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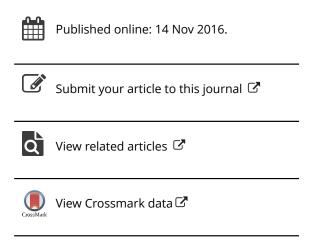
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## 'Brazil, Tell Me How It Feels': Soccer, Music, Narcissism, and the State, or Mascherano's Failure

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# 'Brazil, Tell Me How It Feels': Soccer, Music, Narcissism, and the State, or Mascherano's Failure

#### PABLO ALABARCES

## 1. Introduction (with a Detour Along the Roads of Roots Rock)

In the early 1960s, like so many others of their era, three young North Americans, John Fogerty, Doug Clifford, and Stu Cook, all born in 1945, formed a rock band. The band was from the town of El Cerrito, just north of San Francisco, and was initially called *The Blue Velvets*, a slightly ridiculous yet sonorous name.

The Blue Velvets would eventually expand to a quartet with the incorporation of John's older brother, Tom Fogerty, who with his rhythmic guitar would complement John's guitar and vocals, Doug Clifford's bass (he had previously played the piano), and Stu Cook's percussion. After Clifford, Cook and the younger Fogerty's military service, they hired a music producer who recommended they change the name of the band, and they decided to take his advice. Thus, in 1967, The Blue Velvets became Creedence Clearwater Revival (another sonorous name, but much more original than the first). In 1968, the band obtained its first contract to record its first album, self-titled Creedence Clearwater Revival. Then, in 1969, Creedence released its second disc, Bayou Country, which featured the famous single 'Proud Mary'. In April of 1969, the band edited the single 'Bad Moon Rising', which would interestingly become the most-listened-to song in the Southern Cone during June and July 2014. In August of the same year, Creedence edited its third album, Green River (worth noting as another hit single), and then in November edited another long-play record, Willy and the Poor Boys. In 1970 the band first recorded a single, the famous 'Traveling Band' whose b-side was 'Who'll Stop the Rain?' in addition to Cosmo's Factory which was edited in July. This went on to become Creedence's most successful and most sold album, selling more than 4 million records throughout the years and reaching the top spot on the U.S., British, and Australian charts, among others.

In an attempt to follow the mercantile momentum of *Cosmo's Factory's* remarkable success, *Creedence* decided not to wait to release another long-play album and recorded *Pendelum* in December of 1970. Two years and many internal conflicts later, the group edited *Mardi Gras*, which was the last long-play released by *Creedence Clearwater Revival*. The band's final album sold much less, and found the band distraught with major internal disputes. Tom Fogerty had already deserted the group a few months earlier, a decision motivated in large part by the excessive narcissism of his brother John who wrote, composed, and sang all of *Creedence's* songs. The official date of the

band's break-up was 6 October 1972, according to an announcement by Fantasy Records, and soon after *Creedence Clearwater Revival* dropped off the map. In 1990, Tom Fogerty's death due to complications from AIDS, which he had contracted from a blood transfusion, ultimately ended any possibility of a *Creedence* reunion. Nevertheless, John Fogerty still continues to play the band's original hits as a solo artist while in 1995 Clifford and Cook formed a band called *Creedence Clearwater Revisited*, paying homage to the original group and playing the same songs over and over again.

Creedence's popularity was immense, and its influence spread in various directions. Two such directions, distant both in time and space, include the well-known North American musician Kurt Cobain, who had played in a tribute band that performed Creedence songs before forming his own renowned band, Nirvana, and the Argentine group Callejeros in South America. Callejeros was one of the most important exponents of the so-called rock chabón, a simultaneous reference to its own somewhat anachronic music and to its popular audiences; the group was originally called Green River before adopting the name with which they would attain a certain level of local fame. Thus, Creedence's 'roots rock', as music critics would classify the band's style, would be the decisive inspiration for the birth of North American 'grunge' as well as an importance presence in the development of Argentine 'popular' rock. These influences, prolonged throughout time, can be seen in contemporary musicians' different, and extremely varied versions of Creedence's works as well as in the incorporation of their songs in the sound tracks or background music of several mass culture products, mainly in film and television.

This is the case of 'Bad Moon Rising', recorded in 1969 and edited as a single in April of the same year, four months before the release of the album *Green River*, as previously stated. The song quickly rose to number 2 on the *Billboard Hot 100 Singles Chart* and to number 1 on the *UK Singles Chart*, becoming the band's second gold record. In 2011, the magazine *Rolling Stone* ranked the song as number 364 on its list of the best 500 songs of all time. There are at least 20 cover versions of the song, from the most varied musical styles, including Jerry Lee Lewis's country interpretation, <sup>1</sup> Jerry Lee Lewis and John Fogerty's country rock version, <sup>2</sup> *Battlefield Band*'s traditional Scottish music remodel, <sup>3</sup> *Lagwagon's* punk version, <sup>4</sup> Thea Gilmore's punk cover, <sup>5</sup> and *Mourning Ritual's* electronica interpretation, <sup>6</sup> which accentuates the song's terrifying aspects to adapt it to the soundtrack of the TV series *The Walking Dead*. As a fruitful addendum to this list, among the many versions compiled in the Wikipedia entry for the song there is the following reference to its most recent Argentine interpretation:

The song has become notably popular in Argentina as a soccer (fútbol) chant, sung by fans at the stadium to support their teams during soccer matches. Different versions of the lyrics exist for different local teams and even political parties. During the 2014 FIFA World Cup, a modified version titled 'Brasil, decime qué se siente' ('Brazil, Tell Me How It Feels') with Spanish lyrics that taunted Brazil, Argentina's traditional rival, went viral and became very popular in Argentina. It was adopted as the unofficial anthem for the Argentine team by its fans, and was sung by fans and players alike. After Brazil lost 7–1 in the semi-final against Germany, the song was once again adapted.<sup>7</sup>

### 2. Rock, Peronism, and Cultural Industry

In regards to this issue, two questions can be asked, and both can only be answered with conjectures. Why *Creedence*? Why 'Bad Moon Rising'?

The conjecture in response to the first question is political. In a text published during the Brazil World Cup, Fernando García, an Argentine cultural critic, asserts that Creedence Clearwater Revival's rock can be interpreted as a kind of 'Peronist rock'. 8 Part of the evidence leading to García's revelation was the example of sociologist and pollster Artemio López, a recognized Peronist whose opinion blog—consistently aligned with official Kirchnerist positions—is titled Ramble Tamble. As we know, 'Ramble Tamble' is one of the songs included on Creedence's 1970 album Cosmo's Factory, and, in case this association was confusing, López's blog also includes numerous links explicitly honouring Creedence. According to García's interpretation, Creedence's rock should be considered rustic, simple, physical, and visceral, or vigorously anti-intellectual. These traits can be observed beyond the rhythmic and timbre qualities of the music, by the plaid lumberjack shirts the band members commonly wore, which in a North American iconography represents blue-collar work clothes. These characteristics replacing the clothes, would be isotopical with a Peronist representation: rustic, simple, physical, visceral, and vigorously anti-intellectual politics. Furthermore, García extends his interpretation in the sense that Creedence's strained relationship with hippie rock (hegemonic in the U.S. in the late 1960s and early 1970s) could be considered analogous to the complicated, rocky relationship between Peronism and the Marxist-Guevarist left of the same era.

Garcías's analysis is possibly excessive here, both the Peronist Youth and the young left shared a strong repudiation of the rock culture, labelling it as fleeting and uncommitted, even suggesting it was made up of homosexuals and addicts ('we're not fags, we're not junkies/we're soldiers of Perón and Montoneros', declared one chant of the era). <sup>10</sup> If *Creedence's* popularity truly survived in the margins of society, stranger to the post-hippie canon organizing Argentine rock from the mid-1970s until the end of the last military dictatorship, it finally came to rest in its reappearance marked by 'popular' rock from the streets and simultaneously marginal and massive, as in the case of the so-called *rock chabón*, mentioned above and about which much has been written. <sup>11</sup>

The second question, even though the first has not been answered but for a wandering conjecture, can be answered in the same way. If one where to question 'Why *Creedence*?', the response ought to be political (because *Creedence* would be a kind of Peronist rock), the choice of the song 'Bad Moon Rising' brings us to a similar crossroads. The main reason a fan base chooses a melody for its songs is always for ease of musical memory as well as rhythmic or metric comfort: one which unites an easy recognition of the melody (that everyone can sing and remember easily) with the simplicity with which new lyrics can be applied to the old metric and rhythmic format. This must be considered not only in musical terms but also in literary terms (for example, the measure of the verse). Thus, the first problem emerges from the fact that *Creedence's* song was no longer part of the musical memory of the young generations that reinterpreted it,

but they did, nevertheless, in a political key with the version popularized by the Kirchnerist youth and the political association 'La Cámpora' in the last few years:

I've been supporting this project Project, national and popular I swear that in the bad times The guys will always be there Because Nestor didn't leave I carry him in my heart With the leader of the soldiers of Perón<sup>12</sup>

Here we arrive at a classic dilemma of the chicken and the egg because, simultaneously, before, or after, the football version of the melody could be heard in the stadiums of Argentina.

Firstly, it was first sung by the fans of San Lorenzo, and evidently, there is unanimity in the assertion that they were the first fans to do so. Secondly, it is also traditionally recognized as the most creative of Argentine football:

I come from the neighborhood of Boedo Neighborhood of 'murga' and carnival I swear that in the bad times I will always be at your side

Let's go, let's go Matador Let's go, let's go Matador Let's go, let's go, let's go Matador<sup>13</sup>

The reiteration *ad nauseam* of 'let's go let's go Matador, let's go, let's go Matador, let's go, let's go, let's go Matador' demonstrates, in spite of the fans' mythical creativity, a certain poetic shortsightedness. If in the elaboration of the first verse there is no significant change in the poetic tradition of the crowd, the chorus is evidence of a regression. However, it can be said that this song inscribed the passage of *Creedence Clearwater Revival* into Argentine music-football culture.

Even if we accept that the conjectural response to both questions is simultaneously political and that Peronism is the bridge that unites both appropriations, many doubts still must be resolved. One such doubt is the question of authorship. Although it has not been discussed in depth by the available bibliography on the subject, as we know, all the melodies of the songs of football fans are derived from popular music. The fans can boast of their poetic prowess and originality but not of their melodic creativity. All of the melodies have been taken from popular music, or in other words, from mass culture. For it has nothing to do with folk or anonymous melodies, but rather with melodies circulating among mass culture. Every stadium song and political song comes from popular music, understood in a restricted sense as a product which circulates among mass culture. At the same time, the origin of the lyrics is typically not widely known, except for internal mythologies of the same fans. Therefore, we can consider the lyrics of these stadium songs as a pop culture text and no longer as one of mass culture, not as a mercantile product diffused by the 'spurious, commercial, and

omnipotent' mechanisms of mass culture, but rather finding a pop culture text there: a text without mediation put forth by popular culture. Could it be that here, in the lyrics of a fans' song, we can find a space to interpret a subaltern voice inscribed upon the text of mass culture?

However, every popular culture analyst's dream should draw back before the evidence in this case. The Argentine fans' appropriation of 'Bad Moon Rising' and its transformation into the hit of the 2014 World Cup is well documented. The lyrics of 'Brazil, tell me how it feels' was written by Ignacio Harraca, friend of one Diego Scordo. The new version was registered at the National Direction of Authors rights in order to be protected under law 11.723 which governs the rights of authors in Argentina. According to various journalistic sources, a group of middle class youths, with enough economic power to allow them to spend 35 days in Brazil, printed 400 copies of their song and distributed them among the Argentine fans wandering the streets of Copacabana in the days previous to the Argentine National Team's debut. More precisely, they ensured that the song was passed around among the fans who tried to pull off a 'banderazo' on Saturday, 14 July, occupying the Cariocan streets as a way to declare their presence in enemy 'territory', a classic practice among Argentine fans. 14 However, the success of their attempt that the new version of the song would be adopted unanimously by the Argentine fans present in the Brazilian stadiums as well as by those unable to travel, was also transformed into a mercantile gesture. The authors were to be paid author's rights each time their 'version' of John Fogerty's song was played by the media, in accordance with the fares set by SADAIC (the Argentine Society of Authors and Composers, which unlawfully holds the authorial music rights). For the second time in Argentine football history, a fanatic's song resulted in economic benefits for its authors.

Once again, it would seem that the populist temptation to reclaim the anonymous, collective, and popular authorship of mass phenomena must cede before the capitalist, dramatic, and industrialized organization of mass culture from which football cannot escape, and would not even try.

## 3. Rhythmic Shortcuts of Nation(s) in the Globalization Era

In his previously cited article, García proposes other interpretative complexities in respect to the patriotic-football version of 'Bad Moon Rising':

The rhythmic inversion of the original song sung by the Argentine crowds explains better than any field research just how deep Creedence's old hits truly reach on the social pyramid. The version which made way for the Cámpora's militant chorus and then to 'Tell me how it feels' realigns Creedence's original version until situating it in a place between 'murga' and 'cumbia'.

Thus, in the end, football fans ultimately nationalized class taste for Creedence in order to impose ['Brazil, tell me how it feels'] as the new official song of the Argentine National Team. 'Let's go, let's go, Argentina' could now be stigmatized as resilient residue from the period 1976–1983, and even the complex scheme of its authorship fits into the puzzle of the 1978 World Cup as an evil triumph of Argentine football.<sup>15</sup>

This quote refers simultaneously to two facets. First, in the last reference, it brings us directly to a previous case of wealth stemming from the author's rights to a song. The hit 'Let's go, let's go, Argentina' was popularized during the dictatorship and reached its climax during the 1978 World Cup, when the song was heard massively:

Let's go, let's go, Argentina Let's go, let's go win Because these feisty fans Will not, will not stop cheering.

Despite the precarious nature of the song, as well as its metaphoric and lyric simplicity, perhaps precisely for these reasons this verse and that melody were transformed into almost the only 'national' song throughout three decades. At the same time, Argentine football culture boasted about its limitless creativity, the support of the National Team continued to fall back on the lines inherited from the World Cup of the dictatorship. There was a long authorial conflict over the song, finally resolved in this century in favour of the duo Rocky Mellace and Enrique Núñez, who had originally registered the song in 1977, though later interpreters and re-versioners would try to seize it for themselves. The appearance of 'Brazil, tell me how it feels' came to clear this symbolic debt, which is that the hegemonic song during the National Team's matches would be a dictatorial inheritance.

García's text, however, proposes another more productive development in its reference to class and rhythm. As García indicates, the rhythm proposed by the crowds—already present in the political-peronist version and maintained intact in the football version's tempo—abandons Creedence's original rock in order to rest in cumbia's rhythmic abyss. Nevertheless, the best contrast proceeds from a kind of Brazilian contra-version diffused by the social networks, one which does not seem to have had much circulation nor popular echo, <sup>16</sup> and responds to the original argentine one.

Here the words do not matter, but what does matter is the rhythmic pattern, which abandons 'Argentine' cumbia and veers toward 'Brazilian' samba. With regard to García's affirmation regarding the 'fans nationalizing class taste for Creedence', the rhythmic pattern is transformed, thus, into a double index signalling the dimensions of class and nation. Conversely, the Brazilian appropriation has no other remedy than to 'nationalize' the Argentine version as a kind of ethnic obligation. Here, there is an exaggeration and at the same time, there exists the possibility of interpretation upon which I want to insist. The exaggeration lies in that the 'cumbiafication' of Creedence does not redirect us to class taste but instead to the ways in which cumbia has been transformed into a kind of national Argentine music. To support this affirmation would require an expansive elaboration, and we have already worked on it in other texts. <sup>17</sup> Cumbia remits us to a popular universe, but it exceeds the limits of social class and becomes a much broader sort of rhythmic pattern, especially suited for its use by football crowds for its simplicity and capacity to support the most varied of versions.

On the other hand, the possible interpretation cumbia offers—and its contrast with the samba version—is much more suggestive because it places us at yet

another decisive crossroad in the treatment and analysis of major events such as the World Cup: the intersection of national narratives and patriotic representations. Although this concept has been analysed extensively (even in my own work), there have not been enough references to how these discussions can converge, precisely, with musical issues, and not just with football crowds, which generally work on, more or less, stable reduced rhythmic variations. I insist, however, that these topics still require further research which radically flees the celebratory, populist, or neo-romantic interpretations which only consider popular creativity. No, here I want to draw attention to more extensive musical compositions of the World Cup, focusing on those related to the 'official' music such as the songs or musical scores which function as the 'universal' presentation and identification of the event.

Starting from the inauguration ceremony of the 2014 World Cup, the Argentine press adopted a tone lamenting the alleged 'lack of Brazilianness'. Furthermore, an article by Gonzalo Aguilar, a scholar of Brazilian literature and culture, extended the discussion of the important relationship between music and football in Brazil, a relationship essentially ignored by the inauguration. <sup>19</sup> Aguilar quotes a Brazilian friend who exclaimed: 'Why doesn't Pitbull open for the Baseball World Cup?!!'. Nevertheless, a debate on the electronic discussion board of the IASPM-L (International Association of Popular Music Studies, Latinamerican Branch) indicated that the inclusion of Claudia Leitte in the ceremony decisively demonstrated said 'Brazilianness', not as a tropicalist stereotype but rather as a sign of the insertion of Brazilian pop into global pop.

As my colleague Felipe Trotta affirms: 'What I see and listen to in Brazil is a deep identification with the global pop world, within which Brazil presents an important accent, a different one, but which doesn't wish to be really dissonant' (personal communication). Further analysis of the topic is necessary, especially integral analyses which take into account all the musical elements displayed during the Cup, in the inauguration and closing ceremonies, in rhythmic and melodic terms, as well as in the corporal performances on display during both ceremonies, to indicate just a few signs which should be attended to. However, a first hypothesis is that Argentine criticism in both graphic and television journalism the condemnation was unanimous, and would have worked more on the stereotype than on the analysis itself. In other words, it would have founded its criticism on what it had expected and imagined of the ceremony based, on a stereotyped imaginary which reduces Brazilian culture's complexity to a more or less, attractive mix of samba, caipirinha, mulatas, and carnival within the possibilities, and all of this together on white-sandy beaches.

Of course, the analysis of World Cup music should deal simultaneously with a complicated crossroads between different elements: stereotypes, auto- and hetero-attributions, local traditions, folklorisms, and global pop, all of that carefully seasoned with the unavoidable condition of the World Cup as global merchandise. Essentially, The analysis should be produced within a historic framework revealing the not-necessarily-linear processes of change but with a fairly well-marked tendency since the 1990 World Cup in Italy. The first music recognized as an 'official theme' was that of Chile 1962, a rock and roll song ('The World Cup Rock', performed by Los Rambles an unknown local band) clearly in debt to Bill Haley and

Elvis Presley, essentially a tribute to the explosion of North American rock during that period.<sup>20</sup> The second, on the other hand, in the 1966 World Cup in England, was a folk ballad titled 'Where In This World Are We Going' by Lonnie Donegan, known as the 'King of the Skiffle', which produced an expected turn toward the display of local music on the stage of world events (the absence of simultaneous satellite transmission for the world does not allow us to call them global yet).<sup>21</sup>

The 1970 World Cup in Mexico solidified this tendency with the song 'Football Mexico 70' by Roberto Do Nascimento, a terror which combined airs of international pop with clear accents of Mexican ranchera and a decidedly unbearable infantile chorus. The music of Germany 1974 introduced a not-so-cheerful innovation: the song 'Fussball Ist Unser Leben' ('Football is our life') by Werner Drexler, with its air of a German march sung by players of the German National Team alongside professional musicians. Intentionally enshew the music of 1978 and moving on to the 1982 World Cup in Spain which was musicalized by the famous local tenor Plácido Domingo who performed 'The World Cup', a terrible song exhibiting all the common places of sporting event rhetoric and of musical localism. Finally, in this series previous to 1990, the 1986 World Cup in Mexico was musicalized by the song 'The Green Wave', once again with the participation of national team players; it was a conventional and lively advertising jingle, but at least it had minimal folklorist accents.

As anticipated, the 1990 World Cup in Italy was a turning point; the bibliography marks it as tournament in which the World Cup decidedly became a global event, transmitted to billions of spectators around the globe and with a powerful synergy between sport, television, sponsors, merchandizing of big brands, and now globalized sports stars. In the same way, the music stopped combining local and sporting celebrations in order to finally assume global pop as the place of enunciation. The song 'Un'estate italiana' ('An Italian Summer', interpreted and co-written by Gianna Nannini and Edoardo Bennato, is usually considered the best of this particular musical history<sup>26</sup> and demonstrates in itself the transformation we are highlighting. A first version, 'To Be Number One', with music by the Italian Giorgio Moroder (already well-known Hollywood composer) and lyrics by the North American Tom Whitlock<sup>27</sup> was discarded by Moroder who had commissioned the song, which was finally performed in the tournament draw and the inauguration ceremony to Nannini and Bennato. Thus, a 'sporting' song was transformed and focused from the purely athletic experience of the player the song had been structured from this point of view—into another which, on the contrary, spoken from the spectator's perspective:

This song decisively installed a musical and lyrical rhetoric; since then, the genre would just be global pop, though this also implicates the necessary combinations with world music in order to integrate regional differences 'multiculturally'. The music composed by Daryl Hall and the Sounds of Blackness for the 1994 World Cup in the U.S. was called 'Gloryland' and combined pop with a gospel choir. In France 1998 the 'Latino' artists are seen incorporated into this grammar; it was Ricky Martin's turn with 'La copa de la vida' and the integration of Latin percussion with the choruses sprinkled with 'Go, go, go' and 'Allez, allez'. In Korea–Japan 2002, 'Boom!' by Australian Anaztacia doubly diffused any risk of orientalism<sup>30</sup> and showed that even the Far East was patterned by global

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pop. In Germany 2006, the hosts forgot their Bavarian marches to give way to 'The Time of Our Lives' by the vocal cuartet Il Divo and North American singer Toni Braxton performed, of course, in English and Spanish without the slightest note of un-global German. The journey ends with the first appearance of the Colombian Shakira in the 2010 World Cup in South Africa with her 'Time for Africa', also known as 'Waka Waka'. 22

We deliberately left out Argentina 1978 because, just at the beginning, it contradicts what is said. As the historical-political memory of the majority of fans tends to limit itself to personal experience, the memory of the 1978 World Cup is already occluded enough. For this reason one of the innumerable interventions on the social networks during the 2014 World Cup alluded to what we are narrating: a meme which stated 'I imagine the World Cup in Argentina, an inauguration with Damas Gratis at full blast playing the Peronist march' (Damas Gratis is the name of the most famous 'cumbia villera' band in Argentina, led Pablo Lescano, the creator of the sub-genre). That is to say: before the 'de-Brazilianation' of the 2014 World Cup, the Argentine fans proposed an Argentine overindulgence, popular, 'cumbiero', and Peronist. The reality, however, was not at all like this, far from it. It was not about global pop—the inauguration of 1978 was prior to the establishment of that grammar—folklore, or rock, far from it. Argentina used two musical compositions: the 'Official March' composed by Ennio Morricone, an unending melody guided by a lyric-free chorus<sup>33</sup> and '25 Million Argentines' composed by Martín Darré, a horrific song with excessive reminiscences of a military march in its brass and band percussion.<sup>34</sup> The rural folklorism was concentrated in the tournament's mascot: the World Cup 'Gaucho', designed by Néstor Córdoba of Manuel García Ferré's studio.

Thus, the self-presentation of Argentina in its World Cup consisted of a heavy emphasis on the state discourse of the moment, that is to say, the dictatorship presided over by Videla: repressive discipline and the silencing of any possible dissonances, 'twenty-five million Argentines' playing a World Cup which was instituted as a patriotic enterprise. Once again, the musical staging signified an imaginary self-representation of a society simultaneously under self-examination and outside observation:

25 million Argentines will play the World Cup

World Cup, the sporting joust without equal World Cup, a shout of universal enthusiasm to tremble, to dream, to fight, to triumph shining always over ambition and anxiety fortitude and dignity (...)

Of course, what the 1978 World Cup allows us to discuss is another intricacy in the concerns regarding the relationship between football and politics which goes beyond those musical interests and refers us to the manipulative hypotheses bordering on 'opium of the masses'. In this instance, we cannot extend ourselves in that direction, but in other works we have already considered it extensively.<sup>35</sup>

## 4. Argentine Fanatics: Homoeroticism, Homophobia, and Narcissism in Excess

The trajectory of World Cup music has brought us to emphasize the rhythmic and harmonic characteristics of the examples considered. We understood that, with a couple exceptions, what we wanted to analyse was better exemplified in the more strictly musical signifiers rather than the verbal. It is a good opportunity, however, to come back to the lyrics and to return to the beginning of this work. If the Argentine fans staged their performance as a privileged text of the 2014 World Cup, if I may dare: as a text even more privileged than the footballing performance itself, the analysis of the song 'Brazil, tell me how it feels' can offer us some new lines of discussion. It is not the case of the fans, who are not short on novelty:

Brazil, tell me how it feels
To have your dad at home
I swear that even as the years go by
We will never forget
That Diego dribbled you all
Cani vaccinated you too
You've been crying since Italy until now
You're going to see Messi
Who's going to bring us the Cup
Maradona is much greater than Pelé

The first two lines consolidate an axis of interpretation: a 'visiting' crowd which claims to have occupied the ('home') territory of its adversary, a crowd which at the same time functions as a symbolic 'father'. On the one hand, the occupation of territory is transformed into the central affirmation of the Argentine fans' behaviour throughout the tournament. If before we mentioned the first 'banderazo' in Copacabana the day before the Argentine debut, that was just the beginning of repeated 'occupations'. The occupations were not necessarily of stadiums, though stories of the odyssey of obtaining tickets would be told and retold until the Cup's end in a constant climb as the Argentine team progressed from round to round and the search for tickets became more and more desperate. The stories revolving around the money necessary for the resale of tickets or the corruption of Argentine directors, essentially ended up involved in dark schemes. For the Argentine fans, the occupation of public spaces was essential as a way to mark the 'invasive' condition of the fans. They occupied, I reiterate, strange territory, but even more importantly, they occupied Brazilian territory, Argentina's great rival according to football mythology. In this way, the occupiers knew they were being televised not only by the global media—which would convert this experience into a universal epic, showing the world the irrefutable condition of the 'best fans on the planet'—but also by the national media. In addition to these mass achievements, Brazil 2014 was the Cup of self-production of images and their subsequent viralization via social networks, by which the central artefact of the experience was not the flags or musical instruments but instead cellular phones. The most repeated image on YouTube (with more than three million views) is that of the Argentine fans on the day of the 'banderazo' in Copacabana, and, as can be observed, there are as many cell phones as fans.<sup>36</sup> The central action does not seem to be singing but *filming the act of singing*. Video destined, of course, to viralization—in other words, narcissistic exhibition—and the storage of the images to be reproduced for family or friends—rather, for the narcissistic satisfaction of being able to say, 'I was there.'

On the other hand, as we stated (and as the song asserts), 'paternity', or the assertion of Argentina as Brazil's *father*, is elaborated in the following five lines, destined to justify said paternity. As we all know, the reason can be boiled down to one episode: the one-zero triumph of Argentina over Brasil in the quarterfinals of the 1990 World Cup in Italy. Thus, the song narrates this episode as unforgettable, introducing two actors in particular: 'Diego', a reference which needs no explanation, who 'dribbles' and 'Cani' (Claudio Caniggia) who vaccinates.

In strictly footballing terms, the fatherhood invoked is meticulously and consciously false. If paternity refers to superiority in a series of confrontations between historic rivals, the history between Brazil and Argentina is unfavourable to Argentina, at least in World Cups: one draw in 1978, two wins for Brazil, and Argentina's aforementioned win in 1990. Furthermore, the two Brazilian victories were indisputable. Counting World Cups, Brazil has won five compared to Argentina's two, and we must count all the matches played between the two nations since 1908 to find an overwhelming Argentine advantage of one more victory: 36 to 35. In Argentine fan tradition, this difference does not constitute 'fatherhood'. The phrase 'we have them as sons' refers to a much more overwhelming and prolonged series of victories: for example, the 20 win difference held by River Plate over Independiente of Avellaneda until today.

Clearly, one does not expect a crowd song to be informative or argumentative but rather catchy; its content is more of an excuse to narrate the fans' desires and not reality. Precisely, the song discusses desire because it mentions an absence (the superiority) imposed as a homoerotic relationship. There, the 'vaccine' of Caniggia. 'Vaccinate' is one of many metaphors used by Argentine fans to refer to anal penetration, the maximum form of 'macho' superiority before the 'non-macho'. In its two variations, the other is the 'non-man' because he is at the same time being 'vaccinated'—or, rather, penetrated—and classified as a 'son' that is to say, boy or non-man. In summary, what the song once again displays is Argentine fanaticism as a manifestation of having 'aguante', a topic already discussed thoroughly.<sup>37</sup> The relationship between fans and crowds has been masculinized in an uncontrollable fashion, which is why all the metaphors that narrate this relationship become, as stated, homoerotic. An inscription left by Argentine fans on the walls of Copacabana during the World Cup is proof of this: 'Pelé Fag'.

At the same time, the occupation of someone else's space should be inscribed in the territory; thus, tagging walls with graffiti is a common practice. In this case, however, the legend doubles the message's meaning as it is as much a 'we are/were here' as a 'we are machos: the Brazilians are not'. Because of this, the fans personified the attribution of homosexuality in Pelé. An old chant, reiterated until reaching levels of abuse in the era of the 1978 World Cup, extended this attribution to all Brazilians but with a tone steeped in racism: 'Everybody already knows that Brazil is in mourning/they're all blacks/they're all fags.'<sup>38</sup> In current

times of political correctness, not even the crowds can be homophobic and racist at the same time, just one or the other. In this way, not even Argentine homophobia could vindicate such an archaic display of racism, which is why this song should be stored away deep in the archives (alongside the already narrated 'Let's go, let's go, Argentina ... '). The novelty consisted in, then, working on an old anecdote according to which Pelé had 'debuted' sexually with a young man: the synthetic and Argentinized version is presented as 'he debuted with a boy'. This criticism is quite paradoxical: after all, the Argentine fans convert the possession of 'aguante' into a metaphor of the active practice of homoerotic sex by anal penetration ('to tear his asshole').<sup>39</sup> In this context, Pelé's sexual activity would not be discordant. Nevertheless, the Argentine fans forget their homoeroticism in order to assume an explicit and condemning homophobia: Pelé would not be a symbolic but a real 'fag'.

At this point, we could continue the discussion of the issue; however, we will only mention it as a possibility for further exploration because these emotional, symbolic, homoerotic, or footballing oppositions have been worked on extensively and expanded upon by both countries' press. Briefly, *O Globo* did not hesitate to exhibit the burning of a Brazilian flag among the photographs illustrating the Argentine fans' violence after its loss to Germany in the final. Also, the newspaper *Lance* did not hesitate in proclaiming its support for the Germans.

As indicated, this issue deserves further analysis, in the line marked by Ronaldo Helal in a journalistic intervention: the imaginary relationships surrounding football symbolisms today are growing increasingly intolerant, beyond amusing comments or jokes, because of mutual circulation via Internet, among other reasons, by the sports media which can only produce these bad and intolerant jokes. <sup>41</sup> Naturally, however, for this reason we intend to construct more extensive and comparative empirical analyses.

Going back to the Argentine fans and their supportive narcissism, my colleague Martín Bergel's note regarding his exasperation fits in here as a symbolic compensation:

Being a fan in the crowd, the exasperation of fandom and anti-Brazilianness, emerges as symbolic justification, as compensation, for the case of the tens of thousands of Argentines who made the enormous effort to go to Brazil without match tickets. What can a fan who travelled so far to see his team play but cannot get into the stadium do? Invent a job which justifies such a journey: being an all terrain fan; converting the road movie of the trip to Brazil into a patriotic gesture; and always carrying along all the condiments, rituals, and codes of he who knows how to be truly Argentine (anti-Brazilian, that is). Because through the observance of all this, you obtain the benefit that the national media and 'el Pollo Vignolo' assign you a role as a major figure of the World Cup. (personal communication, 1 July 2014) [Sebastián 'el Pollo' Vignolo was the television commentator of all the matches played by Argentina transmitted by the state channel *Televisión Pública*.]

The final balance precisely is this: that the major figure of the World Cup for the Argentine public, was precisely and recursively, the Argentine public, protagonists of a patriotic gesture which led them to occupy, as fathers and *machos*, their neighbour's house. Because, as for Messi, negating the end of the fans' song, he did not 'bring the Cup'.

#### 5. Heroes and Patriots: A State Narrative

In another work, we have analysed more extensively that with which we want to conclude this text. 42 Kirchnerism, governor of Argentina from 2003 until late 2015, proposed a new validity for the traditional Peronist discourses: the old national-popular story, with a certain adaptation to current times which includes the condemnation of the neo-conservative decade, though it was also Peronist. This new validity implicated the explicit affirmation of the return of the State as a central actor in social and economic life. Even though this is not entirely verified as the economic organization of Argentina continues to be largely controlled by private corporations, the affirmation was resounding: the State had returned to fulfil the functions it never should have lost, among them, even when this is not explicitly stated, its narrative functions.

When we considered these issues in the 2010 World Cup, we argued that the State had returned emphatically to its central role as a patriotic narrator in Argentine society. In the face of this panorama, football could not propose alternative discourses because it never had done so, not even in conservative times. When the figure of Maradona had allowed for a story which was at least autonomous, it consisted of exhibiting the continuity of the old national-popular Peronist narrative. In returning to the scene, and newly proposed by the State as in the old and yearned for days of the first Peronism (which continues to function as a sort of Golden Age of modern Argentina), football could not incarnate any kind of efficient national narrative again as it can barely even propose its own survival as merchandise, controlled once again by the market, with commercial advertising as the main format of its texts. In so much as the meanings of nation have returned to discussion in public spaces, football has been left with just the empty yet pompous rhetoric of its sponsors which continues to be plagued with the commonalities of patriotic sermons.

The problem is that the national State did it too.

In 2009, the programme Fútbol para Todos (Football for All) appeared: the nationalization of the transmission of Argentine football, complimented in 2011 by Deporte para Todos (Sport for All) which established the requirement of the open television broadcast of any sporting event involving a decisive event for Argentine athletics. However, in 2014, things got complicated: Fútbol para Todos—once again, the national State—acquired the exclusive broadcasting rights to the World Cup in Brazil with which it monopolized almost the entire voice of television, at least that of open access (the cable channel TyC Sports also transmitted Argentina's matches along with the satellite channel Direct TV).

First, *Fútbol para todos* presented its journalists lined up as a football team, with suits but also with Argentine jerseys and cleats, or boots, singing the National Anthem on a football field and copying the movements of the players with the slogan 'one football team and one team of journalists for the same Argentine passion'; thus, the journalistic coverage aligned itself with the very practice of football as representative. <sup>43</sup> In other words, the journalists also set out to conquer the Cup, which would explain why the commentators were so unbearably patriotic, loud-mouthed, xenophobic, and even racist. At one point, the commentator 'Pollo' Vignolo asserted that a 'negrito' was headed to execute a corner kick.

The worst was when commentator De Paoli celebrated each one of the seven German goals against Brazil as if they were knife wounds to the heart of the enemy.

Alongside the journalistic performances was the state advertising. As with the domestic tournament, the state prioritized its own propaganda in the advertising space during the transmissions. Some politically correct advertisements condemned human trafficking during major events. Others banalized the supposedly successful state programmes of 'social inclusion' obtaining credit to buy a house or graduating from a new university—transforming them into goal celebrations for their beneficiaries (a now explicit turn of the screw regarding the footballization of the social and political realms). However, the climax would be reached with the ad 'Nobody wins a World Cup alone' which assimilated all the 'achievements' of the Kirchernist government with the avatars of the national team: 'in order to win, the country must be united'. 44 Even Kirchnerist journalist Horacio Verbitsky admitted that it was a 'fallacy directly descended from the rhetoric used by the dictatorship during the 1978 championship and reiterated by the unbearable commentating during the Argentine matches ... This piece constitutes an insufferable banalization and spurious use of things which are too serious' (in *Página 12*, 6 July 2014, page 10). Something similar would occur with the YPF advertisement 'Pep talk-Proud of our land', produced by Young & Rubicam, in which a voice with military undertones simultaneously directed oil workers and footballers saying 'Men, glory is not found; one must go looking for glory.' Even though the enunciator is a company, in reality, it is a State company—which is why it abuses with the display of the light blue and white of the Argentine flag everywhere.45

This gesture can be read as the (only) apparent combination of two logics: on one side, the national-popular which understands the State as a productive machine of democratic significations and, on the other side, the neoliberal conservative which trusts in the market—which it calls *civil society*—as exclusive enunciator and narrator. In reality, here we see where populism and neoliberalism meet; populism limits itself to add passion, affectivity, and massiveness to what neoliberalism has already made into televised merchandise. Even with the novelty of the patrimonialization of televised sport—radically original in a Latin American context where no State has ever dared to interfere with the gigantic business of the networks—these processes can certainly be described as a new intricacy: the reconciliation of both political and narrative logics into a *neoliberal progressive neopopulism*, the new horizon of Peronism's expectations—and not just of Peronism, speaking in terms of the continent.

Of course, the similarity which Verbitsky found with the discourse of the dictatorship is just that, a similarity. It does not have anything to do with identity. The continuity is in the desire, common to both democratic and authoritarian governments, to use the presumed benefits of football in its favour, as manipulation or as a transfer of sporting success to political success. As we have already analysed, the dictatorship searched at the same time for the famous 'smoke screen' and for civil consensus; in the case of Kirchnerism, the intent—though clumsy, avoidable, and unnecessary—was to associate a good sporting performance with a narrative of the era, the national-popular project. The same signifiers 'all', 'nation', 'glory' do not have the same meanings in different contexts, in 1978 or in 1990, when

Menemism tried to capture the figure of Maradona. However, it must be noted that these words tend to frighten a bit and should thus be avoided even in the case of the commentators because the one really speaking was the national State through *Fútbol para Todos*.

On his end, the old Argentine hero, the one 'greater than Pelé', reappeared in the same nationalized context during the 2014 World Cup; Maradona returned as a talk show host alongside the (Kirchnerist) journalist Victor Hugo Morales on the show 'De zurda' ('From the left') on Public Television and on the Latin American channel Telesur (produced in Venezuela). The programme was visually poor since it was not aesthetic novelty that was expected but rather a new infinite production of Maradonian sayings. Maradona restricted himself to fulfil perfectly what was expected of him: to rant and rave against AFA and FIFA, to converse with old player-friends, and to repeat his favourite phrases while producing some new ones. A verbal machine, to summarize, contextualized by the national-popular and Latin American discourses starting with the very title of the programme and with its opening sequence, plagued with references in that direction—an evocative script, musicians from all over the continent, the production of Gustavo Santaolalla—and all this transmitted by Argentina and Venezuela's respective public television. What we want to argue here is that the common places of a rhetoric which was once Latin Americanist, anti-imperialist, defender of a 'Great Nation', and traditionally bearers of contested, alternative, or contra-hegemonic meanings had become, with Maradona's mediation, a state, and, to top it all off, football discourse.

The figure of Messi should be analysed within this framework. As we have affirmed on various occasions, Messi cannot 'repeat' Maradona for a variety of reasons. The first is personal: Messi is neither a plebeian nor can be pretend to be one—there is neither hunger nor poverty in his biography. The second is historical: even if Messi were to play against England and score 43 goals, that could never happen just four years after the Malvinas War. The third is political: a fictitious national-popular construction (which with Messi is impossible because he is not of the type) would not occur in contrast with an absent national-popular narrative—like Maradona—but actually right at its peak: the Kirchnerist cycle is precisely national-popular. The fourth is sporting: though his footballing quality is just as (if not more) exceptional than Maradona's, his development is centred around the famous growth treatment he received at Barcelona when he was 14 years old, taking him out of the epic of the potrero (literally 'pasture') and the escuelita (football school for young boys), the classic spaces in the development of the Argentine footballer, or the pibe (boy) analysed by Archetti, and placing him into the logic of the European factory, the Masía, the Catalanoian school, and its pure control and discipline, bringing us to the end of the story. The final is totally moral: Messi is not charismatic and limits his exhibition to the script demanded of him by the global spectacle—an abundant script, indeed, but entirely foreseeable and planned; he almost never speaks, and when he does, he does it with his body strictly in his play. Messi is mute, he is a dog; Hernán Casciari would brilliantly point out that dogs do not talk nor do they become national symbols. 46

In summary, of all the conditions presented by the myth of Maradona, Messi only has one, nothing less than the exceptional condition of his game, but it is

entirely sufficient to discuss football and entirely insufficient to discuss nationalist myths and patriotic narratives. Messi, thus, devoid of the upheavals and conflicts—and of the radically popular plebeian condition—of a Maradona, cannot and will not be able to articulate that sporting narrative of the nation. Even if he had won the World Cup, even if he had 'brought home the Cup' after scoring 37 goals, five of them epic, he would never have been more than just a good boy and never a *pibe*. Messi cannot be reduced to the *aguante* logic, to the epic of *balls* and *heart*; consequently, since Argentine football culture always needs a hero who works in that system, it found Mascherano, a sort of second-grade Maradona.

The poor Mascherano, an exceptional player, the *centrojás* (centrehalf) mandated by Argentine tradition, saw himself be reduced to a forced loud-mouth who gives and wrecks everything, a surprising *moral model*. Nobody cared to mention his tactical intelligence and skill, but exceptional players do not work in the reinvention of national-popular myths. They need players with *aguante*, even if they do not have too much epic or political content. That is why the State exists; the rest will simply be national-political merchandise, that is to say, quite paradoxically, anti-imperialist merchandizing.

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#### **Notes on Contributor**

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#### **Notes**

- 1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBHGoY8TGuU.
- https://www.voutube.com/watch?v=2NsKco1zSqY.
- <sup>3</sup> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpdGR7JYiLc.
- 4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2a221E-hwu8.
- <sup>5</sup> https://www.voutube.com/watch?v=0J4mPbSBtHO.
- 6 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2S4GTD-AAw.
- <sup>7</sup> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bad Moon Rising (song) (accessed 17 September 2014).
- Fernando García, 'El hit de la selección', in Dossier Mundial 2014 of Informe Escaleno. Available at: http://www.informeescaleno.com.ar/index.php?s=articulos&id=227 (accessed 17 September 2014).
- <sup>9</sup> http://rambletamble.blogspot.co.uk.
- For an in-depth analysis of the period, see Pablo Alabarces, Entre gatos y violadores. El Rock nacional en la cultura argentina, Buenos Aires: Colihue, 1993; Sergio Pujol, Rock y dictadura. Crónica de una generación (1976-1983), Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2005.
- See Pablo Alabarces, Daniel Salerno, Malvina Silba and Carolina Spataro, 'Música popular y resistencia: los significados del rock y la cumbia', in Pablo Alabarces and María G. Rodríguez (eds), Resistencias y mediaciones. Estudios sobre cultura popular, Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2008, pp 31–58; José Garriga Zucal, 'Ni 'chetos' ni 'negros': roqueros', Trans-Revista Transcultural de Música, 12, 2008. Available at: http://www.

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- sibetrans.com/trans/a89/ni-chetos-ni-negros-roqueros; Pablo Semán, 'Vida, apogeo y Tormentos del Rock Chabón', in *Bajo Continuo. Exploraciones descentradas sobre cultura popular y masiva*, Buenos Aires: Gorla, 2006.
- Own translation from the original which can be seen, among many others. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= o8WiAqV7e4 (accessed 2 September 2014).
- Own translation from the original which can be seen, among many sources. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHGv-ukUSoc.
- Among various possibilities, the coverage of BBC is interesting. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/noticias/2014/07/140704\_wc2014\_brasil2014\_argentina\_brasil\_decime\_que\_se\_siente\_irm.shtml, or that of the newspaper *La Capital* of Rosario, Argentina. Available at: http://www.lacapital.com.ar/ed\_impresa/2014/7/edicion\_2057/contenidos/noticia\_5320.html. The term 'banderazo' among fanatics refers to a street movilization in which flags of the teams colours abound—whether official or flags with the logos of certain groups, marking territories or just names of people which display the emotional ties to the team. These movilizations might be for a specific protest or simply to show support for the team in a poor season, for example.
- Fernando García, 'El hit de la selección', in Dossier Mundial 2014 of Informe Escaleno. Available at: http://www.informeescaleno.com.ar/index.php?s=articulos&id=227 (accessed 17 September 2014).
- Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBYQplyM0WA.
- Pablo Alabarces and Malvina Silba, "Las manos de todos los negros, arriba': Género, etnia y clase en la cumbia argentina', Cultura y Representaciones sociales, VIII(16), 2014, pp 52–74.
- Pablo Alabarces, Fútbol y Patria. El fútbol y las narrativas de la nación en la Argentina, Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2002; Pablo Alabarces, Héroes, machos y patriotas. El fútbol entre la violencia y los medios, Buenos Aires: Aguilar, 2014.
- 19 Gonzalo Aguilar, 'Ponele música al Mundial', in Dossier Mundial 2014 of Informe Escaleno. Available at: http://informeescaleno.com.ar/index.php?s=articulos&id=186 (accessed 18 September 2014).
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0oJQfIw6q0#t=77.
- 21 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TO7QHp-W1c.
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVZimsXKDGk&list=PL2riImDVCPkK4p5r6Fr6oWIYgy4D-QPK5.
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- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwvQyIC4krE.
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSEp4Bz73WA.
- <sup>26</sup> http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX1x J2JC7U.
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v= XXIW-rXiss.
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lyNR0UMVic.
- <sup>29</sup> http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BkYKwHLXiU.
- 30 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jcC\_ejluLw#t=23.
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4aOxDHqWyK0.
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzsuE5ugxf4.
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bb6IUr3LSUk#t=20.
- http://www.voutube.com/watch?v=OzCVOosTZ8k.
- 35 Cf. works cited in Note 10.
- <sup>36</sup> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IOGFENyGJM (accessed 22 September 2014).
- There is a long list of bibliography regarding Argentine 'aguante'. Recently, I have returned to discuss it in Pablo Alabarces, Héroes, machos y patriotas. El fútbol entre la violencia y los medios, Buenos Aires: Aguilar, 2014. From a more anthropological perspective, Pablo Alabarces, José Garriga Zucal and Verónica Moreira, 'La 'cultura del aguante': fútbol y violencia en la Argentina contemporánea', Estudos de Sociologia. Revista del Programa de Posgraduação em Sociologia da UFPE, 14(2), 2008, pp 75–92.
- 38 Translated from original text: 'Ya todos saben que Brasil está de luto/son todos negros/son todos putos'.
- Original text: 'romper el culo'. We could argue that the Argentine fans' narrative inscribes itself in what we call the 'epistemic Maradonian cycle', alluding to Maradona's two famous declarations at the end of the 2009 World Cup qualifying: what ranges from 'you have it in you' (code for anal penetration) to 'keep sucking it' (reference to oral sex).
- http://oglobo.globo.com/rio/apos-derrota-argentinos-provocam-tumulto-em-copacabana-13245110 (accessed 22 September 2014).
- 41 'Copa mostra acirramento da rivalidade Brasil-Argentina, afirma sociólogo', interview from Alex Sabino to Ronaldo Helal en Folha de Sâo Paulo. Available at: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/esporte/folhanacopa/

 $2014/07/1484416\text{-}copa\text{-}mostra\text{-}acirramento\text{-}da\text{-}rivalidade\text{-}brasil\text{-}argentina\text{-}afirma\text{-}sociologo.shtml} \quad (accessed 22 \text{ September 2014}).$ 

- Again, Pablo Alabarces, Héroes, machos y patriotas. El fútbol entre la violencia y los medios, Buenos Aires:
   Aguilar, 2014.
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GLStO2-xmc.
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- 45 Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfdfVtk0iuI.
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