Testimony, Witness, Authority
Testimony, Witness, Authority: The Politics and Poetics of Experience

Edited by

Tom Clark, Tara Mokhtari and Sasha Henriss-Anderssen
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INTRODUCTION

TOWARDS A TRANSDISCIPLINARY LOGOEPISTEMY

TOM CLARK AND TARA MOKHTARI

The lead title of this volume, *Testimony, Witness, Authority*, comprises three fundamentals of verbal media, necessarily allied because they inform what we humans know as ‘experience.’ Where there is Testimony there is Witness. Where there is Witness there is Authority. Where there is Authority, be it constructive or overpowering, there is Testimony. The cycle of these elements helps us to tell, retell, remember, and re-remember our stories and their worlds – both our versions of things and things’ versions of us. The subtitle of this volume, ‘the politics and poetics of experience,’ signifies our particular approach: an emphasis on verbal and word-related expressions.

Readers of *TWA* travel from the homes of Sudanese immigrants in the western suburbs of Melbourne, Australia, to the lower house of parliament in Canada in the year 2008. They converse across time with poets Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Judith Wright, and then with Adolf Hitler’s last personal secretary, Traudl Jung. The subjects of these essays have memories to calibrate, responsibilities to wear, objective and subjective truths to bear. The contributors expressly reflect on what it means to listen faithfully to how stories are told through a web of verbal and near-verbal media. What emerges is a dialogue between poets, historians, performers, educators, narratologists, musicologists, theologians, story-tellers, linguists, and no shortage of football enthusiasts on the nature of oral, written and other verbal media.

It is no coincidence that the contributors to *TWA* met at Victoria University (Melbourne, Australia), in a 2011 conference titled ‘The Oral, the Written, and Other Verbal Media.’ The focus for OWOVM 2011 – and, in turn, for this volume – is a twofold interrogation: of constructs of knowing and what is known, and of the ways that various knowings and knowledges are transmitted. Of course, there are questions of bias inherent
to all these ways of knowing. How does the individual’s cultural background effect what is known? How do emotions affect knowledge? Over time, how do memories transform knowledge? How does the environment in which subjects are invited to tell their stories influence the presentations and subsequent interpretations and retellings of what is known? This last question brings us to the key problem of transmission, and specifically to how the politics and poetics of communication are essential to experience – both for purveyors of expression and for its receivers (who may in turn become agents of retelling). How are meanings reinterpretable depending on the mediums of transmission, the capriciousness of knowledge and its expressions? What analytical frameworks can we apply to testimonial, witness, and authoritative discourses in order to broaden our understandings of what they communicate?

An early modern Scottish ballad plays on these concepts and their relations with a play on the abbreviated title of this volume (Scott 1908):

**The Twa Corbies**

As I was walking all alane,
I heard twa corbies making a mane;
The tane unto the t’other say,
‘Where sall we gang and dine to-day?’

‘In behint yon auld fail dyke,
I wot there lies a new slain knight;
And naebody kens that he lies there,
But his hawk, his hound, and lady fair.

‘His hound is to the hunting gane,
His hawk to fetch the wild-fowl hame,
His lady’s ta’en another mate,
So we may mak our dinner sweet.

‘Ye’ll sit on his white hause-bane,
And I’ll pike out his bonny blue een;
Wi ae lock o his gowden hair
We’ll theek our nest when it grows bare.

‘Mony a one for him makes mane,
But none sall ken where he is gane;
Oer his white banes, when they are bare,
The wind sall blaw for evermair.
This is what the fans want from their murder ballads: a tale of disloyalty, treachery, and adultery, which straddles both the human and pastoral realms. Its drama hinges around forensic questions of who knows what. The crows clearly know the knight’s body lies there; his hawks and hounds have left it there; his murderer dumped it there; ‘his lady’s ta’en another mate,’ safe in the knowledge she is free of him there — and yet the crows also claim that nobody knows his fate: ‘nane sall ken where he is gane.’ They are merely the last in an ensemble of parties who have reason to be glad of his death, and hypocritically to bleat about the sorrow of it: ‘Mony a one for him makes mane.’ Spanning time and genre, one might infer these crows point to a distinctly *noir* paradigm.

Like the present work, *Twa* offers particular working accounts of testimony, witness, and authority. Those accounts are notably more materialist and correspondingly less religious than those of an English ballad often held out as its partner piece, *The Three Ravens* (Child 1965). There the narrative stresses loyalty through all the despair, especially loyalty in love:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{She lift up his blody head,} \\
\text{And kist his wounds that were so red.}
\end{align*}
\]

*Three’s* final stanzas suggest that the desolate procession of mortals is in God’s plan:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{She buried him upon the prime,} \\
\text{was dead herself ere evensong time.} \\
\text{God send every gentleman,} \\
\text{such haukes, such hounds, and such a Leman.}
\end{align*}
\]

By contrast, *Twa* posits a truth greater than love, greater than any posthumous consolations of theology. Such divinity as we may infer is radically unsympathetic to mortal purposes. In this north-of-the-border imaginary, seekers for an abiding truth find the wind. In new words:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{While it binds within its ropes} \\
\text{weakwilled knowledge, forlorn hopes,} \\
\text{it is stronger than both.}
\end{align*}
\]

So what does one learn from this contrast? What experience does it do us? In a sense, that is a matter for each reader or listener, idiosyncratically. The imaginaries these ballads construct and their intersections with cosmogeny are of course open to all the idiosyncrasy of personal interpretation. In another sense, though, it is so clearly a collective matter
for everyone who cares to attend: both sets of testimonies, both sets of witnesses, and the authorities we ascribe to both constitute an infinitely complex knowledge. An essential point of TWA, if we may be so bold, is that the problem in view is affectively contingent. To reconcile divergent accounts of experience is inherently and necessarily a poetic project – because versions of experience present as affective systems, because we apprehend frames of experience (after Goffman 1974) aesthetically, both our own and others.’

Walter Ong’s most far-reaching manoeuvre was to achieve a synthesis of the Parry and Toronto school traditions of research, by positing the ‘psychodynamics’ of the form and medium of any given expressive communication (Ong 1982). In short, the way we communicate governs the way we understand those communications, both as producers and as receivers of them. Ong’s essay style is gentler and more self-effacing than many, his indulgence in paronomasia more reserved than some, but the consequences for rationality are still profoundly unsettling. To put his work in our terms, Ong answers analytic epistemology (‘the word on knowledge’) with an empirically tenacious logoepistemy (‘knowledge through the word’).

As with both his source-traditions, Ong’s focus was more heavily on the production of discourse than its reception. Arguably that misses the most far-reaching theoretical turn across the social sciences, humanities, and creative arts of the last half-century: a neoliberal priority for demand-side economics over supply-side has marched in lockstep with a postmodern priority for cultural consumption over cultural production; and popularity has displaced critical recommendation across the creative arts as the most authoritative proxy for ‘impact.’ Nevertheless, the logoepistemic turn allows us to reconstitute this present collection’s pillars of experience in valuable ways:

1. **Testimony**, in the rationalist tradition, is a constant myth of disinterest, the discourse of the testis (third party). In the logoepistemic paradigm, however, its most remarkable function is as the expressive response to experience, a response that prompts listeners’ or readers’ comprehensions of that experience as poetically as it has allowed the experience to prompt it.

2. **Witness** is the one Anglo-Saxon word in this triad. It references the function of witan: the wise ones, the people who know. In evidentiary discourse, we find witness tends to be a question either of personal learning-knowledge (e.g. ‘expert witness’) or of proximity-knowledge (e.g. ‘eyewitness’). The logoepistemic view does not interrupt that paradigm so much as deepen it, rendering it
more inclusive. It enriches learning-knowledge to include ‘textural’ versions of expertise alongside the ‘referential’ (c.f. Voloshinov 1929). It enriches proximity-knowledge by incorporating emotional experiences of situation alongside a five-senses-only apprehension of it.

3. Authority is of course cognate with authors, authorship, and authorising. It is a draconic force – the ‘I see, I occupy, and I own’ of experience – hence every hero-scholar’s need to defeat it. Its rhetorical power is great, perhaps inherently overweening, in any view, but rationalist tradition wilfully obscures its axiomatic quality by a deference to corroborating evidence. Logoeplistema recognises authority as a manifestation of affectively plausible claims within a given discourse, and acknowledges its disproportionate influence by focusing squarely on it as an object of study.

Alongside these three pillars of experience, we are struck by a fourth concept that emerges from the contributions to TWA, a term derived from psychotherapeutic discourse that would diagnose both the paralysis-by-analysis of the ballads’ chatterbox carrion birds and the human fascination with the tabloid tales they tell. Epistemophilia is a term that literally means ‘love of knowledge,’ but which Freud extended into psychopathology, indexing an overweening ‘drive to knowledge.’ If knowledge is power, then this must constitute one of Freud’s most Nietzschean turns, for it neatly translates Nietzsche’s ‘will to power’ into terms commensurate with the production, transmission, and reception of knowledge (Assoun 2000, p. 105).

Epistemophilia, like the story of Mary Magdalene, presents as a question of proportionality; it only becomes apparent when we perceive too much love or too much knowledge. It can take the form of an autistic drive towards epistemic prolixity, a compendious accumulation of (factoid) knowledge and fastidious hoarding of it. That is the typical focus of clinical approaches. By contrast, the contributions to TWA have focused on the more socially embedded problem of transgressive knowledge: knowing awful or socially volatile truths; the great sense of jeopardy under which people guard and nurture traumatic or highly revealing knowledges. These works negotiate a constant compulsion to find out what we should not know, to know in ways that we should not (another Bible story here). Arendt argued that truth is necessarily beyond the pale when it cuts across politically convenient myths (Arendt 1993 [1954]), but Paola Bilbrough takes a close-up camera to this axiom, showing we can actually observe how people make that banishment work:
In the final version of *No One Eats Alone*, Bronica’s story hinges on a metaphor she uses for the flawed nature of the settlement experience; she describes Australia as being a bowl of food the Sudanese have approached and tried to eat from, only to discover that the bowl has a hole and the food is flowing out. The loss of her daughter is left ambiguous, allowing the viewer to believe that Bronica is speaking of a very young child. This is a deliberate ‘fiction,’ yet it is true to Bronica’s feelings of loss and separation.

In part, we fasten onto this word, epistemophilia, because it captures so much in people’s expressions of and from their experiences. An equally important reason is the way it captures a more specific ‘all of us,’ namely the writers and readers of this collection. It is no coincidence the focus on transgressive knowledge marks a constant point of reference for research and scholarship about people, whether in the Humanities or elsewhere: transgressive forms of knowledge and ways of knowing speak to the scholarly epistemophilia that is fascinated with knowing ‘too much’ about people, and often equally fascinated with the fascination itself.

Again, it is the logoepistemic turn that brings us to this point. These essays offer knowledge-through-discourse about knowledge-through-discourse. That is, in each case, their subjects have stories to tell. Many of these stories, and other stories like them, are documented in cultural texts both historically and contemporarily – the syntax and prosody which construct the narratives, the intonations and performance of political speeches, the talking heads conjuring memory in documentaries, the student re-enactments of historical events in Indigenous schools, the motivational rhetoric of sporting coaches and fans, the oral storytelling in Hellenic Greek composition, and the traditional narratives which morph over time as they are passed down through generations. The presentations and receptions of all these types of expression, their implications for the experiences which catalyse those presentations, and the way their intrinsic interconnectedness characterises our very humanity are effects of these stories which fascinate us. Thus Susan Gingell, for example, reflects on a distinctive logoepistemy that postcolonial readers and audiences must always negotiate:

Whereas *testimonio* is typically produced by collaboration between an oral testifier and a literate recorder, Indigenous testimonial poetry does not require such mediation of an ‘iterate[‘s]’ testimony. Instead, Indigenous testimonial poems often acknowledge another kind of mediation as the language and voices of ancestors are said to be speaking through the poets.
These are concerns Gingell has brought from Literary Studies into questions of transdisciplinary, multimodal communication over a long while (e.g. Gingell & Roy 2012), including her leadership of the inaugural OWOVM conference at Saskatoon in 2008. The number and diversity of colleagues responding to similar themes bears witness to the value of questions she has pointed to and developed.

If knowledge is so inherently volatile, and communication so vulnerable, and the internal process of interpreting experience so dependent on the internal processes of our neighbours – where does that leave us? The culmination of the essays here is a multidisciplinary discussion of the complex correlations between ‘knowing,’ the communication of what is ‘known’ both objectively and imaginarily, and the verbal or near-verbal mediums which transmit knowledge. The chapters include (but are not limited to) examinations of the impacts of oral, written, and other verbal media on knowledges which share symbiotic relationships with memory, empiricism, cultural reproduction, identity and self consciousness.

*TWA* is divided into four sections. Part One, on the politics and poetics of ‘Footy’ (Australian football), commences the discussion with a cultural phenomenon that is peculiar to Australia, yet profoundly similar to putatively distinctive sports in other countries. In its generic distinctiveness, footy has always stood as a powerful object for cultural analysis among Australian scholars. Margaret Trail’s essay, ‘New Ways to “Play On!” – Radical Empiricist Philosophy for Football’ tests radical empiricist philosophy on the discourse of play in football in a step towards understanding the significance of the sport to individuals and communities. Then, Rosemary Clerehan and Robert Pascoe continue along a football discourse trajectory to analyse a famous rallying speech given by an Australian Football League coach to his team before the 1975 Grand Final using systemic functional linguistics and appraisal theory in their essay, ‘His Master’s Voice: John Kennedy Sr. and the Making of a Unified Tribe at Hawthorn.’

Part Two, entitled ‘Exegesis,’ is dedicated to practitioner based research into the relationships between artists, their work, the mediums they use, and their subjects. Tamara Saulwick examines the implications of pre-recorded media on live oral postdramatic and documentary theatre performance in ‘Pin Drop: A Live Work for Solo Performer and 11 Voices.’ In ‘A House with a Boat on its Roof: The Shadowy Flux of Alterity,’ Julia Prendergast grapples with discontinuous, (or, split) narratives using Freudian dream analysis and Derrida’s alterity approach to narrative in relation to her own ‘fractured’ novel manuscript. Paola
Bilbrough interrogates in the collaborative approach to documentary filmmaking and its ethical implications in ‘Takers, Framers: Acknowledging the Relationship between Documentary Artist and Participant.’ Then Karen Berger’s “To Soothe the Pillow of a Dying Race” – The Force of a Phrase in Producing Theatre’ offers an account of how responses to powerful language can drive the theatre making process. In doing so, Berger’s contribution strongly anticipates those themes of texture and reference, affect and effect, which dominate the analytical approaches that the essays in Part Four take to questions of Indigenous testimony, witness, and authority — and of non-Indigenous responses to the presence of those questions.

The essays in Part Three, ‘Storytelling and Testimony,’ interrogate the qualities and limits of personal, familial, social, traditional and religious narratives. In ‘Click Here for My Family Stories: What Happens When Auto/Biographical Narratives Move Online?’ Stefan Schutt discusses the impacts of sociable media as a platform for shared personal stories and storytelling. Margaret Lee takes us back to the origins of oral storytelling as she critically analyses literary compositions in Hellenic Greek for their sound structures in ‘Melody in Manuscript: The Birth Narrative in the Gospel of Matthew.’ Then we travel to Portugal in ‘From Male to Female and Back: Personified Death in Portuguese Traditional and Contemporary Storytelling,’ in which Luís Correia Carmelo traces the historically confused gender personifications of death in Portuguese narrative and linguistics. Finally, Adam Brown and Deb Waterhouse-Watson provide insights into transformative experiences of guilt as it manifests in marginalized individuals who escape classification as ‘perpetrator,’ ‘bystander’ or ‘victim’ in Nazi Germany in their essay ‘Holocaust Testimony and the Question of “Guilt”: The Case of Traudl Junge.’

In Part Four, ‘Aboriginality and Non-Aboriginal Responses,’ we conclude our interrogation of testimony and authority and the ways in which they frame personal and public discourse around Aboriginality. Kathryn Gilbey and Rob McCormack discuss their experiences of a unit of study dedicated to workshopping performance re-enactments of Indigenous histories at Batchelor Institute in ‘Telling Histories: Performing History, Becoming History.’ Tom Clark’s ‘Sorryness as Public Poetics: Rhetorical Figuration and Poetic Formulas in the Australian and Canadian 2008 Parliamentary Apology Debates’ is a critical poetic and political analysis of the parliamentary speeches given in apology for the nationally mandated forcible removals of Aboriginal children from their families in Australia and Canada, respectively, during the twentieth and late nineteenth centuries. Emma Dortins uncovers a complex private and
public friendship between two of Australia’s great poets and their cumulative expressions of experiences of violence and culpability, Aboriginality and the desire for reconciliation in ‘Apology and Absolution – the Poetic and Public Dialogue of Judith Wright and Kath Walker.’ We conclude with Susan Gingell’s contribution, “‘A Voice Much Older Than Mine”: Orality and Genre in Indigenous Testimonial Poetry,’ in which the poetic testimonies of experiences of sexism and racism are analysed for the value of their stylistic orality and accessibility.

These four parts represent a holistic synthesis of some of the foundations of culture: families and friendships, play, traditions, the arts, narrative, history, Indigeneity, and government. We look to these foundational experiences for insights into knowledge and communications of knowledge, and what emerges is a scholarly discourse of humanity, of life, of living. Out of respect for their substantial commonalities of interest, as well as for reader convenience, this volume includes a single combined bibliography of works cited in the contributions.
PART I

FOOTY
Preamble

This article is concerned with scholarly discourses of play, and how football, a particular form of play that is very important to people and communities, is largely disserved by the texts that attend it; texts that take it upon themselves to describe and provide the scaffolding for public discussions of its value.

Football is play. Despite its thoroughgoing institutionalisation as a professional sport, and the great seriousness with which it is pursued, it nevertheless conforms to Brian Sutton-Smith’s definition of play as ‘a virtual simulation’ pervading life, characterised by: ‘quirky shifts and latent potentials,’ ‘redundancy,’ ‘proliferation of form,’ and ‘flexibility’ (Sutton-Smith 1997, pp. 231; 222–224). From this perspective it presents problems for scholarship. Writing and thinking about play is notoriously difficult. McKenzie Wark calls on Mihai Spariosou’s assertion: ‘Play is ultimately ‘unthinkable’ … the Other of Western Metaphysics [it] cannot be approached with critical or analytical tools’ (Spariosou in Wark 2007, p. 225).

The consequence of this difficulty is that football is poorly articulated in scholarly and public discourses, and in moments when it requires detailed consideration – to be interrogated, defended, transformed – we lack concepts and language to adequately represent it, to thoughtfully transform it.

Fortunately however, there are counter-traditions within Western Metaphysics that have made it their task to approach the ‘unthinkable;’ to bring to articulation those phenomena which traditional styles of understanding have failed. For instance radical empiricist philosophy, which is concerned with the articulation of movement and the condition of
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relation, or confoundedness, as opposed traditions of analysis that consider the separation of phenomena into parts as the proper basis for understanding (see Massumi 2002, pp. 162–176, for an excellent discussion of this). These concerns particularly commend radical empiricism as a framework that might further our understanding of play. Its aim to articulate conditions of movement (shifting, proliferating, flexibility, to recall Sutton-Smith’s definitions above), suggest its potential to aid in articulation of play’s slinky and elusive properties. My interest in this article will be to test this potential, and experiment with the application of radical empiricist philosophy to a description of football’s play. Although this testing should only be considered a beginning step, it is hoped that further elaboration of football in these terms might develop our capacity to write and speak of it in ways that will illuminate it, its significance in cultural life and the depth of our attachment to it.

1. Football: A Singular (Playful) Event Form

Football is a popular pastime of grand proportions. In its various codes it is played all over the world by very large numbers of people. Yet it has been observed that football is poorly served by knowledge systems that attempt to describe it. It is consistently drawn into service of theories as an illustration, rather than being investigated as a singular event-form with unique characteristics and affects itself.

In a recent article in the Journal of the Philosophy of Sport Daniel Campos has called for a more detailed reading of football’s singularities, pitched against the more commonplace discussion that ‘purports to capture the truth of the real game … but tends to be an external view … applied to football while looking down on or disregarding its particularities’ (Wisnik in Campos 2010, p. 70). Campos argues that football lacks descriptions of itself that shed light on the experiences of play: not its narrative or dramatic structure, not its role in culture, but how it feels, and how its feeling-conditions are produced.

In my opinion, our collective non-understanding of football from this perspective is a mystifying and terrible omission from scholarly discourse. After all, we do not seek to understand art only as a symptom of other currents in culture (an expressive technique for community, a way of developing gender identity etc.), we seek to understand it as a powerful experiential engagement between people and materials that has value in itself; effects and affects of its own. We ask: What does art do to people? How does it do this? How does it feel to be engaged in or by art?
I am drawn to ask these same questions of football, and believe that exploring it in this style has the potential to contribute much to our understanding of what it is. My best suggestion for approaching it thus is to adopt techniques from radical empiricist philosophy: that style of philosophy fundamentally concerned with articulating ‘the felt reality of relation’ (Massumi 2002, p. 16), rather than conducting analyses that separate qualities or characteristics from one another in order to understand them—an external view. Radical empiricism’s emphasis on feeling and relation commends it as a means to develop descriptions of football that articulate these qualities in it as well. Accordingly this essay will draw particular concepts from radical empiricism and begin the work of applying them to a discussion of football. In particular it will make use of recent writing by Brian Massumi in his book *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*.

A note before we proceed: I acknowledge the discussion that follows draws its examples exclusively from Australian football, and bases its arguments on specific qualities of this game. Nevertheless it styles itself a potential contributor to the international discussion mentioned above (which has been up till now focussed on soccer). I contend that all the world’s football codes share similar tendencies with respect to the experiences of play they produce, and on this basis insist Australian football can contribute to this broader discussion. However, future elaborations of this argument should take care not to conflate all of the football codes either, because they do possess distinct characteristics, that greatly inflect the experiences of play available in them. The task of articulating these distinctions, indeed delimiting what football actually is, in light of the existence of its many codes, must be put aside on this occasion for a future time, but noted as an important task nevertheless.

### 2. Sensing the Emergent Event

Radical empiricism understands existence to be a streaming of emergent events. Events are relations: the coming into being—the becoming—of experiences. They emerge from the world of things and relations all around, arising from these, pulling and pulled into a new relation that separates them somewhat from this general world of things. They become *novel*, a singular set of relations, and eventually, once the infolding and unfolding of novelty that they become is done, terminated in the act that it turns out to have been, this set of relations will be recognised as having been some-thing (Massumi 2011, pp. 1–4).
In existence understood thus, sensing does not belong to the subject, but is distributed in relations between the things of the event; streaming together through one another and through it, thereby comprising it, carrying it and being carried into future elaborations of it. Sensing draws human and non-human forms into perceiving relation together. ‘The subject’ is implicated in the event, and therefore in all sorts of things (seemingly) other than itself. ‘There is no subject separate from the event’ (Massumi 2011, p. 8). ‘I’ may feel things, but—at least in an exciting event—these feelings don’t last very long, they change; and this is a clue to how they are collective. Events gather me in their unfolding, defamiliarising me in new feeling-relations that are being produced across them. Massumi says, in events ‘we’ are always: ‘taking in nonhuman occasions of experience … inheriting their activity … a society of occasions of experience contributing to a continuing growth pattern it pleases us to call our human self’ (Massumi 2011, p. 26).

This allows us to conceive of perception as belonging less to the subject in (or of) the event, and more to the event itself and therefore to human and non-human participants alike. Perception Massumi says (following William James) is taking account: ‘Taking account means an event inflecting the arc of its becoming as a function of its feeling the influence of other events …’ (Massumi 2011, p. 26). This means that in events, perception happens via shifts in gravity, applications of force, between human and non-human participants, as much as in the sensory apparatus of the human body.

Australian football is a sport in which this existential experience, the streaming of emergent events, is investigated and elaborated in the form of a game. Of course all games are characterised by such investigation in that all are acts with outcomes that are impossible to pre-determine, and the sport of games, from jumping jacks to the NBA finals, is to force a victory—an event-outcome or event-closure, that is in one’s favour—from a field of un-closed potentials and contesting forces. However, Australian football brings an extremely wide range of variables into play, an extremely varied field of participation, and in so doing seems to produce a particularly compelling experience of the emergent event.

Consider for instance how Australian football fields 18 players per side (compared with 11 per side in Soccer and American football) and has no offside rule (which means that all players may move anywhere on ground at any time, rather than being held apart by this rule). Furthermore, the dimensions of the playing field vary from ground to ground, and the trajectory of the elliptical ball is notoriously difficult to control. Thus, the game’s necessary elements – bodies, ground, ball – are all marked by a
tendency to variability and to the production of many possibilities. From this perspective, we might say that the skill required by players of Australian football is less execution of almost-impossible-to-control, singular acts of precision (which might be said of tennis, shooting, or taekwondo), than the execution of precise flexibility within a storm of force that unleash un-control on players through generating manyness: crowdedness and mutability of form.

This tendency of its elements towards variability and manyness establishes the condition for Australian football to build its play out of the streaming of emergent events, for it is from their being/becoming that it draws its relation between a general field of many things, incompletely perceived, and the emergence of singular decisive actions that are named and known. Think of the moment before the ball is bounced in the centre square, at which time we perceive a wide field of many players in some vague relation to the event we know will be forthcoming (the passage of play inaugurated by the bounce): a general field of manyness, too big and too varied for anyone to comprehend in totality. This field is then activated by the bounce of the ball, which galvanises its many elements into an emergent event, the shape and outcome of which is unknown until it is completed. Out of the numerous leads, feints, jostling match-ups and tackles, the ball eventually emerges and is directed in what will (afterwards) be described as a centre clearance attributed to one team, and to the skilful actions of particular players. Following its clearance, the ball may fly down the flank, to be drawn once more into an indeterminate field of manyness, lost in a contested mark, or a spill: something messy, something impossible-to-comprehend, but which will nevertheless resolve through the emergence of a new, singular action that we can recognise, and name. This surging between incomprehensible manyness and definite singularity will keep happening, one way or another, for the whole of the game.

Thus, football can be described as happening according to a choreography of emergent creation, allowing and producing a set of repeating but unpredictable movements between states of general activity and singular, novel emergence. In this of course, to some extent, it reflects how things go for the whole of existence, and from this perspective it is interesting to wonder about why people are so deeply attached to it. If its choreography is in some sense, merely existential it should not be all that interesting surely? It is important, given this pursuit of football in radical empiricist terms, not to go reaching for external notions like the compelling nature of the narrative, in considering this question, but to remain within the particularities of the event. The next part of the
discussion will consider the idea of aesthetics or semblance in football’s play, and will speculate about how its style of engagement with emergent creation is so compelling.

3. Semblance: The Aesthetics of Emergent Creation

Massumi’s discussion of the aesthetics of emergent creation assists. He explains that emergent creation has an aesthetic dimension, even at the existential level. This aesthetic dimension for Massumi, consists in the composition of semblance, and semblance is ‘the effective reality of what doesn’t appear’ (Massumi 2011, pp. 24–25). Events, in the way they have been described above (acts that move between a general field of manyness to singular, resolved actions), are fat with potential; they are a travelling between fatness of potential to singular resolved actuals. This sense of fat potential, and the way it is perceived, is the semblance that attends them.

Consider by way of example, the dying moments of the 2005 Australian Football League (AFL) Grand Final (between the Sydney Swans and West Coast Eagles) when a startling passage of play occurred. The Swans were 3 points ahead with seconds remaining to play. Thus any scoring shot made by the Eagles could reverse the fortunes of the game—a terribly dangerous situation for the Swans, and critically important for the Eagles. Sure enough an attack was made, the ball kicked long towards the Eagle’s goal, and seven men – from both sides – hurled themselves into a contested mark to try and secure it. The moment of the mark was extraordinary. When seven men fly for the ball it is not possible to work out what is going on. It is impossible to see the ball or all the men, impossible to ‘read,’ to know. Such a mark is a fine example of that movement between general field of manyness and singular resolved action that characterises emergent creation, but more importantly, it is a moment fat with potential/s which are present but not appearing, which is to say, semblant.

This mark – which the Swans defender ‘Leaping’ Leo Barry completed in dramatic, emphatic style – has become famous, iconic; photographs of it have become famous; the television commentary that attended it has become famous (see Niall 2006, pp. 1–4). I contend it stands as an icon for qualities of play that most compel our participation. The excitement that it produces is generated both by its critical place in the drama of the game, and by how it opens the experience of all players to the onrushing of event-potential in a way which is irresistible, and this is its semblant or aesthetic dimension. The latter, I believe, is the dimension of football’s
play it is necessary to articulate and to claim if we wish to understand its
hold on people, and particular significance to culture.

Massumi discusses ways that games and art use this sense of
semblance or aesthetics in different ways (Massumi 2011, pp. 46–47).
Games de-emphasise semblance in favour of ‘the function of the
instrument’ and its aims, whereas art tends more to semblance and the
sense it brings of being: ‘new or different or intensely feeling or vitally
voluminous or vitally freeing’ (Massumi 2011, p. 47). The task for this
discussion becomes the articulation of semblance in that choreography of
emergent creation we see in football. What is it doing there? How does it
work?

There is no doubt that in football the aesthetic dimension of play is
subordinate to the goal of establishing a victor in the game. Action is
prescribed by rules and determined by logic (and indeed training), that
reduces bodies to instruments-for-winning. Nevertheless, certain effects
and affects of play do exceed these interests. For instance, football’s play
might be said to have exceeded the domain of its rules when spectators
invaded the football ground on the occasion when Hawthorn forward
Lance Franklin kicked his 100th goal in the 2008 AFL season. In line with
a long standing tradition (that the AFL has tried to stamp out in its
professional matches) thousands of members of the crowd surged over the
boundary line at Etihad Stadium in Melbourne, in order to celebrate
Franklin’s milestone. They did this despite being threatened with fines and
evictions, and in so doing they completely stopped play (Edmund 2012).
This type of action is against both the rules, and the avowed singular
interest of all parties in winning—since it breaks the flow of play and
disadvantages the leading side. It indicates how a feeling-and-acting
condition is nevertheless at work in football that exceeds this interest.
With respect to semblance or aesthetics, the effect of such an event (both
that of the 100th goal and subsequent ground invasion) seems to be that,
for players (and we consider spectators of football to be players, in fact the
word ‘spectators’ to be misleading in its suggestion that all are not in
play), it opens the game, its stitched up codification, and control by
weighty institutional forces, to another set of forces: challenging, free,
surprising. ‘And people power has spoken,’ cried the television
commentator, ‘out they come by their thousands.’ Such an event produces
a thrill, a welling-up of joyful feeling, that is a response to the effects of
this semblant, or aesthetic dimension at work.

To return to the previous example of Barry’s contested mark that
closed the 2005 Grand Final, there can be no doubt that the excitement it
produced was connected with its role in the drama of the game, as a key
event in the determination of a victory, but it has become iconic not only for this reason. It has become so because it also represents this other compelling, aesthetic force in football: the way that play, moving through a series of events that travel from an experience of general manyness, to the production of a singular knowable event, draws all players through a zone of indistinction in which things are impossible to grasp, but which is attended by perception of a semblance of multiple potentials, one of which is about to emerge in actuality. This experience is what is compelling, beyond the drama of the game. This is Massumi’s semblance. The aesthetic dimension of football’s play: the thrill, the new, the can’t-look-away, voluminous vitality of its surging events, and it is this dimension and its effects which need more detailed articulation if we are to understand football as we wish to.

4. Becoming-Many, Becoming-Indistinct, Becoming-Singular: Experiencing Football’s Semblance

The work of this detailed articulation in Australian football, and in other codes beloved to communities worldwide, is a task for the future, not far off I hope. For now, however, the discussion can be brought to a close with some thoughts about how it may work, in preparation for its future elaboration.

Considered from the perspective of radical empiricism, it seems that the compelling quality of football’s play is not just the excitement of event resolution, a sort of narrative pleasure (although there is that as well), but a particular, vividly experienced, defamiliarisation or reorganisation of ‘ourselves’ in course of the unfolding of the event. This is not spectating or speculation, it is participation. If we are in play, then the experience we have of the event’s emerging involves us in becoming-many, becoming-indistinct, becoming-potential, becoming-forming, becoming-event-resolution. This makes us other-than-singular, other-than-the-subject. Only at the very end of this chain of unfolding stages do we separate from the emergence of the event and find ourselves back in our seat, singular, and full of opinion about what has come to pass. For some (exhilarating) time we were not able to speak, we were other-wise.

Recall at the outset of the discussion Massumi’s contention that ‘there is no subject separate from the event’ (Massumi 2011, p. 8), and how perception of the event can be said to be collective, distributed between all of its participants, human and non-human alike. Recall also the notion that Australian football in particular brings a set of necessary elements with tendency towards variability and manyness into play. Drawing upon both
of these circumstances (distributed perception, variable elements), it would seem that football takes the eruption of the event, its power to disturb the familiar feelings of being-subject, and power to engage perception across a multitude of forces, objects and entities, and nurtures an aesthetic dimension within its game structure that exploits such defamiliarisation as excitement: opening onto new, expanded worlds of powers, potentials and collectivity.

This excited sensing, in and of the event, is the semblant or aesthetic dimension of football’s play at work, and it is as powerful a force as any narrative drama, expression of local antagonisms, or other frame we might drop over the game to explain its value. It happens at no remove from the unfolding of play whatsoever, but accompanies it: ‘a thoroughgoing actualism’ (Massumi 2011, p. 16). It therefore deeply effects and affects the experience of players. It thrills, it vivifies, it makes us feel free, and this above all accounts for the hold football has on people’s lives, and hints at its significance to culture.

This article is a beginning. It tests the value of radical empiricism for developing concepts that can be used to articulate the experience of playing football. Until an understanding of the experience of playing football comes to be included in public discussions of its value—to people, to culture—then we are really talking around the topic and not of it. Talking around any topic is tedious but talking around football, instead of becoming part of it, contributing to it, and allowing it to surprise, challenge and make free, is really the most awful weight we could place on it, and on play, and on thought. Let us not. Let us keep talking of it.
CHAPTER TWO

HIS MASTER’S VOICE:
JOHN KENNEDY SR. AND THE MAKING
OF A UNIFIED TRIBE AT HAWTHORN

ROSEMARY CLEREHAN AND ROBERT PASCOE

The Coach’s Speech, During and After the Match

We can identify a significant genre of speechifying, that of the Australian football coach who is charged with the responsibility of putting into words the vital communication of addressing his players during the course of a match, and then providing an account of the match once it is over. Australian Rules is the nation’s indigenous form of football, and its most popular sport (Pascoe 1995).

Elsewhere we have argued (Pascoe 2010) that the performance of the Australian footballer in the theatre of a sports stadium amounts to a kind of specialised language, ‘the trope of the torp.’ Here we take that idea further, into the arena of football coaching, to interrogate the performance of one of the men who coach senior footballers. A coach (invariably a former player of the code) is responsible for articulating the day’s play – to set the goals and strategies the team will adopt (finessed in the pre-match address in the changing room), to comment on progress quarter by quarter (three speeches), and to offer a post-match summary (first to the players, and then to the waiting media).

Discussions of Australian football have moved on from the simpler proposition that a traditional form of the code has in recent years undergone a shift because it has been overwhelmed by commercial pressures (predicted in Sanderson & Turner 1981, pp. 236-242). Instead the notion of clubs as ‘imagined communities’ (to use Benedict Anderson’s telling phrase) has become more acceptable (Anderson, in East 2012, p. 9). Rather than undergoing thorough commercialisation, the code is in a dynamic state of being, ‘re-imagined,’ and still holds an appeal for the so-called ‘tribals,’ those fans whose devotion to one club at the
expense of all others gives the game a major part of its energy and cultural interest.

In the 2012 season, with his club’s game tally standing at 0-3, the Melbourne Football Club coach Mark Neeld urged the club’s supporters not to lose faith in the playing group (Smith 2012). Thus we can conceive of a modern club’s discourse community as a square involving the coach, the players, the club, and its supporter base (sponsors, fans). In the 1970s, however, Hawthorn lacked a strong supporter base, and arguably the famous speech of John Kennedy Sr imagined a community binding him as coach and his players, to the exclusion of the fans.

By the 1980s Hawthorn FC had become the dominant club within the competition. Yet its supporter base was still markedly low. This seemed an unusual contradiction: everyday common sense has it that a club going through a golden period attracts a strong following.

Much of what takes place within a sporting club is closed off from public view. Listening to the recording of Kennedy’s 1975 Grand Final Day speeches, it is very apparent we are present as eavesdroppers. How can we use discourse theories to understand what is going on within a club? What does the coach reveal about the value-system of the club culture, according to his version of it, in the manner of his speaking?

The ‘Don’t Think, Do!’ Speech

The so-called ‘Don’t Think, Do!’ speech during the 1975 Grand Final by Hawthorn Football Club coach John Kennedy is one of the best remembered speeches in the history of Australian Rules football. (The exact words were, ‘Don’t think, act!). The text we use was actually not one speech, but two speeches, one at half time and the other after the match. A favourite team-mate (captain, Peter Crimmins) was dying of cancer. The team was only 20 points down at half time. The key phrase of the speech even appears, 35 seasons later, on a banner waved by supporters of the club who might not even have been alive in 1975 (Fig 1).

The speech is referenced everywhere: celebrity Sam Newman dresses up in Kennedy’s famous coat (de Krester & Timms 2011); journalist Rohan Connolly plucks a phrase from the speech in a 2012 article (Connolly 2002). The speech features in an advertising campaign for the Holden Colorado (‘Don’t Hope, Don’t Think, Do!’) in 2012. It is replayed as part of the soundtrack for the TV program on the 1975 Gran Final (Dickson 2012). In the discourse of Australian football, the Kennedy speech lives on.
In Kennedy’s second year as coach, 1961, Hawthorn had finally won its first flag, breaking the drought it had endured since joining the Victorian Football League in 1925. In all, Kennedy served as the club’s coach from 1960 to 1963, and again from 1967 to 1976. Hawthorn’s second and subsequent flags came in 1971, 1976 and 1978. By the 1980s Hawthorn had established itself as a powerhouse club, equal to Geelong in the 1880s, Collingwood in the 1920s, or Melbourne in the 1950s (Gordon & Gordon 2009).

We have a transcript of an audio recording of the 1975 Grand Final Day speeches [recorded off-air from ABC radio, see below) and offer the following theoretical perspectives to inform our analysis. (There is also a longer transcript in Winkler 2011, pp. 26-29, taken from Warhaft 2004, pp. 467-70. Curiously, there is no reference to the speech in the latest account of the match, Bowen 2012.)

**Theoretical Perspectives**

In thinking about Kennedy’s speechmaking style, for insights we turned first to the sociologist, Erving Goffman. A coach’s speech, to use his term, is a ‘binding talk’ (Goffman 1981, p. 140), designed to connect the players
together in a common ritualised purpose. There is a clear framework of participation – both the speaker and his audience have expectations of the behaviour of each other. The coach has the floor: the players cannot simply move off as they please. The footing (p. 173), or alignment of speaker versus hearers, can be seen to vary in the three speeches, as the coach manages the production of his utterance according to his purposes at each of the three points in the game, framing and re-framing the events which have just passed or are to come. In Goffman’s terms (as he speaks of ‘The Lecture’), the Kennedy speech is ‘fresh talk’ (p. 171), apparently unscripted, but given ‘hypersmooth’ delivery with very few hesitations or re-starts. Kennedy references himself in the speech, presenting this ‘textual self’ to the players who are his audience. Members of this target audience – and others – find themselves embedded in the speeches as the afternoon progresses.

We also considered the history of rhetoric as understood by the Ancients (Glover 2011). This classical view of rhetoric was ‘speaker-centred’ and the rhetorical principles were intended for those who delivered the speeches; the voices of those who listened were not considered (Condit and Bates 2009). In Aristotle’s three-fold classification of rhetoric, the Kennedy speech is classic ‘epideixis.’ Unlike the ‘political’ or the ‘judicial,’ the ‘epideictic’ style (sometimes called ‘ceremonial’) deals with praise-and-blame issues of the kind usually deployed during major rites of passage. In modern footballing terms, the rite of passage is to glory as a premiership player or relegation to historical insignificance as a member of the vanquished side. The virtues of justice, courage and nobility could be manifested or, on the contrary, shame and dishonour.

A winning speech, according to Cicero, at least the greatest orator of his day (Glover 2011, p. 25) requires three elements in particular: instructing the listeners, gaining their sympathy, and vigorously moving their emotions (p. 129). In the first excerpt, for example, ‘Play virile strong football,’ we can observe some of the classic strategies of rhetorical persuasion in play: strong directives, use of paradox, appeals to authority, appeals to history, and an appeal to pride.

**Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Appraisal Theory**

A more modern set of insights into this kind of speechmaking derives from the work of M. A. K. Halliday (1994), Martin and White (2005), Martin and Rose (2007) and Hood (2010). Halliday’s systemic functional grammar initially affords us a language with which to speak in detail about