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## Three Ways of Watching a Sports Video

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## Three Ways of Watching a Sports Video

### Abstract

It does not typically seem to be worthwhile re-watching a sport match, for example in a video recording, once the result is known. Sports matches are like detective stories. Once one knows 'whodunit' there seems little point in revisiting the tale. By drawing on an argument from musicologist Edward T. Cone, this paper argues that certain sports matches may be revisited with profit. The initial experience of a game may be of a series of events that are often ambiguous or confusing as to their meaning or purpose. The full appreciation of a sport match requires, not just this initial familiarity with the immediately perceived events of the game, but also an awareness of the tactics being deployed by both sides. An understanding of tactics and strategy is akin to the analysis of a piece of music (or other art work). A further (third) viewing of the game, during which one can appreciate how the tactics inform the events naively experienced in the first viewing, will yield, it will be argued, an aesthetic pleasure. This takes the experience of sport beyond the merely entertaining or exciting. In certain games, the third viewing may also transcend an appreciation of the merely formal qualities of the game, and so offer substantial insights into what it is to be human.

Key words: detective stories; hermeneutic circle; Kantian aesthetics; musicology

## Introduction

Sports matches are ephemeral events. Once played and the result known, our interest typically passes on to the next match. As such, the sports match resembles the detective story. Once the reader knows 'whodunit' (or perhaps how it was done), there seem to be few reasons to revisit it. Here a detective story stands in apparent contrast to any novel that would aspire to the exalted status of art. It may be taken for granted that art works can be profitably revisited. A re-reading of Chad Harbach's *Art of Fielding: A Novel* (2011) will yield an appreciation that is deeper than the initial reading. Returning to recordings of baseball games, of the sort described in the novel, would seemingly offer no such rewards. This parallel might suggest that sport is little more than a relatively superficial entertainment, akin to the detective story, and as such cannot aspire to the cultural depth or importance of the art work.

I intend to explore the possibility that under certain conditions sports matches may be worthy of a second (and third) viewing. To understand these conditions is to understand the sort of cultural event a sports match is, and thus the potential importance of sport within a broader culture. Further, if a game can be the sort of event that can be profitably re-visited, then this will say something about the nature of sport as an event that requires interpretation. The second and third viewings of a game may be worthwhile precisely because they allow for new and richer interpretations.

The paper will proceed by offering a critical rehearsal the arguments of musicologist Edward T. Cone (1989) as to why we might want both to re-read certain detective stories and listen repeatedly to a piece of music. Cone offers an account of why art works are worth revisiting. A modified version of Cone's analysis will then be applied to sport and games in order to untangle the reasons that we might have for watching a game repeatedly. At the core of this argument lies Kant's distinction, in his discussion of the appreciation of beauty, between agreeableness and pleasure. Pleasure is a more profound experience, grounding in the mind as well as the sensual experiences of the body. By drawing on this distinction, I will argue that sport is not simply agreeable or entertaining. To watch a sports match a second time entails that it is a complex event worthy of an appreciation akin to that typically involved in the repeated engagement with art works. Such appreciation will yield pleasure, not mere entertainment. At its most straight-forward, it will be argued that this repeated watching is grounded in an analytic awareness of strategy and tactics. Yet, potentially, revisiting a game takes this appreciation of it beyond the merely awareness of tactical subtleties towards an understanding of sport as an insight into the human condition. If this suggestion is justified, then sports matches may aspire to a cultural significance akin to that enjoyed

by the arts.

Re-reading a detective story.

We read a detective story in order to find out what happens. Once read, it should lose its appeal. As Cone observes, we may reread the tale 'not for story but for style, for portrayal of character, for comment on society' (1989, 77-8). Such motivations may be put to one side for the moment. The crucial point is that, as long as we remember the denouement of a detective story, there seems little point in returning to read it again as a story. Yet Cone observes that he does return, with pleasure, to certain stories, and Conan Doyle's 'The Speckled Band' is a case in point.<sup>i</sup>

The plot of 'The Speckled Band' may be briefly outlined (see Cone 1989 pp 78-9). As narrator, Dr. Watson begins by promising to reveal the the truth about Dr Roylott's death. He tells first of the visit of Roylott's step-daughter, Helen Stoner, to Sherlock Holmes, and of how Stoner recounts her family history. Roylott had lived for sometime in India, gaining a reputation for his cruelty. He married Stoner's widowed mother upon returning to England. The mother died, and her will stipulated that Roylott will enjoy her estate until her two daughters marry, at which point the estate will be split between the daughters. Two years previously, Stoner's sister had died under mysterious circumstances and shortly before her intended marriage. Her dying words mentioned 'a speckled band', seemingly a reference to a band of gypsies travelling in the neighbourhood. Now Helen Stoner is herself engaged to be married and certain recent events have made her fear for her life. Holmes agrees to help her. Shortly after her departure Roylott himself appears on the scene, threatening Holmes. Undeterred, of course, Holmes and Watson travel to Roylott's home. Hiding in Helen Stoner's room, in darkness, Watson sees Holmes attack something, seemingly in order to protect her. Watson hears a cry from Roylott's room, and upon investigation finds him dead, with a 'speckled band' about his head. The speckled band is revealed to be a poisonous Indian snake that Roylott had introduced into Helen Stoner's room (just as he had to her sister's), but when struck by Holmes it had fled and attacked its master.

Cone's claim is that the pleasure that lies in the reading, and indeed re-reading, of this story centres around one's identification with Watson's confusion as to what is really happening, but also in its exploitation of certain conventions of detective story-telling. We readers are deliberately misled by reference to a gypsy band. Similarly, Dr Roylott appears too obvious a villain to be the actually murderer. The true mystery lies in how Roylott carries out the murder (and thus what the speckled band might be) and not in identifying Roylott as the murderer. Doyle has concealed a

'howdunit' (a locked room mystery, in effect) within the appearance of a 'whodunit'.

Cone therefore suggests that there is a profitable second reading of the story to be had as we reconstruct the true order and nature of events that lie behind Watson's narrative. Watson's own account can be analysed, broken down into its component parts and reconstructed in a simple chronology: Roylott murders his elder step-daughter to safe-guard his inheritance, doing so with a poisonous snake, and now threatens to commit the same crime for the same motive against his younger step-daughter. As Cone notes, even this simpler telling of the tale reveals 'a simple and satisfying structure' (1989, 87), and as such has a certain aesthetic appeal.

The third reading of the story, and thus the reason why we might return not once but many times to it, is a more subtle affair. The third reading, Cone proposes, is made in full awareness of the discoveries of both the first and second readings. The naive enjoyment of the first reading is now replaced by 'intelligent and informed appreciation' (Cone 1989, 80). Yet such appreciation presupposes a capacity to pretend to forget the outcome of the story. That is to say, one appreciates Watson's narrative, not by seeing through it to the truth of the events that lie beneath, but rather one engages with its very ambiguity and confusion. Cone gives other examples that throw light upon what he intends. The third reading is the reading that an actor would give performing, or reading out loud, the story. An actor, of course, knows the outcome of any story in which they play a character, but must perform in such a way that this foreknowledge is not revealed to the audience (Cone 1989, 84). So, in one's third reading one acts out the story to oneself, suspending one's knowledge of the outcome of the tale. Given that Cone's fundamental issue is the analysis of music, one of his most profound examples of a third reading comes from Beethoven. An analysis (which is to say, a second reading) of the opening chord of the *Ninth Symphony* will reveal that it functions as the dominant of D minor. Cone's point is that upon the listener's first experience of this chord it does not immediately sound like a dominant. Its initial function within the music is highly ambiguous. The naive listener is initially puzzled by this chord. It only gradually comes to be perceived as a dominant, retrospectively and through a more analytic process of listening. As Cone expresses this: 'it *becomes* the dominant' (1989, 86 [original italics]). The third reader/listener must then not hear this chord as a dominant, precisely because the ambiguity is crucial to what Beethoven is trying to achieve. One must, in effect, hear the chord's becoming, just as, when one re-reads Watson's account of the adventure of the speckled band, one experiences his gradually dawning awareness of what is really happening.

In summary, Cone is arguing that our engagement with a work of art proceeds through three

stages: an initial pure or naive experience of the work; analysis; a final 'intelligent and informed appreciation' (Cone 1989, 80). Cone suggests that these three stages may even be mapped on to the key male characters of 'The Speckled Band'. Watson's experience is that of the naive listener, being surprised by the unfolding of events. Roylott, in contrast, as the orchestrator of those events, shares the objective knowledge of the analyst. Holmes, uncovering and coming to understand the true nature of the problem, is then the third reader, as once experiencing events unfold, and yet with an awareness of where they are leading (1989, 91). As such, Cone offers an intriguing solution to the problem of why art works (let alone detective stories) should be worth revisiting.

The nature of the crucial second stage may be noted. Wittingly or unwittingly, Cone implies that an analysis of this structure can be definitive. Approaching music from the largely formalist presuppositions of musical analysis, he suggests that the functions of notes, chords and thus passages of music can be determined with a significant degree of objectivity. The aesthetic pleasure derived from the third reading of the work is thus rooted in the tension between the ambiguity of the first reading (and thus Watson's experience) and the objectivity of the second (and Roylott's machinations).

The idea of an objective analysis of a work may be readily challenged. Within the hermeneutic tradition, it may be suggested that definitive readings are anathema. In this context, Cone may be understood to be offering a curtailed version of the hermeneutic circle. The classic account of the hermeneutic circle holds that the reading of a text begins with certain expectations (or pre-judgements) as to the nature of the text and how it will proceed (see Gadamer 2004, 267ff). The reader thus has a preconception of the whole. Cone recognises this in his appeal to the reader's expectations about how detective stories proceed (for example, that the most obvious suspect never commits the crime) and indeed how classical symphonies unfold (for example, that the first chord should be the tonic) (Cone 1989, 87). The hermeneutician would argue that our experience of the work, and particularly of the details of that work, will either confirm or challenge these expectations. Cone recognises this process to be at work within the ambiguities and confusions experienced within his first reading. For the hermeneutician, the reader will respond to the problematic detail by rethinking their preconceptions of the whole. Hence, again as Cone recognises, 'The Speckled Band' comes to be seen as an example, not of the 'whodunit', but of the 'howdunit'. Yet, for the hermeneutician, this second pre-conception of the whole is no more definitive than is the first (albeit that it may be richer and more encompassing). It is at this point that hermeneutics departs from Cone. The hermeneutic reader never proceeds with the security that Cone suggests. The experience of ambiguity lies not in the tension between what is revealed in a

first and second reading, but rather in the continual turning of the hermeneutic circle.

Cone's curtailment of the hermeneutic circle may be understood as a privileging of a special form of reading, which is to say, analysis. Analysis arrests the movement of the hermeneutic circle. A disciplined and systematic description of the structure of the text interrupts the spontaneous flow of interpretation. This analytic description is nonetheless intended to inform further interpretation, and thus to feed into the hermeneutic circle. Cone notes that the third reading of a piece of music will be, typically, a performance (Cone 1989, 90), and yet a performance is necessarily an interpretation. Beyond this, it may be suggested that analysis focuses upon a distinctive character of a text (and one that may be neglected by traditional hermeneutics). Analysis is concerned with the structure of a text, and Cone may be taken to be arguing that it is therefore necessary, as a second reading, to texts where an awareness of structure is fundamental to their interpretation. Put otherwise, music in particular requires the arresting of the hermeneutic circle precisely because musical meaning is predominantly syntactical rather than semantic. This is to argue that the meaning of any element (such as a note, chord or sequence of notes) within the work must be understood through its relationship to other elements within the whole, rather than through any reference to a world beyond the music (or even to the evocation of an emotion). A sequence of notes is meaningful simply because it reproduces or varies a sequence that has gone before. Equally, note and chord sequences will set up, fulfil or frustrate listeners' expectations of what should be happening. Meaning thus lies in the role that a passage of music is playing in the creation and manipulation of expectation (see Meyer 1956). Cone's initial example of the Sherlock Holmes story serves to indicate that awareness of structure is a necessary component of the interpretation of many (if not all) literary texts as well.

Cone has highlighted a special form of reading (and it will be the contention below that this analytic reading is fundamental to our appreciation of sport). Further, his account of three readings serves to identify something distinctive in the reading of an artistic text. The hermeneutic circle is an account of the reading of any text.. Cone's account, in contrast, would not be relevant to, say, the interpretation of scientific texts. But as such, Cone also hints at the source of aesthetic pleasure yielded by an artistic text. Cone's account can be read as implicitly Kantian. Kant, in his analysis of beauty, argues that our experience of beauty appeals to both the sensual faculty of the imagination, and the more rational faculty of understanding. The art work is something that is sensually experienced and yet requires the engagement of the intellect or understanding. The scientific text requires merely understanding, and as such yields no aesthetic pleasure. The charming entertainment appeals only to the senses, and thus requires only imagination. In Kant's



terms it yields a sensation of agreeableness [*Angenehmen*], not pleasure [*Lust*] (Kant 1952, §3). Thus, Cone is arguing that a genuine appreciation of music does not treat it merely as an agreeable or charming sequence of sounds, but rather that it is something that must, through analysis, be understood. Only thus does music (or indeed any art work) yield pleasure.

Despite their insights, Cone's arguments remain problematic. This problem, and thus Cone's relationship to hermeneutics, may be understood, again, through appeal to Kant. In the third moment of the 'Analytic of the Beautiful' Kant argues that the observer is unable to identify the end or purpose of an object that is perceived to be beautiful (Kant 1952 §17). Beauty is thus 'purposiveness without purpose' (Adorno 1997, 184 [translation modified]). That is to say that one recognises that the beautiful and thus aesthetically pleasurable object has been designed, and thus has a structure. However, unlike our experience of a work of craft, one cannot identify the purpose or function to which this structure is to be put. The object of beauty is thus ambiguous. The beautiful object has no obvious extrinsic purpose, existing seemingly for its own sake alone. Further beauty itself cannot be pinned down or formulated, at least in terms of the set of rules or instructions for its making. This stands in contrast to a work of craft. The production of a work of craft follows pre-determined rules (Kant 1952, §43). Kant may here be understood as anticipating the notion of Romantic irony whereby an art work offers itself to continual re-reading, precisely because it cannot be pinned down in one definitive interpretation (see Schlegel 1996).

The hermeneutic circle may be understood as commenting upon the experience of 'purposiveness without purpose'. The work is ambiguous because it can be continually re-interpreted. In contrast, Cone, as noted above, places the experience of ambiguity between the naiveté of the first reading and the analysis of the second. Cone aspires to definitiveness at the moment of analysis (see Edgar 1999, 440-1), so that analysis identifies, objectively, at least the function and purpose of each part within the whole, if not the rules that govern the whole. This is problematic on two fronts. Firstly, there is not one method of analysis in musicology, and different techniques, informed by different pre-judgements, will lead to different accounts of the structure of the work (see Cook 1987). Secondly, and perhaps more significantly in terms of the hermeneutic circle, while analysis may inform performance, it does not obviously determine it. The performance becomes a test of the analysis, not a mere application. It is only in performance (or the third reading) that one discovers whether or not analysis has generated a coherent, aesthetically satisfying experience of the work. The contention of the hermeneutician will be that no performance or third reading of any work of sufficient depth and subtlety will be wholly satisfying. The sense of ambiguity will not then be, as Cone maintains, an experience designed and

manipulated by the artist, in their skilful management of the work's deep and surface structures, but rather a real resistance to interpretation. The experience of the work will be ambiguous because parts stubbornly refuse to fit into any pre-conception of the whole.

In summary of this section, I have argued that Cone offers a significant account of the process of interpretation of certain art works. This account has some points of contact with hermeneutic arguments, but its focus on the structure or syntax of the work highlights a special form of reading: analysis. In this Cone offers, perhaps unintentionally, an account of the pleasure that the audience derives from an art work, precisely as a Kantian harmony of the faculties of the imagination and the understanding. Cone's account becomes problematic precisely where he suggests that analysis can be definitive, and as such determine the third reading, rather than allowing itself to be tested and proved in that reading. It will be argued in the next section that sport, as a rule governed activity, offers itself to analysis. As such, the appreciation of a sports match may rest upon something akin to Cone's three readings.

#### Re-reading a sports match

A sports match may be revisited through various media. The story of a game may simply be retold. The angler may tell the tale of the one that got away. A newspaper will provide a more formal report. Matches may be chronicled in publications such as *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack*. Games of chess can be recorded exactly, through notational systems that precisely describe each move. Modern film and video technology allows sports matches to be recorded in some detail and from multiple angles and perspectives. Sport is, thus, not quite as ephemeral as it may first seem. A game is not forgotten the moment it is played. It lingers, for a lesser or greater time, in the memory of the individual and the community. Sports matches are thus revisited.

It was noted above that Cone accepts that a detective story may be re-read, 'not for story but for style, for portrayal of character, for comment on society' (1989, 77-8). So, sport is similarly revisited for diverse reasons. An exciting, beautiful or innovative move may be celebrated for its style. Thus, Reifentahl's film documenting the 1936 Olympics, *Olympia*, records the graceful movement of divers, athletes and gymnasts. Character is portrayed in a sports biography, be this in the more traditional form of a written narrative or as a montage of video recordings. Games played will inevitably be a focus of an such story. Similarly, a certain pleasure can be gained in following the career of a first class cricketer by tracing the records and reports of their matches in a sequence of *Wisdens*. As comment on society, a sports match may be treated simply as a historical or

sociological document. Again, Reifentahl's *Olympia* is of interest because of the light that it sheds upon the use of sport in Nazi propaganda. More innocently, it also shows much about the attitudes and techniques of athletes in the 1930s (such as marathon runners stopping to drink and eat, or pole vaulters dropping into a sand pit).

While all of these reasons may be important, they each reflect the tension that Cone implies between returning to a story *as* a story and returning to it for other reasons. Cone, in the second reading in particular, is concerned with the story (or piece of music) as whole, as opposed to 'savoring appropriate passages here and there' (1989, 78). To appreciate a sports movement for its style detaches it from the flow of the game as a whole, and from any concern with the result. (There is a contrast between the first and second parts of *Olympia*, precisely in that the first part places more emphasis upon the development of the competition as a whole, for example in sprinting and pole-vault, while the second part focuses on the movement of athletes separate from the competition.) Similarly, documentary concern with sport may not be an interest in sport as sport, much as a reading of Homer for what it can tell the historian about the techniques of ancient Greece sea-going neglects the story and thus the art. In *Olympia* sport is, in part, of interest as propaganda.

The case of 'portrayal of character' is more complex. Cone's own argument largely neglects this aspect of the art work, as his formalist approach displaces more expressivist considerations of art (where the quality of the art work would be judged primarily, not in terms of the subtlety and innovation of its structure, as Cone argues, but rather in terms of its capacity to express human emotion and character). This problem will be returned to below, but an initial comment may be made in order to orient and frame the following discussion. A film such as *When we were Kings*, documenting the 1974 world heavyweight boxing match between George Foreman and Muhammad Ali (and indeed documenting it as a whole), provides an important account of both the contest and its relationship to its historical period. Yet it may also be re-watched precisely for its portrayal of the characters of all involved. Such an example raises the question as to whether it matters that it is a sports film. Any documentary film, just like any historical narrative, could and frequently will seek to portray the characters involved. In effect, character is betrayed by the actions that are recorded in the narrative. A good detective story, like any expressivist art work, will, in subtle contrast, develop the character of its heroes (and villains) through their involvement in the plot. The plot is not simply a sequence of events that betrays the character of the protagonists. It is rather constructed deliberately to reveal that character.

This is, in effect, to argue that the very concept of 'portrayal' is ambiguous. It raises the

possibility that an art work does not merely represent a character, but provides a context within which the audience may consciously reflect upon aspects of character. So too, it will be argued, a good sports match allows the characters of the players, as players, to be made available for reflection. The ludic challenges of the game test certain physical and psychological qualities of the players, and as such reveal specific characters or personae. Before developing this argument, and as such a crucial argument as to why a sports match may be re-watched, the relevance of Cone's formalist second reading to sport will be reviewed, for it highlights precisely the problem of experiencing sport as sport and experiencing the sports match as a whole. The structure revealed in the second reading is the context within which the portrayal of character, in any profound sense, can be experienced.

It has been argued above that Cone's second reading is a special form of interpretation. The usual temporally unfolding narrative that concerns hermeneutics is replaced by an atemporal, or spatial, laying out of the structure or form of the work, possibly in diagrams (Cone 1989, 85). My contention here is that this second reading is a constitutive moment of sport as a hermeneutic event. This is to make two claims. Firstly, that sport, like any human interaction, is constituted through the interpretative skills of its participants. Secondly, that a special form of interpretative skill, that of analysis, is required to understand a sports match in any depth or profundity. These claims may be articulated by returning to Cone's analogy of Watson, Roylott and Holmes as, respectively first, second and third readers of a text.

Watson, Roylott and Holmes may be considered as participants in a game, albeit that this leads to an importantly different account of their relationship to reading and interpretation than Cone's. Watson is the spectator, watching the unfolding events. Roylott and Holmes are players. They contend against each other. Roylott, the attacker, has the objective of disposing of Helen Stoner. Holmes, the defender, has the task of stopping him. The strangeness of a detective story is that the reader does not know – at least until the denouement of the tale – against whom the detective competes. Yet there is still a contest here (albeit one where the reader knows that the detective will win). Perhaps more importantly, the characters within the tale could offer their own stories. Holmes, indeed, has the opportunity to recount his version of the events as he explains everything to Watson. Roylott, had he survived, would no doubt have been able to offer his own distinctive narrative, defiantly cursing Holmes' meddling and his own ill-luck. As readers, we might also imagine that, as the events unfold, the characters are gradually constructing and modifying their own narratives of what is happening. Crucially, such narratives will also shape their subsequent actions. In any social interaction, the actors can only know what to do next – how to

carry on – if they can offer an interpretation of what has already happened.

The characters' narratives thus serve to shape the development of the story as a whole. To consider Roylott and Holmes as contestants is to recognise the part that narrative will play in the construction and pursuit of any game. The sports match (like, indeed, any meaningful social interaction) is a hermeneutic event. It is constituted and unfolds through the interpretations and narratives of its participants and the implications that those narratives have for going on meaningfully. In effect, each player works relentlessly through the hermeneutic circle, the narrative of the whole being continually tested and revised in the light of the subsequent particular actions that arises from it.

How a player acts, or how they go on, will depend upon how well they make sense of their own and others' actions. Yet a sports match is distinctive, as a hermeneutic event, because the meaning of one's own and others' actions will be mediated by one's interpretation of the constitutive rules of the sport (to which all players are self-consciously abiding). An action will only make sense if it is encapsulated by those rules (even if it has meaning only as a 'foul' or other illegal play). Further, the rules constitute ludic goals for the players, be these the goal of winning (e.g. completing 18 holes in fewer strokes than one's opponent), or intermediate goals (such as tackling an offender fairly and effectively; playing an un-returnable tennis shot; negotiating a bunker). Further, players do not merely give meaning to their actions in terms of the rules of the game, but will also judge how well they are playing: where they have been successful and where they have failed in pursuit of those ludic goals. The player's self-narrative will be, very significantly, entwined with the narrative they tell about their opponents, and again what their opponents' actions mean, and how well they are playing. Judgements of intention, motivation, physical, or even psychological, strength and frailty are all part of this narrative. This complex narrative, giving sense to one's own and others' actions, allows the player to go on, continuing to act meaningfully and purposefully. Thus, to return to the analogy of Holmes and Roylott as players, after his visit to Holmes, in the midst of the game as it were, Roylott may assume that he has successfully warned off Holmes. He is thus free to launch his final, deadly, assault on Miss Stoner. Holmes will have a story of Roylott's complacency and arrogance, and so can plan how to outwit him.

If Holmes and Roylott are players, the position of Watson is a little more ambiguous. The Watson who we encounter as a character within the story is a spectator. He stands slightly on the sidelines, struggling to make sense of the sequence of events that he experiences. Again, there is a hermeneutic circle in play, but here the narrative of the whole is tested, not by Watson's actions, but

by the subsequent events that he witnesses. But Watson is not an entirely naive spectator. He is familiar with Holmes' methods. He has an idea, however vague, of how Holmes is responding to the challenge that Roylott poses. In an analogy to sport, Watson is the spectator who is familiar with the nature of the game. He may not know what will happen next, but he understands the rules, and appreciates a bold and unexpected play when he sees one. He may even be seen as the radio or television commentator, offering an informed, unfolding, narrative. Yet Watson is not just a character within the story. He is also the narrator of the story. In Cone's terms, he (rather than Holmes) is the third reader, who knows how things will turn out, but in order to tell the story well, to sustain the tension of suspense and ambiguity, pretends ignorance. This is the spectator retelling, skilfully, the story of a game to a friend, but not revealing the final score until the narrative ends. This is perhaps the least useful analogy to the drawn, but it does draw upon the fact that games are hermeneutic events not merely in their creation, but also in the retrospective stories that spectators will tell. The game continues being interpreted and re-interpreted in players' tales of glorify or anguish, in newspaper reports, and even in archives such as *Wisden*.

There is a further subtlety in Holmes' narrative and his place as a character. As noted above, Watson records Holmes' final account and explanation of the events. Through this Watson can understand the events properly, and so construct the third reading. Here Holmes moves from a mere player to an analyst (and, contra Cone, it is Holmes who personifies the second reader, and not Roylott). Holmes' account of the contest is that of a coach (or perhaps, draining the last drops from the analogy, a player-manager). Holmes understands the winning strategy. His account of the game is thus of a different order to that of even the moderately well informed spectator. It is, as Cone suggests of a second reading, diagrammatic. The analysis of the game abandons the linear or temporal narrative in favour of a time that can be stalled, in order to identify and evaluate the positions of each player at a given moment, or even reversed, in order to analyse the build-up of a move, and to identify alternative positions that players could have occupied. Such an analysis may appear to be concerned with only details of the game, and thus with important passages of play, rather than with the game as a whole. However, a thorough analysis will take in the game as a whole. A successful passage of play may realise perfectly a strategy that has only been partially realised earlier in the game; conversely it may rest upon a change of strategy, unexpected by the opposition players. Each moment thus has its full analysis only in the context of the whole, and it is this analysis that informs and enriches a third reading.

It was noted above, with respect to Cone, that in characterising the second reading as he does, as an analysis that arrests the hermeneutic circle, that he privileges a certain type of art work.

Music, and in particular the Western canon of high art music with which Cone is concerned, lends itself to such formal analysis, and does so because music may be understood primarily as of syntactical, rather than semantic meaning. Sport is similar (see Edgar 2013, 140-167). The meaning of any movement within the game is determined, not by its reference to anything beyond the game, but by its relationship to the constitutive rules of the sport and to other moves already made or anticipated. The analysis of strategy thus explicates these syntactical relationships. While the coach and the analyst at the end of the game may have the most complete (although never necessarily definitive) understanding of strategy, a partial grasp of strategy must be part of the competent player's on-going interpretation of the game. The player knows their own teams' strategy and will be trying to work out the strategy of their opponents. Players' second readings are thus part of the intersubjective construction of the game as a meaningful social process. The greater the tactical acumen of the player, the more readily, it may be suggested, are they able to integrate revisions to the second reading within the continuing movement of the hermeneutic circle, reinterpreting the events around them.

The relationship between the relatively naive spectator and that of the analyst (and thus between Watson as character and Holmes as player-manager) may be illustrated by recounting a personal experience of watching a game. The game in question was the second game of the National Basketball Association finals, between Miami Heat and San Antonio Spurs, in 2013. I am a relatively naive spectator of basketball, understanding the basic rules, but few subtleties of the game. This particular contest was puzzling. The game was evenly balanced until the third quarter. Miami then began to outscore San Antonio significantly. I could follow the crude meaning of the game, in that I could obviously enough recognise a basket when scored. But I had no idea why Miami were suddenly outplaying San Antonio. I could not tell whether their offensive tactics had changed, identifying and responding to a weakness in the San Antonio defence, or whether the San Antonio defence was now simply making errors, or perhaps missing a key player. I could, thus, profitably re-watch the game under the guidance of a suitably knowledgeable analyst. Here, in effect, is Cone's point. I would not simply watch the game with the analyst (which is to say, follow an analysis of tactics that would of necessity break from the temporal flow of the game). Having understood the analysis, I could watch the game for a third time and, although fully aware of the final result, would appreciate the flow of play as a realisation of that result.

At its most basic, this is the claim that an analytic knowledge is fundamental to the appreciation of strategic sports. It is the claim that, without the capacity for this analytic second reading the sports match can only be agreeable entertainment (in Kant's sense of agreeableness),

and not a genuine pleasure. Thus I readily found the Miami/San Antonio game entertaining. There was something exhilarating in watching Miami's developing dominance. But without a deeper understanding of basketball strategy it is no more than exhilarating (and akin to a listener who merely follows the pleasant, exciting or moving sounds of the music, without concentrating sufficiently to understanding the unfolding musical argument). Something similar may be seen in American Football. A short highlights package may focus on the exciting moments when touchdowns are scored. Typically this entails showing a single down. While there will indeed be strategic and tactical issues that can be contemplated here, the emphasis is still primarily on the exhilaration of, say, a successful forward pass. To see the sequence of downs that led to the touch down, and thus the offensive team's struggle to move up the pitch, adds further context, and much richer strategy considerations. The touchdown is not then a moment that is exciting in itself, but rather the culmination of a pleasurable, analysed, whole.

Beyond this basic, albeit important, point, it may be argued that analysis allows the interpretation of the game to go beyond the syntactical. Put boldly, analysis allows one to appreciate a game as an expression of the human condition. In 1996, Bjarne Riis won the Tour de France. Stage 16, a mountain stage, was particularly important to this win. Riis was already leading the Tour. In addition, he took part in a break-away group at the head of the day's race. He attacked this group a number of times, trying to gain an individual lead. A crucial moment then occurred. Riis seemed to drop to the back off the group. Here was the ambiguity that both Cone and hermeneutics highlight. The move initially made no clear sense. Perhaps Riis was exhausted, and this was the end of his challenge, possibly his Tour as a whole. However, Riis then began to cycle back, passing the group. He looked at each rider in turn. Once at the head of the group, he kept up his pace, easily cycling away to victory (of the stage, and thus of the Tour).

A re-watching of this moment is telling. Understanding it requires analysis, for the deeper one's awareness of technicalities such as gearing, as well as tactics within a break-away (for example, of how riders co-operate, work with or without team mates, and challenge each other). Riis can be seen doing, perhaps, two things. Technically, he is looking at the gears that his competitors are using, and so assessing their degree of exhaustion. Psychologically, he may be psyching out these competitors. The ride up, passing them, announces, 'Look what I can do!'. A third watching of this event will enjoy the ambiguity between deep and surface structures that Cone identifies. The surface experience is ambiguous, and in a third watching, one may identify, not just with Riis, who after all knows what is going on, but with his competitors. A fleeting moment of hope ('Riis is exhausted') becomes despair ('I am exhausted'). Here is the point of much ambiguity



in tactical sport. The behaviour of one's opponent is frequently ambiguous or even baffling, even if one is striving to interpret it within the frame of the constitutive rules of the sport. One tries to confuse and deceive one's opponents (through, for example, feints, dummy passes, and the like). Only in a second reading can the true meaning of the move be understood (by spectator and player alike). It is only in a third reading, stepping outside the immediacy of the game, that this tension between naive experience and tactics can be appreciated and enjoyed (as Kant's semi-intellectual pleasure).

The Riis example may be taken further. The rules of road cycling constitute a series of ludic challenges. They put specific tests to the physical body, but also the psychology, of the athlete. It is here that the character of the athlete, as athlete, is revealed for reflection. Riis' ride may thus be understood, not simply as a physical struggle, but also as a social and psychological one. Road cycling is a team event and yet it is the individual winner who matters. One or two individuals are supported and privileged by their teams. As such, certain forms of social or communal organisation are thematised by the sport's rule. The sport thus reveals something complex about the human condition, and the human capacity to deal with physical stress (demanding extremes of strength and endurance), as well subtle forms of co-operation and competition. The interpretation of Riis' victory is thus not simply formal. While analysis focuses upon the syntax of constitutive rules and tactics, a full understanding recognised the substance of the competition in the experience of the athletes.

A final example may illustrate this. As noted above, Leon Gast's 1996 film *When we were Kings* records the 1974 heavyweight championship contest between Ali and Foreman (the 'Rumble in the Jungle'). The film can certainly be re-watched, although that in itself does not entail that the boxing match itself is worth re-watching. One may watch the film as a film, appreciating its artistry, rather than the fight it documents. But the contest itself is extraordinary. Between the second and seventh rounds, after a relatively aggressive first round, Ali allowed Foreman to punch him, with the most minimal attempt to fight back. Here again, from the perspective of a first reader, is baffling or ambiguous behaviour. Ali's strategy, if that is what it is, is radically unclear. The mystery is resolved in the eighth round. Foreman's offence is more tiring than Ali's defence, if Ali can absorb the (considerable) punishment. A relatively fresh Ali could then knock out the exhausted Foreman in the eighth round.

A second reading can analyse Ali's tactic, and indeed recognise it as such, against the background of a understanding of more orthodox boxing tactics. A second reading can also analysis

Foreman's tactics, and how he is trying to make sense of, and thus cope with, what Ali is doing. A third reading again strives to watch the match, appreciating the ambiguity as a tension between surface and deep structures, or between Ali's overt behaviour and deep tactic. But it is also here that a re-watching goes beyond a mere appreciation of boxing tactics, and thus beyond the merely syntactical. The physical punishment that Ali endures, and indeed the humiliation experienced by an outwitted and out-boxed Foreman, turns the contest into an exploration of the human condition. The bout itself, and not just the film, rewards re-watching, and in this goes beyond Cone's focus on the ambiguity that lies in the tension between first and second readings, to a hermeneutic circle, and so beyond a mere matter of strategy and tactics, or the interpretation of the rules of the sport. The bout invites interpretation and re-interpretation as to exactly what it does say about the human condition. It is an infinitely rich hermeneutic event, a study in suffering, endurance and self-discipline.

## Conclusion

I have argued that a sports match may reward being watched multiple times. Sport is a specific form of hermeneutic event. It is constituted through the interpretations of its participants, and the implications that these interpretations have for how play continues. More specifically, interpretations are structured by the constitutive rules of the sport, so that both the interpretation of one's own and others' actions are mediated by knowledge of what is meaningful action in terms of the rules, but also that one's development and presentation of oneself as a player depends upon the possibilities, in terms of the ludic goals of the games, that the rules constitute. Much of the behaviour of players in any strategic contest will be ambiguous as to its meaning and purpose, not least as players seek to deceive and outwit each other. It is this initial ambiguity that Cone highlights as characteristic of the first reading of a detective story (and indeed first hearing of music, or at least music of any subtlety). Precisely because a sports match is constituted by syntactical rules, understanding of this naive experience will require analysis. Analysis, it has been argued, partially arrests the hermeneutic circle. It is a special form of interpretation, abandoning the temporal flow of narrative in favour of a atemporal or spatial exploration of events and their relationships. Analysis identifies the tactics that underpin and make sense of that which is experienced in a first reading. A good strategic player will incorporate this analytic awareness in their on-going interpretation of the unfolding of the game. The pleasure of a third reading comes, however, from watching the game as a whole, with awareness of the tactical choices being made

through out, and thus in awareness of the tension between the ambiguities of a first reading and the relative analytic certainty of a second reading. As a game unfolds, the third reading will reveal how particular move come to have a certain meaning and significance. Riis' possible exhaustion *becomes* his moment of triumph.

It was argued that Cone's account of three readings is flawed, both in terms of the definitiveness or objectivity that he appears to attribute to a second reading, but also because of his formalism. There seems little scope to move from a formalist second reading to substantial issues, such as the portrayal, or more precisely expression, of human character. Sport, at its most profound, bridges the gulf between the formal and the substantial. The rules of sport constitute specific physical and psychological tests for competitors. It is thus in response to these tests that athletes come to explore the human condition, testing the limits of physical and psychological strengths, and exposing weaknesses. In great contests, the sports match aspires to the status of a essay on the human condition, in all its comic and tragic diversity, as athletes engage with their own frailty and contingency, thrown into a sporting arena that is at once tightly regulated, and yet typically open to the vicissitudes of good and ill luck. Sport may not be art, but at its best, it may yield an aesthetic pleasure similar to that which the arts themselves yield.

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i Originally published in 1892, 'The Speckled Band' is collected in Arthur Conan Doyle's *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. See <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1661/1661-h/1661-h.htm> [accessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016].