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# Football and Stereotypes: Narratives of Difference between Argentina and Brazil

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Through an analysis of football, this work explores how stereotypes such as tropicalism and Europeanism are used to construct narratives of national identity in Argentina and Brazil. These stereotypes, which are the consequence of colonial perspectives that seek to reduce heterogeneity in order to gain symbolic power, appear to be effective when we consider their prominence in a range of media. This study argues that these stereotypes need to be deconstructed using methodologies based in the social sciences, while also considering the role of humour in their production and dissemination.

Keywords: football, stereotypes, tropicalism, Argentina, Brazil.

## Formulas

Social types and narratives, that are essentially patterns of meaning, constitute modes of explaining and grasping social and cultural phenomena. Societies acquire knowledge – of others and of themselves – through the processes of narrating and typifying, especially at times of national invention and imagination; for Anderson (1993), this is a means of reducing complexity and heterogeneity, as well as constructing forms of homogeneity that can be widely recognised and accepted. Such typifications abound in Brazilian writing, in fictional narratives and in the essay alike, from the 1930s onwards, and indeed can be encountered in works from the late nineteenth century. However, once they have undergone a process of mythification, they become transformed into ‘ideological formulas of reiteration’: as the formulas are reiterated, orally or in writing (given that some notable texts are read and re-read, discussed and repeated), a process of ideologisation or reification may take place (Ianni, 2002: 8). The same point could be made in relation to Argentinean culture and a number of its foundational texts: for example, the interpretative exercise carried out on *Martín Fierro* by Leopoldo Lugones and Ricardo Rojas to transform a ‘malevolent *gaucho*’ into a new Achilles or El Cid; or the wonderful second chapter of *Facundo*, in which Sarmiento sets out the typifications that will become crucial markers of Argentinean barbarism (the evil *gaucho*, the singer, the guide, the tracker); or the definitive invention of the patriotic *gaucho* in the Third Song of Rafael Obligado’s *Santos Vega*, in which almost a century of bloody civil war is resolved by a loyal *gaucho*

who makes a successful call for the defence of Buenos Aires in the middle of a peaceful game of *pato*.

As Ianni points out, over time such articulations become expressions of common sense, widely held and reified views that lose their power to explain as they gain mythical capacity. This has important political implications. The operation of typification and mythification that he analyses comes into effect at precisely the time that the hierarchical structure of Brazilian society is consolidated. As a result, 'What is at stake is the "depoliticisation" of a nascent civil society, which will be defined and organised from above, taken as inactive and unorganised, lacking shape and leadership' (Ianni, 2002: 9).

In the world of football culture, where stereotypes are the norm – as they are in other texts of mass culture, of course – practices such as these are frequently encountered. This is especially so when dealing with relations between Argentina and Brazil. Football occupies a space of unrivalled importance in both countries, in part because of the manner in which it permeates daily sociability, and also because of its central position in the construction of national narratives, of myths around racial integration, of tales of heroes that reach beyond the field of play to become icons of Argentineness or Brazilianness. Such issues have been explored in cinematic narrative (heroism that moves from the familial to the national in Torres Ríos's 1948 film *Pelota de trapo*), in journalistic writing with essayist pretensions (Mario Filho's foundational *O negro no futebol brasileiro*, also first published in 1948), as well as in the social sciences (DaMatta, 1982; Vogel, 1982; Leite Lopes, 1994; Alabarces, 1998, 2002; Archetti, 2003a). By contrast, an area that has received little critical attention is the borderland, the point of encounter where narratives of identity are necessarily narratives of alterity, and where the significant other is either Argentina or Brazil. A notable exception is to be found in a study by Brazilian anthropologist Simone Lahud Guedes (2002), whose fruitful interpretations of this topic, which engage with the work of Archetti for Argentina, are the foundation for the following analysis.

## Argumentation Peripheries

Is there a use for football? A response from the social sciences might be that football can provide a focus, a point through which the critical gaze can pass to interrogate the dimensions of the symbolic domain and its problematic relationship with the political. Yet football may also be seen as a site for the deployment of some of the richest and most effective narrative strategies in relation to the construction of identities. While the academy, politics and the mass media continue to represent the central spaces of legitimacy, in line with their historically variable capacity for instituting and administering discursive legitimacies, it is possible – on the margins of what is considered legitimate – to perceive processes of typification that play a role in the contested construction of narratives of identity.

According to Guedes, who picks up on the work of Lévi-Strauss: 'Football is a privileged signifier, a vehicle whose demand for signification is so great that it simply cannot allow for the absence of meaning. [...] The semantic process unleashed by the game becomes a field of debate, in which several positions confront each other' (Guedes, 2002: 3). Amid this proliferation of discourses, Guedes continues, 'various dimensions of identity are disputed, negotiated and constructed [...]. One of them is that of the nation' (ibid: 4). Hobsbawm (1990) was one of the few historians to highlight the importance of modern sports in his analysis of the processes whereby modern nations are 'invented',

especially in relation to the bottom-up construction of nationalism, with otherness playing a vital role in such discourses. Consequently, Guedes affirms that:

According to this point of view, the fact that football is the most popular sport in the world is definitely not irrelevant. It is a matter of constructing difference within a code with which everyone feels at home and within a practice to which everyone attributes value, albeit unequally. Thus, alterity, as those who have studied ethnic groups have taught us [ ... ] does not come after identification: it is part of the same process. (Guedes, 2002: 5)

However, it is not just the fact that football is practised across the world that speaks to its richness: it is a particularly productive space in which discourses full of meaning and relevance are generated. As Archetti notes, 'football and tango are mirrors and masks at the same time' (2003a: 41), mirrors in which Argentineans see themselves and masks that are seen by others, all made possible as a result of them constituting what Archetti calls 'free zones' of a culture:

When considered as areas in which to display 'national masculine' identity, tango and football reveal the complexity of these types of 'free zones' in relation to 'others'. The factors that have tended to organise society are linked to public institutions, such as schools, military service, work, public ceremonies and rituals of nationality. The 'free zones' [ ... ] allow for the articulation of languages and practices that can challenge an official and puritanical public domain. 'Free zones' are spaces for mixing, for the appearance of hybrids, sexuality and the celebration of physical endeavours. In modern societies, sport, games and dance are privileged sites for analysing freedom and cultural creativity. Football and tango may, then, be conceptualised as a threat to official ideologies. (Archetti, 2003a: 42)

However, this sense of creativity and freedom, grounded in the peripheral nature of such practices in relation to those established by official forms of legitimacy, should not result in idealisations that are somewhere between populist and post-modern, or which seek to be both at once.

While this cultural production takes place at the interstices, this does not mean that it is necessarily a mode of alternative production. As has been demonstrated elsewhere (Alabarces, 2002; Archetti, 2003a), what arises from the narratives of national identity that are built around football in Argentina complements rather than opposes legitimised official narratives: it is inclusive, although that inclusion is controlled; it carries a democratising charge, albeit within the confines of class hierarchy. Football's invention in Argentina comes about as the result of complex articulations, through which expressions of identity draw on elements of association as diverse as immigrant groups, the *barrio*, belonging to the same generation or being part of a particular social class. However, they tend to converge around two basic contrasting axes: in opposition to the English (as inventors, owners and administrators of the game), from which emerges a myth of nationality; and in opposition to the hegemonic classes (as practitioners, owners of leisure time, those who stigmatise), from which emerges a myth of popular, but never proletarian, origins (Alabarces, 1998; Archetti, 2003a). This duality of articulation gradually becomes reduced to a singularity governed by considerations that operate at the level of the national, while the second option – based on questions of social class – is restricted to moments of particular significance, when it can be revived and employed in contexts in which a 'popular' narrative is required. In an

Argentinean context, the case of Maradona provides perhaps the most obvious example of a working-class popular symbol of the nation in a manner that Messi's narrative does not (Alabarces, 2002: 143–174). Guedes draws attention to a similar phenomenon in Brazil, albeit with an additional element in play, where ethnicity acquires significance in the dynamics between the country's blacks, whites and *mestizos*. At the heart of such debates we find the question of 'styles', functioning as powerful narratives of distinction in the face of a significant other, which in both cases is understood as the English or, more broadly, the European:

As the crossroads of these two axes, as a practice and a semantic space appropriated by the 'nationals' (in opposition to the 'English coloniser') and the 'people' (in opposition to the elite), there emerges an initial space of distinction that allows the children to confront the master, facing them with a new creation. This new creation is what became known as *futebol-arte*, a term generally accepted for Argentinean and Brazilian football alike, and whose contrastive definition is *futebol-máquina* or *futebol-força*, epithets reserved for English football and, at a secondary level, for all European football. (Guedes, 2002: 9)

When football became a popular practice in both countries during the same period it did not acquire the force of class-affirming narrative, but instead became a means of national affirmation and distinctiveness, aided by its being understood and valued:

by all sectors of the populations and, moreover, it resonates beyond the national frontiers. The 'product' of this process, in Brazil and Argentina alike, will result in the valuing of a certain type of corporality, in a determined social use of the body [...] that explores its aesthetic possibilities and its ability to defeat the opponent through skill. [...] In this case, for Brazilians as for Argentineans, all 'others', particularly 'Europeans', are like machines able only to use their bodies as a source of strength. (Guedes, 2002: 11)

What draws Argentina and Brazil together in football is now apparent: a narrative of hybridity and *mestizaje*, built around popular practices that were once the property of elites. They also share common histories of European invasion and colonisation. Moreover, both countries, at the time of their 'modern invention' as nations during the first two decades of the twentieth century, discovered that the social, and popular, use of the body through football could highlight their condition as modern nations. What now has to be explored is the zone of fissure that separates the two nations.

## Tropicalisms

Guedes states that the fissure is fundamentally located in the two countries' differing hegemonic narratives around ethnicity, and it would indeed appear that stereotypes that have historically been (and continue to be) built around this feature are the greatest factor in articulating a sense of difference. The Brazilian construct is based, broadly speaking, on the myth of three races, presenting and representing itself as a *mestizo* amalgam in which, without doubt, the place of blacks is decisive.

The point of stress, the essential difference, is the symbolic incorporation of the black as being responsible for the 'spontaneous' use of the body in dribbling, dummies and

body swerves in an effortless manner that requires no learning (Guedes, 1998). This understanding is at the heart of the very understanding of the 'Brazilian people' and participation therein is deified or demonised, but it is always present. The glories and the failings of Brazilian football were often conceived as the result of a specific form of black corporality, whose foremost antecedent is *capoeira* (Guedes, 2002: 14).

While it is possible to construct a white hero who has achieved the requisite bodily practices through commitment and discipline, as Helal's analysis of Zico aptly demonstrates (Helal, 2000), the dominant narrative remains that of the *mestizaje* established by Gilberto Freyre. It is no coincidence that Freyre wrote the prologue for the key text in the development of this narrative, namely the aforementioned *O negro no futebol brasileiro*, written by journalist Mario Filho. Here Freyre states: 'Sublimating so much of what is most primitive, most young, most elementary in our culture, it was only natural that when football in Brazil grew into a national institution, so too should the black, the descendant of the black, the mulatto, the *cafuso*, the *mestizo*' (Freyre, 1964; Soares, 2002). Guedes, however, highlights the limitations of this interpretation:

The metaphor equally allows for the interpretation that, in this way, the 'ambiguities and fissures' of narratives around 'Brazilian style' are also denounced [...]. Because the identification of 'Brazilianess' with 'blackness' is not, in any way, consensual or unequivocal in Brazil. Not even in the wake of Gilberto Freyre, the modernists and the tropicalists, did our *mestizaje* come to constitute an entirely shared value. Not least because it is a society that is a long way from including black people in the distribution of collective wealth and as egalitarian participants of its socio-political construction. (Guedes 2002: 15)

Drawing on Edward Said's influential notion of Orientalism, Gustavo Lins Ribeiro (2002) explores the concept of tropicalism as a reductive stereotype that results from a series of complex and heterogeneous characteristics in a process that reveals traces of the colonising power via an imposed imaginary. This is because that tropicalist definition of the nation (like the corresponding Europeanist definition in Argentina) is widely accepted by elites and popular classes alike as a means of experiencing their association with their respective nation-states. 'This statement, evidently, does not signify that the success of these patterns is universal, nor that they are not openly contested by different sectors', argues Ribeiro (2002: 248–249), but the power of this trope 'is expressed in a complex and capillary fashion, as it is voiced and reproduced in different rituals, media and institutional spheres' (Ribeiro, 2002: 249). For Ribeiro, the foundational text of Brazilian culture, Pero Vaz de Caminha's renowned *Carta* (Letter) of 1500, already fixes two of the key aspects of tropicalism: on the one hand, the bountiful nature of the land, conveyed in the expression *em se plantando tudo dá* (everything that is planted grows). On the other hand, there is a similarly bountiful sexuality, apparent in the hackneyed descriptions of indigenous women's naked bodies that continue to this day to act as a central element in the construction of stereotypes about Brazil, in which 'an image of a Brazilian woman's body becomes purely an object of desire' (Ribeiro, 2002: 250). This repertoire of feminine images would subsequently be complemented by those of Afro-Brazilian women, thereby completing the construction of a potent imaginary, namely that of a society that resolves its tensions in the kitchen, in festivities and in bed, a 'dark-skinned, sensual, joyous people, always ready for sex' (Ribeiro, 2002: 255). This stereotype informs aspects of the manner in which Brazil is constructed in the Argentinean imaginary: according to Frigerio (2002), female Brazilian migrants

in Argentina complain of being considered 'easy' women by Argentinean men, who appear solely to engage with this aspect of the stereotype. The upshot of all this is that in contemporary society it is football and the half-naked women of *carnaval* that constitute the mediascapes (Appadurai, 1990) that dominate international pop culture's image of Brazil. It is clear that these stereotypes are constructed from a male gaze and voiced through a language that is decidedly masculine.

Of course, as Ribeiro affirms (2002: 260), tropicalism is not restricted to the eroticisation of Brazil's image through the body of indigenous, black or mulatta women; it is also present in the country's music (for example the notions of *jeitinho* and *saudade*), and in the web of relationships between tradition and modernity developed by the *antropófagos* in 1922, as well as in Mário de Andrade's *Macunaíma*, first published in 1928. Despite just 0.2 percent of the Brazilian population being indigenous, compared to 1.24 percent in Argentina (Ribeiro, 2002: 256), the indigenous plays a key role in this imaginary in Brazil, quite unlike the situation in Argentina, which rejects any elements that might detract from its Europeanism. In Brazil, the fact that the indigenous population consists entirely of hunter-gatherers in the tropical jungle facilitates this identification, while in Argentina emphasis tends to be placed on the Inca imaginary: the scant presence of the indigenous in cultural traditions privileges the image of empire over nomadic or tropical tribes. This can be appreciated via Manuel Belgrano's efforts to install a monarchy by restoring an Inca to the throne during the Independence period, or in the work of Joaquín V. González in the late nineteenth century, or in the republication of *Ollantay* by Ricardo Rojas at the start of the twentieth. More recently, the weight of this imaginary and imaging is apparent in aspects of consumer culture among Argentina's youth, especially those who are more politicised, as well as in the trip from Buenos Aires to northern Argentina – which regularly includes Machu Picchu in Peru – as a rite of passage. In Argentina, these can be considered forms of positivised indigenism.

This tropicalist imaginary is particularly evident in footballing stereotypes. On the one hand it is associated with a style of play that relies on a specific use of the body marked by its supposed blackness; on the other, and specifically for Argentineans, there is the trope of the *macacos* (monkeys) constructed by the gaze of the other that, as has been discussed, relies on stereotyping to highlight a fissure, to mark an otherness that simultaneously constructs one's own identity. The use of the term *macacos* to stereotype and stigmatise dates back over two centuries, with traces in the colonial era, in the literature of the *gaucho* and in the repeated geo-political conflicts between Argentina and Brazil during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This historical antipathy is constantly updated through football, described by Ribeiro (2002: 260) as 'a clash of stereotypings'. Alejandro Frigerio concurs, suggesting that 'the long-standing stereotype of Brazilians as blacks, uncultured *macaquitos* (little monkeys), is still there under the surface, and can be brought out on occasions that produce strong emotions and antagonism, as in the case of football matches. On such occasions, difference can again become a stigma rather than being something positive' (Frigerio, 2002: 37). Franzini (2000; cited in Guedes, 2002) traces the use of the term in football back to the South American Championships of 1920, hosted by Chile. During the Brazilian team's transit through Buenos Aires en route to the tournament, a local newspaper published an article, accompanied by a cartoon, that depicted and described the members of the team as *macaquitos*. As Richey (2016) observes, this incident played to perceptions and expectations that were already well established in the local media of the time and it was but the most infamous of a series of such references. What is even more surprising, or perhaps it merely

reveals the weight of these imaginaries among the elites, is that in 1921 Brazil's President Pessoa determined that the Brazilian team that was to travel to Buenos Aires for that year's South American Championship should contain no black players.

More astonishing still is the endurance of this stereotype into the present, albeit outside the realm of everyday discourse. Following Argentina's victory in the first semi-final of the men's football tournament at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, with Nigeria to play Brazil in the other semi-final, the Argentinean sports newspaper *Olé*, which had at that time not long been in circulation, carried the front page headline *Y ahora, que se vengan los macacos* (And now let the *macacos* come, 13 July 1996: 1). Five years later, disregarding the criticism that resulted from this headline, the same publication carried an image of a half-naked mulatta on the day of a qualification match for the 2002 World Cup, with the accompanying headline of *¿Qué tenés que hacer esta noche?* (What are you doing tonight? *Olé* 5 September 2001: 1). Blackness and sexuality, the two key elements of the tropicalist imaginary, came together in the mediated football discourse, in which the most obscene version, popular among Argentinean fans, is the racist and homophobic chant *Ya todos saben que Brasil está de luto/son todos negros/son todos putos* (Everyone knows that Brazil is in mourning/they're all black/they're all fags), first sung during the 1978 World Cup, an event that still conjures up terrible memories. However, during the World Cup finals of 2014 in Brazil, in times of 'political correctness', Argentine fans limited their violence to homophobia, painting walls with graffiti stating *Pelé puto* (Pele is a fag) or chanting a long, widely adopted song about metaphorical anal penetration, as we will see below.

## Gauchos, Europeanism and Crafty Rogues who Turn Out to be Cheats

This projecting of attributes onto the other is possible as a result of the interplay between the weight of the Brazilian tropicalist imaginary and the self-image of the Argentinean imaginary as being white and European. The idea of Argentina as a white, Europeanist invention has a key starting point in Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1847), a work that projected civilisation and barbarism as polar opposites that were mapped onto Europe and America respectively. This project continued with the genocidal Campaign of the Desert (1879), during which the Argentine military massacred the indigenous inhabitants of Patagonia under the pretext of pushing back the boundaries of land that could be cultivated, and culminated with an immigration policy that populated Argentina with Italians and Spaniards while further decimating indigenous communities. Participation in civilisation is characterised by the whitening of the population, associated with Europe and driven by actions by the state, as well as the myth of the 'melting pot'. This ethnic dimension, which could have been democratised during Peronism, instead shifted in its focus from ethnocentricity to ethnicity as internal migrants to Buenos Aires were stigmatised through use of the term *cabecita negra* (little black head), and immigrants from Paraguay and Bolivia were subsequently called *paragua* or *bolita* respectively. Even today, at least in sporting commentaries, the affectionate *negrito* of daily usage carries racist and pejorative connotations.

However, in the case of football's founding narratives, those that enshrined the existence of a *criollo* style, known as *la nuestra* (ours), had to rely on other possibilities. Argentina's Europeanism, at a certain point in time, became *criollista*. Mass immigration threatened the elites' attempts at homogenising projects, and created an ideological

as well as a linguistic Babel. Migrants brought increased trade union activities and anarchism among the working class at the start of the twentieth century. The *criollista* Europeanism of the elites championed the *gaucho* as a figure that symbolised both the myth of race and Argentineness, marking a Europeanism that falls short, that has to take an Americanist turn when the need to prolong hegemony proved imperative (Altamirano and Sarlo, 1982; Alabarces, 2002; Archetti, 2003a). It is at this point that football gives rise to a paradoxical nationalist narrative: the creolisation of football, as an ethnic operation in opposition to the English, is carried out by Italian and Spanish immigrants. Racing Club's status as the first *criollo* team depends on the substitution of the surname Brown with Perinetti and Ochoa: a phonic replacement that stands for an ethnic replacement, and which is narrated as *Argentinisation*. This is the narrative championed by the journalist Borocotó in the pages of *El Gráfico*: a model of hybridity in which the elements derived from immigrants (at least Italian and Spanish immigrants, for the English cannot be part of this) are transformed on contact with a supposed *gaucho* essence, sustained by *mate* (a herbal tea), *asado* (a meat-based barbecue) and the landscape. The result of all of this is a style of play carried out on the *potrero*, empty patches of land free from buildings that recall the enduring metaphor of ranching: football players become Argentinean in the same spaces where local cows and horses can be crossed with European breeds to produce unbeatable hybrids.

Why, then, is the new imaginary not constructed on the basis of the *pampas* instead of Europe? Let us review some of the best-known images from Argentine culture in the early twentieth century: immigrants dressed up as the rebel *gaucho* Juan Moreira during carnival (Prieto, 1988); Carlos Gardel in *gaucho* costume in some of his films between 1931 and 1935; tango musicians and dancers in Paris wearing anachronistic *gaucho* costumes well into the 1930s. The 1920s and 1930s in Argentina represent a period of considerable instability, when the interplay between tradition and modernity reveals the complexity of constructions such as those discussed here, as Archetti's analysis reveals (2002). Yet despite the elites' leisurely *criollista* pursuits and Borocotó's pilgrimages to the *potreros* to watch football, the reinvention of Argentina cannot be boiled down to *gaucho* essentialism, for the new imaginary is urban and modern, and is thus incompatible with a rural myth of origins. The elaboration of this new imaginary, in which football plays an active role, has a single centre in which all of its narratives converge, namely the metropolis of Buenos Aires, a modern yet peripheral city (Sarlo, 1988), where the rural is at best an allusion to the country's riches in agriculture and livestock. The *pampa*, then, comes to be the signifier that allows for mythological inventions, epic *gaucho* tales, stories of origin, in short the administration of a past converted into a myth. At the same time, it signifies ownership of the land, which determines the administration of wealth and meaning and, consequently, power. Thus, endeavours based around the *pampa*, the *criollo* and the *gaucho* will end up being mere markers of a mythical past that supports a decidedly Sarmiento-like present that is urban, civilised and European (Archetti, 2003b).

Thus, football discourses are constructed upon points of tension, for the style of play must differentiate itself from the European in order to defeat the master ... and then be accepted by them. It is no coincidence that the affirmation of this style should have come about in the domain of the other, notably in Boca Juniors' tour of Europe in 1925 and the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam, where the final of the football tournament was contested by Argentina and Uruguay. In the wake of the all too predictable victory of the Uruguayans, the notion of River Plate football arose, incorporating the team from Montevideo in order to mask Argentina's defeat. From these origins, two further traits



were incorporated into stereotypes of Argentinean football, the first of which is a form of cunning known as *viveza criolla*, a discourse that originates in the Spanish picaresque and derives from popular forms, embodying the traditional story of the struggle of the poor against the powerful, using the only weapon available to them: their wits. This mode of behaviour marks a stereotypical characteristic of Argentines, although the overpowering weight of Buenos Aires in the national imaginary means that it is particularly applicable to inhabitants of the capital. Although this would be disputed in conversation in any bar in Argentina, the self-image of *viveza* is read by the other as cheating, as breaking the rules to achieve personal gain: the crafty rogue turns out to be a mere cheat. The prime example of this is Maradona's 'hand of God' goal in 1986, seen by others as a transgression that deserves to be punished rather than the crowning moment of *picardía criolla* (creole craftiness). The second trait is violence, which is also disguised as *viveza* (cunning), making the most of the ins and outs of the rules, or alternatively is cloaked in notions of masculinity, such as 'it's a man's game'. This element figured prominently in the media of the 1960s, as a result of the innumerable kicks dished out by Argentinean teams on the international stage (Alabarces, 2002), and reached a high point in the 1990s, when a Brazilian advertisement for football boots proclaimed them to be 'Mais animal que zagueiro argentino' (More of an animal than an Argentinean defender).

## **Stereotypes and Parody**

It goes without saying that the aim of studies based in the social sciences is not to continue the proliferation of these stereotypes. On the contrary, the fact that they have become statements of common sense enables the illusion of a society in which meaning is fixed, 'located, organised, comprehended, explained and decanted' (Ianni, 2002: 10). In no way does this article propose the reproduction of these organised meanings; rather, it proposes the deconstruction of such statements of common sense by demonstrating their fallacious nature, their historical origins, and by pointing out what it is that they prevent and obstruct. For Ribeiro (2002: 261), stereotyping simplifications are a means of bringing heterogeneity under control and subjecting it to administration; in other words, reducing substance and polyphony. A key player in this is the media, propagating a mode of sports journalism that specialises in banalities, alongside advertisements that cloak themselves in patriotic and xenophobic nationalism to hide economic objectives and achieve the greatest profit margins. In the ethnocentric narratives and the gutter chauvinism that are deployed around international football matches, stereotyping is constantly reproduced (as discussed in the examples from *Olé*), while in the Brazilian advertisements for Mastercard that celebrated the nation's football victories in the 2002 World Cup, Argentina's elimination was 'priceless' (Guedes, 2002: 6). During the same period, a well-known Brazilian beer joined in solidarity with the Argentinean economic crisis of 2002 as a key issue: the Brazilian fans, all seriousness and concern, discussed the gravity of the situation ... before bursting into laughter and celebration. Could it really be that 'the rivalry is greater than any solidarity or, in truth, is the rivalry so great that the Argentinean economic crisis provokes joy?' (Guedes, 2002: 6).

All of this is a far cry from the parodic humour that, through such schematic representations, criticises the shortcomings of a culture. In the short stories by Argentinean author Roberto Fontanarrosa, for example, critical attention is drawn to this stereotyping as it is shown to be baseless: typification leads to laughter because it

interpellates us as speakers of a discourse that is determined by others, and alienates us through forms of language that have been built up by centuries of schematising. Thus, a Uruguayan centre back can only be the fearsome figure of Wilmar Everton Cardaña, the terror of South American football pitches:

¡Cuánto valor cívico podía esconderse bajo el glorioso número cinco prendido a la mirasol peñarolense, ya fuera sobre el verde césped del Estadio Centenario, en cualquier campo de la vecina Buenos Aires, o en la grama misma de tantos y tantos estadios brasileños donde los frágiles y siempre pusilánimes morenos le tenían como a una figura mitológica!

[...] Allí, delante mío, Wilmar Everton Cardaña, ‘El Hombre’, ‘El Capitán Invicto’, ‘El Hacha’ Cardaña, estaba llorando. ¡Aquel que hiciera callar de un solo chistido a ciento cincuenta mil brasileños aterrados en el Estadio Pacaembú, cuando la final de la Copa Roca! ¡Aquel que se bajó los pantaloncitos y el canzoncillo punzó para mostrar sus testículos velludos, uruguayos y celestes a la Reina Isabel en el mismísimo estadio de Wembley!. (Fontanarrosa, 2000: 85–90)

What civic courage could lie behind the glorious number 5 attached to Peñarol’s shirt, whether he played on the green lawn of Montevideo’s Estadio Centenario, at any pitch in nearby Buenos Aires, or on the very grass of so many Brazilian football pitches, where the fragile, always pusillanimous black players held him to be a mythical figure! [...] Right there, in front of me, Wilmar Everton Cardaña, ‘The Man’, ‘The Undefeated Captain’, ‘The Axe’ Cardaña was crying. The same guy who silenced, with a single whisper, one hundred and fifty thousand terrified Brazilians in the Pacaembú Stadium during the final of the Roca Cup! The very same who had pulled down his shorts and his bright red briefs in order to show his hairy Uruguayan light blue testicles to Queen Elizabeth, in Wembley stadium itself!!

Via the hyperbole of a narrative built around typifications, Fontanarrosa points up their limitations, the mythical nature of their construction, their uselessness as a means of explaining anything; he reminds us that any stereotype can only ever end in laughter or in failure. So when Fontanarrosa (1990) draws on the Argentinean erotic imaginary around Brazilian women in his short story ‘Elige tu propia aventura – para adultos’ (Choose Your Own Adventure – For Adults), the travelling salesman’s eagerness to engage in a sexual adventure with a local woman – or two – can only lead to disappointment. The series of stereotypes on which he bases his decisions (fear of urban violence, the ease of picking up a woman, covert and widespread transvestitism, the Argentinean as a street-wise winner) cannot but fail to lead to the frustration of his erotic desires, to the impossibility of sex.

## **‘Brazil, Tell Me How it Feels’: The 2014 World Cup and a Hopeful Conclusion**

The stereotypes discussed above, fed by the historical football rivalry, were evident in the most important practice deployed by the Argentine fans during the World Cup Finals in Brazil, in June and July 2014. At the stadiums, but especially in the streets, there were

many groups of fans chanting the song 'Brasil decime que se siente' ('Brazil, Tell Me How it Feels') to the melody of 'Bad Moon Rising', the 1969 song by the US rock band Creedence Clearwater Revival:

Brasil decime que se siente/ Tener en casa a tu papá/ Te juro que aunque pasen los años/ Nunca nos vamos a olvidar/ Que el Diego los gambeteó/ El Cani los vacunó/ Están llorando desde Italia hasta hoy/ A Messi lo van a ver/ la Copa nos va a traer/ Maradona es más grande que Pelé. (Guzmán, 2014)

Brazil, tell me how it feels/ To have your dad in your own home/ I swear that even as the years pass/ We will never forget/ That Diego [Maradona] dribbled through you/ That Cani [Claudio Caniggia] vaccinated you/ You have been crying since Italy [World Cup 1990] until today/ You are going to see [Lionel] Messi/ He will bring us the World Cup/ Maradona is greater than Pele.

The first two verses establish the basis of interpretation: the 'away' fans claim that they have occupied the territory of the adversary (the 'home' of the locals), and at the same time they stake their claim to be the symbolic 'father' of the other. On the one hand, the occupation of territory was the core affirmation of the Argentine fans throughout the World Cup finals in Brazil: following an initial street occupation in Copacabana, on 14 June 2014, the day before Argentina's opening match, there were numerous public demonstrations. These were not necessarily located at the stadiums, where the presence of the fans was limited by the need to have acquired tickets, but through the occupation of public spaces. Because it was foreign territory, and crucially also a Brazilian one, the most important rival according to national mythology, they saw themselves as invaders rather than just fans.

At the same time, the fans knew that the street occupations would be televised by global media, building a universal epic and thereby showing the world that Argentine fans were the 'best fans on the planet'. The same phenomenon could be seen on social networks: predictably, this was the cup of the self-production of images and of viralisation on social networks, which explains why the central artefacts of this collective experience were not the traditional flags and musical instruments but mobile phones. The most widely consumed of such images on YouTube, with more than five million views, is of Argentine fans in Copacabana (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1I0GFENyGJM>): as can be seen, there are as many phones as fans. The core action is not to sing, but to record the act of singing, a recording that is destined for viralisation, of course – that is, a narcissistic exhibition – and for storage to be subsequently used for familiar or friendly reproduction – that is, a narcissistic satisfaction of 'I was there'. On the other hand, as the song claimed, there was a 'paternity': the affirmation of Argentina as a father to Brazil is developed over the next five verses, which explain the reasons for such paternity. That paternity, of course, comes down to a single episode: Argentina's 1-0 victory over Brazil at the World Cup finals of Italy 1990 in the round of sixteen match that the song evokes. Hence, the song narrates that episode as unforgettable. The song is completed by the introduction of two actors: 'el Diego' (Maradona) who dribbles, and 'el Cani' (Caniggia) who 'vaccinates' (scoring the goal). In strictly football terms, this paternity is false if 'paternity' is taken as signifying a winning record in matches between the two historic rivals, for the record is unfavourable to Argentina: at the World Cup, there have been two victories for Brazil, one (this one)

for Argentina and one draw (in 1978). Brazil have won the World Cup five times, and Argentina twice. If we extend the consideration to all the games played between the two countries since 1908, there is the slenderest of advantages for Argentina, of one more game won. This cannot, from the point of view of results, be called a 'paternity', although Argentina's longer history of the game could, but significantly does not, constitute an alternative basis for such a notion (for an extended analysis of the chant, see Alabarces, 2016).

Obviously, a football song is neither explanatory nor informative; rather, it needs to be catchy and memorable and the lyrics are used more to narrate a wish than to describe a reality. And this is the point with this song: it talks about a desire, because it refers to an absence (that of superiority), and the desire for it is imposed by means of a homoerotic relation. Here Caniggia's 'vaccine' comes into play, for *vacunar* (to vaccinate) is one of many metaphors for anal penetration, the maximum form of underlining the superiority of the macho against the non-macho. Among football fans in Argentina, this is the favorite form of expressing male superiority: the rival is non-macho because he is a 'son' (of a metaphorical father) and is moreover 'vaccinated' (penetrated). In short, the song represents the condition of Argentine fandom as being in possession of *aguante*, a phenomenon that has been explored at length elsewhere (Garriga Zucal, 2007, 2010; Alabarces, 2014). At the same time, it highlights the manner in which imaginary relations between rivals have become ever more intolerant of difference as a result of the increased circulation, via the internet, of popular sporting media and advertising, all of it constructed on the basis of the stereotypes analysed here, with the addition of verbal violence (Alabarces, 2014; Helal, 2014).

Even if we are condemned to a game of mirrors, both Argentines and Brazilians need to develop a greater sense of humour around mutual stereotypes, more (self-)criticism and less schematic reproduction. Ribeiro's conclusions follow similar lines, and it is with these that I close this article:

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. (Ribeiro, 2002: 262)

As long as Brazil and Argentina remain within their armour of tropicalism and of Europeanism, that has been constructed over centuries by hegemonic western discourse, they will continue to function as ventriloquists of other people's voices, repeaters of stereotypes that serve only to reproduce hegemony. By the same token, persons or individual political subjects, as well as groupings or collective political subjects, who do not know who they are, cannot know what they want nor where are they going.

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This text builds on, and engages with, the author's significant previous publications on notions of football and national identity in Brazil and, especially, Argentina.

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