

Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry and Drama. Compact 2nd Edition. Robert DiYanni, ed. McGraw-Hill

Michael Hogan, "Kickoff."

There is no time like it again in life
the drum roll kettle rattling
too-late-now let's-go-for-it feeling
as you stand in the glare
of the October sun and commit yourself

to the just-kicked ball which spins lazily
upward, higher as opposing linesman
stampede in your direction ready to prove how
bad they are with your blood on the first play.

Blind, indifferent rage which you
understand but have no time for and decide
in a second not to call for a fair catch
as heart racing with adrenalin you still
haven't made your move or got your blockers lined up
and can't until the ball starts its downward arc.

You hear to your left the roar in the stands

maybe for your broken body
lying beneath a rack of tacklers end-zoned
or for the hope that you'll catch the ball
as you do now and putting a quick fake

on the point man spinning off another tackle

you pick up your blockers in a flying wedge
and run it to the twenty
the thirty, the forty-five
where you're finally brought down in what
even Bubba and Tiny have to admit
is pretty good field position
for a chickenshit white boy.