

# Newton International Fellowships 2019 Awards List

## Awards made under Newton International Fellowships in 2019

**Funding Source:** Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Core

### **Dr Abigail Moffett – South Africa**

Commodity circulation, consumption patterns and early global trade networks: a study of the cowrie shell in African archaeological contexts.

NIFBA19\190822

University of East Anglia

£100,500.00

Objects such as glass beads, cowrie shells and ivory were truly global commodities in the medieval world. These small, visually pleasing, items were exchanged throughout the Old World, and they played a particularly important role in Africa. They reached different regions of the continent through a web of land and sea routes spanning the Indian Ocean rim and Mediterranean region. Reconstructing these networks, and better understanding the African communities who participated in these early global trade networks, is critical to repositioning Africa within global scholarship. This fellowship aims to contribute important new data on the nature and impact of these networks across the African continent. A study of such networks is a huge task, requiring a sharp focus in order to be effective: accordingly, this fellowship proposes a cross-regional comparative assessment targeting the exchange, use and valuation of a single major commodity, the cowrie shell. Cowrie shells (*Monetaria annulus* and *Monetaria moneta*) were major early global commodities, equally popular in China, India, Europe and Africa. However, the systematic study of their distribution and deposition in archaeological contexts in Africa is only at its beginnings. Research carried out by Professor Anne Haour and myself in West Africa and South Africa respectively has been pioneering in this respect, and provides a sound foundation for developing a cross-continental comparison and expanding the analytical techniques used to study the uses of cowries. This fellowship will allow me to analyse cowrie shell collections from southern, East and Central African sites housed in European and African museums. In addition to this, the fellowship will allow me to conduct use-wear analyses on cowries from African archaeological contexts, an analytical technique well established in archaeology but that has been sparsely applied to the study of trade

goods in African archaeology. These analyses will be further complemented by an ethnoarchaeological study of the harvesting and trade of *Monetaria annulus* shells in Mozambique, a project developed in collaboration with colleagues in the United Kingdom and southern Africa, which will be the first such targeted study in Africa. The combination of novel methodologies and an under-researched subject area make this proposed fellowship project unique and will enable an important contribution towards understanding the extent and nature of early global trade networks in Africa. The experience and expertise of both the applicant and co-applicant provide a strong basis for the success of this fellowship.

**Dr Alexander Mielke – Germany**

Monkeying around: complexity, cognition, and culture in primate play

NIFBA19\191052

University of Oxford

£89,250.00

In the quest to compare the cognitive abilities of humans and other species, especially apes, researchers have long relied on experiments in captive populations, as no directly comparable behaviour seemed forthcoming. However, these experiments often feature situations that are highly unnatural for the involved animals, making it hard to interpret a failure to succeed. One context in which cognitive abilities could be tested in a more meaningful way is play. The play of nonhuman primate infants and juveniles strongly resembles that of human children in form and function, allowing us to test their cognitive development using natural observations. While research has focused on play's function, we do not yet have a framework to quantify the cognitive complexity of play behaviour. Play involves fast-flowing, rule-based exchanges of actions of multiple players, and I will study repeatable patterns ("games") in hundreds of hours of video-recorded play bouts for a community of wild chimpanzees, spanning more than 30 years or two generations. This will allow me to study a range of cognitive skills that have thus far been deemed uniquely human. Specifically, I will test whether the rules of games grow more complex as individuals grow older, how flexible individuals are in combining different elements and games, and whether developmental trajectories are the same across individuals. I will be able to investigate how well players synchronise their actions and if synchronicity is aided by the ability to swap roles during cooperation and to read the intentions of other players. Finally, I will test whether new play traditions are invented, how individuals learn them, and how they spread, to investigate if there is something like play "culture" in this community. By collecting video material in a captive chimpanzee community and comparing the results to the existing video archive, I will test whether captive

individuals pass through the same developmental stages as their wild cousins, whether their play complexity is similar or impoverished, and whether we can use play as a marker for well-being. This will help us identify individuals with welfare concerns early on and allow for targeted enrichment interventions. This research stands out both through its innovative use of a novel context to study higher cognitive functions in chimpanzees using natural observations and its direct application for the welfare of captive communities of primates.

**Miss Amaya Querejazu** - Colombia

Making Kind with other worlds. Relationality as a methodology to build pluriversal International Relations.

NIFBA19\190793

Aberystwyth University

£96,000.00

International relations are about interconnections in a globalized world. With this research proposal, I intend to bring the relations back to study of international relations. I do so through a critical and constructive reconstruction of how the discipline of International Relations (IR) engages its 'objects of study'. This project, which foregrounds ontological reflection and specifically relational ontologies so far side-lined in IR, seeks to engage the study of IR, and international relations practices, in a way that allows us to consider plural coexisting realities and 'worlds' as part of our analytical considerations. From a relational perspective new theoretical and practical alternative become evident to better understand the complex world we live in and other readings, interpretations and understandings of issues that are key to human civilizations, such as climate change and conflict, are thus also allowed. Additionally, engagement with relationality also permits more respectful dialogue and encounters with millions of people in the world whose experiences and ways of existence are relational.

**Dr Belal Alabbas** - Egypt

Law and Authority in Shi'ite Legal Thought: A Theory of Twelver Hadith Criticism

NIFBA19\190952

University of Exeter

£87,990.00

The academic study of Islamic law has generally focused on Sunni legal thought, largely neglecting the legal thought and practice of Shi'ism and other traditions. This project will contribute to remedying this gap by embarking on a study of Imami Shi'ite legal thought and comparing it to Sunni legal thinking in the area of hadith criticism. This

research centres on the historical intersection of the Shi'ite and Sunni legal traditions and is built on the conviction that Imami Shi'ite legal thinking is most usefully seen as a conversation with the mainstream Sunni and other traditions of Islamic legal thinking. I will examine Imami thought on the authority of the dicta ascribed to the Prophet and the Imams and the principles for assessing such material with particular attention to al-Qadi al-Nu'man (d. 974), who produced a systematic refutation of Sunni legal theories, some of which are pertinent to hadith criticism in the Sunni tradition, and 'Allama al-Hilli (d. 1325), who is credited with the systemisation of hadith criticism in Shi'ism. I will also explore legal thought that might have given rise to these discussions, drawing on Sunni and Shi'ite prosopographical sources from the 10th-12th centuries, which remain largely unexplored as sources for the history of early Imami legal thought. This study will shed new light on Imami contributions to wider Islamic legal developments over time. On the basis of this research I will prepare a series of journal articles contributing to debates concerning the history and development of Islamic legal theory.

**Dr Giovanna Laterza – Germany**

Material Worlds: Making Knowledge in Vitruvius' *De Architectura*

NIFBA19\190545

University of Warwick

£91,725.00

The Augustan Revolution was not only a seminal political event, but a catalyst for profound intellectual and cultural change. One of the most significant manifestations of this transformation was a radical "epistemic shift", a fundamental change in the conceptualisation of knowledge. This proposal focuses on a striking example of this transformation: the material representations by which Vitruvius' *'On architecture'* depicts knowledge and cognitive processes. I will explore how these material images contribute to the theoretical structure of the treatise, how they function on the aesthetic level and how they affect the reader's mind. Moreover, I argue that the progressive specialization of knowledge under Augustus, exemplified by the *De Architectura*, is traceable and readable in these material representations. In summary, the project will investigate how Vitruvius conceptualizes his expertise and the relationship between his imagery of knowledge and the political needs of the Augustan autocracy. The analysis will combine close reading with philosophically informed approaches that problematize the political impact of figurative language.

**Dr Ilaria Andolfi** – Germany

Empedocles Redeemed: Poetry, Magic, and Political Power in fifth cent. Sicily

NIFBA19\190464

King's College London

£80,580.00

The proposed book-length project analyses for the first time in modern scholarship the communicative strategies of the poetic production of Empedocles of Acragas. His poetry, which is preserved in fragments (representing roughly 20% of the complete work), illustrates the plurality of his interests, stretching from physics to religion, and from botany to the reincarnation of the souls. Such an unexpected blend of topics has puzzled ancient and modern critics alike, especially since he conveyed his message in hexameters, the medium of heroic and didactic poetry, and not in prose, whereas his subject would rather fit the prose style of the then nascent prose philosophical exposition. Until now, approaches to Empedocles have tended to be exclusively textbased. However, I argue that the existing framework can be enriched by emphasising the performative aspect, which lies at the heart of oral literature and forms the background of the fifth-century Sicilian context. This is because Empedocles, like all the so-called Presocratic philosophers, is far from being an armchair philosopher living in an ivory tower: literature and philosophy interact closely with contemporary society, as is also true for most of the Greek sages (Pittacus, Solon) and for later philosophers (Plato, Aristotle). Therefore, this research revolves around three focal research questions. (1) I will illuminate how Empedocles' verses interact with his audience. I will analyse the use and frequency of all features of context-related speech that could point to oral delivery, but which could also work mimetically to place the poet's fictional word in front of his readers' eyes. (2) I will study how the audience(s) understood and interiorised his teachings. Empedocles' use of metaphors and images, often regarded as opaque, must nonetheless have reached the interpreters' experiential background in order to be effectively interiorised. Cognitive approaches have shown how embodied image schemata shape our understanding of abstract issues and how they work in our conceptual upbringing: by means of metaphor, the audience could simulate the ineffable qualities of a body-perceptual experience. (3) I will highlight how Empedocles' verses interact with the contemporary political situation in Acragas. As cross-cultural studies have proved, one's self-representation as a miracle-worker can actually testify to his capability as a political leader. Moreover,

I will argue that his representation of Nature and of the joint action of the cosmic forces Love and Strife mirrors the political powers at work in his own version of the ideal city.

**Mr José Manuel Aburto** - Denmark

Analysing changes in population health through the lens of lifespan inequalities.

NIFBA19\190679

University of Oxford

£100,500.00

Most countries experienced major increases in life expectancy in the second half of the 20th century. This progress has meant that people are living longer on average and, at the same time, ages at death have become compressed to a narrow band of ages within populations. In other words, ages at death have become more similar, or lifespan inequality has decreased as populations live longer. Recent trends in several countries however indicate that continued improvements in longevity are not inevitable, with stalls in life expectancy occurring in some low mortality countries, such as the UK, and increasing premature mortality resulting from violence in contexts such as Latin America. These recent dynamics indicate increasing complexity underpinning population health improvements and highlight the need to analyse population health through the lens of lifespan inequality. This research proposal has three aims: (1) develop new methodologies to better measure lifespan inequality and its dynamics over time, (2) analyse recent trends in levels and sex differences in lifespan inequality in low mortality countries, including the UK, to investigate if similar ages and causes of death underpin increasing lifespan inequality and changing patterns of sex differences across different countries, and (3) measure the contribution of violent deaths to lifespan inequality in contexts with high violence (e.g. Middle East, Latin America). The data used in this project come from open-access databases, including the Human Mortality Database, national statistical offices (e.g. the Office of National Statistics in the UK), the Global Burden of Disease, and the Global Peace Index. The above objectives will be carried out using established and novel methods in demography, some of which are and have been developed by the lead applicant. These methods have the main function of disentangling the ages and causes of death that have driven trends in life expectancy and lifespan inequality recently. This project will seek to better understand the processes and pathways through which populations can attain similar levels of life expectancy at disparate levels of lifespan inequality. This has significant implications for policy, as it reveals emerging forms of inequalities that highlight the importance of adopting inequality-based metrics for evaluating population health around the globe.

**Mr James Fraser** - Australia

The archaeology of olive oil: Investigating horticultural specialisation during urban recession in the Jordan Rift Valley escarpment.

NIFBA19\190884

Durham University

£100,444.50

When the earliest proto-urban systems of the southern Levant collapsed in the mid 3rd millennium BC, the economy is thought to have contracted to simple forms of agropastoral subsistence. However, the appearance of several small, defended sites in upland areas suggests that post-collapse communities maintained a complex rural economy through the exploitation of different environmental zones. Strikingly, these “enclosure sites” are found on the well-drained slopes of the Jordan Rift Valley escarpment, which are better suited for the cultivation of horticultural fruit crops than the flood-prone Jordan Valley floor. This project proposes a new model that approaches enclosure sites as specialized processing centers for upland fruit crops such as olive and grape, and suggests they were defended to protect seasonally produced caches of cash-crop commodities such as oil and wine. The implication is that the production of high-value liquid commodities played an especially significant role in maintaining a resilient economy in the southern Levant during a period of urban recession, and ultimately underlay urban resurgence in the 2nd millennium BC. To test this model, excavations were undertaken as a British Museum – University of Sydney project in 2017 and 2019 at the 0.4 ha enclosure site of Khirbet Ghozlan in the Jordan Rift Valley escarpment. These excavations yielded botanical, ceramic, faunal and architectural remains that support the interpretation of Khirbet Ghozlan as a specialised site for the production and storage of olive oil. As a Newton International Fellowship at Durham University, the project will analyse these data at the Materials Analysis Lab, Isotopic Analysis Lab and Environmental Processing Lab at the Department of Archaeology to achieve four objectives: 1) to articulate processes of Bronze Age oil production; 2) to determine the extent to which horticulture constituted a specialised economic strategy; 3) to track how oil jars were distributed through local economic networks; 4) to assess whether the Ghozlan community were seasonal occupants of niche environmental zones. This research articulates a particularly south Levantine route towards urbanism that distinguishes rural

communities in the Jordan Rift Valley escarpment from increasingly complex societies approaching different forms of urbanism in various landscape zones in the greater Middle East.

**Mr Jeffrey Whyte** - Canada

Constructing Insecurity in the Age of Disinformation

NIFBA19\190683

University of Manchester

£100,500.00

Once a relic of the Cold War, 'psychological warfare' has returned to the public spotlight in the wake of the 2016 Brexit referendum and American presidential election. Purportedly facilitated by sophisticated online 'cyberwarfare' activities, the new hybrid cyber-psychological warfare has produced what many have identified as a 'post-truth era' in which socially mediated disinformation presents threats to democracy and election integrity. This project proposes to study the rise of the cybersecurity industry, its role in the construction of elections as new objects of security policy, and the broader threat of 'cyber insecurity' as such. Drawing upon the applicant's research on the history of American psychological warfare in the 20th century, this project seeks to interrogate the construction of the current 'propaganda scare' and consider the extent to which popular framings of foreign 'information threats' are being leveraged to justify new rounds of securitization and military spending. This project revolves around identifying cybersecurity's networks of consolidation between government, industry, and the academy, and its networks of dissemination between journalists, think tanks and advocacy groups. Fieldwork for this project will consist of attendance at cybersecurity conferences where government, industry and academics converge to define crises of cyber-in/security and propose political, military, and commercial solutions. This project takes a mixed method approach to producing qualitative and quantitative datasets. In addition to qualitative analysis of these events and their themes, this project will yield social network data and analysis concerning the proliferation of the professionals and organizations driving the contemporary movement toward the securitization of information and knowledge. In addition to mapping the social and professional contours of these inward-facing networks of cybersecurity consolidation, the applicant will code and analyse popular cybersecurity discourse in order to map the contours of cybersecurity's construction in the press and media. This project's key contribution and impact lay in determining the extent to which the emergent cybersecurity industry has and continues to define



the terms of political threat and crisis, and the extent to which these discourses serve the interest of the publics of both the UK and the applicant's home country of Canada.

**Dr Marlene Schäfers** - Belgium

The politics of afterlives: martyrdom and the making of a transnational Kurdish political community

NIFBA19\190672 London School of Economics and Political Science £99,000.00

How do dead people shape politics? When political power is asserted or contested, the dead and their afterlives regularly make an appearance. Promises of martyrdom have fuelled suicide attacks around the globe, including in Europe. Celebrated martyrs have the capacity to mobilise communities and inspire upheaval. They have motivated hundreds of individuals from European and Middle Eastern countries to join ISIS in Iraq and Syria. But imaginaries of martyrdom have also powerfully animated the struggle of ISIS's main opponent in northern Syria, the secular Kurdish forces. Yet we know too little about the appeal, mechanisms and effects of political martyrdom, both Islamist and secular. To address this lacuna, this project proposes an in-depth study of the afterlives of fighters who have lost their lives in the struggle for Kurdish autonomy in eastern Turkey and northern Syria. Through ethnographic research with Kurdish diaspora communities in the UK, with Kurdish and British martyrs' families and in digital spaces online, the project inquires how a transnational community spanning Europe and the Middle East mobilizes a variety of narrative, visual, digital and material means to transform these fallen fighters into politically potent martyrs. Prominent approaches in political theory have theorised politics either as a question of disciplining life (biopolitics) or inflicting death (necropolitics). The centrality of the dead and their afterlives in political conflicts like those currently unfolding in the Middle East, however, suggests that politics needs to be interrogated also as a question of governing afterlives. Departing from anthropological scholarship on death as a site where bodies are claimed for membership in different social communities, this project conceptualizes death not just as the endpoint of politics but as a moment that may unleash potent forces that political actors are keen to harness and direct. Afterlives, the project proposes, may be mobilized to imbue life into the body politic. As such, they represent central sites for the constitution, performance and contestation of political power and community. Investigating afterlives from this perspective, the project will produce much needed insight into the appeal of martyrial death at a moment when imaginaries of martyrdom powerfully reverberate in Europe and the Middle East. It will shed important light onto the transnational ties that link political conflict in the Middle East to European societies and will provide nuanced

knowledge of the Kurdish movement, an increasingly crucial political actor in the region.

**Dr Nicolas Brando** - Belgium

Childhood at the Margins: A Normative Analysis of Children's Status as Right Holders

NIFBA19\190492

Queen's University Belfast

£99,000.00

The proposed book-length project analyses for the first time in modern scholarship the communicative strategies of the poetic production of Empedocles of Acragas. His poetry, which is preserved in fragments (representing roughly 20% of the complete work), illustrates the plurality of his interests, stretching from physics to religion, and from botany to the reincarnation of the souls. Such an unexpected blend of topics has puzzled ancient and modern critics alike, especially since he conveyed his message in hexameters, the medium of heroic and didactic poetry, and not in prose, whereas his subject would rather fit the prose style of the then nascent prose philosophical exposition. Until now, approaches to Empedocles have tended to be exclusively textbased. However, I argue that the existing framework can be enriched by emphasising the performative aspect, which lies at the heart of oral literature and forms the background of the fifth-century Sicilian context. This is because Empedocles, like all the so-called Presocratic philosophers, is far from being an armchair philosopher living in an ivory tower: literature and philosophy interact closely with contemporary society, as is also true for most of the Greek sages (Pittacus, Solon) and for later philosophers (Plato, Aristotle). Therefore, this research revolves around three focal research questions. (1) I will illuminate how Empedocles' verses interact with his audience. I will analyse the use and frequency of all features of context-related speech that could point to oral delivery, but which could also work mimetically to place the poet's fictional word in front of his readers' eyes. (2) I will study how the audience(s) understood and interiorised his teachings. Empedocles' use of metaphors and images, often regarded as opaque, must nonetheless have reached the interpreters' experiential background in order to be effectively interiorised. Cognitive approaches have shown how embodied image schemata shape our understanding of abstract issues and how they work in our conceptual upbringing: by means of metaphor, the audience could simulate the ineffable qualities of a body-perceptual experience. (3) I will highlight how Empedocles' verses interact with the contemporary political situation in Acragas. As cross-cultural studies have proved, one's self-representation as a miracle-worker can actually testify to his capability as a political leader. Moreover,

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**Dr Parastou Saberi** - Belgium

The urban geopolitics of radicalisation: Prevention strategies from the UK to Canada

NIFBA19\190709

University of Warwick

£99,000.00

The recent terrorist attacks in European cities have turned ‘home-grown radicalisation’ and its prevention into top security issues in the West. Security policymakers have increasingly shifted their attention to neighbourhoods such as Molenbeek in Brussels, Sparkbrook in Birmingham, and Rexdale in Toronto as the supposed ‘breeding grounds’ of radicalisation; a metaphor that hitherto was used for the ‘failed’ states in the War on Terror. This overlap between the geographies of racialised urban poverty and the so-called ‘breeding grounds’ of the ‘home-grown radicalised’ in policymaking begs critical attention. What roles do urban imaginaries of poverty play in the construction of the figure of the ‘home-grown radicalised’? How is this figure related to the historical figure of ‘the immigrant’ as a threat in Western cities? How is the metaphor of the ‘breeding ground’ related to that of the ‘ungoverned’ spaces of the War on Terror? In what ways do public-private partnerships in research on radicalisation affect the content of knowledge deemed scientific for policymaking? Current research on radicalisation, concentrated in Critical Security Studies, has been focused either on the national or international scales. My project adds a unique multidisciplinary dimension to these debates by examining the convergence of two policy domains (urban and security) and the co-constitution of the urban and international scales in radicalisation prevention. Building on my earlier fieldwork in Birmingham, I undertake a relational comparison of urban and security policymaking in Birmingham and London (UK), and Toronto (Canada), by using a multidisciplinary approach that brings debates in urban studies, political geography, and critical race theory into the existing debates in Critical Security Studies. My research will make three major contributions. First, it will highlight the politics and pitfalls of the convergence of urban and security policies in ‘immigrant neighbourhoods’ of Western cities. Second, it will enable a comparative understanding of how the convergence of security and urban policies at the local and international scales are articulated in various geographies of race, class, and urbanity. Third, it will give voice to the on-the-ground, local effects of the convergence of security and urban policies in targeted areas. These contributions are central for deepening our knowledge of a major security issue of our time, and, for bringing together local authorities and community assets in

policymaking to facilitate integration and security without compromising liberty and democracy in Western cities of the twenty-first century.

**Dr Radka Sustrova** - Czech Republic

Women's Labour Activism in Authoritarian Regimes: Czechoslovakia, Austria and Poland, 1938–1968

NIFBA19\190569

University of Liverpool

£98,700.00

How did women workers mobilise to protect their interests in authoritarian regimes such as National Socialism and state socialism, and how might these forgotten histories of women's labour activism shape our understanding of women's rights in post-communist Europe today? This project addresses those questions through the first social history of women's labour activism in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Austria from 1938-1968. Drawing on government, trade union, and factory archives, my project aims to examine Czech, Polish, and Austrian women workers' social, economic and political participation under Nazi occupation and state socialism. The starting point for my research is a surprising one: Women first gained official representation within Czech trade unions not in the democratic First Republic of the interwar period, but during the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in 1942. Yet although women made up almost 40% of the Czech industrial workforce, we know almost nothing about their efforts to secure equal pay, the right to work, or better living and working conditions. At a moment when an anti-gender agenda is sweeping across post-communist Europe, and both women's rights and social rights are under threat, this research is both timely and necessary. In the Czech Republic, for example, campaigns such as #MeToo resonate much more strongly among academic feminists than ordinary women. My research suggests why this might be. In previous decades women were provoked into action by issues of social welfare, childcare, working conditions in factories or the disharmony between employment and household duties of working-mothers, which are still relevant today. It was the negotiation for social rights, I suggest, which sparked women's activism. The Newton Fellowship will enable me to develop my expertise on nationalism, welfare, and family policy in the Czech Lands under Nazi occupation by undertaking a much broader and ambitious project on women's labour activism in East Central Europe across the chronological, ideological, and geographical divides of the Second World War and Cold War. At Liverpool, I would gain the opportunity to locate my research in global histories of free and unfree labour, human rights, and social protection. Resulting in two academic articles, a book proposal, public engagement workshops and a funding application for an international

network, my project will set a new research agenda in the study of women's rights, social protection, and citizenship in democratic and non-democratic regimes.

**Dr Tommaso Sabbatini** - USA

Fairy Tales of Two Cities: West End spectacular theatre and its Parisian influences, 1866–1900

NIFBA19\190608

University of Bristol

£81,690.00

The aim of this project is to offer an alternative history of late Victorian spectacular theatre, one that will broaden the scholarly debate by contributing a musicological perspective and adopting a cross-Channel framework. Building on my research on *féerie* — the French fairy play — I will investigate the cultural broth from which phenomena such as the Drury Lane Christmas pantomime and the Gaiety full-length burlesque emerged. I argue that those art forms, which we think of as quintessentially English, actually represent a synthesis between longstanding local traditions and recent French imports. During the last third of the twentieth century, in fact, the London West End was thoroughly permeated by the influence of the Parisian theatre industry — possibly the most powerful global cultural industry before the advent of Hollywood. The comparison between London and Paris will not be limited to the content of the plays but will extend to the social function of theatre (which in turn illuminates the content of the plays). In particular, I will examine the transformations in urban social geography that allowed commercial theatre to reach the peak of its cultural relevance in the period at hand. Spectacular theatre is a particularly apt vantage point to do so, as the connection between business infrastructure and artistic result was particularly close, and a musicological approach is especially desirable, as the scores of spectacular plays can be a thermometer of the dominant taste.