

This thesis is concerned with the early works of American novelist Harry Mathews { in particular the literary semiotics of Mathews' *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium*. The work also sets out to deal with Mathews' relationship to the avant-garde collective Oulipo (Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle/Workshop for Potential Literature) and the collective's project of formal experimentation. "Potential literature," treated as a function of sign systems, is approached through a comparative analysis of structures and relations found in seemingly disconnected branches of mathematics.