role of Greek chorus for the match. Those in this chorus, which includes the Italian supporters in the main match, are marginalised by Australian society, living a life separate from their "native-born" Australian counterparts. The soccer stadium allows these men to express themselves in their own language,<sup>151</sup> performing in their own way another ritual in parallel to that of mainstream Australian culture – cheering on their heroes, decrying those they consider inept, and in this case despising one whom they perceive as a traitor to Hellenism. These heady emotions, and the complex social and cultural framework they exist in, are a long way from what prompted Criton

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<sup>150</sup> "I am a Roman", a nod to Byzantium and the perpetuation among the Greeks of that Empire that Roman citizenship (and perhaps the cosmopolitan association that came with it) was as, if not more, important than provincial ethnic identities.

<sup>151</sup> Both in their native tongues and in the language of soccer.

to take up soccer again – the simple joys found in the passing of a ball, from which his “heart grew light”. (Martin, D 1966, p. 100)

When a player is discarded in body, he is also discarded and displaced culturally. He is forced to renegotiate his environment in order to find a new useful or fulfilling manner of living. This exists in elite sports, where the relationships between elite athlete and their employers are often very blunt, but also in smaller worlds where close friendships and cultural specificities may take precedence over matters of money. After being assaulted during the riot, Criton withdraws from both soccer and the Greek community, preferring to live in the semi-rural urban fringe of Melbourne’s outer eastern suburbs.

Others however are unable to let go so easily, such as Paul “Mack” McNeil in Peter Goldsworthy’s 1996 novel *Keep It Simple, Stupid*. Mack is the aging star player of the Napoli Soccer Club, an Italian-backed soccer club in suburban Adelaide. Apart from the self-esteem Mack attains while playing the game, the club also acts as a surrogate family for him, a replacement for his own biological family which was unable to provide the nurture and security the then young Mack craved. Mack’s identification with the club and his view of it as a surrogate family runs deep – he viewed the late club patriarch Beppe Rossi as a father figure, and Beppe’s sons Vince and current president Aldo as something akin to brothers. Mack even picks up the ability to speak the rudiments of conversational Italian, which he sees as further entrenching him within the Napoli club’s culture.

Mack’s pending cultural dislocation is foreshadowed early on in the novel. After Beppe suffers a stroke, Mack is erased from Beppe’s memory. (Goldsworthy 1996, pp. 79-80) It is a traumatic experience for the then young Mack, losing a father figure he

actually respected,<sup>152</sup> but it is trauma he is at first able to overcome by further immersing himself into the Napoli Soccer Club's culture, becoming what his biological father sneeringly called "The Honorary Dago".<sup>153</sup> (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 11)

When the club's new coach is introduced to the players in the form of Englishman Billy Colby – a move which signals a change in the club's purpose by moving away from an identity as a social soccer to one of a club that prioritises winning at all costs – Mack believes that his own position in the starting eleven is secure no matter what the circumstances, because of his self-perception of being an indispensable part of the club. When Aldo notes that "Our club is open to everyone", (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 32) Mack responds with "'Si!' Mack called from the back. '*Per mia sfortuna*'", (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 32) a blatant attempt to demonstrate his position within the club's social hierarchy:

The laughter of the members was followed by a second, delayed outburst from the non-Italians as Aldo translated. "Unfortunately for him". (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 32)

In this case, the Italian speaking members get to laugh first. Tacitly or otherwise, the non-Italian speakers do not occupy the same level of belonging as those who can speak and understand Italian. And while Aldo may make the joke that "We even allow Greeks to play for us", (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 32) the fact that the joke is made at all

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<sup>152</sup> As opposed to his biological father, a violent, drunken and psychologically damaged war veteran.

<sup>153</sup> A phrase re-used in Goldsworthy's short story "The Bet". Compare this also to Debra Oswald's *The Redback Leftovers*, where the Anglo-Celtic Australian youth Spencer talks with the Italians at a local café about soccer, and becomes one of them, an "Honorary Italian". (Oswald 2000, p. 108)

acknowledges the existence of a socio-cultural hierarchy at the club based on ethnicity.

Because Mack understands enough Italian to feel that he is part of the club, and because of his extended history at the club and his social proximity to the Rossi family, the founders and financiers of the club, he believes he holds a superior position in the socio-cultural hierarchy compared to Billy Colby. Later on though, it becomes clear that the rules of the game have changed, and being fluent in the “local lingo” (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 37) is less useful than it once was – Mack becomes an outsider not because of notions of ethnicity, but because he no longer serves any use to the quasi-nationalist cause represented by the Napoli Soccer Club.

Mack, once the star forward, is now a midfield grunter watching the ball go back and forth over his head, (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 181) now impotent both at home and on the field of play. Colby has also managed to turn soccer into work, not play, diminishing the joy Mack almost took for granted. When Mack thinks of how the soccer field was now “someone else’s office”, (Goldsworthy 1996, pp. 181-2) what becomes evident is that an Anglo-Protestant work ethic has been applied to the Napoli Soccer Club, an approach at odds with Italian artistry and craftsmanship. As Mack’s fellow veteran teammate Bruno articulates, “It ain’t... pretty”. (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 147)

While Mack believes he is defending the club’s cultural ethos when he challenges Colby’s ruthless utilitarianism, he is also defending himself and his emotional, physical and cultural investment in the club, and the man he has become because of these decisions. Instead Mack comes to realise that he has become an on-field liability; that his belief in his de facto ethnic family is a lie, and that his knowledge of basic



conversational Italian is useless; that maverick, joyful players are a relic of an older time, now worthless in the ultra-pragmatic English game.

But whatever issues Mack has about the changes to the club's culture, his aging body is also no longer able to keep up with the younger players. Incidentally, this is why Mack keeps getting selected to play, thanks to the pressure put on Colby by Aldo – because if Mack plays, the team is more likely to lose, and thus able to save the club's financial patron Aldo (whose business is struggling) the costs of paying for winning football instead of losing football. The threat to Mack's position at the club, both on the field and off it, is embodied by the presence of Watson, a young player from Adelaide's British influenced northern suburbs brought to the Napoli club by Colby. Not only does Watson – who sports a Union Jack tattoo – play in the same position as Mack, but he also shows no interest or concern with the Napoli Soccer Club's culture, a fact resented by Mack:

“That's young Watson. Come over with Colby. Package deal.”

“A skinhead.”

“They're all thugs up north. *Gli skins inglesi!*” (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 110)

For the members of the club themselves, the personal travails of Mack matter little. Though Mack attempts to fortify his own withering confidence by believing he has the support of the club's members, (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 25) the members place more importance in the continuing existence of the club itself. For them, the Napoli Soccer Club acts as a geographic (and historic) marker of ethnicity – after waves of

immigration and demographic change, only the Italian soccer club remains of the Italian era within the host suburb. (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 54)

In Australian soccer, during that era where the game was dominated by an ethno-cultural paradigm, notions of loyalty to the relevant host culture played a huge role in determining the usefulness of a player. The reinforcement of a patronage system was used to appease a club's members in ways that mainstream sports would not necessarily have to deal with. The outcome is a group of people otherwise oppressed by mainstream society – in this case soccer playing wogs – creating their own insular hegemonies. This is partly a reaction to being denied access to mainstream acceptance, but it also manifests in its own form of cultural superiority, which expresses itself via the ostracism or denial of access to this power structure to people outside of it.

Sometimes the effect of a patrician system based on ethnicity is harder to quantify, and open to interpretation. Mack recalls his difficulties in becoming accepted by the Italian community and its soccer club in his initial forays as a junior soccer player, with the fathers of the other boys concerned that Mack – an outsider to their community – would displace one of their sons from the team. Mack is fortunate enough to receive the patronage of the club patriarch Beppe Rossi, and Mack's tenure at the club is long enough that he is able to witness the next generation sons of immigrant fathers playing the game, "already taller than their fathers". (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 151)

The existence of a second generation of players implies that soccer in Australia now has a continuity of sorts, but in this instance it is still that of an insular ethnic continuity. The prejudices of the past as they relate to the intrusion of outsiders remain, as they did in Mack's youth. Shaun, a rough, underclass and (we assume) Anglo-Celtic

Australian teenager, himself without a father figure, loiters around the margins of the club, without a patron to let him in to the club. (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 152) Much like Mack relied on Beppe to convince the Italian fathers of a previous generation to let Mack play, Shaun will rely on someone like Mack to facilitate his entry to the club. But when Mack leaves the club, who will stand up for Shaun? Where Criton became Italian in the eyes of his Italian supporters and a traitor in the eyes of his fellow Greeks, and where Monty and his gentile Blue-White teammates became Jewish in the decade afterwards,<sup>154</sup> so, too, did Mack become Italian by the consent of the dominant cultural group at the Napoli Soccer Club. In Mack's case the failure to realise that consent was conditional proves catastrophic to his sense of self. That he is also thrown free from the bonds of a family that he thought he had come to belong to compounds that sense of marginality.

That notion of induction into an ethnic community via the bonds of family – and in soccer's case, via the father – is a recurring feature in Australian soccer literature. In Ian Bone's young-adult novel *Tin Soldiers*, the protagonist Michael recalls an early experience at a Greek-backed soccer club. When he was younger, Michael, who is one quarter-Greek, had tried out for a junior team of the unnamed main Greek club in the professional league. His father, George, had managed to get him a spot on the team in part because one of the coaches was a fellow Vietnam War veteran, but the experience goes poorly. Michael is ostracised by the other members of the team both on and off the field, perhaps because he does not look or act Greek, or perhaps because his father is not Greek – even though it is also noted on the same page that

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<sup>154</sup> In David Martin's short story "Who Says A Must Say B".

there were other players on the team who were not Greek who did not seem to have those issues. (Bone 2000, p. 15)

This ambiguity is a useful example of the difficulty in quantifying where genuine discrimination based on ethnicity ends and where the perception of being discriminated against begins. It shows that as often as the ability of the dominant community in dictating the terms of belonging can be true, sometimes the terms are intellectually or retrospectively dictated by the individual who has been shunned – and who can make rationalisations about why he was shunned, and come up with the idea in this case that it was due to ethnicity, when perhaps it was only part of the answer, or not part of the answer at all.

Though Michael is unsure as to why he was ostracised by his teammates, his father is sure it was because of their lack of “Greekness” compared to the other fathers and sons, a wound George has carried with him since he was a child. Yet George’s sense of being discriminated against is revealed to be more complicated than he lets on. According to George’s younger brother Nick, the olive skinned George was looked upon more favourably by the Greek side of the family than the fairer skinned, “Aussie” looking Nick; indeed, that George was “Greek when it suited him”. (Bone 2000, p. 47)

This malleability of identity is also not always seen as a burden by George, who at one time was able to move in between the two cultures with relative ease, such as when he took up and excelled at Australian Rules football:

George had played Aussie football on the weekends. Eleni wanted him to play soccer when he was little, she thought it was a safer sport. But none of George’s friends played soccer, and none of them worshipped any soccer players. So he

stuck with Aussie rules, even after he'd quit school and taken up a job as a labourer. (Bone 2000, p. 52)

In order to be included socially in mainstream Australian society, George makes the decision to play Australian Rules rather than soccer.<sup>155</sup> Nick notes of himself that he had:

grown up in suburbia, in a half-Greek household with neighbours who refused to understand what his mother was saying. He grew up without a clear label – was he a wog or not? – did he belong here? (Bone 2000, p. 37)

A failed radical, Nick had come to believe that “the politics of the personal – changing the simple, everyday stories of people’s lives – was the true revolution.” (Bone 2000, p. 37)

Michael’s later soccer experiences are influenced more by class than ethnicity. Michael and his school friends had played soccer together since they were young, in countless school teams, until their paths seemed to diverge towards the end of school. (Bone 2000, p. 12) Later however they are able to find a local amateur team to play for, playing alongside:

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<sup>155</sup> By comparison, *Keep It Simple, Stupid's* Mack chose soccer because of its proximity rather than because of its wider socio-cultural implications – it was there “just across the road”. It is also noted that Mack had played Aussie Rules at school, and still had an affinity for it. “He had played the game at school as a boy, real football, Australian football. The sport still spoke to him. He had loved its random, slapstick quality, especially in the winter mud: the unpredictable bounce of the slippery, suppository-shaped ball. More greased pig than dog, it obeyed no known law of motion, refusing to sit, heel, chase.” (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 234)

Saturday morning heroes, bank tellers and accountants with glory in their eyes, real-estate salesmen who hung their shirts loose to hide the early onset of flabby bellies. (Bone 2000, p. 13)

The older players are participating for the sake of fun, fitness and a chance to escape from the weekday grind. The team is carried by its four youngest players, and because of this the team is the easy-beat of the competition. This is not enjoyable, but Michael reacts to it in a sort of detached way:

Michael acted as if he didn't care, because to care would mean aching after every goal was scored against you. It would mean putting more than your body on the line – and for what? For those bank tellers with their hire-purchase cars? For Sam and Troy and Benny? Did they care now? Maybe once they wanted to win, when they were younger. (Bone 2000, p. 14)

Emotional investment in the game arrives however in the form of a personal rivalry established while Michael is warming up for his amateur league soccer match, when Ahmad comes by and juggles the ball ever closer to Michael's personal space. Michael calls Ahmad, a rival soccer player (and a fellow student at his high school), a "son of a terrorist" and intruder. (Bone 2000, p. 7) Ahmad had changed his name from "Al" to "Ahmad" within the last year. The boys from Michael's team, who had gone to school with Ahmad, interpret this as an attempt to become more Lebanese, (Bone 2000, p. 11) establishing another layer of separateness from both Ahmad and his team, but also to themselves. Though Ahmad and his teammates are of the same social class as Michael and his friends, their ethnicity and their desire to maintain and perpetuate their culture via forming a social soccer team means that the shared class experienced of the young men is overshadowed.

As the game proceeds, it becomes more violent, the tackles more crude, the sense of danger building to the point where a brawl breaks out and Michael finds himself strangling Ahmad. (Bone 2000, p. 25) The fight ends, and the recriminations within the team begin, with the younger, working-class men trying to justify the fight, and the older, middle class men deploring the lack of decorum and the fact that the team will now face expulsion from the league. (Bone 2000, p. 27)

While soccer in Australia has provided a cultural and social safe haven for migrants, the nature of this safe haven – a sport seen as un-Australian – creates problems for the communities involved in the game. This is true for that era of the game when Continental European migration saw the game characterised as irretrievably foreign, but also in the contemporary era where soccer itself has sought to largely disown its ethnic-Australian past. But even within the migrant Australian soccer sphere, there were communities that were treated more marginally than others, or felt that they were more marginalised than other clubs. Twenty years after the publication of *The Young Wife*, David Martin returned to the theme of ethnicity and soccer via two short stories in his *Foreigners* collection.

In his short story “Who Says A Must Say B”, set within the 1970s Victorian soccer scene, the Croatian community feels under constant attack from the Yugoslav regime. This Yugoslav regime, perceived by the story’s Croatian immigrant protagonist Jure Lukic as not being a country, but rather “the name for a prison-house of nations” (Martin, D 1981, p. 28) dispenses money to propaganda tours of Australia by its leading football team. (Martin, D 1981, pp. 26-7) Jure and the Croatian soccer community believe that the regime is even obsessed with controlling soccer in Victoria to the extent that it seeks the destruction of Croatian organisations like the overtly

political soccer club Sava (the team that Jure supports) that provide a nexus for supporters of an independent Croatian state. (Martin, D 1981, p. 26)

But these clubs and their members are not beyond discriminating against and oppressing opposition clubs. In Martin's short story "The Full Back", the Scottish import brought over to Australia to play for the Jewish backed team experiences a form of alienation similar to that experienced by Criton in *The Young Wife*. Monty Gallagher finds himself playing for the fictional Jewish backed side Blue-White in Melbourne. The club has few Jews in its team, but opposition players and supporters waste no opportunity in asserting their anti-Semitism towards the Jewish contingent of Blue-White (limited here to one player and the club's supporters), as well as anyone who associates with Blue-White:

A Sava player ran in to block him, but with excessive force, and Monty raised two fingers in the universal gesture of reproof. Shortly afterwards the whistle blew. As he entered the wire enclosed race which led from the pitch someone pushed him in the back. He turned and saw it was the same offender.

"What's the matter with you, Moses? Why you do that with your fingers?"

"Because that's where you can stick it. And I have nothing to do with Moses. Come to the shower and see for yourself."

"Don't matter one stuff. They pay you, you do the shit work. You people is worse than Jew, make me sick." He pretended to vomit. (Martin, D 1981, p. 168)

As *The Young Wife's* Criton and the other non-Italian players for Minerva became "Italians by consent", (Martin, D 1966, p. 100) so does Monty become a sort of Jew by



association. The anti-Semites from the opposition see him as something much worse. Monty finds himself both confused and angry at being identified and vilified as a Jew. After enduring this kind of abuse for several weeks, Monty finds himself identifying with the Jewish community against a rioting anti-Semitic crowd at a football match; a crowd which was screaming “to the ovens!”:

Christ forgive them, Monty thought, they don't know what they're yelling, the crazy loons! Ovens! He felt a great urge to snatch an iron bar, or the corner-flag – anything at all – and rush in among them to crush their thick, worthless, cretinous skulls. (Martin, D 1981, p. 170)

Monty is unwilling at first to take seriously the idea that the social conditions of the rioters – mostly emotionally and culturally stifled migrants from working-class backgrounds – is part of the cause of the riot's savagery. It is only when Babette, the daughter of Blue-White's president, explains to Monty the complexity of the situation that Monty begins to think of the rioters as human:

“Dad tells me”, she said, “that you'll be in court tomorrow. You let yourself be provoked by those ratbags – congratulations. He thinks you were lucky they didn't have you up for the disciplinary tribunal.”

“In the end I couldn't stand and do nothing while they wrecked our ground. People are animals, Babette.”

“Yes, but they are still people.”

“‘To the ovens.’ I heard them scream it with my own ears.”

“I wasn’t there that time. I only hear it in my dreams. But some of those who screech the loudest probably fought against the Germans. The odd few may even have had an old Jew hidden in the cellar when the deportation squad came round.” (Martin, D 1981, p. 171)

When Monty insists that it is not possible that any of the rioters could have possibly shown such humanity, Babette insists that it is true: “Everything is possible”, she repeated. “*Everything*. That’s one thing you find out when you’re Jewish.” (Martin, D 1981, p. 171) Monty is reminded then, as he has been reminded often during his limited experience of soccer in Australia, that he has much to learn; that the game is not merely a game, but also one in which the clubs are vehicles for cultural expression, for better and for worse.

Other perspectives of the way those soccer clubs functioned as vehicles for community expression come from the spectators themselves. Dina Dounis’ poem “Soccer at Middle Park” discusses a family outing at the Middle Park soccer ground in the mid-to-late 1960s, where the family watches the Greek backed club South Melbourne Hellas. In the poem Dounis talks about family, of enjoyment, even while holding a rose-tinted view of the violence that would sometimes break out among soccer crowds. Dounis’ poem gives a rare first-person insight into what it was like to be a woman involved with the male dominated aspects of soccer in Australia, with the only mention of obvious femininity being the food prepared by Dounis’ mother “an assortment of treats / oranges, nuts and cake”. (2011, p. 109). Dounis however does not focus on femininity, as she might be expected to do – instead she focuses on aspects of class:

momentary diversions

from the back breaking toil

of the coming week

and ethnicity:

clear cut loyalties back then

we barracked

for the Greek team (Dounis 2011, p. 109)

Dounis highlights the fact that people from European but non-English speaking migrant cultures in the 1960s had only limited outlets for recreation. It is a point emphasised by several writers writing on that era of Australian soccer. Though David Martin was writing on cultural tropes that had been played out at the beginning of the 1960s and Dounis those at the end of that decade, there are similarities in their thinking despite Martin's focus on the single male migrant aspect of the crowd, with families and women only brought to the games on special occasions. The soccer journalist Les Murray in his autobiography also makes mention of this fact. Murray's mother joins the rest of the family for matches, even though she was not a football fan. At first this entails merely outings to matches in the local Illawarra-based league, but later on also long car trips to Sydney with her husband and her three sons to watch the Hungarian-Australian team Budapest SC. The sense of family and community were more important than household chores. (Murray, L 2006, p. 51)

Journalist Wanda Jamrozik's view of that era contains a less misty-eyed recollection than Dounis' poem or Murray's recollections. In her short memoir article "A Day at the

Footy”<sup>156</sup> she recounts attending a soccer match in Adelaide when she was a child.<sup>157</sup> Like Dounis, in this piece Jamrozik is uninterested in discussing the politics of being a female observer at a male dominated venue or sport. Both writers are more interested in the social dynamic being played out before them. Unlike Dounis’ fond memories of what is virtually a family picnic, Jamrozik sees the barely constrained rage of émigré populations with real grievances against each other being played out via the medium of a suburban soccer match:

Half the time the matches were like ethnic wars in miniature as the various national groups used soccer to pick at the scabs that barely covered the generations of conflict living and breathing in their collective psyches. Soccer was the vehicle for catharsis, an excuse for atavistic wallowing in grudges and glories that stretched back to the Bronze Age or beyond. (Jamrozik 1995, p. 8)

Jamrozik alludes to gender via the fact of her then pre-adolescent state, and her Aunt Win (whom we are not shown attending these matches). The piece is however primarily about class in Australia, as seen through the cipher of ethnicity. In both of these cases – Dounis’ poem, and Jamrozik’s memoir piece – the writers discuss the emotional toll taken on people who, by virtue of the linguistic, social and educational

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<sup>156</sup> There is something very unusual about the medium in which Jamrozik’s piece is situated, that of the National Soccer League match day programme of the Greek-aligned club Sydney Olympic. It is a piece containing a woman’s point of view in an almost exclusively male dominated format (in both content, production and audience). The piece discusses events that took place in Adelaide, and not Sydney (where the relevant match programme is based). The piece shows hostility to the experience of growing up being forced to watch soccer matches in a tense and volatile atmosphere. One wonders about – while also being appreciative of – the probably ramshackle editorial policies which allowed such a piece to be published.

<sup>157</sup> There is a similar, although much briefer example of a father-daughter day at an ethnic soccer match in *Looking For Alibrandi*, where the teenage Italian-Australian protagonist Josie remarks “When I was in Adelaide I had to watch soccer. My father is a fanatic. It’s the only time I see him lose control.” (Marchetta 2006, p. 243)

barriers they faced as migrants on a daily basis in Australian life, see the Sunday trip to the soccer grounds as an opportunity for this caste to express itself.

The problem as Jamrozik seems to understand it, is that this migrant caste does not turn its energies towards that group which oppresses it. Instead it directs its frustrations toward the most proximate members of the same caste who do not happen to share the same ethno-cultural background. The sense of residual and ingrained mob tendencies sees age-old and more recent resentments and enmities rise up instead. Rather than Dounis' sepia tinged reminiscences, Jamrozik's recollection resembles a localised version of David Martin's "prison house of nations". In this case, a goal scored by one's own caste is celebrated for its own virtues but also, when appropriate, for the additional meanings attached when it is achieved against a particularly reviled opponent:

Clearest of all, I remember the shock of unexpected tears one miserable afternoon when, late in a tense, close-fought game, Polonia out of the blue suddenly scored. Everyone around us going crazy with joy. I couldn't help it, they came gushing out whether I liked it or not. The fading light, the freezing wind, everywhere strangers shouting and stamping and my cheeks wet with pre-adolescent, patriotic tears. (Jamrozik 1995, p. 8)

Down the years however, that sense of ethnic exclusivity is gradually undermined by a number of social forces. These include assimilation, integration, official multiculturalism, and the beginnings of a social change in which some non-Anglo-Celtic Australians, especially those from second and third generations, saw themselves as members of distinct ethnic groups as well as belonging to a distinct ethnic, non-Anglo-Celtic "other". This can be seen to some extent in Richard Barrett's

play *The Heartbreak Kid*. The worlds of the “migrant” and the “Australian” are clearly demarcated, despite the play’s protagonist Nicky Politis having been able, to his own satisfaction, to be both Greek and Australian, including via his localised soccer identity. (Mavroudis, P 2013, p. 489)<sup>158</sup>

The play’s film adaptation (Barrett & Jenkins 1993) is in that sense much more ambitious, going into more depth on the matters of class and ethnicity upon which the play touches, but also adding to that the issue of gender. In the film, Nicky becomes Nick, eldest child of a single father (Nick’s mother having died), and no longer quite the caricatured “wog” delinquent of the play. Nick may “play up” at school and with his friends in the film as his counterpart Nicky does in the play, but he is also more responsible, looking after his younger sister and undertaking many of the household chores. Nick also sees a future for himself as a professional soccer player. Importantly, he sees that future as being in Australia (ideally playing for the team he supports, South Melbourne Hellas), but also in representing Australia. The film also searches deeper than the play into the issue of soccer’s place within Australian culture. Because the film is based in Melbourne rather than the Sydney of the play, a sharper contrast between the traditional Australian sports and soccer is drawn; the split between Australian Rules football and soccer is shown as being not just a matter of aesthetic or athletic taste, but one based upon a strict sense of assimilation against pluralism.

It is a pluralism made bluntly evident via the makeup of the Australian Rules and soccer demographics. The Australian Rules participants are uniformly Anglo-Celtic

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<sup>158</sup> See (Mavroudis, P 2013) for an extended commentary on the play itself.

Australian, compared to the ethnically diverse soccer players. The former display their Australianness through their game as well as their training guernseys, which are predominantly replica Victorian Football League jumpers. The soccer players meanwhile, disorganised as they may be, represent themselves as cosmopolitan via their use of Internazionale, AC Milan and Liverpool jerseys.<sup>159</sup> In the film, Southgate, the main physical education teacher at the school, is also harder-edged and nastier than his relatively benign counterpart in the play. In a quite literal demarcation of the school's cultural boundaries, Southgate uses his position of authority to deny those students interested in soccer a chance to use the school's oval. The soccer boys organise a lunchtime soccer competition on the basketball courts, a tournament ended when a serious collision occurs, with Southgate unilaterally banning soccer from its makeshift home, and effectively eliminating soccer from the school.<sup>160</sup>

In order for the soccer students to be able to use the oval and represent the school, they need to find a teacher to supervise the team on a voluntary basis. With no male volunteers, it is Christine "Papa" Papadopoulos who takes up the challenge, to the amusement of Southgate and even the boys she intends to coach. When Christine's attempts to coach directly from a coaching manual fail, it is fortunate that she is able to call upon Nick's father (a former international footballer for Greece, and recently laid off from his factory job) to coach the team. Christine nevertheless finds herself liberated by her proximity to the team. At least while she is at school, she is free from

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<sup>159</sup> Even the use of "guernsey" vs "jersey" is a marker of difference.

<sup>160</sup> Note the irony here of a game often derided for its "softness" and "weakness" being banned because it is too dangerous.

the overbearing patriarchal tendencies of her father and her fiancé, who have no more ambition for Christine than to perform the role of the dutiful good Greek girl.

While Christine's tryst with Nick in the film is the most scandalous part of her behaviour,<sup>161</sup> her decision to become involved with the school soccer team is also seen as culturally transgressive by her family. In part this is due to heightened class differences – the film version of Christine is shown as coming from an upper-middle-class background, compared to the lower-middle-class or working-class play version of her character. But it is transgressive also because she is being, within the bounds of contemporary Greek-Australian culture, unwomanly and unfeminine. When Christine joins in a training session with the boys in order to make up even numbers – including wearing one of the jerseys she has purchased for the team – her psychological liberation from the cultural restrictions placed on her by her family and community becomes complete, exemplified in the moment when she falls over in the mud.

Nevertheless, the kind of liberation Christine experiences in rebelling against the expectations of an ethnic culture's strictures on women's behaviour is also an end point. Once that rebellion is successful, whether on a grand, deliberate scale, or merely an incidental one, the overbearing controls of insular ethnic communities – and their self-conscious sense of community – begin to be dismantled. That this happens alongside the gradual absorption and assimilation of different ethnic groups into a more amorphous "middle-Australian" identity means the real scope to write about

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<sup>161</sup> In the play the relationship between Christine and Nicky never goes beyond a schoolyard crush.



distinct ethnic communities and their proximity to soccer is much more difficult to imagine.

### **The end of the migrant collective alongside the rise of the individual migrant**

Even with the decline of the ethnically backed soccer club within Australian soccer culture (both within Australian soccer literature and outside of it) the notions of ethnicity and multiculturalism are not entirely discarded. They are dealt with in a different manner, through the experiences of the refugee, and often through the prism of left-wing writers sympathetic to the refugee cause. The goal here is to highlight the trauma suffered by individual refugees and asylum seekers in Australia, as well as creating individual characters who share a common humanity as opposed to massed hordes of the anonymous poor and frightened. In Alan Whykes' poem "Refugee Soccer, Darwin", the enmities which plagued the Balkans and Australian soccer are cast aside, being replaced by the shared joy of soccer. Serbs, Muslims, Croats and Bosnians, men and women, all suffering trauma courtesy of the 1990s Balkan conflicts, all come together on the neutral turf of an Australian soccer field:

and so they played on

playing out Balkan battles on a humble green strip

with dignity, spirit and unnatural sweat

under fading foreign light (Whykes 1999, p. 194)

Whykes holds on to the faux naïve idea that sport could one day act as a substitute for war and politics:

to solve their politicking and posturing

when maybe

a soccer ball might suffice (Whykes 1999, p. 194)

It is an idealised, utopian vision which ignores not only the enmities, but also the fact that sport – and especially soccer, the most popular sport in the Balkans – has played a central role in fostering and perpetuating those ethnic enmities.<sup>162</sup> Whykes is not alone in using refugees and their love of soccer as tools for exploring the psychological trauma of war and the effects of social disconnection. In more contemporary times the notion of what constitutes a refugee has changed from those fleeing the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s to those fleeing the Middle East conflicts of the 2000s and beyond. The kinds of characters and even the narrative and political motivations for using refugees and their attachment to or love of soccer has shifted to portrayals of members of Afghan refugees. Thus we see in Emma Hardman's novel *Nine Parts Water* the ancillary character of Hassan, an Afghan asylum seeker in the Woomera detention centre who escapes during a riot at the facility. Hassan thinks of his escape in the metaphorical terms of being a soccer striker streaming down the field:

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<sup>162</sup> For an example of Australian soccer literature which portrays the dissolution of Yugoslavia from the perspective of people with a Balkan heritage, see George Toseski's poem "Cheers" (2006); this poem, which has as its setting an Australian schoolyard, analyses the death of Yugoslavia leader Josip Broz Tito upon the previously suppressed nationalist identities of a group of soccer-playing high school boys.

Hassan ran like he was the striker for his country; the blood dribbling down his arms was sweat; the lunging guards were defenders, challenging his every step; and the blazing sun of autumn in the desert became the lights shining down, revealing his brilliance. (Hardman 2007, p. 10)

But it is a delusion. When Hassan gets tackled – as it turns out later on, not by guards, but by protestors who will facilitate his escape – the illusion disappears:

He went limp, his arms across his face against whatever would come, and reminded himself that Afghanistan didn't have a soccer team; the sports stadium was reserved for public executions. (Hardman 2007, p. 11)

Even among those trying to help Hassan, such as the librarian Esme (a refugee activist who was corresponding with Hassan), Hassan's love of soccer initially creates confusion and isolation. When writing about football to Esme, there is confusion about what football is and what it means to different people, even people who have no interest in football:

He told her how his case was going (always going nowhere, round and round and round). He told her he liked football, and for a while Esme thought he had meant rugby or Aussie Rules, but soon she realised he meant soccer. (Hardman 2007, p. 48)

Later when talking with Nina, the teenage daughter of a local resident, Hassan corrects himself, changing “football” into “soccer”. (Hardman 2007, p. 66)<sup>163</sup> After his escape Hassan lives in hiding in a Queensland coastal town. When on the beach, Hassan wishes he had a soccer ball. (Hardman 2007, p. 61). Later, Hassan buys a ball, and plays with it on the beach while he travels to and from buying groceries. (Hardman 2007, p. 131)

Isolated because of the circumstances of his escape as well as his difficulties with the culture, Hassan uses his love of soccer to become better integrated with the local community. When Hassan watches the opening match of the 2002 World Cup between France and Senegal, he is alone in the small shack he shares with Cal. When Senegal scores he is joyous, (Hardman 2007, p. 89) perhaps the first time he has felt joy since fleeing Afghanistan. Senegal’s eventual victory in the match makes Hassan even happier, (Hardman 2007, p. 92) seeing the underdog triumph and express unbridled joy.

Later Hassan panics that he may not get to see the World Cup final. It turns out Cal is going to watch it with some friends at the local bowls club, and invites Hassan along, facilitating Hassan’s integration into the community. (Hardman 2007, p. 200) When the aging German hippie Greta responds to Cal’s question of what the score is with “The score is nil-all, but I think Germany is winning”, Hassan interrupts with, “No. They have only one good player, *only one*. Brazil has Ronaldo, Ronaldinho, Rivaldo.” (Hardman 2007, p. 204) Hassan is at his most joyous, most ebullient, most expressive, his

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<sup>163</sup> Nina also reveals that she had once played soccer. It is not a topic that is touched upon again once Nina takes up surfing.

English language skills at their most confident, fear having momentarily deserted him. Cal observes the ensuing friendly argument between Greta and Hassan:

They went back and forth like this through half-time – the different tactics used, the chances lost, the defence, the attack. Between their accents and the clamour of the room, she wondered how they understood each other. (Hardman 2007, p. 204)

Cal meanwhile feels like an outsider to the discussion – it is clear that Greta and Hassan are communicating in a way that excludes her, by speaking in the language of soccer.

The Afghan refugee motif also exists beyond the world of politically left-leaning adult-oriented literature. In Deborah Abela's trilogy of *Jasper Zammit* children's novels, the experiences of an Afghan child refugee are also used to make social, political and moral points. When Jasper Zammit, the grandson of a Maltese immigrant to Australia befriends Aamir, an Afghan refugee, their mutual love of soccer overcomes the cultural and language barriers between them. Jasper and Aamir are emulating in their own fashion the experiences of Jasper's grandfather (known affectionately as Nannu) on his arrival in Australia decades earlier. In the first book in the series, Jasper tells us of his grandfather that he:

had played soccer all his life. Even as a kid growing up on Malta. He came to Australia when he was only eight years old and the first thing he did when he got here was join the local soccer team. He couldn't speak English, but that didn't matter, he'd tell Jasper. In soccer you don't need to speak the same

language, you just have to have the same love for the game. (Abela & Warren 2005a, p. 14)

So when it comes time to help the shy Aamir adjust to life in Australia, Nannu has an opportunity to reiterate to Jasper his message of the joy of the game, and its ability to cross cultural and linguistic boundaries:

Lots of people from all different countries came here. It was really hard at first, but it didn't take long for us "New Australians" to work out we had a few things in common, and one of them was soccer. I played on teams where none of us spoke the language, but you know what? When we were on that field it felt like we'd been playing together since we were kids.<sup>164</sup> (Abela & Warren 2005b, p. 18)

Because of soccer the migrants were, in Nannu's version of events, combined into something greater than themselves, rather than existing in the ghettoised clubs of David Martin, Peter Goldsworthy and Wanda Jamrozik. While taking into account the necessary naiveté of a children's story, the emphasis on togetherness is paramount; the link between soccer and food, too, is something which appears as a recurring trope for those who seek to find a way to justify or find an ally for soccer's place and contribution to multicultural Australia.<sup>165</sup> As with Reilly's emphasis on the diverse

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<sup>164</sup> This ideology shares much with Graham Reilly's interpretation of soccer as the great cultural mediator for disparate migrant groups. (Reilly 2004, p. 70)

<sup>165</sup> The implied message here seems to be "If we can accept their food, why can't we accept their game?"

feasts on offer at the fledgling Baytown Soccer Club, Abela has Nannu recall also the great post-game feasts of his childhood soccer days:

After every game, we'd have huge parties where we all brought food from our own country, from all sorts of places like Hungary, Lebanon, Italy, Croatia. I hadn't even heard of half of these places, but I can tell you, it was some of the best food I've ever tasted. (Abela & Warren 2005b, p. 18)

When "Badger" Mackenzie, a member of an opposition team, taunts Aamir with slurs about refugees, calling them among other things "stinking refugees", "bludging boat people", and "terrorists" (Abela & Warren 2005b, pp. 98-9), Jasper's fury leads him to punch Badger on the nose, with Jasper getting sent off. (Abela & Warren 2005b, p. 100) The politeness of middle-class left-wing discourse gives way, through the actions of a child, to the anger lurking beneath the civil veneer. When comparing the migrant and cultural experiences of his grandfather, who was expected to assimilate, and the culture of his own time, Jasper Zammit reckons: "It's different today, you don't have to stop being who you are to live here and be Australian." (Abela & Warren 2005b, p. 125)

But what Jasper fails to mention – understandably, having experienced no racism himself – are the complex arguments raging around multiculturalism and assimilation in his own time. In comparison, because of the audience she is writing for, Hardman can be more direct about these matters than someone like Abela, who is writing for much younger readers. In their portrayals of the vocabulary of soccer being able to overcome both the limitations of language, but also the inhibitions of language, they share a common understanding. As Hassan grows in both social and linguistic confidence when discussing soccer with Greta, so too does the shy Aamir reveal that

his knowledge of English is better than he has let on when his confidence is high enough that he lets his guard down.

Nevertheless, a shared love of soccer is not always a suitable panacea for the wounded refugee or migrant soul. In Louise Wakeling's poem "Morning Vigil", the narrator sets the scene as being an ordinary soccer field in Sydney's western suburbs:

Welded to metal benches  
in a soccer field in Auburn,  
we close ranks against the cold keep watch,  
listening to the scrape of wind on leaves,  
the thud of goals into corners  
of the earth not ours. (Wakeling 2008, p. 10)

Soon this quiet vigil is interrupted quietly by a young Afghan man, fresh from the refugee camps of Pakistan:

the Afghan boy stiches himself  
to us as we ponder losses  
of an altogether smaller kind. (Wakeling 2008, p. 10)

The game being played in front of them is thus put in a different perspective, its sense of quiet routine forever altered. The boy talks for over an hour, and the group he has



attached himself to is no longer watching the game. The impact of religion, war, displacement, and the uncertainty of a temporary protection visa, have overwhelmed previous audiences, even moved them, but the gap in shared experience cannot be overcome.

Unlike in previous decades, when migrants and refugees could congregate collectively to alleviate their isolation, those who have arrived in Australia later on must depend on the generosity of their hosts. Thus in Morris Gleitzman's *Boy Overboard*, a children's novel about the journey made by Afghan asylum seekers to Australia, Jamal, Bibi, Rashida and Omar (all Afghan child asylum seekers who have been placed in a mandatory detention centre by the Australian government), can find joy in playing soccer against Australian service personnel:

I can hear my two Aussie defenders thudding towards me.

"Pass," screams Omar.

"Shoot," screams Bibi.

I hesitate, then shoot.

A flash of pain sears out from my hip, but I don't care. The goalie doesn't even move. The ball's a missile. Flashing between the posts, over the crowd and slamming into the compound fence.

I fling my arms into the air. (Gleitzman 2002, p. 163)

But it is only a fleeting joy. Soon the refugees are told that the boat carrying Jamal and Bibi's parents has sunk. While one of the Australian navy personnel, Andrew, is

sympathetic to their plight,<sup>166</sup> other members of the Australian navy feel little sympathy, smirking as they tell the children they are on an island a long way from Australia. (Gleitzman 2002, p. 166) It is an experience which is largely experienced in isolation, with the asylum seekers in *Boy Overboard* unable to form an effective, functioning and self-defined community. Where the earlier migrants had a shared mass experience and many thousands of others like themselves, more recent migrants are often left to fend for themselves, without the same level of support structures of their ethnic or religious communities.

The efforts to describe the experiences of ethnic minorities via the medium of Australian soccer literature are mostly laudable. But as is often the case in Australian soccer literature (despite the best intentions of many of the writers to write honestly and sympathetically about Australian soccer and its participants), the subjects of the works themselves still essentially perform the function of the subject, rarely being the narrators of their own experience. Even in well-meaning, politically activist works such as *Boy Overboard*, Gleitzman feels the need to add an introductory addendum apologising for any mistakes made, and thanking those with the firsthand experience of being an asylum seeker for sharing their stories with him.

Those writers who can recognise the limitations of their ability to put themselves in the shoes of those subjects are at least able to treat their subjects as individuals in their own right. This is perhaps easiest done when the refugee experience is mediated by

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<sup>166</sup> As was another Australian, an aid worker in the Pakistani refugee camp, who tells Jamal about his hometown soccer club, Dubbo Abattoirs United, as well as the fact that girls are encouraged to play soccer, which is good news for Jamal's soccer-loving sister Bibi. (Gleitzman 2002, p. 80)

a migrant rather than an Australian born character. This is what happens in the third book of the *Megs Morrison* series, in which a new kid, Finidi, a refugee from Sudan, arrives at Megs' school.

Finidi joins in with the other soccer playing children during lunchtime and post-school training sessions, but Megs resents the apparent ease with which Finidi is accepted into the group. Megs, an English migrant who has experienced and largely overcome his own difficulties to adjusting to life in Australia, attempts to ostracise Finidi, only to end up ostracising himself. When the school soccer team's coach Atti catches on to Megs' behaviour, he intercedes by getting both Megs and Finidi (unbeknownst to each other) to a local park together to resolve the matter. Soon enough Megs realises that Finidi's adjustment to Australia is harder than Megs could have imagined – at least Megs had both of his parents (Finidi's father is missing in Sudan), a stable upbringing, and the sharing of a mostly common language with his new classmates. But Megs overcomes his aversion to the outwardly confident (but internally anxious) Finidi by kicking the ball with him: "Suddenly they were speaking the language of football – and they were good at it." (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2008b, p. 48)

The experience here of Megs and Finidi showcases the differences between a migrant and a refugee, and the difference between choice and necessity. Megs comes to befriend and look after Finidi in ways that go beyond the care Megs has been given by his Australian friends, transcending naïve political statements and ideology. This is highlighted on their school soccer team's trip to England, where Finidi is afraid of not being allowed to return to Australia and of being sent back to Sudan or to the refugee camp. Megs' practical (as opposed to sloganeering) intercession on Finidi's behalf alleviates Finidi's fears; their common humanity is what comes first, not politics,

ethnicity, national belonging, or even football. Later, when news that Finidi's father has been sighted but still missing in a refugee camp in Ethiopia causes Finidi and his mother to fall into a depression, Megs' mother offers to help Finidi's family with washing, cooking and other household chores if necessary. (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2008b, p. 90) Though somewhat clichéd, the friendship between Megs and Finidi allows both to become more than the ethnic caricatures they could have turned out to be.

### **Conclusion – The decline of the ethnic soccer paradigm**

Different writers, from within both the scholarly and literary spheres, will agree and disagree on the nature of “ethnic” soccer, its reasons for creation, continued existence, and its scope to provide a social good that is inclusive of many people who are otherwise marginalised or feel marginalised by Anglo-Celtic Australian society. Sometimes, the depictions of inclusiveness will contradict themselves, being extended to some and not to others. Georgakis seems to suggest for instance that the ethnic Greek soccer club re-created, in its own fashion, the agora/public sphere space that the migrants had left behind, but that it was also an overwhelmingly *male* domain. (Georgakis 2000, p. 185) Such an assertion seems to accord with the works of David Martin, though less so with the (limited) work of Dina Dounis.

Despite its ability to go beyond journalistic tropes and cultural stereotypes in its depictions of ethnic Australians involved in Australian soccer, Australian soccer literature still places a level of exoticism upon its non-Anglo-Celtic subjects. Moreover, while Australian soccer literature allows for non-soccer people, or those of an Anglo-Australian background to write on people of non-English speaking backgrounds and

their involvement in the game, too often the stories of those people told in their own words remain invisible.

The fleeting moments of soccer as presented in Nino Culotta's *They're A Weird Mob*, illustrate however the problems of soccer people from non-English speaking backgrounds being unable to represent themselves. In this novel, the Italian journalist Nino arrives in Australia in the mid-1950s in order to write about Australians. In order to do this effectively, Nino takes up a job as a builder's labourer. The book's purpose has often been defined by critics as a demonstration of the differences between "native" Anglo-Australians and New Australians, and the difficulties of a member of the latter to understand the culture and language of the former.

This is in part an erroneous assertion, due to the fact that Nino Culotta was actually the pseudonym of the journalist and humourist John O'Grady. But amid the highlighting of the differences between the locals and the migrants – usually centred on the eccentricities of the Australian version of the English language, especially among the working classes – there comes a brief moment when soccer becomes part of the discussion, when the game and those who play it are criticised: "Soccer," said Charlie, "is a lousy game. Only dills play soccer." (Culotta 1964, p. 168) and, "Italians are dills", Charlie said. "That's why they play soccer." (Culotta 1964, p. 168)

Nino nevertheless is not discouraged by Charlie's assertion, and defends himself. He even takes Kay (his now girlfriend) to picture shows, soccer matches, and rugby league fixtures. (Culotta 1964, p. 172) But there remains the problem of the novel's closing statement, where Nino implores New Australians to assimilate into Australian culture instead of holding on to their own ways. This does not seem to apply to soccer however – the one moment of hostility Nino endures from Charlie is more or less

ignored and isolated. Nino is somehow able to include soccer watching as part of an assimilated Australian experience.

Yet there is no indication given here of where and with whom Nino is watching soccer matches. If he is watching the game alongside other non-British migrants, then chances are that he is watching soccer alongside many of those migrants he has implored to assimilate – and who have chosen to attend soccer matches and create soccer clubs in part in an attempt to maintain and hold on to their native cultures. A northern Italian, Nino is especially dismissive of southern Italians, and generally has little to do with any Italians in the novel, something that complicates his attendance at soccer matches. As Ben Maddison notes, Nino is already naturally blessed with fairer skin and lighter hair, and an attitude towards southern Italians that is already in tune with the pre-existing and racist Australian prejudices against the darker Italians from the south. (2008, pp. 148-50)

In that sense Nino's immigrant story is not indicative of the general Italian experience in Australia. David Carter's critique of *They're A Weird Mob's* assimilationist stance is that it "is foundational and pervasive" even if it is not as one-dimensional as it is sometimes made out to be. (2004, p. 56) More importantly, Carter also points to studies of the book which emphasise the complicated duplicities involved with O'Grady's creation of Culotta being used to analyse stereotypical or pseudo-Australians. (2004, p. 57) As Stratton observes:

Culotta/O'Grady not only provides a fantasy of grateful migrant assimilation, he naturalises the dominant myth of identity of that as the reality into which the migrant assimilates. (1998, p. 90)

While assimilation is at the forefront of critiques of the novel in our own era however, reviews originating from the book's contemporary release are more glowing, largely ignoring the assimilationist rhetoric, and focusing more on the authorship ruse:

We therefore do not have an account from an Italian looking at Australians through Italian eyes, but what is perhaps more engaging (and harder to bring off) is an account from an Australian, who knows migrants intimately, trying to look at Australians through Italian eyes. (Mitchell 1958, p. 217)

If it seems odd to talk at length about a book with only the most fleeting mentions of soccer, then that is the exact point; here we have the depiction of an immigrant writing his own story, who likes soccer and who continues to watch soccer in Australia even though he implores other new Australians to assimilate. Is the implication therefore that soccer is a naturalised sport in Sydney? What would O'Grady's version of sport been had Nino landed in Melbourne instead of Sydney? Could Culotta/O'Grady have ignored sport or talk of sport the way they have done in Sydney had the book been set in Melbourne? Is this then an Australian experience or a Sydney experience? Is there an argument to be made that, in 1957 at least, the year of the book's publication, that there is no formal sense of an Australian identity, only a melange of regional and class identities? As Culotta has Nino note:

It seems to me that it is very difficult for a citizen of Sydney to understand the citizens of Melbourne, who appear to be interested in such extraordinary things as Australian Rules football, calm water for swimming, and six o'clock closing. (Culotta 1964, p. 200)

Ultimately though it is a non-migrant talking about the experience of other migrants, whose experiences and opinions are largely of no interest to Culotta/O'Grady. While O'Grady is able to add nuance to the character of Nino by pointing out the prejudice of northern Italians for their southern cousins on both racial and class grounds, Nino's lack of interaction with the Italian community provides the reader with a skewed view of the Italian migrant experience. Culotta/O'Grady falls very much on the side of full assimilation – migrants to Australia should give up all their old ways and integrate as quickly as possible with the host Anglo-Australian culture. For other writers, especially those writing for children, the emphasis is on a cooperative, soft multiculturalism, where migrants should give up the harder, exclusive elements of their cultures, assimilating in another fashion.

For those protagonists and communities attempting to come to terms with their place within ethnically based Australian soccer and Australian culture more broadly, the onus is on them to assimilate either to the host soccer culture, or to mainstream Australian culture. For those individuals, even those of the same ethnic background as the ethnic soccer club to which they are in closest proximity, a kind of cultural conformity is expected. Deviation from the mainstream cultural traits of the relevant ethnicity risks and often results in social isolation and ostracism.

For those like Criton, who are considered to have betrayed their own communities, the cultural and social backlash is severe. For those who conform, like Jure Lukic, the attempt to assimilate and conform too strongly to the dominant cultural ethos of the soccer club can have its own drawbacks. Yet others find a security and acceptance within a soccer culture in which they are a part of the majority culture, one which



provides a sense of safety in being out of the control of an Anglo-Celtic Australian mainstream which resents the game and those who play it.

Sometimes, it is as simple as being caught up in the web of nostalgia. The impending and drawn out death of the ethnic soccer club and its attendant culture in Australia is something experienced by the relevant community as a whole, but also by individuals. Through the experiences of these individuals – both those involved in the game and those on the periphery of Australian soccer’s cultural sphere – analysis can be made of the decline through multiple perspectives. For example, in Jason Di Rosso’s unpublished manuscript *Marionettes*, the Italian-Australian Gino and his Yugoslav-Australian friend Zvonko find themselves pining for a past that is already gone, represented in this case via the medium of Perth’s ethnic soccer scene:

When they’d walked up and back the length of the dock they sat in the car and smoked cigarettes. Zvonko suggested they could spend more time together, if Gino wanted to.

“Maybe we could go and watch the soccer next week,” he said, “Azzurri, Dalmatinac are playing on Saturday.”

“Like old times.”

“Yep.”

Zvonko sucked in a lungful of smoke. There was a long silence. “I miss the old days sometimes Gino.”

“Tell me about it.”(Di Rosso 2008, p. 13)

When Gino and Zvonko follow through on their plan and head out to the soccer, they find themselves with constant reminders of both their own aging selves and the decline of the ethnic communities they grew up in:

They headed away from the city down Fitzgerald Street and in a few minutes they reached the Italian Club which had a soccer ground, Dorrien Gardens, built behind it. There was a crowd of about two thousand gathered, most of them middle aged Yugoslav and Italian men who lined the perimeter fence, leaning against signs advertising local builders and plumbers. Most of the younger men, dressed immaculately and less interested in a view of the field, stood back watching out for pretty girls, who circulated in small groups. (Di Rosso 2008, p. 44)

The increasing generation and gender gap is further highlighted later on by a conversation Gino has with Tania, Zvonko's seventeen year old sister:

She flung both hands across the desk and thumped her forehead onto the wood. "Oh Christ. And where have you just come from?"

Unsure why he was being asked this, Gino replied hesitantly, "Saw Azzurri and Dalmatinac at Dorrien Gardens."

Tania shook her head.

"Why do you have to be such a wog?"

The word caught him by surprise. Confused, he looked at his shoes for a moment. (Di Rosso 2008, p. 56)

While not explicitly or directly criticising soccer's male-dominated cultural paradigm, Tania's blunt, accusatory question – "why do you have to be such a wog?" – serves to further underline the increasing irrelevance of ethnically backed soccer clubs to their affiliated communities. While the middle aged men and those longing for nostalgia may continue to encircle the perimeter fence on match days, for the young and those with no cultural need to attend these events there is not even the need to feign interest or concern for the future of these cultural institutions. For women previously bound by ethno-cultural obligation to attend these matches, the future of their involvement in Australian soccer will take on a different hue – complimenting, conforming and challenging what was once the male dominated Australian soccer status quo.

Tania's comment indicates a shift in the cultural relevance of ethnic soccer clubs and the people who support them – predominantly men of an ethnic cultural background of a certain generation – but also in what Australian soccer literature will take an interest in. The stories of those kinds of men and the culture that some of them sustain to this day, have disappeared from Australian soccer literature, at the expense of the third and fourth generations, girl participants, and people who no longer consider themselves to have an ethnic identity first, and a naturalised Australian identity second.

In many of cases in Australian soccer literature, walking away from the game in adulthood – usually meaning a clean break – seems to be the only solution to resolving the issue of Australian soccer's cultural minefields. For the children however, especially those playing the game in more contemporary times, the desire to let go has not yet arrived. Whether the cycles of loving the game and then leaving it due to irreconcilable differences continues in Australian soccer literature, remain to be seen.

Ethnicity as it is explored in Australian soccer literature provides a pivot point for how we understand soccer in Australia. Its heyday may be receding quickly into distant memory, but neither the Anglo-Celtic Australian and British-Australian experiences of soccer which we looked at earlier, nor the experiences of Australian women and girls which will follow in the next two chapters, can be understood without the experiences of “ethnic” Australians.

## **Chapter 7: Everywhere in the Background: Women in Australian Soccer**

This chapter will discuss the depiction of women in Australian soccer literature, and the ways in which women's soccer lives are an extension of the sporting lives of the male and child soccer players and spectators to whom they are attached. This chapter will demonstrate the emotional, domestic, physical, economic and other labours performed by women who do not directly participate in soccer, but without whose actions the many men and children who do play could not function; the assertion here is that Australian soccer literature formally and informally acknowledges these efforts in ways that mainstream soccer and sports writing does not.

Critics such as Brian Stoddart note that "Sport has been the site of major sexual discrimination in Australia". (1999, p. 134) Even as women "have had a long history of participation in sporting activities in Australia and New Zealand", (Burroughs & Nauright 2000, p. 188) they remain invisible in much of the public discourse about sport in Australia. Although women have been given increased access to sport in recent years, their activities are still rarely treated as being of the same importance as those of men's sport.

As with much of the rest of the sporting world, the emphasis in sporting analyses – especially outside academia – is so focused on male activity that the presence or proximity of women to football (whatever the code) is "often eclipsed" in mainstream public discourses. (Back, Crabbe & Solomos 2001, pp. 133-14). As Shona Thompson has noted, the assumption is made that "the relationship of adult women to sport, if they have one at all, is far more likely to be through their associations with others who play, such as their husbands or sons, and less frequently, daughters". (1999, p. 2)

While critics such as Jean Williams have noted that “Women’s involvement is fundamental to the history of association football” (2007, p. 1) women’s seeming<sup>167</sup> absence from Australian soccer – or at least most mainstream representations of it – is just as an important a consideration as other forms of marginalisation and omission.

In Australian historiography, women’s soccer histories are written and conceptualised as largely separate from those of mainstream (read: male) histories. This includes even well intentioned efforts by John Maynard, (2011) Roy Hay and Bill Murray, (2014) and Paul Mavroudis. (2015) This approach is not without some merit. Where previous studies would have ignored or neglected the history of women’s soccer in Australia entirely, these efforts at least carve out territory for the history of Australian women’s soccer to be represented, with varying degrees of success and tokenism.<sup>168</sup> More recent research developments, such as work by Greg Downes, (2015) has considered Australian women’s soccer history on its own terms, largely independent of men’s soccer. Both of these approaches make a kind of sense. The first, in recognising that women’s soccer in Australia *does* have a different history from that of men’s soccer, women’s soccer can therefore be compared and contrasted to historical representations of the men’s game. The second approach treats the women’s game as being worthy of study on its own right, independent of comparisons to the male

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<sup>167</sup> This “seeming” absence is important. In very recent times, the public profile of women’s professional sport in Australia, including soccer, has increased significantly. However this visibility remains framed by the previous marginalisation of soccer and women’s sport in Australia.

<sup>168</sup> For what it is worth, the Hay and Murray history of Australian soccer, and Maynard’s book on Aboriginal soccer, both go far beyond mere tokenism in their writing of women’s soccer in Australia.

game, which would otherwise consign the women's game to the realm of second-class citizenship.

Rarely though are the histories combined into a greater whole. Men's soccer proceeds onward as the dominant mainstream version of the game, while women's soccer is juxtaposed as perpetually battling for relevance and respectability in the shadow of a male-dominated sport. Downes notes that despite the lengthy history of women playing soccer in Australia:

researchers have largely ignored the history of women's football in Australia, and the voices of women players remain unheard. The women's game is yet to be written into the history of the code. (2015, p. ii)

A more important limitation is that these kinds of histories often neglect to consider the interactions of men and women within the same sport at the same time. Downes notes how the development of gender when discussing women in sport moves the discourse away from merely analysing the differences between men and women towards interrogating the relationships between them. (Downes 2015, p. 61) Downes' doctoral thesis was based on oral histories of adult female players. This makes sense within the context of a paucity of written records, due to the lack of interest shown by outside forces, as well as by the participants themselves. The women felt that they themselves – and by extension their sporting interests – were not important enough to write about. The combination of class with gender may also help explain why sports such as tennis, which are associated with a more middle-class and “respectable” demographic, have more published works about their social sporting experiences.

The consideration then of Australian soccer literature as a valid area of inquiry with regards to sport and gender relations becomes self-evident. As much of Australian women's soccer experiences are contained in an oral tradition, Australian soccer literature is vital in revealing instances of women's relationships to soccer in Australia that may not otherwise have been considered. Like the depictions of the other groups covered in this thesis, this analysis is not being put forward as a substitute for historical or sociological research; rather, the intention is to be complementary, by making known potential avenues of inquiry for people working in those fields. As has been noted, the first step to making this possible is by positioning literature as a legitimate field of research for people working in other scholarly disciplines.<sup>169</sup>

### **Not playing but watching (and cooking, cleaning, sewing, ferrying, waiting...)**

While in many cases Australian soccer literature has been ahead of the curve in terms of the diversity of its characters, the genre fails to showcase women playing soccer, even as it provides a range of examples of adolescent and pre-adolescent girls playing soccer. Australian soccer literature also contains numerous examples of what Downes calls the "supporting male" – a father, brother, boyfriend, husband or coach in encouraging and making possible the participation of women as soccer players. (2015, p. ii) Australian soccer literature has the ability to surpass these limitations, by

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<sup>169</sup> Nevertheless, written literature is not an equivalent form to oral history, let alone oral literature. In oral histories for instance, there is at least a nominal back and forth between the subject/participant and their interviewer. Literature falls both somewhere outside and in-between oral and written histories and literatures.



depicting males and females interacting on the same field of play<sup>170</sup> as well as in the social sphere around soccer.

Australian soccer literature has engaged with the difficulties and nuances of Australian soccer's relationship to counter-hegemonic narratives of ethnicity, but it has been less successful in doing the same for the relationship of women and girls to the sport. Australian soccer literature generally lacks representation of the experiences of post-adolescent female soccer participants. Unlike those works dealing primarily with the issue of ethnicity, Australian soccer literature also lacks a degree of prescience with regards to the future of female soccer participation. Apart from occasional inferences about state-squad selections, there is little reference made – other than by allusion – to the future prospects for Australian women's soccer and its participants.

The especial lack of a social participation element in Australian soccer literature for adult females is worth drawing attention to. Since most if not all of the depictions of Australian women and girls playing soccer are found in young adult and children's literature, this makes a discursive sense; the genre traditions of such works are focused on aspiration, fighting for equality among their male peers, and the notion of "girl-power". Girl-power is a rhetorical device which seeks to empower girls through the practices of "visibility" and assertiveness. (Whiteside et al. 2013, p. 417) Sport literature which contains a girl-power theme provides the opportunity for writers and readers to negotiate the tensions between the "athletic" and the "feminine". (Whiteside et al. 2013, p. 418)

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<sup>170</sup> With the caveat that this is almost always limited to children's soccer.

Feminist critics however are sceptical of girl-power's ultimate aims, seeing in girl-power's emphasis on choice and individuality over solidarity, as well the concept's general commodification,<sup>171</sup> a sense of de-politicisation which is "detrimental to building a consciousness among young women toward ongoing systemic inequities". (Whiteside et al. 2013, p. 418) Likewise, critics of girl-power see the concept as placing limits on girls' potential to the point where they still meet and surrender to traditional gender norms. (Whiteside et al. 2013, p. 419) Girl-power as a concept is further complicated by the fact that even the "category of "girl" itself has proved to be slippery and problematic. It has been shaped by norms about race, class and ability that have prioritized the white, middle class and non-disabled". (Harris 2004, p. xx)

While some examples of Australian soccer literature are able to subvert these notions, many are not. Young adult sporting literatures aimed at girls also fall short at the point where sports playing girls become adults, whereupon they disappear from the literary record. The absence of women playing soccer socially in Australian soccer literature presents a demographic omission which can only partially be justified on the basis that literary depictions of other sports in Australia also largely ignore women's participation in social sport.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Even the act of reading sport literature as an act of girl-power/feminist resistance has become a marketing ploy. (Whiteside et al. 2013, pp. 419-20) Combined with Kathryn Jacobs's assertion that "how the genders are portrayed in young adult literature contributes to the image young adults develop of their gender roles and the role of gender in the social order" (Jacobs 2004, p. 19) it is easy to see the ways in which conservative and/or neo-liberal cultural forces seek to use young adult literature to influence young adults.

<sup>172</sup> For an excellent example of a literary work on another sport which bucks this trend, see Sandy Jeffs' *Confessions of a Midweek Lady: Tall Tennis Tales*, (Jeffs 2001) in which Jeffs presents a series of poems about social (albeit still competitive) tennis played by women from a variety of class, marital and age situations as a factor.

With the exception of the broad range of texts dealing with girls playing soccer, it appears no Australian text depicts adult women playing the game.<sup>173</sup> Apart from the occasional coach, most of the women in Australian soccer literature function as adjuncts to male participants. In those depictions, their chief roles lie in supporting male players – as mothers, wives, cleaners, feeders, drivers etc. They thus become limited to roles which are “ancillary and decorative”. (Thompson 1999, p. 157) In some cases, women in Australian soccer literature may also play the role of an intellectual, ideological or cultural obstacle to their partner’s participation in soccer. Nevertheless, without deconstructing the mainstream ideology of adult female participation in Australian soccer, the extant literature goes some way to acknowledging the diminished place of female players and spectators in the hierarchy of Australian soccer.

With the exception of texts aimed at children and young adult readers, the female characters in Australian soccer literature fall into two large groups: those who take no interest in the game and as often as not do not exist except in their unacknowledged or unspoken absence; and those with a clearly articulated attachment to participant men or boys. In several Australian soccer literature texts – short stories, poems, plays and novels – women take a supporting role in the efforts of male players. These roles include those of supportive partners, such as in Harold C. Wells’ novel *The Earth Cries*

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<sup>173</sup> While there are members of the Australian national female soccer team the Matildas who double up as scouts or coaches of younger players, they are not shown in action as players. As importantly, their inclusion and the absence of recreational or social adult female soccer players reinforces the notion that if a female soccer player does not play representative soccer, they cease playing soccer entirely. By comparison with soccer’s paucity of adult female soccer players, and despite the AustLit database listing just eight novels when searching for “netball”, several of those netball texts include significant references to adult female participation including in professional competition.

*Out*, where Bettye is active as a supporter of (and distraction to) her boyfriend Dick, while remaining nevertheless on the margins of the game:

Bettye arrived a few minutes later when the Rovers were one goal up. She stood with two other girls and her high-pitched voice reached him clearly as he got the ball. "Go on, Dick, go on your own."

"Dash it!" He had hesitated and been easily robbed. Sheepishly he looked at her and waved. Soon he made up for that mistake by trapping a rising ball, just inside the eighteen yard mark from a corner kick, and slamming it past the goalkeeper to the delight of the crowd and to Bettye's especial joy. (Wells 1950, p. 133)

These women can act as antagonistic partners:

Keep playing soccer and it will be sooner than you think. (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 55)

They can also be constructed as ornaments, as in the case of *The Young Wife*, where on the day of an important match:

Husbands who kept their wives from public gaze relented and told them to dress well for the occasion. (Martin, D 1966, p. 153)

Women may also contribute to soccer via their performance of domestic chores, such as being sock menders:

I slip the banded soccer sock

onto the wooden mushroom (Deller-Evans 2003, p. 18)

Jumper knitters:

Aunty Win knitted our jumpers. She was my mother's elder sister and a dab hand with the needles. Not too ambitious they never seemed to sit quite right on the few occasions she ventured into fair isle territory – but incredibly gib [sic] and warm. I think we appreciated them most when we went to the soccer. (Jamrozik 1995, p. 8)

Healers, mothers or housewives:

I sing to my husband,

Come my love

I have cleaned the cockroaches from the bath

Come my love

Lay your body in the water

Oh come my love the sheets are clean

I have done the vat of washing in the laundry

I have done this for you.

Come and sing me songs of love

Before the soccer. (Paice 2008, p. 34);

Or otherwise any role considered secondary in importance to male participation in soccer, whether that male is a player, official or merely a spectator.

If the game of soccer is a medium for its participants to express themselves, then the forms of expression open to female participants in Australian soccer literature – either as players or spectators – are limited compared to their male counterparts. This is especially true in the ways in which players express themselves on the field, with adult females having almost no on-field role in the extant literature. Furthermore, the nature of women's work off the field in supporting the efforts of the men or boys playing soccer demonstrates the cultural schisms between men and women, with the former able to use their bodies to express joy in play, while the latter can generally only use their bodies to create the surplus value<sup>174</sup> necessary for males to be able to play or attend soccer matches.<sup>175</sup>

A clear example of this occurs in *Sweet Time*. Here, even when women are involved with the running of a soccer club, it is almost always in stereotypically feminine roles. Moreover, women's roles are secondary to those of the men – while the women cook and help with fundraising, they do not play. (Reilly 2004, pp. 133, 73) In Peter Goldsworthy's *Keep It Simple, Stupid*, set in the early-1990s, some 25 years after the setting of *Sweet Time*, women's involvement in Australian soccer is depicted in much

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<sup>174</sup> In this case, usually surplus recreational time rather than a fiscal surplus.

<sup>175</sup> See also the pulp short story "Diamonds, Too, Are Blue", where a lonely Italian immigrant housewife laments of her husband, "And Leonelli's breath when he came home from work, when he came home from a night with the boys, when he came home from soccer, always smelt of beer." (Green 1979, p. 123)

the same way. Indeed, the Napoli Soccer Club is a place where migrant Italian men are described as going in order to get away from their wives:

This was their home away from home: *una seconda casa*, untroubled by the presence and demands of wives. (1996, p. 100)

The women who are at the club are restricted to cooking duties and what Mack's partner Lisa derisively calls the "Ladies' Corner", (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 22) where women are kept busy and out of the way of the men's business. While Mack protests that he goes to all of Lisa's functions, Lisa retorts that she has nothing in common with the other wives.<sup>176</sup>

The limited scope for expanding women's participation in either the management or playing departments is further emphasised when the club's new coach, Billy Colby, organises a "gentlemen's night", at which the only women present will be those there to provide topless bartending and stripper shows. This event is a fundraiser for the club, but it also represents a means by which Colby hopes to create a sense of solidarity among his players. That sense of solidarity does not involve women playing any role other than as sex objects. Examples of this kind of behaviour reflect the real-world social construct of women being excluded from the bonding process of men playing sport together. (Cashman 2010, p. 57) This dynamic, when expanded upon in

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<sup>176</sup> One may argue here that Lisa inadvertently racialises the predominantly Italian-Australian women who volunteer in the Napoli Soccer Club's social wing. Lisa herself does not interact with Italians in the way that Mack does, including being distrustful of the conservative and sometimes chauvinistic attitudes held towards women by some men at the club such as Vince, Mack's sleazy former teammate.

Australian soccer literature, leads towards conflict between male and female characters.

In addition to women being marginalised by not being considered for leadership roles or a chance to play the game, men's devotion to soccer and sport in general also causes significant problems for married couples. Early on in *Sweet Time* this is treated as a bit of fun, when Douglas and his cousin Andrew abandon their partners in a restaurant in order to deal with soccer matters. Kirstin light-heartedly says to Francine, Andrew's girlfriend: "Don't get involved with Scottish men, Francine. They're football crazy. They're obsessed, sick in the head." (Reilly 2004, p. 14)

Women are also excluded from the bonding process that is males playing sport together. (Cashman 2010, p. 57) Like much of men's participation in soccer and sport, Douglas' love for the game is located within the language and imagery of childhood. When Douglas dreams of playing football again (Reilly 2004, p. 18), it symbolises the throwing off of the shackles of the priesthood alongside his simultaneous reluctance to embrace the fullness of adulthood. For Douglas soccer is a means of reverting back to his childhood, or at least the happier parts of that unhappy childhood, where he was a member of the Glasgow Schoolboys Team. Later this obsession for football becomes less endearing, as soccer increasingly gets in the way of family life and marital relations. (Reilly 2004, pp. 99-100, 81) The separate spheres of men and women, in this context in part created and maintained by men's participation in soccer, leads to the unequal division of domestic labour between men and women. At one point Kirstin wonders:

Why was it always women who ended up doing the housework, even when they bloody well worked all week? Maybe it was because their men were always at



the pub or kicking a ball around a field on a Saturday afternoon. Sport was invented by men so they could avoid mopping floors and cleaning toilets. One day things would change and it would be the men who'd be wearing the aprons and watching their skin go all soggy and wrinkled as they washed up a week's dirty dishes. And there'd be robots for the ironing and little trained animals for cleaning out the cupboards. It couldn't come quick enough as far as she was concerned. (Reilly 2004, p. 196)

Even as Kirstin wishes for the reversed of these traditional domestic roles, there is no suggestion that women want to take up football themselves while the men do the home duties. This is an example of the conceptual limitations placed upon female characters by Australian soccer literature.<sup>177</sup>

Resentment towards the activities of male relatives or partners is not universal among women in Australian soccer literature. In the case of "Who Says A Must Say B", Jure Lukic's wife Magda shows patience and understanding for her husband's weekend soccer habit often missing in other stories. Magda explains Jure's boisterous behaviour at the soccer, including his becoming more politically active, as an extension of the limited forms of entertainment available to migrants at the time:

Poor man, what can he do? He still works in the chair factory. There is nothing in this Footscray; after dinner everyone goes to sleep. Let him shout a few

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<sup>177</sup> Compare this strict division of labour between the sexes with the experience of Louisa Bisby, one of the soccer players interviewed by Downes: "I enjoy it because it is healthy. Healthy body healthy mind. For me it is just a nice mental release, something else to think about, you don't have to think about work, you don't have to do the washing or just those little house chores." (Downes 2015, p. 142)

hours; it's only once a week and it gets him into the fresh air. In the old days, in Zagreb, he didn't go much to the football, but now I am glad he has the habit. (Martin, D 1981, pp. 25-6)

It is a point of view that is out of step with much of Australian soccer literature's depictions of the opinions of women for the game and their secondary role in relation to it. Unlike many other women, Magda takes both pride in her domesticity and in her role as matriarch of the family:

I know he yells. I think that's why our grandson, Branko, does not want to go with him. It doesn't matter. The whole family comes to us on Sundays, and sometimes my Jure goes to church with us all. (Martin, D 1981, p. 26)

When Jure gets himself involved in the affairs of Croatian independence activists and is asked to take care of a mysterious package for a few days, Magda gently guides Jure away from his involvement in soccer and in the political causes attached to it. In that sense Magda keeps the fort, with Jure depicted as a novice activist at best – more inexperienced child than man, who has to be protected from himself – and for Magda, what better place for that protection to take place than within the domestic sphere?

On occasion, sometimes the women are even able to make sense of what is happening in the stadium. Monty, the Scotsman playing for a Jewish backed club in Melbourne, is confused about the vitriolic anti-Semitism of the crowds he has played against. Monty notes that he has seen riots and sectarianism in Scottish football, but that the hatred here is something else in part because it includes women. Babette, the

daughter of the club president, who has been courting Monty, explains the complexity of Melbourne soccer's cultural and political dynamics.<sup>178</sup> (Martin, D 1981, p. 171)

But the women in David Martin's soccer stories are only one part of a broad range of depictions. Martin's female characters are defined as much by their proximity to non-Anglo-Celtic culture as they are to ideas of masculinity and femininity. Once ethnicity ceases to be a dominant lens from which Australian soccer literature analyses its characters, the focus moves to other factors, such as the differing roles and expectations of men and women, as well as how class interacts with those concerns. This is the case even when a particular text is, superficially at least, apolitical or agnostic on matters of class and ethnicity.

In Lisa Heidke's *What Kate Did Next*, a chick-lit novel following the midlife crisis of middle-class housewife Kate, there is a clear demarcation between what women and girls do and what men and boys do.<sup>179</sup> In the case of Kate, her daughter plays netball, while her son plays soccer. (Heidke 2010, p. 21). Kate's duties also include ferrying kids (both her own and those belonging to other parents) to and from soccer practice sessions and games, tasks not expected of Kate's husband. (Heidke 2010, p. 26) As in the real world, so too does the literature depict how the servicing of "children's

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<sup>178</sup> Earlier on Martin has Babette familiarising Monty with Melbourne while discussing several topics of discussion, including the local soccer scene. Monty notes that Babette had talked "freely about soccer, which she had probably watched since she was in rompers". (Martin, D 1981, p. 165)

<sup>179</sup> Because of Kate's (and the novel's) proximity to soccer only occurring because of the involvement of Kate's son, the use of these tropes falls into the scope of McGowan's genre of the "soccer mom novel" (McGowan 2015, p. 85). The attention to filth and dirt in the novel is also quintessentially middle-class. Though Kate and her mother have what could be considered to be an elevated sense of "cleanliness" beyond normal middle-class propriety, the increasing dishevelment of Kate's home is also reflective of the deterioration of Kate's psyche.

participation in sport slips fairly seamlessly into women's work". (Thompson 1999, p. 39)

These developments can be used to read meaning into the contemporary cultural understanding of soccer in Australia. For example, Mardi, the mother of Ben, one of the other soccer playing children, complains about the apparent lack of opportunity for her son to shine in the higher grade "As" instead of the lower grade "Bs". (Heidke 2010, p. 32) Even in the under 9s, the focus for parents like Mardi is not on fun, but on achievement – quite clearly in this case the achievements of her son being the vicarious achievements of herself as a mother.<sup>180</sup>

The win-at-all-costs mentality of some of the parents occasionally creates extreme conclusions. At one point during the novel a brawl breaks out among the fathers at a junior soccer match.<sup>181</sup> (Heidke 2010, p. 54) This is initiated within a culture that cannot comprehend that the game is about the enjoyment the children are having in getting worn out and dirty. (Heidke 2010, p. 55) It is also important to note the differences in the ways the men and women attempt to vent their frustrations. They revert to classic male/female stereotypes – the men use physical violence, while the women use gossip and words, or internalise their frustrations.

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<sup>180</sup> Mardi is almost cartoonish in her desire to see her son succeed, even imagining conspiracies against Ben's success. This includes the notion that other parents are feeding their children steroid filled meats in order to overcome their deficiencies in talent. (Heidke 2010, p. 98)

<sup>181</sup> This could be the first depiction of a violent incident in Australian soccer literature that has nothing to do with ethnicity. While later on the phrase "soccer hooligans" (Heidke 2010, p. 245) is used to describe the affair, it is worth asking whether the violence here is being explicitly blamed on soccer? I think not. Rather, more attention is paid to bad parenting with an accidental or incidental nod to middle class parenting values. Still, the fact that soccer is the game this violence happens at seems to suggest at least an implied connection to Australian soccer's reputation for violent incidents.

This physical involvement of the adults sits in contrast to the way the majority of the parents otherwise participate in sport. In *What Kate Did Next*, participatory sport is almost unequivocally a children's affair. The adults in the novel may exercise by taking part in such activities as walking or swimming, but they do not participate as athletes themselves. The women facilitate children's sport while taking little interest in soccer beyond their own child's involvement. Instead, the women's interest in the game exists only as a measure of the vicarious lives the women live through their children, and as a non-negotiable element of the suburban middle-class routine. The notion that participation in junior soccer may at all be about the boys' enjoyment is almost an afterthought for the parents – even Kate, who in her internal monologues criticises parents like Mardi for their crass behaviour, acknowledges to herself her own desire and hope that her son Angus “will score the winning goal, all the goals”. (Heidke 2010, p. 53) Kate does this while being aware of the self-conscious middle-class desire to keep those feelings to herself, not to create a scene. This raises the question of whether there is any genuine widespread altruism in junior sport. (Heidke 2010, p. 244)

It is a question also asked by Peter Goldsworthy in his short story “The Bet”. (2010) In this story, two coaches of opposing teams of a junior boys' soccer team force their respective sons to run a race after the conclusion of a match, in order to settle the fathers' petty sense of vanity. Before the race and during the soccer match itself, “The Terrier”, the coach of the opposing team, decries a refereeing decision given against

his team: “It’s a man’s game, for Christ’s sake, not the fucken Royal Ballet!” (Goldsworthy 2010, p. 46).<sup>182</sup>

Unlike in *What Kate Did Next*, the addition of the resentment of the four-wheel-drives driven by the alleged<sup>183</sup> Italians of the opposing soccer club adds a class dimension to what may at first appear to be mere rank misogyny – the Terrier’s fears or apprehension (expressed as anger) that a working-class and therefore masculine game has been lost to middle-class, and therefore feminine and effeminate sensibilities.

“Watch your language”, Dom growled. “What kind of example are you setting the boys?”

“The kind *your* kind of spoilt brats need,” the smaller man said, or, rather, spat.<sup>184</sup> (Goldsworthy 2010, pp. 47-8)

Mick, the ostensibly mild-mannered coach of the opposing team, starts to lose his cool. Eventually, with the Terrier and Mick already warned by the referee about their behaviour, Mick’s wife Heather gets fed up with Mick as well:

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<sup>182</sup> This kind of attitude also pops up in other works. In amid the yells of encouragement for the soccer playing boys in *What Kate Did Next*, one anonymous voice yells out “Tom, what the hell are you doing, you big girl?” (Heidke 2010, p. 57)

<sup>183</sup> The Terrier’s generalisation is based on his own preconceptions – Mick, his rival for the day, is not of Italian background. (Goldsworthy 2010, pp. 48-9)

<sup>184</sup> Even The Terrier’s words are framed as an example of forceful masculine action – they are “spat out” as opposed to be merely being expressed.

“What the hell are you doing?” she hissed when she reached his side. “What kind of example are you setting?”

“Me?” he said. “Me? Listen to *him!*”

“*He’s* not my husband! I don’t have to explain *his* behaviour to the other parents. We can hear every word you say over there, Michael.<sup>185</sup> For God’s sake, sit down and shut up!” (Goldsworthy 2010, p. 54)

Heather adopts the role that so many women play in Australian soccer literature, moving beyond the role of being biological mother towards also being a social mother – in this case not only to her own son, but also to her husband, whose standard of behaviour sinks to ever more juvenile levels.<sup>186</sup>

While men and women seek to achieve a level of social status via their children’s participation in sport, a fundamental difference exists between how they choose to go about this and the meanings they attach to that achievement. For women, a child’s sporting achievements reflect well on their role as carer and nurturer. This success is somehow reflective of their own maternal proficiencies. For men, it manifests itself as proof of the potency of their own genetic prowess. When the Terrier screams, “Maybe you should put him in the girls team,” (Goldsworthy 2010, p. 53) it is a direct attack on

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<sup>185</sup> Note that just like in *Keep It Simple Stupid*, where Mack’s partner uses the formal “Paul” when she is upset with or reproaching him, Mick’s wife Heather uses the full name “Michael” instead of simply “Mick” during her reproach of Mick’s behaviour.

<sup>186</sup> Even while, as in the case of the boys’ soccer team in *What Kate Did Next*, the two sons of the competing coaches Willie (Mick’s son) and Jason (the Terrier’s son) are oblivious to their fathers’ petulant behaviour: “The game was over; they might have been best friends, wandering innocently off for showers and pizzas.” (Goldsworthy 2010, p. 58)

the opposing coach's ability to create genetically superior offspring. The ensuing bet, in which Mick and The Terrier place a \$100 wager on the result of a race between their respective sons, serves as further evidence of the crude nature of the male pride on display. Heather is disgusted with the wager as a matter of civil or parental principle: "What are they? Horses? *Dogs*? You want to race, you race yourselves! You're like a pair of five-year-olds". (Goldsworthy 2010, p. 60) Heather's patience and disgust eventually forces her to search for an even more primal response:

"Why don't you just compare the sizes of your *cocks*, you stupid... stupid..."

She struggled for an adequate answer, and perhaps found it: "*Men!*"

(Goldsworthy 2010, p. 60)

In "The Bet" and in *What Kate Did Next*, the pressure put on children to succeed at junior sport seems specifically to be centred on the achievements of boys. When girls play soccer or another sport, the battle is against each other, or against a system in which girls are discouraged from playing. Without needing to fight against a system of play and with access to a culture which has been already granted to them, male children have a different kind of cultural or structural enemy to conquer – the expectations of their parents. In some of these texts, the boys themselves seem to exist outside of the concerns of their parents. Oftentimes the boys lose themselves in the game so completely that the vapid concerns of their parents either disappear entirely or are never registered to begin with. (Heidke 2010, p. 56) For them, the immersion in the contest and the moment is the most important thing. Sometimes this is to the horror of their parents, as in when Kate arrives to pick up her son and some of his friends from soccer practice:



I arrived at the oval to pick up Angus from soccer training. Eleven filthy little boys, half of whom were shirtless (including my son), were running around the oval screaming. I was freezing cold. (Heidke 2010, p. 211)

Many of the women involved with sport in *What Kate Did Next* and stories like it, do not like sport let alone soccer. They are there to facilitate their children's participation (ferrying, carpooling, cleaning, organising etc.) out of a sense of parental duty or social propriety.<sup>187</sup> When Kate serves a sugar-laden cereal to her son for breakfast, she wonders what the other mothers would think. (Heidke 2010, p. 53) This concern is confirmed at the soccer field later that day, when Mardi asserts that the mother of one of the other boys in her son's team must have been "gobbling white bread and drinking cask wine by the litre" while she was pregnant with him. (Heidke 2010, p. 56)

Meanwhile, the fathers will watch the junior soccer match for the same vicarious sense of glory, but they do not watch or play soccer themselves nor talk about it. All the talk in *What Kate Did Next* from the various men on sport is about the fortunes of sides in the National Rugby League, Australia's elite rugby league competition. When Kate introduces her estranged father to her husband Matthew, her father immediately grasps the opportunity to form a cultural bond with Matthew by discussing rugby league with him. This action unwittingly serves to further entrench the gulf in feeling between Kate and Matthew:

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<sup>187</sup> It is worth noting that transporting children to sporting events must be done around the children's school schedule – these training and playing times then create the pivot point around which all other family activities take place. (Thompson 1999, p. 11) Kate and others like her have their lives and routines function around the schedule of other people.

I stepped back from my father's embrace and introduced him to Matthew. Once inside the house, Dad immediately handed him a beer and said, "What about those damn Broncos?"

Hey presto! Matthew and my father had instantly bonded over football. And I was sure that once football chatter had been exhausted (which wouldn't happen until the season ended), there would be the state of the economy and lack of rain to discuss. Men. (Heidke 2010, p. 136)

Not all mothers of soccer-playing boys in Australian soccer literature behave in this way. In Debra Oswald's *The Redback Leftovers*, a children's novel about an eclectic group of kids playing in a mixed-sex under 13s team, the mother of the narrator-protagonist Will exclaims early on: "I don't know about soccer. I don't care about soccer – except I know you used to love it". (Oswald 2000, p. 10) Will's mother attempts to reassure Will and encourage him to rediscover his love for the game, despite the efforts of Will's father to make participation in the game solely about winning. Will's interest in the game is largely self-sufficient, as he no longer plays in the team coached by his father; nor does his mother attend matches. (Oswald 2000, p. 83)

Apart from acting as an impenetrable gulf with regards to the sharing of mutual interests, the routines of soccer and children also interrupt the possibility of sex, creating a dispassionate and at best platonic form of marriage. (Heidke 2010, p. 52) While Kate herself has no sporting interests, she claims (passive-aggressively) that she is OK with her husband spending Friday nights at the football with his friends, regardless of the resulting hangover and irritable moods he carries over into Saturday mornings. (Heidke 2010, p. 67) Later however, Kate admonishes Matthew over his disinterest in their sex life, claiming that he is either absent from home, or when he is

home only interested in football. (Heidke 2010, p. 144) While this is not a case of soccer interfering with home life, the broader notion of football or sport being used as a means of avoiding dealing with home life is relevant to the broader issue of women being marginalised by men and their sporting interests.

At no point in *What Kate Did Next* does Kate's husband take any responsibility for their son's soccer activities. The primary view of the game is not one consisting of the game's own virtues and the simple joys of play. Rather, the view is that of the *routine* of soccer – rescheduled practice sessions, petty parental and social ladder politics, muddy boots, carpooling, and early Saturday morning matches. Soccer is portrayed as an ordeal to be endured in part as a necessary aspect of Australian middle-class life, rather than as a break from mundane suburban routines.

When the women perform these stereotypically maternal actions, it is often without an understanding of the experience of the usually male participants. "Motherly" reactions, expressed in both their disciplinary and nurturing forms, end up juvenilising the recipients of those reactions. When *Keep It Simple, Stupid's* Lisa gives Mack a pair of new, expensive Italian imported football boots for Christmas (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 47), this act of tenderness and generosity comes across as motherly – Mack's gift for Lisa was bought and chosen by Lisa herself (apparently by mutual agreement); the gift of football boots becoming a way of Lisa showing her support for Mack's soccer career.

Thus Mack manages to have two mothers – one being his actual mother, the other his wife – deciding for Mack when he should stop playing, working in a sort of collusion,

turning Mack into a child again. (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 192).<sup>188</sup> This is emphasised in those moments when Lisa uses “Paul” instead of “Mack” (Goldsworthy 1996, pp. 19, 23, etc) – the effect is again to assert a maternal control over the apparently childish behaviour and attitude of a man in his mid-30s. When Lisa says to her friends that Mack gets “bored and fidgety”, (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 73) we see yet another inference of Mack’s alleged childishness.

While Lisa can provide material support for his soccer career, her ability to provide emotional investment is constrained by her lack of affinity for the game, and more importantly, her lack of understanding of the joy that Mack gets while playing the game:

Mack had never forgotten the feel of Saturday mornings as a boy, of rising in the winter dark brimming with joy – a joy whose purity he recognised only now, as an adult, when he had the words to describe it.

Lisa had never understood this part of him. Amused at first, of late she was merely baffled. (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 91)

When Mack tries again to explain to her what playing means to him, including the connection to something larger than himself in the form of the surrogate family of the club, Lisa can only respond with, “Fine, Mack. *Then*. But we’re talking about now. You’re a grown man.” (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 91) Mack is prone to putting pressure on Lisa to be part of his sporting life, but there are consequences for these relationships

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<sup>188</sup> Regardless of their own personal achievements, even professionally accomplished women in Australian soccer literature thus play the role of parents to child and partner alike. This is, in its own way, a middle class view, which “matronises” womanhood and infantilises masculinity.

when women reject that subordinate role. In the case of *Keep It Simple, Stupid*, while Mack has his soccer, which his partner hates, Lisa has other interests and circles of friends that Mack, at best, only tolerates.

While Mack resents being made to feel like a child by his spouse and her friends<sup>189</sup> he also makes conscious decisions to act like a childhood version of himself:

Nothing had changed. He still couldn't walk past a couple of schoolboys kicking a ball around a park without joining in, a schoolboy himself, not too deep inside.  
(Goldsworthy 1996, p. 25)

For Mack these moments represent a joy that exists independent of a time, place or the formality of a match day. Yet the unfettered and simple freedom of "just playing" is made to feel illegitimate by Lisa's attitude.

It would be unfair though to blame women entirely however. Those feelings of the illegitimacy of footballing joy can also come from other men, which in Mack's case come via the authoritarian methods of the club's new coach, Billy Colby. Apart from his own distrust in soccer players who consider themselves on-field artists – Colby's preferred style of soccer is based on a brutish British form of long ball, uncompromising work ethic, and no room for individual expression – Colby also uses sexist language ("bleedin' girls") as a motivational insult to his players. (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 142) Colby also uses such language to infer physical weakness in his own team and the

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<sup>189</sup> As in the example of when Lisa's friend Anthea (another teacher) asks in an accusatory manner why Mack would quit his teaching job to take up a milk round, Mack responds in a mocking, childlike falsetto: "It's something I always wanted to do be, Miss Pridmore. When I grow up." (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 72)

opposition: “The little bastard – what is he made of, porcelain? Let him know you’re there! Go *through* the little bastard, son!”<sup>190</sup> (Goldsworthy 1996, p. 141)

The depiction of a female character in Australian soccer literature usually focuses attention on the males involved in soccer, whether as players or administrators. Little attention is paid to what the women themselves may feel about the game. Perhaps the most detailed example of the distance between men and women as caused by proximity to soccer is in Adrian Deans’ novel *Mr Cleansheets*. In *Mr Cleansheets*, the 39-year-old Eric Judd is the star goalkeeper of his local amateur soccer club in suburban Sydney. Eric’s claim to fame among his friends and family is that when he was 16 years old, he received an offer to trial with Manchester United when he was ready. An injury sustained while saving a small child from being hit by a car however prevented Eric from taking up the offer of a trial. Obsessive about soccer to the extreme, Eric is also the epitome of conventional heterosexual masculinity. Over the course of the novel Eric is revealed to be more than capable at hand-to-hand combat, lovemaking, and drinking, making him the ultimate man’s man.

Despite these ultra-masculine tendencies, Eric is never overtly homophobic or misogynist. As a lover, he is tender and understanding; with his pop-star girlfriend Doreen Bender, he never resents his partner’s career success. Deans and *Mr Cleansheets*’ gender politics are not beyond reproach though – while Eric may be a

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<sup>190</sup> There is also evidence here of a class dimension, reproduced later on in Goldsworthy’s short story “The Bet”. Colby, like the Terrier from “The Bet”, blends his notion of masculinity with the notion of class. The inference in both cases is that the middle-class male player is softer, weaker and more effeminate than his working class counterpart. Indeed, as noted earlier, in *Match Fixer* the security guard on duty at Docklands Stadium derides soccer and its participants not just on the grounds of ethnicity, but also on its apparent lack of masculinity – using the pointed term “housewives”.

modern and enlightened man, despite his masculine credentials, the novel makes it clear that most women know almost nothing about sport, whether they're English or Australian.<sup>191</sup> They may have roles in football in marketing or as assistants to football club owners, but they are best suited to other roles. A prime example of women's ignorance of sport is Doreen's obliviousness to the occurrence of cynical play in soccer and sport in general. The following dialogue occurs after Eric's opponents seek to injure him deliberately, having read about his back injury as revealed by a female journalist in the press:

"It's the nice things she said about my back I'm worried about. She may as well have painted a target on me."

Doreen was shocked.

"You don't mean to tell me that the other team tried to hurt you deliberately?"

"You're just a poor innocent petal really," I replied, getting her back with one of her own favourite lines. (Deans 2010, p. 298)

Like Goldsworthy's Mack in *Keep It Simple, Stupid*, the realms of men and women as designated by sport are separate domains. Shona, Eric's long suffering girlfriend, has finally got sick of Eric and his so-called football career, as well his unceasing devotion to the sport.

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<sup>191</sup> The one woman in the novel who knows a lot about football turns out to be one of the novel's villains.

“Bloody football,” she retorted. “Stupid, bloody football’s ruined his life. He could’ve been anything but he just frigged about the whole time doing crap jobs so he could have more time for football. Weekend comp, training, even personal training, six-a-side, indoor, long weekend tournaments anywhere in the country, off-season training, pre-season training...”

I opened my mouth to defend myself but she just powered over the top of me.

“Do you know how many times he’s been sacked from paying jobs because of football injuries, or getting into fights?” she asked, and I realised she was talking to Dave. “Nearly 20 times – just since I’ve known him! The only jobs he can get now are low paid physical torture like removals or carrying bricks. Then he comes home exhausted, broken and penniless, but he’s always right for bloody football.” (Deans 2010, p. 16)

Set 40 years on from the fledgling soccer community of *Sweet Time*, and lacking the focus on domestic duties entirely, Shona’s complaint of the toll of Eric’s obsessive participation in football nonetheless bears a stylistic resemblance to the complaints made by Kirstin.

## **Conclusion**

The future prospects for adult female participation in soccer as depicted in Australian soccer literature remain at best a mixed proposition. There is ample potential, but few obvious signs of where and how such improvements will manifest themselves. One possible avenue to showcasing more direct involvement by women in soccer comes in the form of Roanna Gonsalves’ short story “Soccer Mum”. (2016) This story focuses



on Priya, a migrant to Australia from India. Divorced from Joe, her son Neil's father, she enrolls her bookish son into the local soccer club. To a noticeable degree, divorce characterises the relationships at Neil's soccer club. The coach of the under 9s team, Matt, is the divorced father of the team's goalie, Tom. Matt and his ex-wife Anastasia take turns housing Tom over alternate weekends. Matt is insinuated by Anastasia to be coaching the team in order to prove his hands-on fathering capacity, and thus paying less child support. (Gonsalves 2016, p. 182) The emphasis is not about the club, or the welfare of the children themselves, but the welfare of the children as it relates to what their parents hope to achieve from the game vicariously.

The main conflict in the story arises with the need for someone to take over the coaching of the under 9s team:

There is silence because no one wants to make a commitment that involves exposing themselves so much, spending time, making decisions for other people's children, taking responsibility. (Gonsalves 2016, p. 184)

Initially Priya is reticent to take up the role not because of her gender, but because of her self-recognised exoticness. This exoticism in turn breeds suspicion and distance, with Priya being unsure even how to yell out encouragement to her son:

I am unsure what to say out loud in support of my son. I hear Will's dad, Simon, saying, "Put it through, Neil, put it through!". I know those words, in that accent will falter off my tongue like a taste that has not yet been acquired. I stay silent. (Gonsalves 2016, p. 185)

Where once a foreign accent<sup>192</sup> was deemed almost necessary to be a soccer supporter in Australia, for Priya it has become a complicating factor: “I can coach. I’ve coached before. In India.” (Gonsalves 2016, p. 186)

Simon asks – and it is difficult to tell how beliggerent his disbelief is – if they even play soccer in India, to which Priya replies in the affirmative, winning him over:

“I used to play football, soccer,” I say, trying to brownsplain my way out of the knot of awkwardness in this conversation. (Gonsalves 2016, p. 186)

But though ethnicity is part of the issue here, the issue of gender is never far away. After Priya manages to overcome her reservations about coaching the soccer team, and volunteers for the soon-to-be vacant job, she is stereotyped and marginalised by Luca’s mother on gendered grounds. Luca’s mother tries forcefully to make the point that as a working mother, Priya has no time for coaching children’s soccer. (Gonsalves 2016, p. 187) Where fathers and men are around the sport, their roles revolve around obvious participatory roles such as coaching – things which are necessary for children’s sport to proceed, but which also provide a sense of fulfilment within the confines of the sport itself, not done out of a sense of obligation. In this case Priya volunteers for the soon to be vacant coaching job in part due to a sense of obligation, but also through a desire to participate. Yet the other parents do not take Priya seriously, preferring to harangue the reluctant Simon into taking up the task.

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<sup>192</sup> Or close genetic proximity to someone in possession of that kind of accent. There are also other curious moments of lexical difference which come through the narration rather than conversation. For example, Priya knows (or knew) the game as football, not soccer (Gonsalves 2016, p. 183), and the 2014 World Cup as “FIFA 14”. (Gonsalves 2016, p. 185)

Eventually a compromise is reached whereby Simon and Priya will share the coaching duties.

The lack of depictions of women playing sport on a social level are important when one considers that the vast majority of sportspeople do not play sport professionally, despite the large resources directed towards professional sport. (Anderson 2010, p. 4) Because most of the soccer playing females in Australian soccer literature are girls, and because they are placed in young adult literature and children's literatures, little scope exists for exploring romantic or sexual dimensions of female athletes. Almost all the girl athletes are also presented as being heterosexual, as part of the process of creating "sanctioned athletic femininity". (Whiteside et al. 2013, p. 419) To be homosexual, that is to express no desire for males, is to challenge further the dominance of the cultural paradigm of male sport being a means of heterosexual cultural dominance.

Those adult female players, in these cases often being reduced to the status of gatekeepers or role models of limited narrative complexity, also have no personal lives. The lack of a social female participant soccer sphere in Australian soccer literature means that the sexual and/or athletic appeal potentially manifest in female soccer players is absent; the women exist as adjuncts to male desires (Eric, Mack, etc), or the women have their attentions focused on athletic men (Arnaud, or Marcus in Iris Blobel's romance novel *I Think I Love You*. (2015))

Opportunities to depict women as something other than an adjunct to male participation have been missed or lost. Even a contemporary character like Priya, who has played soccer in the past and is knowledgeable about the game, still has to fight the biases of her contemporaries, and perhaps even the reticence of the author

herself, in order to take control of a children's soccer team. Women excluded from sport, whether as participants or spectators, become further associated with domesticity and inactivity, while men are further associated with the outdoors and activity.<sup>193</sup> While this is not always the case, the overall effect is to cast women at soccer as being incomplete.

Australian soccer literature has done well in writing about adult females and their social importance to the game – both as a supportive and antagonistic force. The idea that non-playing partners are “hidden” (Thompson 1999, p. 105) breaks down in Australian soccer literature, as the texts help to reveal their existence. Nevertheless, the writers of these works still lack the necessary imagination to see women as being in the game, as opposed to being adjacent to it. Even in those brief moments when women soccer players are depicted in Australian soccer literature, the emphasis is almost always on professionals or representative players, and never on characters who play soccer socially or recreationally. We also do not get to see the social costs of playing sport as an adult female in Australia – the complications it causes around childcare, domestic duties, etc – only the social costs of devoting one's energies towards helping others play sport. As a sideline spectator, Priya's reclamation – however tentative – of her right to lay claim to her soccer heritage and to participate is a worthwhile genre development. Rather than such a representation being an aberration, it is hopefully

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<sup>193</sup> A noteworthy exception is Jessica's mother in the children's verse novel *The Spangled Drongo*, who is described as a former soccer player; (Herrick 1999, p. 33) this is subtly placed within a scheme of gender non-conformity, as Jessica's mother is also a qualified carpenter. (Herrick 1999, p. 36)

the beginning of a more complete depiction of women and their proximity to soccer and sport.

## **Chapter 8: “Nothing is a Boys-Only Game Anymore”: Girls Playing Soccer**

This chapter is an analysis of the depictions of girls with regards to Australian soccer, via the medium of Australian soccer literature. It emphasises the role of children’s and young adult literatures with an activist dimension in providing first the conceptual space for girls’ participation in a traditionally male dominated sport, and then the ways in which girls participation in soccer comes to be seen as a normal activity. Australian soccer literature does this by presenting reading audiences not with gender-conscious and socio-politically aspirational characters, but also those whose main goal is personal enjoyment. Apart from self-consciousness in terms of gender, this chapter also looks at soccer-playing girls’ heightened sense of awareness of the power and fragility of their own bodies, as well as the negotiation of belonging to male dominated and later female dominated sporting groups.

While there is a clear relationship between the subjects of this chapter and the previous one, the experiences represented in the two are so significantly different from one another that they warrant separate analyses. Fundamentally, the differences lie in the proximity of direct participation between the two groups; the vast majority of women in Australian soccer literature have their participation in soccer limited to that of adjunct of a male or child player. The girls in Australian soccer meanwhile encompass the totality of the spectrum of proximity to soccer from disinterested adjunct to diehard participant.

The previous chapter noted that despite the many and varied depictions of women with an involvement in or close proximity to soccer, Australian soccer literature has

failed to expound upon the experiences of adult female soccer players. This is despite Australian soccer's success in getting women and girls to play the game in large numbers. Writing aimed at junior audiences reveals a different and powerful dimension to female soccer characters, while also revealing the limitations of works aimed at adult audiences that exclude the concept of adult female athletes of almost any kind. Australian soccer literature aimed at and about girls and young women, revels in tracking their experiences across many levels. These include gender relations in both the athlete and non-athlete spheres, male-female stereotypes, body image and anxieties, and the future prospects of female athletes who aspire to become professional athletes. This diversity of representation occurs because Australian soccer literature aimed at child or young adult audiences often has an activist dimension, one which seeks to promote gender equity and female empowerment. As Cath Crowley, author of the *Gracie Faltrain* series, notes in an interview:

There was a girl and she was a really good soccer player and she was fearless and she would just fly onto the field and yell "Hi Cath!" and away she'd go. She talked about playing and she didn't think about being a boy or a girl on the field – it didn't matter. (*The Rap* 2009)

Children's literature is a "powerful medium through which meanings about the body are normalized and conveyed during childhood". (Davies 2014, p. iii) There are limitations to that activist approach however. Among these are the tendency of literatures aimed at children and young adults to become targeted or marketed by publishers toward one gender or another. Hargreaves notes the differences in socialisation performed via literatures aimed at boys and girls, with literature aimed at

boys presupposing that boys are interested in physical activity,<sup>194</sup> whereas girls need to be convinced of its merits.<sup>195</sup> (1994, p. 149)

That activist strain also hits a barrier in relation to the depiction of adult females as soccer participants; in Australian soccer literature there are no such role models, except in the abstract. Instead, in the literature on Australian soccer, girls are often excluded from boys' activities. When this exclusion occurs, it includes ideas such as teamwork, camaraderie and aggressive physical expression that are deemed the exclusive preserve of males. This segregation ends up being carried into adult lives. Because almost none of the women depicted in Australian soccer literature are shown to have played any sport in their childhood or adolescence, they cannot relate to the devotion of men to play or watch the game, whatever the game may be.

In addition, the tropes used in Australian soccer literature about the integration of female soccer participants into the mainstream, fall within the notion of negative integration:

Whenever a woman player or coach is signed to a male team, these modest avatars of the unthinkable and the unmentionable provoke this question of status. What kind of equality is desirable and is it possible to have too much?  
(Williams, J 2007, p. 17)

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<sup>194</sup> Indeed, that such activities are "everyday" activities for boys. (Hargreaves 1994, p. 150)

<sup>195</sup> Hargreaves also notes the differences that result from sequestering girls within a single sex, upper middle-class school environment.



As with other groups seeking to become part of the majority culture within football, including Australian soccer, acceptance of outsiders is conditional. (Back, Crabbe & Solomos 2001, p. 86) So long as the relevant persons acknowledge that they exist outside the “cultural middle”, and that their own culture is not at the top of the localised or mainstream cultural hierarchy, they are allowed to share in the joy, the passion and the virtue of “being one of us”. Whether they are a player or supporter, so long as they’re playing “for us”, or want to be “one of us”, then the only thing that matters is the colour of the jersey, not the colour of their skin, or their gender. (Back, Crabbe & Solomos 2001, p. 90)

Williams also notes that some female soccer player play the game for reasons other than a desire for gender equity. Enjoyment, joy and the camaraderie encountered while participating are often more central in their motivations. (2007, p. 18) Despite the existence of strong female protagonists in much of the extant literature, these “purer” sporting traits and goals are also evident. That said, the application of caution is necessary when comparing the often avatar, exceptional female soccer protagonists of Australian soccer literature with their real life counterparts. The motivations of these protagonists, and their desire to overturn the establishment, are as much a product of the host genre and target audience of the texts, as well as the personal socio-political beliefs of the writers themselves. The further caveat is that some of these female soccer-playing avatars are initially uncomfortable with the activist role thrust upon them in the narrative.

## **The first step in breaking the grass ceiling: Making the impossible seem possible**

Cath Crowley's *Gracie Faltrain* series is foremost among the works of Australian soccer literature covering the experience of female player participation and empowerment. Over the course of three novels – *The Life and Times of Gracie Faltrain* (2004); *Gracie Faltrain Takes Control* (2006); and *Gracie Faltrain Gets It Right (Finally)* (2008) – Crowley follows the travails of the star teenage soccer player Gracie Faltrain. These travails are counter-intuitive with regards to the still largely assumed biological superiority of boys over girls that shapes dominant Australian attitudes towards sport.<sup>196</sup> Instead of foregrounding presumed physical-biological differences, Crowley makes the primary difference between male and female players a matter of *attitude*, something more closely related to the cultural assumptions and practices of gender as opposed to biological sex.

In the first novel, Gracie succeeds in becoming the star player of a boys' school soccer team not necessarily because she overcomes any physical obstacles.<sup>197</sup> She has superior skill but she also possesses a stronger desire to win than the boys. This stems from her love of soccer, which is also superior to that of the boys. Gracie's entry into the world of boys' soccer, while moderately complicating the notion of gender for the

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<sup>196</sup> The following quote from Murray Drummond is a useful summary of how such notions develop within children and adolescents: "However, I have been most struck with the way the boys, from a very early age, consistently compared and contrasted the sports and physical activities that boys and men do, with those of girls of women. They also reflect on muscular differences in bodies as well what they believe men's and women's bodies *can do* and *cannot do*." (2016, p. 146) In this context, Australian soccer literature which reimagines the limits and possibilities of gendered ideas of biology performs an important role in debates about gender.

<sup>197</sup> Though they are there – Gracie is initially denied a place on the team because she is a girl (Crowley 2004, p. 3), and then when she initially fails at a trial (having been physically bullied on the field), her future teammate Andrew Flemming's point seems proven: "Told you we shouldn't of let a girl play." (Crowley 2004, p. 5) At some points during the series, but not often, Gracie is noted as being smaller than most of her teammates, but in general Crowley's descriptions are not specific on these matters.

boys she plays with, complicates gender far more for Gracie. The boys need to make relatively little adjustment in the use of their bodies and in terms of their attitudes, and because of Gracie's high skill level, they treat her as an equal. Gracie must make changes in order to fit in better with the masculine culture of boys' soccer.

At times Gracie is oblivious to this fact, but those around her – teachers, friends, enemies, family – are not. For example, Gracie's long term schoolyard and classroom rival Annabelle Orion calls Gracie "a girl who thinks she's a boy". (Crowley 2006, p. 51) Earlier in the story, Nick mentions the rumours that Gracie is a lesbian. While related to Gracie's looks and her tomboyish flair, (Crowley 2004, p. 48) the fact that Gracie plays sport and does not wear dresses is also used against her by Annabelle as further proof to Gracie's potential beau Nick that Gracie is a lesbian. (Crowley 2004, pp. 147-8)

There is a tension here and in other parts of the *Gracie Faltrain* series about Gracie not just wanting to prove that a girl is the equal of or better than her male peers at soccer, but that Gracie Faltrain herself is better than everyone. As a potential feminist and sporting role model then, Gracie has her limitations, even if her friend Alyce, in the final book of the trilogy, is able to confidently exclaim that:

Gracie Faltrain is not dictated to by the norms of a patriarchal society. Whilst she may, one day, find a partner to enjoy an equal relationship with, until then her love of soccer completes her. (Crowley 2008, p. 67)

No one at the school follows Alyce's example in terms of seeing Gracie as someone who is transcending the limits of gender. Nor do they follow Gracie's example by taking up soccer. For her part, Gracie does not seem to care that they do not: "I wanted to

be out there proving how good I was. Me. A girl. Gracie Faltrain.”<sup>198</sup> (Crowley 2006, p. 24) The on-field ramifications of this attitude alienate Gracie from her peers (female and male) not only on the basis of sex and gender, but also because she is not a team player. Gracie’s desire to succeed and experience joy on the field comes across as self-serving. When asked why she plays soccer, she responds:

I guess I play because I’m good. And because when I’m out there it doesn’t matter so much that I’m not good at other things. Nothing exists at the centre of the game except the wind and the ball and the score and me. I don’t think about school or missing Dad. I just play. (Crowley 2004, p. 217)

At the start of the second novel, Gracie is again effusive about her unbridled but self-centred joy, oblivious to what others need or want, despite the apparent lessons she is meant to have learned about teamwork:

I want to take the shot so bad. I love the first Saturday in May. It’s better than Christmas. Better than my birthday. It’s our team’s first official game of the season. And I want to make sure we win. (Crowley 2006, p. 3)

When during the second novel in the series Gracie’s school team seeks to enter the prestigious “Firsts” competition – which happens to be a gender segregated competition – Gracie is devastated. The idea of playing in a girls’ team does not appeal to Gracie. (Crowley 2006, pp. 42-3) On the one hand, this is understandable, as Gracie feels that she has already proven herself capable of playing at a higher level – which

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<sup>198</sup> The possible meanings and significance as regards the order of these self-identifiers is difficult to interrogate.

in this case means playing with boys. However, in her zeal to achieve that level, she ignores the potential to lead and create something larger than herself by contributing to female soccer.

When new student Kally tries out for the school soccer team alongside the boys and fails, Gracie is torn on whether she should have helped Kally or let her sink or swim. Martin notes that Kally has to make it on her own, without favours. (Crowley 2008, pp. 35-6) Gracie initially agrees with this – “If she had been a boy, no one would have expected me to help” (Crowley 2008, p. 48) – but she eventually sees that she has to rectify the situation, not necessarily out of a sense of feminist sisterhood, but out of a sense of doing the right thing, much as she had done for a male teammate, Declan Corelli, when he was a struggling player.

Despite Gracie’s best efforts, biology is not completely overcome as a factor determining her soccer participation. The romantic content of the trilogy is minimal – no relationship goes further than kissing. Sex and gender occasionally have an impact on the storylines and perceptions of the characters. While playing a match Gracie notes, “I trapped it with my chest. Not my favourite tactic – a girl’s got to think of her future – but necessary.” (Crowley 2006, p. 5) Later when playing in the physically brutal Firsts competition – during which Gracie and her teammates have decided to up the physical ante in order to remain competitive – an opponent nicknamed “Truck” calls Gracie “girlie”, and deliberately aims at injuring Gracie’s breasts during a game. (Crowley 2006, p. 122) The violence on the field suddenly becomes sexist, but also sexual, and Gracie herself becomes an active contributor to this sexualised violence, seeking to attack the testicles of her opponents. (Crowley 2006, p. 144)

Gracie's language, too, becomes tainted by negative gender stereotypes, despite one of her initial goals being the attempt to transcend her perceived gender limitations. To re-ignite her boyfriend Martin's seemingly waning passion for the game, Gracie accuses him of "playing a like a girl." When Martin challenges her on this, Gracie replies with, "You know what I mean. You've lost something out there." (Crowley 2006, p. 16) There is an assumption that the reader also knows what Gracie means – that Martin has lost an essential competitive drive to succeed which should come innately to boys.

Gracie is not above using those stereotypes for her own ends. After she accuses Martin of being patronising to her when he too is worried about Gracie's safety playing in the Firsts. Gracie responds with:

"You think I need favours, Martin? You think I only scored goals over the summer because everyone on the field let me?"

I feel like my boyfriend has gone and some, some *guy* has stepped into his place. (Crowley 2006, p. 39)

Gracie creates the idea that Martin, too, is no different from every other male who has told her not to play in a male team. Gracie also becomes upset when her dad agrees with the principal's notion of not letting her play in the Firsts, accusing him of sounding like Martin. (Crowley 2006, p. 42) Gracie's mother takes it a step further, talking about medical bills and permanent damage. (Crowley 2006, p. 43)

"I don't want her playing, Bill."

"Helen, you've watched her on that field. She comes alive out there."

“It’s not the alive part I’m worried about. It’s the dead part, when those apes flatten her. She’s not supergirl.”

“You can’t keep her in cotton wool forever.”

Mum snorts loudly. “Cotton wool? I’ve watched that girl fly too close to the sun all her life. She’ll get burnt, Bill. And then what?”

“She’ll rise again.”

“You live in books. This is mud and dirt and boys who will think of nothing of running right over the top of Gracie.” (Crowley 2006, pp. 45-6)

The threat is clear: the boys will show no sympathy. More importantly, soccer at higher levels is described as a hard, even violent game, going against the grain of its popular perception in Australian culture as a sport for those too weak to play Australian Rules or rugby league. Playing dirty also leads to problems for Gracie and her team, eventually leading to a diminishment of joy, with the purity of play becoming lost.<sup>199</sup> (Crowley 2006, p. 164)

Forms of sporting joy come differently to different people; for some “winner takes all” is enough, but for others the notion of “right spirit” is also important. The story resolves this by reverting to a moral trope common among sport literature books aimed at child and young adult audiences – that to play fairly and ethically is more important than playing pragmatically or ruthlessly. A similar tack is taken in the final book of the *Jasper*

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<sup>199</sup> See also David Martin’s *The Young Wife*, where temporarily overwhelmed by the occasion of a big match, Criton puts in an uncharacteristically physical challenge on the opposing goalkeeper.

*Zammit* series, where the newly installed Coach Riley takes a rather psychotic approach to coaching an under 11s team. As the Rovers team start arguing among themselves about whether Coach Riley's brutal approach is worth pursuing, one of the characters is told:

"I thought we were here to play soccer", Nippy shot back.

"Yeah, but I don't fancy being a loser if that's right with you."

"Lever her alone!" Josie stood in front of Tricky with her hands firmly on her hips.

"I will if she stops playing like a girl." (Abela & Warren 2006, p. 94)

Gracie loses perspective on what gave her joy; she had wanted to transcend the limitations of sex and gender when playing, and felt that she had. But playing well and playing with the right attitude is also important, something she realises late, as part of learning to let things unfurl and how to fail. (Crowley 2006, p. 185) When the joy of playing disappears, it is replaced by something far nastier. (Crowley 2006, p. 225). Martin, who by the time of the second novel is both Gracie's teammate and boyfriend, remarks. "I loved watching you play soccer. I loved watching you." (Crowley 2006, p. 238) He demonstrates appreciation of Gracie as both a footballer and a young woman.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Martin is not the first boy to appreciate Gracie in this way. The Australian Rules playing Nick watches all the games in which Gracie is involved, (Crowley 2004, p. 67) and appears to be athletically attracted to Gracie's body. (Crowley 2004, p. 72) This is a reversal of the trope that has women or girls watch men or play soccer and sport. Martin initially cannot see Gracie as anything other than a mate. (Crowley 2004, p. 93)



Liz Deep-Jones' *Lucy Zeezou* series initially extends the still radical sense of physical equality in the *Gracie Faltrain* series. In this work, Lucia "Lucy Zeezou" Zoffi dreams of playing in a mixed male–female match, a World XI vs an Italian XI (2008, pp. 1-2). The problem for Lucy in making that dream come true is that her father, a champion Italian footballer, holds very traditional views on his daughter and femininity. (Deep-Jones 2008, pp. 14-5) Lucy keeps receiving "girly" toys, while always preferring to play with a football. (Deep-Jones 2008, p. 17) Where Gracie Faltrain's boyish tendencies are explicit, Deep-Jones has her protagonist disguise herself to look like a boy in order to trial successfully for a boys' soccer team. When assessing her body and its ability to adapt to the purposes of the disguise, the fourteen-year-old Lucy notes to herself:

I was a tomboy<sup>201</sup> anyway, so I didn't have to worry about my walk. Being tall also helped, and my body was very slim – boy-like in fact – but of course my face could have been a bit of a give-away.<sup>202</sup> (Deep-Jones 2008, p. 48)

Lucy makes the team despite the failure of the disguise. (Deep-Jones 2008, p. 54)

While one teammate, Harry, says girls are not good enough to play, being too slow

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<sup>201</sup> The importance of the "tomboy" factor as seen in literature and girls' sport warrants further analysis in its own right. For now it is worth noting that critical studies of tomboys and literature are limited, including whether tomboy behaviour is masculine or androgynous, and whether the term is outdated in an era of increased gender equality and girls' access to sports. (Thompson 1999, p. 564) It has been noted however that a defining feature of "tomboyism" is that tomboys engage in activities atypical for their gender, potentially putting them at risk for social rejection (Thompson 1999, p. 564) in addition to broadening their social options. As opportunities for girls to participate in "male" sports and activities has increased, the tomboy stereotype has declined. This is compounded by the idea that as a gender non-conformist, the existence of tomboys depends on cultural marginalisation; if all of a sudden many girls are "playing rough", the specific identifiers of the tomboy become mainstream.

As an illustration of how messy and vague the notion of a tomboy can be, in Iris Blobel's pulp romance *I Think I Love You*, Blobel notes that Sarah had played football as well as cricket, having been a tomboy in her youth. This is done in part to create a more tangible reason for Sarah to become interested in the former soccer player Marcus. (Blobel 2015, p. 19)

<sup>202</sup> No reference seems to be made to differences in voice though.

and not tough enough, (Deep-Jones 2008, p. 49) the majority of the boys are happy to include Lucy on the team. Because Lucy plays well, she is able to become one of them, with competency trumping presumed gender inferiority for the time being. (Deep-Jones 2008, p. 67) While Gracie Faltrain and Lucy Zeezou receive the support of male coaches in their goal of playing in boys' teams, their inclusion is nevertheless dependent on the agreement of the participant males themselves. The necessity of winning the approval or permission of male gatekeepers is a well-worn trope in literature aimed at young female audiences. Ellen Singleton for instance observes that the idea of "permission" – the requirement that girls go through male gatekeepers in order to be allowed to participated in sports – is present in early 20<sup>th</sup> century girl literatures that include sport. (2009, p. 41)

Similarly, the acceptance of girls in *The Redback Leftovers* is primarily achieved via Emilio and Sal, the two male coaches of the team. (Oswald 2000) Here there is more nuance provided to the trope of social inclusion than in the *Lucy Zeezou* series. This includes, first, the example of Sarah, one of the girls on the mixed-sex Leftovers team who quit the girls' team because of the teasing she got for being big.<sup>203</sup> When Sarah accidentally crashes into a smaller teammate, Will notes: "you could tell she felt terrible, hating herself, hating her big clumsy body." (Oswald 2000, p. 29) However, Emilio and Sal are able to teach Sarah how to use her body's size to its advantage.

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<sup>203</sup> "Seriously tall, huge shoulders, legs like tree-trunks." (Oswald 2000, p. 16) Emilio and Sal's exhortation to Sarah to *use* her body instead of *changing* her body is interesting – in other texts, the female athletes (Gracie Faltrain, Lucy Zeezou, even Ellyse Perry) attempt to varying degrees to mould their bodies to more closely resemble male bodies.

The presentation of girls' bodies is a continuing issue in Australian soccer literature, as it is with wider society. In this case, the tendency by some writers is to discuss girls' (especially adolescent girls) bodies within the context of a male, heteronormative, sporting ideal. In soccer's case, this applies to a certain lankiness, or lack of curves. In some of the stories, the more that the female protagonist soccer player's body resembles a male body, the more likely they are to succeed in soccer, including when playing against boys.

As seen with Gracie Faltrain, gendered questions of attitude also frequently come into play. When the talented but angry Maria is taken to task by Sal for her bad language, Maria asks whether she is being singled out because she is a girl. When Sal says no, Maria asks whether it is because she is the only Italian on the team; but Sal says it is because Maria's anger gets in the way of her immense talent, which in turn hurts the team. (Oswald 2000, p. 45)

These examples play into notions of what could be termed "corporeal confidence"; (Hughson, Inglis & Free 2005) that is, the idea that when it comes to sport, males and females are conditioned differently from each other when it comes to displays of athletic behaviour. Australian soccer literature takes up the task of overturning the persistent and hegemonic assumption that girls are wary of collisions and meeting the ball or the contest head on, while boys are naturally driven towards being aggressive and active on the field. Nevertheless, when it comes to self-awareness of the body, the boys who play soccer in Australian soccer literature are shown as being innately aware of the power of their own bodies, even if that understanding is primarily that of a latent physical power. Girls on the other hand need to fight to prove to the boys,

other girls and themselves that they have a power of their own that is comparable to that of boys.

The younger the age group, the less likely it is that presumed gender differences are raised (if only to be explicitly contested). In the first book of the *Megs Morrison* series, the title character quickly adapts from playing only with and against boys to playing with and against mixed gender teams. Several girls, including Angelique, Abda (who plays in a headscarf), and the most talented of them all, Paloma, all play with the boys. When questioned via email by his friends in England on whether Paloma is a girl, Megs responds that yes, Paloma is a she, and that “she’d wipe the floor with you, Jacko!” (Montagnana-Wallace & Schwarzer 2007, p. 108) Likewise in the first book of the *Jasper Zammit* series, when new player Lil is introduced to the rest of the under 11s team by Coach Wallace, it is a straightforward introduction, with no emphasis on gender. (Abela & Warren 2005a, p. 26) Because it is an under 11s team, there is no quirk in this, and there is already at least one other girl player on the team, nicknamed “Nippy”. Jasper’s main interest in Lil is in finding someone with as much passion for the game as he has:

“You’re good. How come you know so much about soccer?” he asked.

Lil Laughed and pass the ball to him. “I have a big brother who plays in the state team. He and his mates used to talk about soccer all the time and I guess it just sank in.” (Abela & Warren 2005a, p. 40)

An older male sibling has taught and influenced a younger female sibling. But that is all that can be taken from this example – no importance is placed on the actual sex of the siblings. In all the other cases, the role of a cultural gatekeeper is much more

pronounced. In order to play, Gracie Faltrain needs to win over first her coach; then her teammates; then her male opponents; and eventually the governing bodies of the competition in which she plays. Lucy Zeezou needs to win the approval of the coach, then her potential male teammates, and eventually her conservative father. While the coach or primary male figure is the most important – without their approval, there is no scope whatsoever for participation for girls in male teams – each layer of the culture of male football must be overcome. To do this, Gracie Faltrain and Lucy Zeezou, while fortunate to have the support of open minded and socially progressive coaches, still need to perform at a level on the field that clearly exceeds the level of the boys in terms of both skill and determination. Merely adequate players, who do not make the game the be-all and end-all of their lives, are easier to ignore and discount as equals.

In the *Gracie Faltrain* and *Lucy Zeezou* series, the insistence on having girls play in boys' teams in Australian soccer literature is notable. By the end of the *Gracie Faltrain* series, Crowley establishes the fact that there have been female soccer players in the past, even if their existence is only implied. In Deep-Jones' case, this is made all the more confusing by having Lucy rattle off a list of famous female footballers.<sup>204</sup> (Deep-Jones 2008, p. 50)

More recent works, including the second of the *Lucy Zeezou* novels, move towards depicting girls playing in teams made up exclusively of girls. The second *Lucy Zeezou* novel (Deep-Jones 2010) has Lucy deciding definitively that she wants to make a

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<sup>204</sup> Deep-Jones – who is a long-time sports journalist, closely associated with what was Australia's premier soccer TV broadcaster SBS – also includes an appendix which has members of the Australian national women's soccer team the Matildas discussing their upbringing and path towards becoming professional soccer players. While the thematic angle on female participation is key here, the *Ellyse Perry* and *Jasper Zammit* series also have appendices with similar question and answer sections.

career out of playing soccer, and thus Deep-Jones makes an effort to make mention in the text itself of the new national women's league being formed. (Deep-Jones 2010, p. 76) At times the "girl-power" angle aimed at the book's female audience lacks any sense of subtlety. For example, when Lucy finds out her representative team's coach, Tilly, is a Matilda, she spouts the ideologically po-faced diktat<sup>205</sup>:

I'd heard more and more about the Matildas – playing for Australia was now on my radar even more than representing Italy. There seemed to be so many more opportunities for female footballers and the Matildas were awesome. (Deep-Jones 2010, p. 86)

But back in the realm of junior soccer, and like Gracie Faltrain before her, Lucy is unsure about how to go about playing with and against other girls in the representative team in which she has been selected: (Deep-Jones 2010, p. 75)

It was the first time I'd been on a pitch full of female footballers. The atmosphere was very different from being around the boys. I wasn't even sure why. There was a hint more chatter, but the girls moved with the same intensity and work ethic. (Deep-Jones 2010, p. 79)

Where the *Gracie Faltrain* series was at least able to commence with its protagonist at first questioning and then understanding herself in a proto-feminist manner, *Lucy*

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<sup>205</sup> As noted in a footnote in the previous chapter, while in very recent times the public profile of the Matildas has increased substantially, as has the visibility of female pathways into professional soccer in Australia (in tandem with global trends) literary material as Deep-Jones' work exists outside of that framework. Indeed, rather than having a prescient quality, as is the case with some of David Martin's works which focus on the ethnic soccer dimension – Deep-Jones' rhetoric here should be seen as aspirational rather than pre-emptive.

*Zeezou* ultimately retreats into the safety of gender stereotypes, despite its attempts at “girl-power” rhetoric. When the Italian press reveals that Lucy’s father has an illegitimate son (Tommy, who also happens to be a talented soccer player) from a previous relationship, the sequence of events leads to Tommy and Lucy’s father becoming teammates on the field:

Tommy was living my dream and more – he’s going to be playing alongside Papa every week. They would be together all the time, training, travelling, playing football all over the country and round the globe while I was stuck in school and back in Sydney. (Deep-Jones 2010, p. 270)

When she realises that her half-brother and even her street urchin friend Max – who is offered a scholarship with AC Milan’s youth team – get treated more favourably in soccer because of their gender, Lucy wonders almost casually, without obvious resentment, about the different trajectories life takes. She seemingly accepts the limitations placed on her gender, and moves on to achieving what is possible within those boundaries in her own right. (Deep-Jones 2010, p. 316)

The necessity and worth of the narrative and stylistic trope of “girl-power”, and the seeming necessity or ease of exploring that by having girls competing against boys and succeeding, are appreciable. However, will Australian female soccer players and their teams become viable narrative subjects? Can their worth only be measured by being compared to male participants? Can those girls in Australian soccer literature, who play sport and seek to play sport at a higher level, function as role models for girls who are unable to conceive of themselves as playing sport beyond their adolescence? That there is next to nothing in Australian soccer literature about girls wanting to play soccer recreationally once they reach adulthood creates a genre problem, which

comes from the sub-genre's own desire to see girls – but not women – succeed at any cost.

Perhaps the greatest outlier in all of Australian soccer literature then is Teghan “Missy” White in Melissa Lucashenko's young-adult novel *Too Flash*. *Too Flash* centres on the friendship of two teenage girls from differing backgrounds – the overweight, middle-class, dark-skinned Aboriginal Zo, and the athletic, underclass fair-skinned Aboriginal Missy. Humbled and disenfranchised throughout the novel on matters of class and her Aboriginality, Missy overcomes all of these obstacles on the soccer field where she is not thought of as Indigenous or working-class, but merely as a “gun” soccer player: “Missy was a good player, as good as many of the boys on the opposing side. Her boots seemed to have a magnetic attraction for the ball and unlike the heavers and grunTERS, Missy ran smoothly, her head up, with plenty of time and space to pass the ball.” (Lucashenko 2002, p. 46)

Observing the relative lack of movement displayed by the goalkeeper, the overweight Zo resolves to think about joining the team, once she gets her weight down. (Lucashenko 2002, p. 47) Rather than ethnicity or race playing any role in the decision of either girl to play soccer, the chief consideration here – at least for Zo – is gender. The novel portrays Missy as being in her element when she is on the soccer field, while Zo eventually becomes a goalkeeper. (Lucashenko 2002, p. 198) Missy cuts off her hair, leaving a spiky boys' style haircut, to look more like a Socceroo, and therefore more like a footballer than a stereotypical girl. At the end of the novel, Missy leaves school having found employment. (Lucashenko 2002, p. 204) While soccer is still there for the time being – Missy is called up to a state squad – readers are left to wonder for how much longer, (Lucashenko 2002, p. 205) given the limited opportunities at the



time of the novel's publication for women to both play soccer and earn a living from doing so.<sup>206</sup>

This interpretation of girls' soccer also has its own inherent conservatism. By playing sport and playing it well, Missy fits into a stereotype and cultural placement often allowed to Indigenous people: that of a highly rated participant in organised sport. As a talented athlete, Missy is accepted when she excels within the space of a white cultural product, even one that is marginalised by mainstream Australian culture. By the end of the novel, Missy's friend Zo has also joined into this pastime, gaining entry into an aspect of mainstream Australian culture. The fact that the sport being played suffers from its own forms of marginalisation from some Australian cultural flagbearers is of little relevance here. For characters such as Zo and Missy, already on the margins of Australian culture – Zo because she is black and middle-class, Missy because she is black and underclass – soccer is still closer to the imagined middle ground of Australian culture.

This interpretation offers up an interesting slant. Despite notable players such as Kyah Simon and Lydia Williams,<sup>207</sup> soccer is seldom considered a mainstream sport within Australian Aboriginal communities for either men or women. It does not offer the usual safety valve of participating in the culturally hegemonic sports of the Australian mainstream, such as Australian Rules football, rugby league or netball. Perhaps

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<sup>206</sup> In contrast, Cath Crowley posits a much more optimistic and radical future. In the final *Gracie Faltrain* novel, Coach hands Gracie a photocopy of an article about a woman playing with the Olyroos – the Australian men's Olympic soccer team. (Crowley 2008, p. 118).

<sup>207</sup> Both Aboriginal women who are established members of the Australian national women's soccer team, the Matildas.

because the characters are playing in a female team, there is less social pressure to conform. The problem of women playing sport in a manner that is approved of by the patriarchal system remains. While the player has access to increased social mobility, this comes at the cost of conforming to dominant cultural norms. Soccer may not be a hegemonic Australian sport, but as a sport with its own following and with its own desire to largely mimic the tropes of the hegemonic sports, any participant is destined to discard a core element of her cultural self in order to fit in with mainstream Australia. Missy's nascent soccer career is experienced as the one moment of her feeling superior or even merely set apart from her day-to-day existence as a member of the underclass Aboriginal community of Brisbane. (Lucashenko 2002, pp. 79-80)

Such an interpretation leads to the conclusion that rather than challenging the system, Missy and Zo<sup>208</sup> – and perhaps almost all female athletes who participate in organised sports traditionally viewed as male-dominated affairs – are performing at best an attenuated form of social rebellion. Instead of participating in activities that reject the values of the cultural middle ground, their participation does not change the culture as a whole. The games, and the social values and hierarchies they seek to propagate, remain intact.

Such a pessimistic view downplays the changes that *can* be made by female participants within a male-dominated soccer culture. Despite her initial resistance to

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<sup>208</sup> Lucashenko's most notable achievement here is in balancing the different effects of race, gender and class on the various characters in *Too Flash*. This is important because it begins to deviate away from presenting Aboriginal culture as consisting solely of a reaction to a perpetual victimhood. While Missy and Zo are discriminated against on the basis of race, class plays as much of a role as race – especially when different classes victimise and stereotype each other. The novel is an attempt to go beyond only race as a way of discussing the difficulties facing Indigenous Australians, moving away from what Lawrence Bamblett calls the "grievance narrative" of Aboriginal representations. (2011, p. 7)

help Kally make the male-dominated school soccer squad, Gracie changes tack, and begins enforcing cultural change. At the state trials – the first time Gracie has played with or against girls (Crowley 2008, p. 48) – Gracie also notes that the tactical talk she has with Kally is something that she never does with the boys. (Crowley 2008, p. 94) While Gracie’s love for soccer is beyond that of almost anyone she knows, by befriending Kally she has found a kindred spirit. Thereafter not only does Gracie bring fellow members of the state trial squad into her school team, but she also makes sure the boys on her team treat the girls fairly. (Crowley 2008, p. 214) After becoming co-coach, Gracie is able to further implement her ideas of cultural change (Crowley 2008, pp. 228-9), ushering in a radical world of mixed-gender soccer.

More important than Crowley’s sport and gender flights of fancy are the cultural shifts she has Gracie achieve. The end of the series hints at the future. The girl soccer players are not yet adult female soccer players, but there are now tangible pathways and therefore stories to be written about female adult soccer players. Among the girls in the Victorian state girls’ soccer squad, a selector for the Young Matildas wants to try out Gracie. (Crowley 2008, p. 392) When Gracie’s friend Alyce, who volunteers looking after disadvantaged children at a neighbourhood house project, gets those children involved in soccer by introducing them to Gracie, Gracie’s skill and determination at her practice match impresses the naïve chauvinist male child Foster, and the impressionable female child Delia. (Crowley 2008, pp. 267-8) The otherwise overtly masculine<sup>209</sup> Andrew Flemming, temporarily sidelined by a long term injury,

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<sup>209</sup> And occasionally chauvinist. Flemming at one point retorts with “Shove your feminist crap in your handbag, Orion”. (Crowley 2008, p. 47) It is a crude slur, but also revealing of something important. First, that Flemming is aware of feminism; second, that in the context of the slur, he sees Gracie’s attitude and soccer prowess as

eventually becomes the coach for the kids. He sees in those children a version of himself, but significantly also a version of Gracie. The game now has a socio-cultural lineage it did not have in the previous books. (Crowley 2008, p. 273)

By the year 2016 girls' soccer teams exist as no longer merely disposable, offhand concepts concocted by men and boys to deny girls access to boys' soccer, and to soccer in general. In Kylie Fornasier's *The Things I Didn't Say*, when Year-12 student Piper Rhodes attends her boyfriend West Kennedy's soccer training sessions after school, she notices a girls' team on one of the other fields. (Fornasier 2016, p. 228) The manner in which this is represented is matter-of-fact. They may still be in the background, but their continuing existence seems secure, and points to the possibility that someone may write a narrative that includes extensive discussion about female Australian soccer played on its own terms, either by adolescents or adults.

Yet the familiar tropes are never far away. The near-adult non-soccer-playing woman supports the near-adult soccer-playing male, albeit with conflicted opinions. In this case Piper, who is initially just a friend of West's, later on becomes his girlfriend. She even wants West to get the courage to quit soccer. In a sense, it is a *fait accompli* that West is going to quit once the season is over – as a clue, Piper notices that there are no soccer posters in West's room. (Fornasier 2016, p. 191) But Piper underestimates or fails to take into consideration West's loyalty to his teammates. (Fornasier 2016, p. 57) They engage in arguments more persuasive than West's parents' arguments on their collective investment of time and money into his soccer: "Every Saturday since

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embodying something beyond or separate to feminism; perhaps the notion that Gracie has transcended her gender to be equal to the boys – the implied notion being that boys are superior in this aspect.

you were four, we've taken you to practice. Do you want all that time and money to go to waste?" (Fornasier 2016, p. 57)

While Piper lacks insight into the bond shared between the players, it is never stated that the gap in understanding is caused by gender differences. Only the coach of West's team seems concerned about Piper's gender, primarily as a distracting influence on West. (Fornasier 2016, p. 228) Piper's social anxiety issues of being among people who are unaware of her selective mutism see her display a semi-conscious desire to get West away not from soccer *per se*, but from other people in general. She wants West to spend more time with her. Yet when Piper first sees West in his soccer gear, she imagines the possibility of becoming a version of a traditional sporting partner, the typical teenage girlfriend of the school's star male athlete:

West appears. He's changed into his soccer gear. I think it's the first time I've seen him in it. He looks hot. Maybe I could get used to these sorts of girlfriend things.<sup>210</sup> (Fornasier 2016, p. 228)

The female-watcher is taken to the next level in *The Redback Leftovers*, where the mixed under 13s team becomes the centre of Nicky's school media studies film project. Nicky's initial opinion takes the form of the proto-feminist notion that "all football codes are a boring, ridiculous excuse for some aggressive boofhead ego trip". (Oswald 2000, p. 13) By the end of the novel she is won over by the fervour of the

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<sup>210</sup> The "soccer girlfriend" also occurs in *What Kate Did Next*, where Kate's teenage daughter Lexi turns into a boy-watcher by going to one of her brother's junior soccer games, in the hope of seeing her boyfriend either playing or watching. (Heidke 2010, pp. 145-6) How this works in conjunction with Lexi's netball "career" is worth considering. Would Lexi's (nominal) boyfriend Hunter bother to go watch Lexi play netball?

participants for the game, if not by the sport itself. She joins in the impromptu post-grand final mud heap kick around, during which she kisses Will. (Oswald 2000, p. 195)

If this sounds too heteronormative, Fornasier at least includes hints of possible lesbianism, when one of the female players is thought of as being lesbian or bisexual. When confronted by Piper's fellow Year 12 classmate Taylor about a kiss shared, the player claims it was a drunken mistake, and brutally rejects Taylor's romantic advances. This moment provides insight into the non-heteronormative tendencies of Australian women's soccer and sporting cultures. This narrative aside also opens up possibilities into what future fictional work could do with what is in the context of Fornasier's novel a narrative cul-de-sac or diversion. Later, when West and Piper play with the ball on an empty field, (Fornasier 2016, pp. 230-1) the scene is not about gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nor even a contest of credibility: it is about a pure joyful love of play. It is about love.

In the even more recent *Ellyse Perry* series of books aimed at upper-age primary school girls, a number of stylistic changes are undertaken compared to predecessor works in the genre of Australian soccer literature aimed at similar demographics. Rather than creating an overtly fictional character, the series is a fictionalised account of the life of Ellyse Perry, a notable Australian female soccer and cricket player. The series attempts to leverage off that brand name recognition, pointing to a situation where there are extant female soccer role models with which the intended audience is at least partly familiar.

Another difference from predecessor novels in this genre is that soccer is not the only sport which Ellyse plays – she also plays cricket and touch rugby, all of which she plays with boys and against boys in mixed teams, but also in girls only teams. That is

not to say that Ellyse does not encounter problems because of playing on mixed teams. Some of her encounters are similar to those faced by characters such as Gracie Faltrain or Lucy Zeezou. Opposition club teams made up of only male players call out “The ladies have arrived” as a slur when Ellyse’s mixed-gender team arrives at a game. (Clark & Perry 2016, p. 71) Like Gracie Faltrain, Ellyse suffers gendered violence at the hands of a bullying male player. The reaction from her parents is the suggestion that it may be time to give up mixed-gender soccer because she will never catch up to them physically. (Clark & Perry 2016, p. 81)

While Ellyse overcomes this obstacle, she also manages to set up a team at her high school.<sup>211</sup> Initially there are not enough players for a girls’ soccer team, but Ellyse soon becomes the figurehead around which other girls – including ones older than Ellyse – rally in order to play the game. This creates a rare dynamic very early on whereby the worlds of mixed-gender and gender-segregated sports can be compared.<sup>212</sup>

Unlike Gracie Faltrain, Ellyse manages quickly to undercut and challenge much of the gendered stereotypes around soccer. This includes otherwise innocuous behaviours such as juggling the ball, which has previously been interpreted by one of the girl triallists as boys showing off. (Clark & Perry 2016, p. 25)<sup>213</sup> Usually in these stories, it

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<sup>211</sup> It is worth noting that not only does Ellyse go to an all-girls school, she also attends what is in effect an elite private school in the wealthy northern suburbs of Sydney. This is in stark contrast to the usually lower middle class (and occasionally working class) settings of Australian soccer literature targeted towards younger readers. One is compelled to consider how much readers from non-upper middle class backgrounds will relate to the setting of the *Ellyse Perry* series. A similar question could be asked of the incredibly problematic depiction of soccer – including that it has a long-standing tradition at what are often called elite private schools in Melbourne – in the young adult novel, *Macbeth, You Idiot*. (Henderson 2009)

<sup>212</sup> The most interesting moment probably being when Ellyse’s mum and dad consider joining a mixed touch football team. (Clark & Perry 2017, p. 75)

<sup>213</sup> For all the stylistic deviations made in the Ellyse Perry series, some tropes remain consistent. The physical education teacher assigned to set up the school’s inaugural soccer team at the junior grade high is English. Ms

is only soccer that is explicitly forbidden to girls, even if the inference is that all traditionally male sports are “forbidden” to them. The *Ellyse Perry* series contains a more overt girl=power theme, made easier in part by virtue of Ellyse attending a girls’ school. But that is true only up to a point, as Ellyse continues to play most of her sport outside of school for club teams.

## **Conclusion**

The depiction of young female soccer players and their non-playing adult counterparts is moving forward only incrementally. For younger audiences, Australian soccer literature has displayed a mostly limited form of “girl-power” influenced protagonists. The presence of one or two girls in boys’ teams can be accommodated, but the complete breakdown of gender barriers in soccer cannot. Caution should be applied when proscribing ideas such as biology absolutely precluding women and girls from successfully participating with men and boys in their sports. While it is possible to critique texts in Australian soccer literature which have adolescent girls competing with and excelling in boys’ teams as being unrealistic, the truth of the matter is that these situations are largely untested in the real world.

Even acknowledging the stylistic bounds of the genre, as well as the overall positive of having female athletes as protagonists, writers still have room to take bigger risks in this area. At present boys and men remain the guardians and gatekeepers of Australian soccer culture. A certain amount of resistance is tolerable, but when it reaches a critical mass things get out of control, and traditional gender barriers get

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Beattie only serves further to reinforce the cultural hegemony of English soccer when she casually states, “I’m an Arsenal fan myself”. (Clark & Perry 2016, p. 29)



reasserted. Those who are concerned about the mealy mouthed or caveat laden opportunities for female empowerment, have to make a decision then as to whether books like these serve any good purpose, even in situations where the girls characters reach a level of a success and achievement within the framework of the text. Yet girls will continue to read these books. In that way, male sport is reaffirmed as the norm, with the *Jasper Zammit* or *Megs Morrison* series intended for both genders, while the Elysse Perry, Lucy Zeezou and Gracie Faltrain series are intended only for girls. Perhaps one day the genre will get to a stage where an older sister teaches a younger sister or brother about soccer or sport without it being an aberration.

Sport shapes male culture, the attitudes of males to their own bodies, and is an important socialisation tool. (Cashman 2010, p. 57) The implication of that socialisation is that girls are taught to be ashamed of their bodies and their potential for athleticism, as well being discouraged from learning social skills via the “male” domain of sport. Women and girls playing sport allows them to express themselves physically in ways other than work. While participation in sporting activity is about leisure, it is also about command of one’s own body, and the promotion of activity rather than passivity. Cashman notes that as sport is an important part of growing up male in Australia, the implications for women on this front tend to be negative. (Cashman 2010, p. 57) Men and boys are expected to be active by our culture, while girls and women are not.

When the two gender cultures clash in Australian soccer literature, usually in the form of girls moving into the active zone of boys, concerns around physical space, touching, contact and a feeling of cultural imposition all come into play.

Within the depictions of mixed gender sports there is evidence of a more expansive experience of sport playing boys. Sporting boys are expected to be instinctively aware

of how to use their bodies against other boys. Boys are inducted into football culture by men, and this induction is a part of the process of these boys becoming men themselves.<sup>214</sup> (Hargreaves 1994, p. 252) But these boys lack an instinctiveness about how to use their bodies when playing against girls. They must then make decisions about their conduct – the actual process of making a decision would seem to contradict the previously instinctive approach to play.

Yet despite boys needing to adjust their behaviour, because men's sport is considered the cultural norm, males are still in control of the sporting culture. As with its "real world" counterparts, it is still largely up to male gatekeepers to allow access to female participation. (Anderson 2010, p. 124) This is repeatedly shown to be the case in Australian soccer literature. The girl athletes invariably have to assimilate to the expectations of the male dominated environment. While the males in the various soccer groups in Australian soccer literature also change elements of their behaviour to accommodate female athletes, they are still in control of how much needs to change, and how, in order to accommodate female participation. Characters like Gracie Faltrain repeat this initiation process in order to initiate more girl soccer players into the male programme.

In line with the tropes of a genre that requires its protagonists to remain optimistic while triumphing over all obstacles on the path to on-field success, the chance for divergent storylines is limited. While the female soccer-playing protagonists in these stories invariably need and desire to work hard at soccer, their boundless talent and

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<sup>214</sup> While Hargreaves here is talking specifically about the experience of soccer in England, it is easy to extrapolate this to any of the major football codes in Australia.

enthusiasm makes their success appear almost inevitable. These kinds of texts necessarily seek to transmit aspirational and inspirational messages to their audiences, but they also create the possibility of marginalising part of their audience.

Since most of the depictions of Australian women and girls playing soccer come from young adult and children's literature, this approach makes a discursive sense. The focus of such works in this genre are aspiration, fighting for equality among their male peers, and the notions of "girl-power". However, the absence of adult females playing soccer socially in Australian soccer literature still presents a massive discursive hole; it creates a gap in the field of female representation that can only be partly justified by the fact that literary depictions of other sports in Australia also largely ignore women's participation in social sporting scenes. Greg Downes suggests that while "the women enjoy playing the game hard and competitively", they also:

bring their own meanings into playing the game, including being part of a team, making life-long friends and just having fun. (Downes 2015, p. iii)

This is especially the case for those readers who do not possess that innate technical or physical talent of the role-model characters, and whose main motivation for playing is one of enjoyment rather than high-achievement.<sup>215</sup> Of course the ultimate point of success for this element of the genre will be when boys, too, also look up to female

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<sup>215</sup> As noted in an earlier footnote, there is also the alienating aspect of the *Ellyse Perry* series in that the action takes place in a social sphere remote from many of the series' intended audience. The highflying, incoherent fantasy world presented in the *Lucy Zezou* series also potentially falls into that trap. This is not an argument for a form of ultra-realism to be applied to sporting novels aimed at young audiences; it is however a reminder that even while attempting to inspire their audiences towards sporting participation and ultimately success, the social and economic environments presented in these stories may end up marginalising audiences which cannot relate to them. Likewise, the intended audience may be sophisticated enough to see through the fantasy, bringing in to question why these novels sometimes seek to present quite unrealistic scenarios in the first place.

soccer players. Will that day ever come? It has not yet arrived in Australian soccer literature and its more open-minded tangents.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> The covers of the books in the *Ellyse Perry* series, littered as they are with “cute” and “girly” drawings and a photo of Perry herself in a non-athletic guise, seem to indicate that the publisher is solely interested in appealing to girl readers. It is an understandable but nevertheless disappointing and limiting ploy. Furthermore, it falls into what Dawn Heinecken calls the post-feminist trope of “choice”, whereby the opportunity to be both “pretty and tough” is available to girls; the net result however, is that freedom from dominant notions of gender is illusory, as such post-feminist discourses which foreground a reassuring, non-confrontational femininity. (Heinecken 2015, pp. 30-1)

## Chapter 9: Conclusion – Where to From Here?

Despite making inroads towards the cultural mainstream, soccer is still a marginalised sport in Australia. Despite the socio-cultural inroads it has made, the effects of its historic marginalisation linger on in the way the game, its followers, and its players attempt to frame their own experiences and social positioning as Australians. Where in other respects an individual or group may have been fully or nearly fully assimilated into Australian culture, their appreciation of soccer sees them subject to a metonymic device in which they become unmistakably un-Australian. In those cases where soccer's advocates attempt to re-fashion soccer as an Australian game, they often only succeed in reasserting the popular conception of "soccer" as a metonym for foreignness, non-masculine behaviour, and any number of associated values directly opposed to the dominant notions of what makes up the Australian national character.

Soccer has historically been denied a place in mainstream Australian culture. Just as importantly, it has also been denied an easy path towards attaining a form of Australian sporting and cultural citizenship. Only the gradual adoption of soccer by the dominant cultural group in Australia – Anglo-Celtic-Australian males – can make soccer a "legitimate" Australian sport. That process will lead toward the disenfranchisement and marginalisation of those ethnic groups and their members who controlled the administrative and economic aspects of Australian soccer, as well as its dominant cultural ethos. Whether those groups were right to feel that they owned or had the right to control Australian soccer's cultural direction is beside the point; the point is that it was an aspect of Australian culture that was, because of the cultural prerogatives of those involved, quite unlike the rest of Australian culture. It was also a cultural sphere in which a collective was able to occasionally break through or around the strictures

of an Australian culture which privileges the Anglo-Celtic above all else. Having been marginalised by the dominant culture, and playing the metonymically marginal game to boot, the gradual and then sudden decline of the ethnic soccer paradigm has left an already marginal group of people even further marginalised.

Despite the myriad forms of marginalisation that soccer and its followers have suffered in Australia at the hands of mainstream Australian culture, the game and its followers have in turn marginalised groups both within and outside the sport. Continental European migrants have suffered at the hands of Anglo-Celtic Australia's alternately indifferent and hostile reactions to soccer. So too have these migrants been the instigators of marginalisation and discrimination. More specifically, those soccer loving migrants have, as collectives, discriminated against rival migrant groups, under the guise or veneer of supporting their particular ethnically aligned clubs.

At other times, the feeling of marginalisation has been a by-product of members of a normally dominant demographic finding themselves having become the minority. That marginalisation and discrimination is not only targeted towards the collective, unknowable "other". It can and has been applied on an individual basis, to members of the same ethnicity who refuse to conform to that ethnic group's expected norms. There are even moments when, under the guise of cultural nonconformity, the discriminatory actions have been applied with one individual of superior influence and resources onto another of lesser means and capability.

Outside ethnically derived forms of marginalisation are those forms of discrimination targeted at women and girls. Sometimes this marginalisation is influenced by the conservative ideologies of traditionalist migrant groups. Often that marginalisation is merely a subset of patriarchal views of sport, which put the leisure interests of women

and girls second to those of men and boys. That is women must create the leisure time and personal accommodation necessary for males to play sport. Where females want to participate in soccer themselves, as adults they are reduced to ancillary or auxiliary roles which have little to do with the playing of the game. And where they are allowed to be involved with the game, they cannot have any authority over male participants. For girl players – and they are, in almost all cases of Australian soccer literature, girls and not women – they inevitably have to win the approval of their male supervisors, male peers and the male soccer establishment in order to play. Those women who are presented as having any sort of soccer pedigree, usually in the form of being a coach or former player, are shown to do so almost only in the abstract.

While these examples reflect something of the reality on the ground, they are not the complete truth. Nor are they the limit of what it is possible to conceive as the truth as it may appear in the future. It is in this area where literature which deals with sport, and in our case Australian soccer literature, is of most value. Australian soccer literature uncovers the untold and nuanced stories of immigrant soccer groups, while also making quiet prophecies about that niche's prospects for adaptability and longevity within Australian culture.

While the instinctive reaction may be that once they reach a certain age, girls should no longer play soccer alongside and against boys, Australian soccer literature is daring enough to explore the issue in depth, and with imagination. What would it take for female athletes to be able to compete with and against male athletes? Does a female sporting culture within a sport have to intrinsically mimic the values of its male counterpart, or should it seek to create an alternative culture? And would that alternative be innately feminine in its approach?

And for those writers coming from outside the game to write on soccer in Australia, Australian soccer literature provides a relatively safe space from which to make comment, without the overbearing and demanding regard for credentials.<sup>217</sup> There they can explore niche paradigms so often ignored by the main part of Australian soccer's writing machine – the experiences of children, of female athletes, of parents, and especially those whose disaffection, disinterest or emotional distance from the game point to other, deeper social concerns.

As worthwhile as the collection and analysis of Australian soccer literature is, it does have and will continue to have limitations in its form, creation and content. In the matter of creation, many writers belong to a white, Anglo-Celtic demographic. They write about people of diverse backgrounds, but rarely do members of Australian soccer's diversity get to write their own stories. Likewise the content is not all-encompassing – the limited appearance of Asian-Australians within the genre was noted earlier in the thesis, as well as the absence of adult female soccer players, or instances where women are directly in charge of supervising men's or boys' soccer. There is also a general absence of boys and men who do not conform to prescribed gender roles.

With regards to form, the compilation and analysis of Australian soccer literature will continue to face hurdles beyond those associated with a general disinterest in the meeting place of sport and literature in Australian culture. As good as the AustLit database is for making possible the kinds of research undertaken in this thesis, it has

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<sup>217</sup> Though, as has been noted elsewhere, that does not mean that one should not carry out due amounts of research.



its limitations. These go beyond the mere collection and categorisation of its indexes, though that is also part of the problem of relying on a digital database.

In an age where sports journalism stampedes from one story to the next without rest – and in an age where demographers collapse millions of sporting experiences into one number or one graph – creative works on sport allow us to take a moment to reflect upon the deeper meanings of sport, ordinary people's attachment to their preferred game, and the way those meanings intersect with their non-sporting lives. For a sport of such diverse experiences as Australian soccer, such analyses are crucial.

At the same time, Australian soccer literature is an incomplete genre. It is missing many of its most important voices. It tends to eschew discussion of business and politics except in the hyper-personal sense. This is in part due to the concerns of writers on such things as refugee and asylum seeker policy, to framing their works around the experiences of small groups, and towards a larger trend in Australian literature which avoids in-depth discussion of economics and business. Those soccer fans with what may be classified as hooligan tendencies are also missing almost entirely from having their voices heard. This does not include those who happen to find themselves as part of a soccer riot, but rather those who belong to organised groups with varying degrees of a proclivity to violence.

Likewise, there is the issue of those whose first language (or at least the one they choose to write in) is not English and whose works, where they even exist, are likely to become only more obscure as time goes on. One of the motivations of this thesis has been to rescue from that obscurity, even if only for a brief moment, those people and those works. Though these people are all marginalised within the sphere of

Australian soccer literature, as often as by their omission from it as their depiction within it, one cannot help but return to the selfish beginnings of this project.

It was noted earlier on in his thesis that the thesis itself was conceived in some small part due to a feeling of “a certain modest insecurity on the part of the author”. This insecurity is in part based on the question, “can a love of sport be reconciled with a love of literature?” It is also based on this writer’s own personal lament for his own failure to achieve athletic greatness, but also the failure to achieve artistic, literary, or perhaps more crudely, a genre-based respectability<sup>218</sup> at all. For this writer that sense of injustice is, however nominally, related to the perceived injustices meted out to his club, excluded from the Australian top-league in large part because of who they are – a migrant backed club, adjudged to be of limited marketable capacity to the burgeoning mainstream of Australian soccer.

This is the quintessential protagonist of the fringes of Australian soccer culture. This person is someone who is interested in the game, but whose physical inability to play the game creates distrust among those who assert that understanding football can only come from playing it, with more credence paid to those who have played soccer at higher levels. The desire to intellectualise the game’s discussions of culture alienates me from those who seek to experience sport on a purely visceral level. Combined with the difficulty of fitting into neither the extant Greek-Australian culture, as well as lacking the desire to subsume myself into mainstream Anglo-Celtic

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<sup>218</sup> With genre in this case meaning writing about Australian soccer in a literary manner.

Australian culture, the result sees me cut culturally adrift, much like many of the characters in Australian soccer literature.

Modern sport is so often reduced to being only about numbers – scoreboards, results lists, statistics, participation numbers, gambling odds, broadcast deal valuations. Where examinations of culture are allowed in, they are often limited to hagiographic portrayals of sport, or at the most criticisms of those who have failed to uphold the standards which maintain the hagiographic illusion of sport. No other field is better placed than literatures about sport to question the popular – and populist – values attributed to sport, including from those who hold anti-sport ideas.

The writing and study of Australian soccer literature is not designed to be a replacement for other forms of comment on soccer in Australia. It cannot replace what historians, demographers, statisticians, journalists, and people working in numerous other analytic fields have produced thus far, nor what they will produce in the future. Instead the argument which has been made here is that the continuing creation of works within Australian soccer literature, and the scholarly consideration of those works, should be seen as being complimentary to those disciplines.

More broadly, this thesis is not arguing for the supplanting of the study of sports history, sociology, psychology or any other field of inquiry as it relates to sport, with the study of literature. Neither is it seeking to claim that sport literatures should gain ascendancy or predominance within sports studies. Rather the aim is to have literature acknowledged as containing valuable insights into sporting cultures, and thus to seek to include the use of sporting literature, or literature which includes discussion of sport as an additional source of academic inquiry within those fields. It is also worth noting that when asking for a greater convergence between sport and the arts, one does not

imply that this should be solely of the mutual appreciation variety – those pieces of literature which condemn sport or which are hostile to it, are still far better than those artistic works which pretend that sport does not exist. Even glib or fleeting attempts at understanding the madness of sport and its seeming centrality to Australian culture add to the collective understanding of sport in Australian culture. As Umberto Eco has noted, “Trying to understand other people means destroying the stereotypes without denying or ignoring the otherness.” (Eco 2012, p. 18)<sup>219</sup>

One of the things that I hope this thesis can contribute to is not only Australian soccer literature being taken more seriously, but also that the relationship between sport and Australian literature is taken more seriously. It would be wonderful to see this thesis lead not only to more academic work, but also to almanacs, collections, conferences; in other words, the beginning of a larger movement. There is value and opportunity for Australian sport should it choose to open its often conservative heart towards the open-ended possibilities that literature can provide. There is value for Australian literature in including depictions of sport or sporting interests in its narratives. In the case of soccer – Australia’s most diverse and culturally unwieldy sport – the possibilities to discuss the lives of marginal people and a still marginal game, and what these experiences may say about both historical and contemporary forms of Australian culture, are waiting to be taken.

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<sup>219</sup> Though immediately afterwards, Eco notes that these ways of understanding are “the prerogative of poets, saints or traitors”. (Eco 2012, p. 18)

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## Appendices

### **Appendix A – The complicated process of discovering Les Murray’s “The Sports Machine”.**

If, as has been argued in this thesis, sport and the arts in Australia are inherently irreconcilable pursuits, whose meetings are at best rare and awkward, then perhaps nothing quite encapsulates that cultural schism than the existence of Australia’s two Les Murrays. For perhaps most of Australia, even that which is does not care about soccer, Les Murray the soccer pundit is the better known of the two Les Murrays. As the face and voice of Australian soccer, and by extension also the face and voice of SBS and a certain strain of the Australian multicultural experience, Murray’s fame existed outside of the narrow trench of Australian soccer.<sup>220</sup> Then there is the “other” Les Murray, often lauded as Australia’s greatest living poet and among the finest living poets writing in the English language, but whose work most Australians have probably only come into contact with by accident and most recently some twenty years ago as the co-author of the then prime minister John Howard’s preamble to the Australian Constitution, which was attached to the republic referendum.

So how is it that these two Les Murrays would have anything to do with each other? Many years ago while I was still an undergraduate, I seem to recall that some now indistinguishable person told me that Les Murray the poet had written a poem about Les Murray the soccer pundit. Not knowing where to start looking for this poem, the notion of trying to find it died quickly. This was before I had even decided that my

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<sup>220</sup> This is perhaps best encapsulated by the Australian public’s familiarity with that strange, untraceable accent, which famously prompted the rock band TISM to ask “What nationality is Les Murray?” – a song which would not have worked quite so well had people had no idea who Les Murray the soccer pundit was.

honours thesis, let alone doctoral thesis work, would focus on soccer and its relationship to Australian literature. This was also I ended up teaching some of Les Murray the poet's works in the Australian Literature unit that we teach to second and third year students at Victoria University.

So how did the topic of this apocryphal poem re-emerge after sitting dormant for so many years? That owes as much to the accidental happenings one experiences when travels Melbourne in the style of a *flâneur*, as it does to the inner suburbs of Melbourne still having enough bricks and mortar bookshops, so that the act of finding one is less a freak accident than a statistical probability. After meeting up in the city, a friend and I decided to head towards Lygon Street for lunch. Taking the tram up there from Federation Square, we had stopped paying attention to where we should have gotten off, went several stops further up Lygon Street than we had intended, and then kept walking in the opposite direction to where we were supposed to be going. By a happy meeting of statistical probabilities, we ended up outside Red Wheelbarrow Books, a small independent bookshop. While we could have turned around and just caught the next tram back, there in the front window was an assortment of books by the anarchist poet Pi O, so I decided to enter the store.

After discussing Pi O with the store's proprietor and being offered a second-hand copy of Pi O's *Selected Works* for \$15, the proprietor and I moved on to discussing my doctoral work on Australian soccer and literature. The catalyst for this was my making a remark on Pi O's lack of interest in sport, especially soccer, despite his extensive work covering (whether incidentally or not) the lives and language of migrant Europeans during the 1970s and 1980s.

One could not help but note the sole poem where Pi O *does* discuss soccer, a piece called “Soccor”, which still barely manages to discuss the topic of soccer at all. From there the proprietor of the bookshop managed to make a couple of suggestions about other literary Australian soccer texts, including Peter Goldsworthy's *Keep it Simple, Stupid*, which I was already well aware of. But he then recalled that Les Murray the poet had written a poem about Les Murray the soccer pundit. That he could recall no further details of its content, title or year of publication was now far less of an issue than it would have been in the past. Nearly a decade on, I was now armed with the resources of the AustLit database, and so I duly went off to search for the entry on Les Murray the soccer pundit, and works which were about him. Alas, there were no poems listed as being about Les Murray the soccer pundit. What to do?

After noting my disappointment on Twitter that the existence of this poem may have merely been an urban myth – a poem by one Les Murray on the other Les Murray, surely it was too good to be true – someone working diligently and anonymously behind the scenes at AustLit came to the rescue,

[@PaulMavroudis @eenfish](#) Found it! ‘The Sports Machine (for Lazlo Urge of SBS TV)’. <https://t.co/HziNAHIW0d>

— AustLit (@AustLit) May 15, 2016 [\(AustLit 2016\)](#)

According to people at AustLit, the poem had never been published either in a literary journal or in a collection of work by Murray, but rather in one of the supplements of the *Weekend Australian* newspaper in October 1991. So my next stop then was the State

Library of Victoria to search through the microfilm newspaper archives until there it was; its being something quite different to what I'd expected.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> One did not expect one of Murray the poet's more stunning efforts, but even so, I could not help but be underwhelmed by the poem's style as well as its content. To begin with, even a quick overview reveals that the poem is not about Les Murray the soccer pundit at all, but merely dedicated to him – and even then, not to Les Murray the soccer pundit, but to Laszlo Üрге, the cast off refugee identity the soccer pundit had left behind at the start of his television career.

Without knowing of the existence of any possible prior interactions between the two Murrays, the motivation for Murray the poet writing this poem and dedicating it to Murray the soccer pundit is hard to fathom. At the end of the poem, Murray the poet affirms that "I'm Les Murray" (Murray 1991, p. rev 6), but it is hard to read between the lines of whether this signing off is meant to be playful and linked to the opening gambit in the dedication itself, or whether it is instead some sort of pointed attempt at reclaiming the rights to the Les Murray name – and if so, what would be the nature of that resentment?

The poem then seeks to describe, in the semi-abstract, various sports played by Australians – among them rugby union and league, Australian Rules, soccer and basketball – but with a kind of dismissive attitude. These sports seem to Murray to be fuelled by an anger and relentless trudging and sense of aimless, furious activity; worse still are those who are not participants, but who live vicariously through the athletes making those exertions.

In that sense the poem's tone is entirely consistent with Murray's oeuvre so far as I am familiar with it – an innate distrust of modernity, and also of the speed and lack of space for thought and contemplation that is attached to that notion of modernity. Murray's familiar dislike of crowds and fear of their encroachment on his personal space gets doubled down in the depiction of soccer – the implied barbarity of the kicking of the heads among caged foreigners, with little definition of who is being separated from whom. Aside from this however, Murray the poet offers little more on soccer than this scene of stylised allegorical violence and the crowds of foreigners who watch the game – an unusual step to take when dedicating a poem to a soccer man.

## **Appendix B – Poems of Athanasios Mavroudis**

My father, Athanasios Mavroudis, despite his limited formal education – only up to grade six in rural 1950s Greece – fancied himself as somewhat of a poet. He wrote several poems in his scrapbooks, and even had some published in the letter and editorial pages of *Neos Kosmos*, the Greek-language paper of record in Melbourne. His style is plain and straightforward, and if we are being fair, not far removed from doggerel. His themes were broad, and usually related to the issues of the day – the political and cultural concerns as they related to the Greek community of Melbourne, and the Greek diaspora as a whole. This was in keeping with one strand of poetry submitted to *Neos Kosmos*, the other, more common one being poetry on important dates, festivals, the seasons, the sanctity of mothers, and the pain of living in a foreign land.

I have included my father's two extant and complete soccer poems here for a couple of reasons. First, as a way to preserve them in some fashion on the public record. Second, because whatever their literary merits, they are outstanding examples of what this thesis is about – the search for the most obscure portrayals of a marginal game, written by a member of a marginal community, preserving moments and points of view otherwise destined for utter oblivion. Also, they have a naff charm which appeals to me.

### **Altona East PAOK poem**

Apart from his poem of Heidelberg United Alexander, Athanasios Mavroudis also wrote two other soccer poems. One of these was about a smaller Greek-Australian soccer club, Altona East PAOK, of which the entirety of the poem survives at least in a draft form. The way my father tells the story, while the piece – which was written to



celebrate the victory by Altona East of the Hellenic Cup, a minor cup competition, but also the club's most important tournament victory to that date – was copied and placed upon the window of the Altona East clubrooms, which were then made up only of a wooden portable building. Such work is of minor literary merit or social importance, but within the context my father was writing in, the rules change.

Σκληρά δουλέψαν τα παιδιά

The boys worked hard

αυτό το καλοκαίρι

this summer

να φτάσουνε στον τελικό

to reach the final

στο κύπελο το Ελληνικό

of the Hellenic Cup

που είναι τόσο ποθητό

which they so desired

να πάρουνε στο χέρι

to take into their possession

Είναι γιορτή Ελληνική

It is a Greek celebration

για μερικές βδομάδες

spanning several weeks

μες στους αγωνες επεσαν

games played by

αμέτρητες ομάδες

uncountable teams

Στον ΠΑΟΚ λέγανε μπροστα

PAOK they said at first

θα πάρει απολυτηριο

would receive its participation prize

μα εβγένη πάντα γελαστός	\but they always smiled
προς το αποδυτήριο	on the way to the changing rooms
γιατί ήταν ομάδα όνειρο	because it was a team of dreamers
και άλυτο μυστήριο.	and unresolved mystery
Έρθε το Μέγα Σάββατο	Big Saturday came
η πιο μεγάλη μέρα	the biggest day
πηχτηκαν μες το γήπεδο	they jumped into the field
ριχτηκαν με το γήπεδο	they threw themselves into the field
Μα η μοίρα τουθέλε πολύ	Indeed, fate desired much
για να τους δοκιμάσει	to test them
κι από αγώνα ισόπαλο	and from a drawn game
στα πέναλτι να φθάσει	penalties were reached
χτυπα το πρωτο πέναλτι	the first penalty was struck
σηκωνονται τα διχτυα	shifting the net
οι φίλαθλοι σιωπάσανε	the fans silenced
αλλαξαν καρδιοχτύπια	heartbeats skipped

Δυο αποκρούει ο Γιαννακός	Giannakos saves twice
και ένα στο δοκάρι	and one onto the post
ο ΠΑΟΚ το ζευγάρωσε	PAOK matched it
και βγήκε παλικάρι	and came out champions
<i>Συγχαρητήρια στα παιδιά</i>	<i>Congratulations to the boys</i>
<i>και σε όλους τους φιλάθλους</i>	<i>and to all the supporters</i>

### **Jim Pyrgolions/Frank Arok poem**

Though undated, this poem would have been written after the 1994/95 National Soccer League season, as it discusses the sacking of Jim Pyrgolios, South Melbourne Hellas coach and one of the club's favourite sons, and his replacement by the successful but divisive Frank Arok – with the poem making note of Arok's failure to lead South Melbourne to a championship in the 1994/95 season. As a Heidelberg United Alexander support, it would seem on the face of it unusual that my father would show any sympathy to toward his team's biggest rival, but the poem is informed by empathy toward Pyrgolios, as well as the desire to see a Greek team win a championship regardless of which one it is.

Χρόνια τώρα παιδεύετε	Years now of struggling
η ελληνική ομάδα	for the Greek team
να κατακτησει το έπαθλο	to capture the prize

που παίζει η εξάδα

played for by the top six.

Βρήκανε πως ο Πυργολιός

They found how Pyrgolios

για τελικούς δεν κάνει

was unsuitable for finals

σε γενική συνελευση

and at a general meeting

το Hellas τον Αροκ πιάνει.

Hellas snared Arok.

Γέμισε ο πάγκος της ΕΛΛΑΣ

The Hellas bench became full

χαρτιά παικτες μολυβια

of paper, players, and pencils

κι όμως τ'αποτελέσματα

and yet the results,

φίλοι μου είναι τα ίδια.

my friends, were the same.

Άμα δεν είναι τυχερό

If fortune is not there

το τρόπαιο να πάρης

to take the trophy

το ριζικό του δεν αλλάζει

the root cause does not change

στον πάγκο όποιον κι αν βαλης.

whoever you have on the bench.

Τον βρήκαν ποιο ιδανικό

They found Arok ideal

και αλεπού τον είπαν

and called him the fox

και μ'έναν παίχτη λιγότερο

yet with one player less

πιο δύσκολα τα βρήκαν.	they found things more difficult
Προχθές ο Αροκ πέταξε	Yesterday Arok launched
στα νέα μια ρουκέτα	a rocket in the news
πως ο Βιντούκα γκολ δεν βάζει	how Viduka would not score
μα μόνο ο Ρουκέτα.	only the Rocket <sup>222</sup> would
Ας όψεται πως μπηκαμε	See how they got
στην θέση της εξάδας	into the finals
με τα αποτελέσματα	from the results
μιας αλληνης ομαδας.	of another side
Σε μουσκεμένο γήπεδο	On a sodden field
μουσκεμένα όλα γίναν	everything became sodden
τα όνειρα που κάναμε	the dreams we made
όνειρα μόνο μείναν.	dreams only remained
και τώρα τι απεμεινε	and now what remains

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<sup>222</sup> My father says there was a South Melbourne player nicknamed “the rocket” – he does not remember who – and thus there is a clumsy attempt here at allusion.

στους συμβολους ακόμη

for the board to do

να πάμε στον Δημήτρη μας

is to go to our Dimitri

να πούμε ένα συγνώμη

and tell him that we are sorry.

## **Appendix C – Australian soccer literature used in this thesis**

### **Novels**

- *Bailey of the Saints*, David Alejandro Fearnhead
- *The Earth Cries Out*, HC Wells
- *I Think I Love You*, Iris Blobel
- *Keep It Simple, Stupid*, Peter Goldsworthy
- *The Last Thread*, Michael Sala
- *Loaded*, Christos Tsiolkas
- *Making News*, Tony Wilson
- *Match Fixer*, Neil Humphreys
- *Mr Cleansheets*, Adrian Deans
- *Nine Parts Water*, Emma Hardman
- *The Slap*, Christos Tsiolkas
- *Subtopia*, A.L. McCann
- *Sweet Time*, Graeme Reilly
- *They're a Weird Mob*, Nino Culotta
- *What Kate Did Next*, Lisa Heidke

- *The Young Wife*, David Martin

### **Young Adult novels**

- *Gracie Faltrain Gets It Right (Finally)*, Cath Crowley
- *Gracie Faltrain Takes Control*, Cath Crowley
- *The Life and Times of Gracie Faltrain*, Cath Crowley
- *Looking For Alibrandi*, Melina Marchetta
- *Lucy Zeezou's Goal*, Liz Deep-Jones
- *Lucy Zeezou's Glamour Game*, Liz Deep-Jones
- *The Things I Didn't Say*, Kylie Fornasier
- *Tin Soldiers*, Ian Bone
- *Too Flash*, Melissa Lucashenko

### **Children's novels**

- *Boy Overboard*, Morris Gleitzman
- *Jasper Zammit: The Game of Life*, Deborah Abela & Johnny Warren
- *Jasper Zammit: The Finals*, Deborah Abela & Johnny Warren
- *Jasper Zammit: The Striker*, Deborah Abela & Johnny Warren
- *Magic Feet*, Sherryl Clark and Elysse Perry



- *Megs and the Complete Left Foot*, Neil Montagnana-Wallace & Mark Schwarzer
- *Megs and the Crazy Legs*, Neil Montagnana-Wallace & Mark Schwarzer
- *Megs, Scarves and Sombreros*, Neil Montagnana-Wallace & Mark Schwarzer
- *Megs and the Wonder Strike*, Neil Montagnana-Wallace & Mark Schwarzer
- *Megs and the Vootball Kids*, Neil Montagnana-Wallace & Mark Schwarzer
- *Mr Lee's Fantastic Football Dream*, PJ Roberts and Marc Roberts
- *The Redback Leftovers*, Debra Oswald
- *The Spangled Drongo*, Steven Herrick
- *Winning Touch*, Sherryl Clark and Elysse Perry

## **Poems**

- 'Action Photo', Adrian Caesar
- 'To the Barrackers', "T, the R.", (aka Charles Hayward)
- 'The Battle for the Medals', "L.R."
- 'Chinese Footballers', "Iford", (aka Charles Hayward)
- 'Cheers', George Toseski
- 'The Football Boy', unknown
- 'The Football Cup', "Iford" (aka Charles Hayward)

- 'On Hearing That Italy Had Won The World Cup', Mick Bocchino
- 'The Modern Bohemian', "T, the R" (aka Charles Hayward)
- 'Morning Vigil', Louise Wakeling
- 'Para vos, West Brunswick', Jose 'Chiquito' de Paul
- 'The Rout of San Romano; or, Arsenal 3 Manchester United 2', Martin Johnston
- 'Soccer at Middle Parl', Dina Dounis
- 'Soccor', PiO
- 'Songs of the Wife of Dirty Bath', Christine Paice
- 'Στον Μέγα Αλέξανδρο', Athanasios Mavroudis
- 'A Ten-Thousand Pounder', "T, the R." (aka Charles Hayward)
- 'Trick Knee', Peter Goldsworthy
- "World Cup Spell 1998", Fay Zwicky

### **Plays**

- *The Club*, David Williamson
- *The Heartbreak Kid*, Richard Barrett

### **Films**

- *The Heartbreak Kid*

## **Songs**

- 'Was Sport Better in the 70s?', The Drugs

## **Short Stories**

- 'Bergen Op Zoom', Michael Sala
- 'A Boy and his Nemesis', Stuart Sakarellos
- 'Diamonds, Too, Are Blue', Thelma Green
- 'The Full-Back', David Martin
- 'Soccer Mum', Roanna Gonsalves
- 'Who Says A Must Say B', David Martin

## **Memoir**

- 'A Day at the Footy', Wanda Jamrozik
- *Australia United*, Tony Wilson
- *Journey Into the Future*, Frank Hardy
- 'Kicking the Habit', Christos Tsiolkas
- 'Love and Footy', Christos Tsiolkas
- *Offsider*, Patrick Mangan
- 'Terrace View', Ian C. Smith
- *The Winter Sparrows*, Mary-Rose Liverani

- *Wrong About Japan*, Peter Carey

### **Autobiographies and biographies**

- *By the Balls: Memoir of a Football Tragic*, Les Murray
- *Captain Socceroo: the Paul Wade story*, Paul Wade and Kyle Patterson
- *My Strange Friend*, David Martin
- *Sheilas, Wogs and Poofers*, Johnny Warren, Andy Harper, and Josh Whittington
- *Walk Alone: The Craig Johnston Story*, Craig Johnston and Neil Jameson

### **Unpublished works**

- 'Marionettes', Jason Di Rosso