

Boundaries and Stereotypes (or what is the use of football, if any indeed?)*

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Social types, narratives condensed in significant patterns: all of these are manners of explanation, ways of grasping the social and the cultural. Societies also learn (and learn about themselves) through narration and typification; according to Benedict Anderson¹, this is a way to reduce complexity and heterogeneity as well as of building up recognizable homogeneities. This kind of typification abounds in Brazilian bibliography, whether in fiction or in the genre of the essay: examples in point are Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Mário de Andrade, or Monteiro Lobato, like Silvio Romero or Joaquim Nabuco in other times. Still, as Octavio Ianni² points out, once they have become myths, they turn into “reiterative ideological formulas”: “À medida que se reiteram as formulações, oralmente e por escrito, já que alguns textos notáveis são lidos e relidos, comentados e repetidos, pode ocorrer um processo de ideologização ou reificação”³. The same could be said of Argentinean culture and some of its foundational literature; for example, Leopoldo Lugones and Ricardo Rojas’s operation on *Martín Fierro*, or *Facundo*’s wondrous second chapter, where Sarmiento establishes the crucial typifications that mark Argentinean barbarism: the wicked *gaucho*, the singer, the pathfinder, the tracker from La Rioja; or the definitive invention of the *patriotic gaucho* in *Santos Vega*’s Third Canto, where Obligado solves nearly a hundred years of civil war through the character of a *loyal gaucho* who calls out for his fellow countrymen to defend Buenos Aires half-way through a relaxed game of *pato** (and the cherry of the cake is that he succeeds in dragging them away to fight for their city.)

Ianni is not wrong when he declares that, after a considerable time has passed, such operations become commonsense enunciations, reified expressions that lose their explanatory efficacy to gain a mythical place filled with important political implications. The typifying-mythical operation of his analysis is deployed right at the moment when the Brazilian society’s hierarchical structure becomes consolidated; thus, * “o que está em causa é “despolitizar” a

* A fragment of the lecture that opened the Chair of Argentinean Studies at UNICAMP (Universidade Estadual de Campinas, San Pablo, Brazil), held in October 2003.

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¹ Benedict Anderson. *Comunidades imaginadas. Reflexiones sobre el origen y la difusión del nacionalismo*. Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Editorial, 1993.

² Octavio Ianni. “Tipos e mitos do pensamento brasileiro”, in *Revista Brasileira de Ciências sociais*, vol. 17, #49. San Pablo, ANPOCS, June 2002, pp.5-10.

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

³ Octavio Ianni. *Op. cit.*, página 8.

* Argentinean game played by two teams of four players on horseback. Both teams try to score by throwing a *pato* (nowadays a sort of ball) into the opposite team’s goal at the end of a large field. [TN]

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

sociedade civil em formação, defini-la e organizá-la desde cima, tomá-la como pouco ativa e pouco organizada, gelatinosa, carente de tutela”⁴.

In the universe of football culture, where the stereotype is the norm, such operations are extremely frequent, even more so when we look at the relations between Argentina and Brazil. In both countries, football plays a role of unprecedented importance, not only because of the way in which it pervades everyday social exchanges, but also because of its weight on the construction of national narratives, myths of racial integration, stories of heroes that burst through the pitches to become icons of nationality in Argentina or in *rei atleta do século* (the distance between adjectives is also the one that separates a Maradona from a Pelé). Much has been said about this issue in film scripts (the heroic quality ranging from the familial to the patriotic in *Pelota de trapo*, a movie by Torres Ríos (1948); in journalism, with essay-style pretensions (the foundational *O negro no futebol brasileiro* by Mario Filho, also in 1948 in its first making), and also in the social sciences⁵ (Archetti, Alabarces, Da Matta, Leite Lopes, Vogel, among others.) What has seldom been explored lies in the meeting point, the bordering threshold where narratives of identity are also –for it cannot be otherwise– narratives of otherness, where the other signifier is, precisely, either Argentina or Brazil. Of these, I am only acquainted with one attempt by Brazilian anthropologist Simone Lahud Guedes⁶ who, in an interplay with my own texts and Archetti’s, ventures some interpretations. I would like to resume our “conversation” in this paper, incorporating a few other interlocutors.

Argumentative peripheries

The time has come for me to risk a possible answer to the question posed in the subtitle. What is the use of football? One possible answer, from the viewpoint of the social sciences, is that football may be regarded as a focal point, a point of passage that aids focalization of the critical look so that it can pose its questions about the symbolic dimension and its problematic articulation with the political. But it could also be seen as a place where some of the most effective, pregnant narrative operations are deployed in order to build up identities. Then, in the peripheries of legitimacy –for the focal point will still be the University, politics, or the media, depending on its historical ability that permits it to change so that it can establish and administrate legitimacies of discourse– we can read typifying operations that will help us with the awkward constructions of such narratives as build identities.

Following Levi-Strauss, Guedes points out that “(...) O futebol [é] um significante privilegiado, um veículo cuja exigência de significação é tamanha que só não admite a ausência de significado. (...) O processo semântico desencadeado pelo jogo constrói-se em um campo de debates, no qual diversas posições se confrontam”⁷. Between these discourses, Guedes says,

⁴ Octavio Ianni. *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁵ Pablo Alabarces. “Fútbol y academia: recorrido de un desencuentro”, in Alabarces, Di Giano y Frydenberg (comp.). *Deporte y Sociedad*, Buenos Aires, Eudeba, 1998; y *Fútbol y Patria. El fútbol y las narrativas nacionales en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires, Prometeo, 2002. Eduardo Archetti. *Masculinidades. Fútbol, tango y polo en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires, Antropofagia, 2003. Roberto Da Matta. “Esporte na sociedade: um ensaio sobre o futebol brasileiro”, in *Universo do Futebol: esporte e sociedade brasileira*. Rio de Janeiro, Pinakothek, 1982. José Sérgio Leite Lopes. “A vitória do futebol que incorporou a pelada”, in *Revista USP. Dossiê Futebol*. San Paulo, USP, 1994, p. 22. Amo Vogel. “O momento felis. Reflexões sobre o futebol e o ethos nacional”, in *Universo do Futebol: esporte e sociedade brasileira*. Rio de Janeiro, Pinakothek, 1982.

⁶ Simoni Lahud Guedes. “De criollos e capoeiras: notas sobre futebol e identidade nacional na Argentina e no Brasil”. Ponencia ante el XXVI Encontro Anual da ANPOCS. Caxambu (MG), October 22 – 26, 2002.

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

⁷ Simoni Lahud Guedes. *Op. Cit.*, p. 3.

“várias dimensões identitárias são disputadas, negociadas e construídas (...). Uma delas seria a da nação”⁸. Hobsbawm (1990) was one of the few historians and analysts of modern nations’ processes of “invention” who highlighted the importance of modern sports in the said inventions, particularly as regards the “downtop” construction of nationalism. In these discourses, otherness plays a crucial role. That is why Guedes states that* “Sob tal ponto de vista, não é, absolutamente, irrelevante o fato de ser o futebol é o esporte mais popular do mundo. Trata-se de construir a diferença no interior de um código que todos dominam e em uma prática a que todos atribuem valor, mesmo desigual. A alteridade, portanto, conforme já nos ensinaram os estudiosos dos grupos étnicos (...) não sucede à identificação: é parte do mesmo processo”⁹.

At the same time, it is not just a worldwide practice, though this aspect sheds light on its pregnancy: it is a specially productive space; an area where significant, relevant discourses are generated. According to Archetti¹⁰, “football and tango are both mirrors and masks”, mirrors where Argentineans see themselves reflected, and masks gazed at by others. And this is possible because they comprise what Archetti calls “the free zones” of a culture.

“Regarded as areas where the “national masculine” identity can be displayed, both football and tango reveal how complex these “free zones” can be in relation to “the others”. The trends that rule the society are connected with public institutions such as the school, the military service, work, public ceremonies and national rituals. Like Turner’s anti-structural properties of prelinarity and hybrid sacralization, “free” zones allow the articulation of languages and practices capable of defying the official, puritan public domain. “Free” zones are spaces for mingling, for the rise of hybrids, for sexuality, and for the exaltation of physical feats. In modern societies, sports, games, and dancing are privileged places for an analysis of liberty and cultural creativity. Thus football and tango may be considered to pose a threat to official ideologies”¹¹

However, as we have already said, such liberty and creativity, anchored in the peripheries of the practices installed by official legitimacy, cannot lead to idealizations that stand half-way through populism and postmodernism, or to both at a time. Production occurs in the interstices, but this does not necessarily make it alternative production. As I attempted to prove elsewhere, in Argentina the outcome of narratives that create national identity on the basis of football is complementary with rather opposed to legitimate official narratives. It is inclusive, but its inclusion is managed; it is democratizing, but it is subjected to hierarchical structuring. The invention of football results from very complex formations, where assertions that create identity refer to dissimilar components: migrants, people who live in the same neighborhood, or are part of the same generation or class. Still, they all concur in two basic interpolations –two axes of oppositions: against the English (inventors, owners, managers), and this results in a nationality myth, and against the hegemonic classes (professionals, masters of idleness, stigmatizers), which results in a myth of origin, of humble but not proletarian origin¹².

The double articulation slowly narrows down until it becomes reduced to the one ruled by nationality. Guedes finds similarities with the Brazilian case, though she adds an ethnic component, which she finds in the relationships established among whites, blacks, and half-castes. Interpretation of the second point of articulation –class- loses relevance until significant

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 4.

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

⁹ *Idem*, p. 5.

¹⁰ Eduardo Archetti. *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 42.

¹² Pablo Alabarces. *Op. cit.*, pp. 268 *passim*.

events bring it back to the limelight. When this is the case, it is recovered and brandished argumentatively in contexts where a “popular” epic is needed and possible. In Argentina, perhaps the clearest example of this can be seen from the Maradona saga as the last national, popular, lower-class symbol. In Brasil, the case of Pelé did not follow the same path, and therefore cannot exemplify this thesis.

Thus, the central discussion shifts to matters of “style”, i.e. powerful narratives that mark the differences with respect to another signifier. In both cases, the “other” is the English or, in a wider sense, the European*

“No entrecruzamento destes dois eixos, como uma prática e um espaço semântico do qual se apropriam os ‘nacionais’ (versus o ‘inglês colonizador’) e o ‘povo’ (versus a ‘elite’) cria-se, como sabemos, um primeiro espaço de distinção que permitirá que as criaturas enfrentem o criador, opondo-lhe uma nova criação. Esta criação nova é o que ficou conhecido como ‘futebol-arte’, classificação genericamente aceita tanto para o futebol argentino quanto para o futebol brasileiro, cuja definição contrastiva é o ‘futebol-máquina’ ou ‘futebol-força’, epítetos que se consagraram para o futebol inglês e, secundariamente, todo o futebol europeu”¹³.

The popularization that takes place in both cultures at the same time does not become a narrative whose purpose is to strengthen belonging in a class. These narratives tend to seek differentiation and anchorage in national features, favored by the fact that they are valued and understood* “por todos os segmentos da população e, além do mais, ecoa para além das fronteiras da nação. O “produto” deste processo, tanto no Brasil e quanto na Argentina, resultará na valorização de uma específica corporalidade, num determinado uso social do corpo (...) que explora suas potencialidades estéticas e sua capacidade de vencer o opositor pela habilidade. (...) Neste caso, tanto para brasileiros quanto para argentinos, todos os “outros”, particularmente os “europeus”, são como “máquinas” ou capazes apenas de usar o corpo como força”¹⁴.

It is now clear what brings us together: a narrative of hybridization and miscegenation, articulated by practices that have become popular through a common elitist feature and equally shared origin: both peoples were invaded and colonized, and at the time of their “modern invention” –the first two decades of the 20th Century- found, through football, a diacritical signifier in the social and popular use of the body. What remains to be explored is the cleavage area, or that which brings us apart from each other¹⁵.

Tropicalisms

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

¹³ Simoni Lahud Guedes. *Op. Cit.*, p. 9.

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 11.

¹⁵ “Everything brings us together; nothing drives us apart”. Such were the words uttered by Argentinean President Sáenz Peña, cited by Coelho Neto, the Brazilian representative at the foundational Conference of the South American Football Confederation held in Rio de Janeiro in 1919, and it went on: “de fato tudo nos une: o sangue, a terra, a língua, a religião. Os povos ligam-se pelas raízes que eles mesmos possuem: o amor, o canto dos seus poetas, as angústias dos trabalhos, a solidariedade dos homens infelizes, a crença e a religião. Todos estes fatores fazem com que, qualquer dos países sul-americanos não aspire a hegemonia: todos em conjunto aspiram a hegemonia do Continente. E para a solidariedade dos povos americanos muito tem feito o esporte”. Coelho Neto’s predictive capacity is to be wondered at... I must thank Simone Guedes once again for the data.

Guedes declares that cleavage is to be found in hegemonic ethnic narratives of both countries. It would seem as if the stereotypes constructed around this axis were the main articulators of the difference, from both a historical and a contemporary perspective.

In Brazil:

“O constructo brasileiro alimenta-se, vagamente, do mito das três raças, apresentando-se e representando-se como um amálgama *mestiço*¹⁶ no qual, sem dúvida, o lugar do negro é determinante. O sinal diacrítico, a diferença essencial, é a incorporação simbólica do negro como responsável pela forma ‘espontânea’ de usar o corpo em *dribles*, *malandragem*, *jogo de cintura*, sem qualquer esforço ou aprendizagem. Concepção que está no cerne da própria concepção do ‘povo brasileiro’, esta participação é endeusada ou demonizada, mas está sempre presente. As glórias e as mazelas do futebol brasileiro, muitas vezes, foram pensadas como decorrência de uma específica corporalidade negra, cujo antecedente maior é a capoeira”¹⁷.

Although this process also allows for the construction of a white hero forged in discipline and hard work to achieve body fitness, as can be understood from Helal’s analysis of Zico¹⁸, the keynote should be the narrative of miscegenation as depicted by Gilberto Freyre. This author had a clear purpose in mind when he wrote the prologue to the key book of this narrative, the above mentioned *O negro no futebol brasileiro*, authored by journalist Mario Filho. In Freyre’s words*: “Sublimando tanto do que é mais primitivo, mais jovem, mais elementar, em nossa cultura, era natural que o futebol, no Brasil, ao engrandecer-se em instituição nacional, engrandecesse também o negro, o descendente do negro, o mulato, o cafuso, o mestiço”¹⁹. Still, Guedes bounds in the metaphor*:

“A metáfora autoriza igualmente a interpretação de que, por essa via, estão também sendo denunciadas as ‘ambigüidades e fissuras’ (...) do constructo acerca do ‘estilo brasileiro’. Pois não é, de modo algum, inequívoca ou consensual, no Brasil, a identificação da ‘brasilidade’ com a ‘negritude’. Nem mesmo depois de Gilberto Freyre, dos modernistas e dos tropicalistas, nossa ‘mestiçagem’ constitui-se num valor totalmente compartilhado. Quanto mais não seja porque trata-se de uma sociedade que está longe de incluir os negros na distribuição da riqueza coletiva e como partícipes igualitários de sua construção sócio-política”²⁰.

The narrative of miscegenation enters in combination with a powerful imaginary that Gustavo Lins Ribeiro²¹ has named *tropicalism*, under the influence of Edward Said’s definition of *orientalism* as a stereotyped reduction of a number of complex, heterogeneous features which, by means of this operation, discloses a mark left by the colonizing power that acted: the

¹⁶ Among others, see José Sérgio Leite Lopes. *Op. cit.*.

¹⁷ Simoni Lahud Guedes. *Op. Cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁸ Ronaldo Helal. “As idealizações do sucesso no imaginário futebolístico brasileiro: um estudo de caso”, in Pablo Alabarces (comp.). *Peligro de Gol. Estudios sobre deporte y sociedad en América Latina*. Buenos Aires, Clacso, 2000.

* In Portuguese in the original. [T.N.]

¹⁹ Gilberto Freyre. Prefácio a *O Negro no Futebol Brasileiro*, de Mário Rodrigues Filho. Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira, 1964.

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

²⁰ Simoni Lahud Guedes. *Op. Cit.*, p. 15.

²¹ Gustavo Lins Ribeiro. “Postimperialismo. Diálogo con el poscolonialismo y el multiculturalismo”, in *Postimperialismo. Cultura y política en el mundo contemporáneo*. Buenos Aires, Editorial Gedisa, 2002, pp 39-59.

imposition of a given imaginary. *Tropicalist* (as well as its correlative *Europeist* in Argentina) is a definition that finds favor with both élites and the masses, for the two groups perceive that it is a manner of representing their belonging to nation-states*: “Esta afirmação, evidentemente, não significa a universalidade da eficácia desta matrizes nem que elas não sejam abertamente contestadas por diferentes segmentos”²², but the power of this metaphor “se expressa de maneira complexa e capilar, sendo cantada e reproduzida em diferentes âmbitos rituais, midiáticos e institucionais”²³.

According to Ribeiro, in the famous *Carta*, written by Pero Vaz de Caminha in 1500 and regarded the foundational text of Brazilian culture, two central elements of tropicalism can be found: the luscious generosity of the land, expressed in the phrase* “em se plantando tudo dá”, and the equally luscious sexuality, described in the naked bodies of the aboriginal women*: “De fato, hoje, o ‘corpo nu das nativas’ pressegue como objeto central da construção de estereótipos sobre o Brasil. O que está em jogo é uma visão do corpo da mulher brasileira que a transforma em puro objeto de desejo”²⁴. The display of female images is later on supplemented by descriptions of “Afro-black” women, thus finishing off the construction of a powerful imaginary: that of a society that relieves its tensions in the kitchen, in celebrations, and between the sheets; a* “povo moreno, sensual, alegre e sempre pronto para o sexo”²⁵. This is correlative with the fact that, in present times, football and the half naked women found in Carnival festivals constitute one of the *mediascapes* (according to Appadurai’s classification) that define the image of Brazil in international pop culture. Doubtlessly, it also proves that the stereotypes mentioned are built by men, since they are presented from a masculine gaze and spoken by men’s language.²⁶

Ribeiro continues to state that tropicalism is not exhausted in an erotization of the image of Brazil fixed on the body of an aboriginal, black, or half-caste woman. It is reproduced in the country’s music -the “jeitinho”, the “saudade”-, or in the complex relations that “cannibals” established between tradition and modernity in 1922, or in Mário de Andrade’s *Macunaíma* (1928)²⁷. Indigenism is a crucial aspect of the imaginary, contrarily to what happens in Argentina, where the tendency is to cast away such components as might call the country’s *Europeism* into question. Thus, although the demographic significance of the indigenous population is relatively smaller in Brazil than it is in Argentina (0.2 % of the population versus

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

²² *Ibid*, p. 248.

²³ *Idem*, p. 249.

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

²⁴ *Id.*, p. 250.

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

²⁵ *Idem*, p. 255. This notion provides correlative information about the Argentinean imaginary of Brazilian features. According to Alejandro Frigerio, Brazilian female migrants in Argentina complain that Argentinean men think of them as “fast”; i.e. men only bear in mind this component of the stereotype. Alejandro Frigerio. “A alegria é somente brasileira. A exotização dos migrantes brasileiros em Buenos Aires”, in A. Frigerio and G. Lins Ribeiro (eds.). *Argentinos e brasileiros. Encontros, imagens e estereótipos*. Petrópolis, Vozes, 2002, páginas 15-40.

²⁶ A phenomenon that resembles the one studied in Argentina by Archetti, who pointedly called his work *Masculinidades*. For further information, see Mosse’s study of the construction of male images in Western Europe: G. Mosse. *Nationalism and Sexuality. Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*. Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, and *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1996.

²⁷ Tropicalism can acquire either transgressive or resistant characteristics. Cannibalism laid emphasis on re-creation as a marker of differentiation. See G. Lins Ribeiro. *Op. cit.*, p. 260.

1.24 %) ²⁸, identification of this group is facilitated by the fact that all indigenous Brazilians are hunters and gatherers in the tropical jungles. On the other hand, regardless of any statistical or demographic consideration, Argentina tends to overrate an Inca imaginary: the few imprints of Indigenism in cultural tradition have been chosen from imperial images rather than from tropical or nomadic tribes ²⁹.

The tropicalist imaginary is specially highlighted in stereotypes derived from football. As pointed out by Guedes, one trait relates a style in the game to a particular use of bodies; a use facilitated by the color of the skin. On the other hand, the trope *macacos*, typically voiced by Argentineans, reminds us that the gaze of the other needs to stereotype in order to indicate the cleavage and establish an otherness that may confirm his own identity. While it is true that the association between the nickname and the stereotyped meaning dates from two hundred years ago –we find it in Colonial times, in *gaucho* literature, in the recurrent geopolitical confrontations between Argentina and Brazil in the past two centuries- football keeps it alive. Ribeiro defines the sport as a “strong clash of stereotyped attitudes” ³⁰. Alejandro Frigerio agrees: “Além do mais, o estereótipo anteriormente construído dos brasileiros como sendo negros, *macaquitos* sem cultura, continua latente, podendo ser acionado em ocasiões de forte emotividade e antagonismo, como é o caso dos jogos de futebol. Nessas ocasiões, a diferença pode voltar a ser um estigma, ao invés de um aspecto positivo” ³¹. Franzini ³² tells us that, regarding football, the nickname goes back a long way: in 1920, when the Brazilian football team made a stopover in Buenos Aires on their way to Chile, where they were going to participate in a South American Cup, a Buenos Aires newspaper seems to have published an article illustrated with caricatures that named the players *macaquitos*. The unwonted thing –or else a sign that revealed how these imaginaries affected the minds of the élites- was that the following year President Epitácio Pessoa is said to have demanded that the team that was to compete for the South American Cup in Buenos Aires should not include black players.

Even more unwonted is the fact that the nickname persists outside daily language. In 1996, after the semifinals of the Olympic Games held in Atlanta, the Argentinean team earned a place in the finals, while Brazil and Nigeria contended for the other remaining place. *Olé*, a recently founded sports newspaper published the following headline on its front cover: “Now let the *macacos* come!”. Five years later, despite the criticism this headline had aroused, the same newspaper, on the occasion of the qualifying rounds that were being played to gain entrance in the 2002 World Cup, published a picture of a half-naked half-caste above the following caption: “Are you available tonight?”. Negritude and sexuality, the two central components of the tropicalist imaginary, were blended together in the football discourse spread by the media. Its most loud version, popular with Argentinean football fans, is the racist, homophobic chorus that goes “Everybody knows that Brazil is in mourning/they are all black/they are all poofs” ^{*}. This was first sung during the 1978 World Cup, an event that brings dreadful memories to mind.

²⁸ Data by G. Lins Ribeiro. *Op. cit.*, p. 256.

²⁹ This can be seen from Belgrano’s attempt at establishing a local monarchy of Inca origin at the time of the Independence struggles, in the writings by Joaquín V. González in the late 19th Century, and in Ricardo Rojas’s re-edition of *Ollantay* in the early 20th Century, for example. It can also be seen in the weight of the imaginary and the imagery typical of certain sectors of the culture consumed by young people, especially those who are more involved in politics than others, and in the initiatic value of the trip made to the Argentinean North, which systematically extends to Macchu Picchu. In Argentina, these are positive sides of indigenism.

³⁰ G. Lins Ribeiro. *Op. cit.*, p. 260.

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

³¹ Alejandro Frigerio. *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

³² Fabio Franzini. *As Raízes do País do Futebol. Estudo sobre a relação entre o futebol e a nacionalidade brasileira 1919-1950*. Dissertação (Mestrado em História Social). Universidade de São Paulo, 2000.

* The eighth and the last word of the chorus rhyme in Spanish [TN]

Gauchos, Europeisms, and smart guys that end up being cheats

Naturally, these heterogeneous manners of exchanging glances are possible owing to the twofold way in which the Brazilian tropicalist imaginary and the white, European self-image of the Argentineans interplay. Starting by Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1847), where the confrontation between civilization and barbarism equated the two antagonistic poles to Europe and America, and continuing by the Campaign to the Desert (1879) – the genocide committed against Patagonian tribes when the policy of the times decided on the expansion of the arable frontier – the Argentinean invention is white and *Europeist*, as confirmed by the immigration policies that populated the country with Spanish and Italian offspring. Access to civilization is defined by the “whitening” of the population in its relation to Europe and strongly encouraged by State decisions and by the “melting pot” myth. In spite of the fact that it would have been the right time for democratization, the ethnic segmentation was ratified during the Peronist administration, when class ethnocentrism became ethnic by stigmatizing domestic migrants to Buenos Aires and calling them “cabecita negra”, with the later addition of such nicknames as “paragua” or “bolita” thrown at immigrants from border countries*.

However, when it comes to football, the narratives of origin that defined a *criollo* style – “our style”, should have been grounded differently. At a certain point, Argentinean *Europeism* should have become *criollista**: when immigration threatened homogenization of the élites, in a linguistic and ideological Babel, in addition to the gradual process of unionization and the growing weight of anarchism among the new popular classes that emerged at the beginning of the century. Instead, *gauchismo* was exalted, and the choice of the gaucho figure as the myth that accounted for both race and Argentinean belonging points to a frustrated feeling of *Europeism*, forced to turn Latin American at the peremptory need to prolong hegemony³³. At that moment, football produces a paradoxically nationalist narrative: as I have already said, in its first ethnic articulation, football takes on its *criollo* characteristics against the English, and this is achieved by Spanish and Italian immigrants. The fact that in 1912 Racing became the first *criollo* team was due that Perinettis and Ochoas replaced the Browns. The phonic change indicates an ethnic change narrated as *Argentinization*. This is the story told by journalist Borocotó in *El Gráfico*: a hybridization model in which the immigrant components (Italians and Spaniards, for the English cannot be included) are transformed when touched by a supposedly *gaucho essence*, supported on *mate*, *asado* (barbecue), and landscape. All of this results in a particular manner of playing the game, first practiced on empty plots of land; an emptiness that highlights the metaphoric lingering of the cattle-raising model: football players become Argentinean in the same places where cows or *criollo* horses can be crossbred with European breeds in order to give birth to great hybrids.

Then why not construct an imaginary based on the *pampas* rather than in Europe? Let us resort to well-known images of Argentinean culture during the early decades of the century: in Carnival, immigrants disguised as gauchos, according to narrations by Adolfo Prieto³⁴; Gardel

* “cabecita negra” refers to the thick, raven black hair of these migrants and, by extension, to their swarthy complexion indicative of their aboriginal descent. The other two nicknames are pejorative ways of addressing Paraguayans and Bolivians respectively. [TN]

* “criollo” and “criollista” have named Argentinean natives of Spanish origin since colonial times.

³³ A good study of the corresponding intellectual process can be found in Carlos Altamirano y Beatriz Sarlo. *Ensayos argentinos. De Sarmiento a la vanguardia*. Buenos Aires, CEAL, 1982. For football, see Archetti and Alabarces.

³⁴ Adolfo Prieto. *El discurso criollista en la formación de la Argentina moderna*. Buenos Aires. Editorial Sudamericana, 1988.

in *gaucho* apparel in some scenes of his films; Valentino wearing a similar costume in *Four Horsemen of Apocalypse*; the unstable staging of the first tango which, besides, was composed by folklore singers (again Gardel, together with Razzano). At the same time, Gardel dons a *smoking*^{*}, succeeds in Europe and signs a contract with Paramount. In spite of the idle *criollista* pastimes indulged in by the élites and of Borocotó's visits to the plots of land where amateurs played football, the re-invention of Argentina cannot be reduced to telluric essentialism, for the new imaginary is mostly urban and modern, and such features do not go well with rural roots. The construction of the new imaginary, achieved with the active collaboration of football, has the metropolis as the only center where all the narratives concur. Buenos Aires, though peripheral, in Sarlo's words³⁵, is a modern city where the rural can at most be thought of as the referent for agricultural and cattle-raising wealth. Thus, the *pampas* acquire a twofold meaning related to property: the property of the signifier, which allows for epic *gaucho* narratives, stories about the origin and, in one word, the management of the past transformed into myth, and the actual ownership of the land, where wealth and meaning are managed and decided on; therefore, the seat of power. This is why the typical features of the *pampas*, *criollismo*, and *gauchismo* are left as traces of a mythical past, and move on to support an unyielding Sarmiento-style present: urban, civilized, and European.

On account of what has been said, football builds its diacritic signs under tension. It must differentiate itself from Europe; the purpose is to outdo the masters... and then be accepted by them. It was not without reason that the advent of the new style was produced on the arena of the "others". It happened in 1925, during Boca's in Europe, and in 1928, during the Olympic Games held in Amsterdam, where Argentineans and Uruguayans played the finals. As could have been predicted, the latter carried off the Cup, giving rise to the notion of *rioplatense* football^{*}, thus including the Montevideo team in an attempt to conceal defeat.

After these events, two more features were incorporated in the football stereotype. One was a special kind of smartness called *viveza criolla*. This behavior derives from the Spanish picaresque tradition, built up by popular sectors –the old history of the poor fighting the rich with the only weapon available to them, i.e., cunning– points to aspects of the *Argentinean* stereotype, although the enormous influence of Buenos Aires in the construction of the imaginary, the stereotype tends to generalize characteristics that only apply to the inhabitants of Buenos Aires. But in the end, the *smart guy* becomes a sheer cheat. Even if this would surely be denied in any conversation held in an Argentinean *café*, the self-image of smartness is read by the victim as *cheating*, as the violation of a rule for the sake of personal gain. This is how Maradona's hand in 1968 is perceived: as a transgression deserving punishment rather than as the climax of *Argentinean smartness*.

The other feature is violence. It appears in disguise, pretending to be *smartness*, pretending that it is taking advantage of the twists and turns of the rules; sometimes it is veiled with masculine meanings, like when the phrase "a man's game" is heard. Violence escalated as from the 60s, in the countless kicks shot by Argentinean teams at other players during international competitions. In this field, it outdoes everything else: in the 90s, a commercial advertising Brazilian football boots used the following slogan^{*}: "Mais animal que zagueiro argentino".

* *Sic.* [TN] In Argentina, the word took the meaning of "tuxedo".

³⁵ Beatriz Sarlo. *Una modernidad periférica: Buenos Aires 1920 y 1930*. Buenos Aires, editorial Nueva Visión, 1988.

* The adjective refers to "Río de la Plata", the river that flows between Buenos Aires and the Uruguayan capital.

[TN]

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

Stereotypes, parody, and the media

There is no need to explain that the social sciences are not interested in preserving such stereotypes. Quite the contrary, and going back to Octavio Ianni's initial postulations, this play on typifications that developed into enunciates dictated by common sense fosters the illusion of a society where meanings are fixed, "situado, organizado, compreendido, explicado e decantado"³⁶. Far from assuming that our work consists in reproducing organized meanings, we feel that it is about breaking down those common sense; in proving their fallacies, their historicity, and in bringing to light what they are preventing and blocking. Ribeiro says that stereotyped simplification is a way of disciplining and managing heterogeneity³⁷; that is to say, of reducing density and polyphony.

This is the purpose of the media, the narrations of trivialized sports journalism, the commercials whose jingoistic, xenophobic nationalism mask economic management and maximization of profit. Ethnocentric narrations of international games and low target chauvinism never cease to reproduce the stereotype (as is clear from the examples we extracted from *Olé*). According to those commercials that celebrate the *victories of the fatherland*, Argentina's elimination from a World Cup "amounts to hitting the jackpot."³⁸ To some Brazilian beer or other, solidarity with Argentina during the 2002 crisis was important: the *torcedores*, moved and grave, discussed the seriousness of the situation... until they burst into laughter and rejoiced. Guedes wonders*: "a rivalidade é maior do que a solidariedade ou, na verdade, a rivalidade é tamanha que a grave crise econômica argentina provoca a alegria?"³⁹.

We have indeed gone a far way from the parodic humor that in, in schematization, highlights the miseries of a culture. In the works of Roberto Fontanarrosa, where the stereotype is criticized because it does not have a leg to stand on, typification turns into laughter, for it addresses us as speakers of a discourse established by others, alienated inside a language build over centuries of schematization. Along these lines, only the awesome figure of Wilmar Everton Cardaña, the whip of South American football fields, can be viewed as an Uruguayan *centrehalf*

"What a lot of civic courage could lie behind the glorious number 5 attached to Peñarol's shirt, whether he played on the green lawn of Estadio Centenario, at any club of nearby Buenos Aires, or on the very grass of so many Brazilian football pitches, where the fragile, always pusillanimous dark guys regarded him as a myth! (...) Right there, in front of me, Wilmar Everton Cardaña, "The Man", "The Unvanquished Captain", "The Axe" Cardaña was crying. The one who, in one breath, had hushed up one hundred fifty thousand terrified Brazilians at the end of the Roca Cup! The one who, in none other than Wembley stadium, had pulled down his pants and his bright red briefs in order to show Queen Elizabeth his hairy Uruguayan light blue testicles!"⁴⁰

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

³⁶ Octavio Ianni. *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

³⁷ G. Lins *Op. cit.*, p. 261.

³⁸ Guedes tells that Mastercard's publicity on Brazilian TV. during the 2002 Cup played in Korea-Japan made use of this slogan. Guedes. *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

³⁹ Simoni Lahud Guedes. *Op. Cit.*, p. 6.

* In English in the original. [TN]

⁴⁰ Roberto Fontanarrosa. "Wilmar Everton Cardaña, número cinco de Peñarol", en *Puro fútbol*. Buenos Aires, ediciones De la Flor, 2000, pp. 85-90.

In the hyperbole of the typifying narrative, Fontanarrosa underscores its boundaries, its construction as a myth, its explanatory uselessness; he makes it clear that a stereotype can end up in either laughter or failure. Thus, working on the erotic imaginary based on Brazilian women, the travelling salesman who is eager to get involved in sexual intercourse with a native will only meet failure, for the successive stereotypes (urban violence, easy availability, hidden transvestitism, Argentinean schematic thought in its “smart, know-all” aspect) lead him straight into erotic frustration⁴¹.

Even if we are condemned to “a mirror game”, both Argentineans and Brazilians need a wider sense of humor, more criticism and less schematic reproduction: such is Ribeiro’s conclusion, which I have chosen to close this paper.

*“Enquanto Brasil e Argentina não saírem da armadilha do tropicalismo e do europeísmo, construída ao longo de séculos pelo discurso ocidental hegemônico, estarão sendo ventríloquos de vozes de outros ou repetidores de estereótipos que só interessam à reprodução da hegemonia. Assim como as pessoas, sujeitos políticos individuais, as coletividades, sujeitos políticos coletivos, que não sabem quem são, não sabem o que querem, nem para onde vão”⁴².

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⁴¹ Roberto Fontanarrosa. “Elige tu propia aventura (para adultos)”, en *El mayor de mis defectos*. Buenos Aires, Ediciones De la Flor, 1990.

* In Portuguese in the original. [TN]

⁴² G. Lins Ribeiro. *Op. cit.*, p. 262.

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Abstract:

Through an analysis of football, this paper explores the use of stereotypes in narratives dealing with national identity in Argentina and Brazil, on the basis of an earlier study authored by Simoni Lahud Guedes. While the construction of a football identity seems to have been similar to the one achieved by the English, who created the game mastered the field, this paper intends to focus on the border areas, i.e. on the way in which the differences between Argentineans and Brazilians was narrated, and on the use of such stereotypes as tropicalism and Europeism. The said stereotypes –resulting from a colonial look that intends to reduce heterogeneity in order to gain symbolic power, as Edward Said writes regarding orientalism- appear to be pregnant and effective, although they need to be deconstructed by the social sciences or else by parodic humor.

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