

BLACK ATLANTIC FOOTBALLER¹

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"A team without a Brazilian is not a team. But a team with 3 or 4 Brazilian players, well, it depends on the profile but it may not be a great team.

I'm kidding. "

(Mourinho, interview with ESPN Brazil, April 28, 2018).

Abstract:

This chapter explores the dual image of Brazilian players, addressing how, in different historical spaces and by different agents, racial and ethnic categories of national and regional identity have been negotiated in the world of football. In so doing, it focus on some particular representations of the population of South American footballers who travel or have travelled through Europe to work professionally for global clubs, based on ethnographic research conducted with Brazilian footballers. Our findings indicate that ethnic and racial stereotypes persist, have economic consequences when they involve commercial transactions and more seriously, perpetuate racist images that refer to the time of slavery.

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Introduction

In a recent interview, the notorious coach José Mourinho synthesized an opinion I have seen expressed by many voices throughout my research. A mix of admiration for talent and concern about rebelliousness appears in the form of a joke, a veiled or explicit accusation. I would like to speak today about this dual image of Brazilian players, addressing how, in different historical spaces and by different agents, racial and ethnic categories of continental, national and regional identity have been negotiated and manipulated in the world of football. I will focus on some particular representations of the population of South American footballers who travel or have travelled through Europe to work professionally for global clubs, based on ethnographic research conducted with Brazilian footballers who are celebrities abroad.

The connection between football and globalization deserves attention not only because sport, and particularly football, has a cultural centrality, which reflects aspects of globalization, but because it also influences and redefines uses of the term globalization. In an analogy with Sassen's (1991, 2003) category of global cities, I would say that global clubs are those that have transcended the boundaries of their cities, regions and even nation-states. Global clubs are nodes of economic, human, media, and symbolic flows. They have players from different parts of the world, concentrate globally circulating capital, are present in the media in different countries, have fans spread around the planet and reach the imagination of a planetary population. It is to global clubs that the expatriated footballers of the black Atlantic wish to go, moving from South to North. That said, we must recognize that football globalization is shaped, initiated and also limited by local societal contexts and specific societal interactions between local and global.

But I would like to make an initial warning. As we know, football is a highly exclusive profession. It is estimated that out of 100 players who reach the junior category in Brazil (the last before professionalization), only 1 becomes professional. Ninety per cent of these professionals earn between 1 and 4 minimum wages per month (between 200 and 800 pounds). Of the remaining 10%, who earn above 800 pounds, I estimate that only 1% will play abroad.

These happy few number about three thousand and are among the approximately 2.5 million Brazilians who live abroad today. Of these, only 800 will receive millionaire wages.³ It was with this minority of a minority that I began an ethnography in 2003 in a study that travelled along with some of them. The international path of most expatriate players goes from Brazil to Portugal, repeating in reverse the world's largest slave trade, which was directed by Portugal, from Africa to Brazil and was responsible for the forced dislocation of more than five million people, from 1501 to 1867, one of the largest migrations in history.

The football players I study are special emigrants who are simultaneously labour force and commodity (MARX, 1978 [1887]): they work, concentrate other's work, and circulate as commodities (BITENCOURT, 2007). Even though it is numerically a minor migratory flow, this emigration has a significant impact on Brazil's financial landscape and a strong presence in the *mediascape* (APPADURAI, 1990). Its main protagonists, players like Gabriel Jesus or Neymar (or Ronaldo and Ronaldinho before them) are certainly among the best known men in Brazil and among the best-known of all men anywhere in the world. They are celebrities, and they are black, a confluence that dates back to the twentieth century.

Blacks, recent presence

In fact, analysing the flows of black players across the Atlantic (this discrete geo-political unit in the modern capitalist world-system that links Africans, Americans, Caribbeans, Brazilians and British, as defined by Gilroy), we see that they are not new – but have grown enormously since the 1990s.

The world discovered South American football in the 1920s, through the Uruguay team at the Paris and Amsterdam Olympics (1924 and 1928), and then at the World Cup in Montevideo (1930). Global fans were particularly charmed by a special type of South American player, the dribblers, who were able to avoid the corporal shock through what is known in Brazil as *ginga* a fluid and graceful style of play.

In the 1920s Europe discovered black talent in dance, music, and football and found it marvellous. Maurice Pefferkorn, a French

³ Between 400,000 and 40 million euros per year

journalist at the 1924 Paris Olympics, wrote about Uruguayan players: "We are watching men who seem to have found a second nature in football." Another journalist added: "I saw before me the revelation of a football dream. He had everything: ease, finesse and inspiration "(RYSWICK, 1962, p. 45 *apud* LANFRANCHI; TAYLOR, 2001, p. 69).

The focus of this admiration was the ability to dribble. There have been a number of attempts to historically explain the preference of the subaltern for dribbling over physical contact, as a strategy of resistance of blacks and mulattos in the rare encounters of their teams with teams of white men. Given the high degree of racism and predictable punishments issued if a white man were physically hit, dribbling was the mode found by *criollos* and mestizos, blacks and mulattos to avoid physical proximity in sporting disputes. In this explanation, the dribble somehow echoes the invention by their ancestors – Brazilian slaves – of capoeira. This form of training for martial struggle that was disguised as a dance because the martial struggle was outlawed by the sugarcane plantation owners. Dribbling, meanwhile, a strategy that has been called "weapons of the weak" (SCOTT; 1985), was a sort of introduction of dance steps into sport to deceive, disconcert and in extreme cases break down and demoralize an opposing team. Whether this is true or not, dribbling and a South American style of play were given racial explanations.

This marks the initial fabrication of the myth associated with South American footballers, who were considered to have special physical talents and remarkable aesthetic qualities. Europe, and especially France, was undergoing a period of cultural ferment and the discovery of the Black Other occurred in many instances, football being only one of them. It was the time of the 'crazy years' of *Ballets Nègres* and Josephine Baker, and Carlos Gardel and the Argentine tango in Paris. It was a time when black American fox-trot and jazz musicians, black Brazilian musicians of chorinho and black boxers toured Europe. And it was the time when anthropologists and artists toured Africa.

The stylistic qualities of the 'beautiful game' were explained by the biological, naturalized, and associated with race and nation.

In Brazil, in the nineteenth century, in football's early days, Gobineau's prevailing racist theory affirmed that blacks were

intellectually inferior to whites, but superior in physical strength. Football requires physical ability, a quality that has been attributed to blacks since the time of this influential French theorist. Since the colonial and slave epoch this imaginary saw black women as nursemaids for white children, as lovers and as reproducers of slave labour. Its counterpart for men also emphasized their corporal attributes. But let's not fool ourselves; football was a sign of Modernity, that came from Europe, which was carried to Brazil in the baggage of an elite youth who had studied in England. According to historians, it was the British-born Brazilian Charles Miller who introduced the game to the South American country in 1894.

The path of access to this modern sport for blacks was long and tortuous. In its early days, football was for gentlemen, not manual workers, especially not blacks. From its earliest period South America colonialism defined domestic relations, in which a small Europeanized elite dominated the vast majority of the population. A situation that continues until today in Brazil, when 1% of the population controls 50% of the wealth, with the remaining 50% divided by more than 200 million Brazilians. The language of football was English, and it was expected that a player could understand and say 'man on you' when a player of his team with the ball was threatened by an opponent. And there was 'take you man', 'come back forwards' as well as the names of the eleven player positions, always in the original language of the 'Breton' sport: goalkeeper, fullback-right, fullback-left, halfback-right, centre-half, halfback-left, winger-right, inside-right, centre-forward, inside-left, and winger-left. "The Argentinian Football Association did not allow Spanish to be spoken at the meetings of its directors, and the Uruguay Association Football League outlawed Sunday matches because it was British custom to play on Saturday" (GALEANO, 2018, p. 24-25).

However, not requiring complex equipment, the sport quickly became popular among the poor, especially factory workers (LEITE LOPES, 2009) who organized their own leagues and championships – that of the blacks in the south was called the Black Legs League. The first star black players emerged from these leagues. Coveted by white teams, they were forced to wear facial make-up to disguise their colour and to undergo long treatments to disguise curly hair – as did the great black player Friedenreich:

First he moistened his hair with oil. Then, with the comb, he pulled it back. The hair did not yield to the comb, it did not lie on the head, it wanted to get up. Friedenreich had to pull the comb back hard and with his free hand hold his hair. Otherwise it would not stick to his head, like a hood.

The comb and the hand were not enough. He had to tie a towel to his head, make the towel a turban, and bury his head in it. And wait for the hair to settle. "(RODRIGUES FILHO, 2003, p. 61)

In 1921, the president of Brazil Epitacio Pessoa banned blacks from the national team, since only white athletes were considered ideal for projecting abroad the image of the best in Brazilian society. Pessoa made this declaration at a time when blacks began to join Brazil's leading teams under the condition that they whitened their faces with 'rice powder' and wore hats to hide their curly hair.

The few blacks in the selection in 1950, especially the goalie Barbosa and the left-half Bigode, were accused of indolence, and of lacking moral quality. They were blamed for the nation's defeat at the 1950 World Cup final⁴.

Still, over time, the clubs (as teams are known – and to which both players and dues paying fans belong) were giving up the prohibition and including blacks (Gremio, for example, only did so in 1952. But at its first game with a black player numerous fans tore up their club memberships and threw them onto the field in protest). There was thus a mixture of admiration for physical qualities regarded as naturally superior and contempt for 'inferiorities of character'. This racist vision was deeply expressed in books written by Lyra Filho, head of the Brazilian delegation at the 1954 World Cup⁵:

Lyra Filho made a comparison between Brazilian players and the members of the Hungarian team, which had beaten Brazil 4 to 2 in the quarterfinals. Seeing the Hungarians as the quintessential Europeans, the author argued that the Brazilian players were always guided by their instincts rather than reason, and their behaviour was

⁴ "Experienced as 'one of the greatest tragedies in contemporary Brazilian history', Da Matta observes, because it was collectively perceived as the loss of the historical chance to finally escape the condition of a destitute people – [it] acted as a metaphor for other defeats of Brazilian society." (LEITE LOPES, Vibrant 6-2:136).

⁵ "Taça do Mundo" ("The 1954 World Cup"), published in 1954 and "Introdução à sociologia dos esportes" ("Introduction to the Sociology of Sport") published in 1973.

marked by immaturity and nervous instability, as opposed to maturity and self-control. These defects, he said, were a consequence of miscegenation and the heritage of the black race. (LEITE LOPES, 1998, p. 137)

In 1958, the 'blackening' of the national team was consolidated, although the motto of the Brazilian delegation in Sweden, coined by the head of the delegation, the legendary Paulo Machado de Carvalho, was still "before the player comes the man", which expressed the disdain for behaviour considered deviant, which were superbly illustrated by the notorious footballer Garrincha. It is known that Pelé and Garrincha were only placed on the main team because of the demand of the other players – the coaching staff, following the diagnosis of the team psychologist, did not consider them fit (LEITE LOPES, 1998).

Racism is expressed in the conflict between two different visions of what should be the Brazilian national identity. One advocated the need to cleanse the country and affirmed the dangers of racial degeneration due to miscegenation. This clashed with the notion of Brazil as a racial democracy, as developed by Gilberto Freyre's theory of Luso-tropicalism, which affirmed that Portuguese colonization was characterized by a special racial relation that was more cordial and docile, prone to the mixture of races. The future of the country would be successful precisely because we were a mulatto country. In Freyre, Negroes use their bodies as artists who express themselves in bodily practices that are imaginatively associated: samba and football. Thus, football in Brazil is seen as black, in fact, mulatto. It is not a coincidence that even today the press in Brazil refers to football players as "pieces" (*peça* in Portuguese) the same word used to designate slaves in the past.

As Gilberto Freyre (1945) says:

An unmistakable Brazilian style of football wound up being defined, and this style is another expression of our mulatismo that, to our liking agilely assimilates, dominates and softens into dance, curves or song, the more angular European or US techniques: whether they are from sport or architecture, because it is our mulatismo – psychologically, to be Brazilian is to be mulatto – that is an enemy of Apollonian formalism because his Dionysian manner – is the great mulatto trait (FREYRE, 1945, p. 432) .

In a paragraph, Freyre defines not only the Brazilian style of football, but also what would be Brazilian man: agile, soft, fluid. Football would thus express the physical abilities imputed to blacks from the time of the racist theorist Gobineau, but here re-signified positively. That is, Gobineau and Freyre share a vision of black or mulatto bodies that are physically superior to white bodies. It is not surprising, therefore, that the ability to play football is considered in the popular imaginary to be innate – “football is not learned in school”, “a star is born that way”, “it’s in the blood” – as innate as the race of its greatest specialists, blacks and mulattoes.

This vision that relates blood, race, body, nation and style of play has been more recently revived in the anthropological writings of Roberto Da Matta in Brazil. In a more critical manner, it has appeared deconstructed in studies on the making of the myth of a national football style by Leite Lopes (1994) in Brazil, and Eduardo Archetti in Argentina (1998, 1999). In both countries, football has been used intensely to explain national identities and has been associated with national ethos and particular masculinities.

Da Matta (1982) emphasizes the moral quality of “malice” that translates into a style of play known literally as “shifty hips”, a type of “swing” not found in any other style of football, with Brazilian football having a less authoritarian, more artistic style. Archetti (1999), when analysing the sports chronicles of the magazine *El Gráfico* of the 1920s and 1930s, in which journalist Ricardo Lorenzo ‘Borocoto’, identifies the creation of the myth of a Creole football in Argentina, which is not a “pure” style, but the result of a hybridization of Italian and Spanish emigrants with the Indians who occupied the nation’s subaltern layers. A particular male nature would determine their style of playing football and expressing masculinity. Like Criollo horses that are a mixed breed of South American and Arabian horses, there are Creole men, Gauchos, who are capable of fertilizing the European, Italian and Spanish essence to produce new masculine beings, specific and peculiar constructs, but not univocal, hybrid males in football and in the nation.

Thus, in Argentina, beginning in the 1930s, in a psychoanalytic death of the father, the national style is mythically constructed as

superior to that of its British inventors; in Brazil this would take some more time to occur.

English professional football first thrashes us, but then, amateur, criollo football gets results against high-performance football. At least in the imaginary, because in reality they do not compete. It will be totally insular football. (Archetti, 1999, p. XX).

It was insular because in the first years of football, Englishmen and criollos did not mix. When they did, in games watched by thousands of people, the result was predictable. As the chronicles of the English newspaper *The Standart* tried to show, at the beginning of the century the English always won because they played a scientific-football in which a good use of headers is emphasized. This anatomical detail is important: the head is the part of the body that the English affirm they use with mastery and undeniable superiority. But this superiority was not fixed in the organ of reason: "Everything is scientific: the posture, the body, massage, the care for muscles. They created this imaginary that became generalized"(ARCHETTI 1999).

In Brazil, the discipline and willpower of the English is seen to be in opposition to a national style and masculinity that is presented as individualistic, sensitive, artistic and based on improvisation. In both Argentina and Brazil therefore, it is skill, not strength that marks Creole or mestizo football. And in both countries football is defined by appropriating racial terminology that refers to a mixture of blood.

This imagery of skilful and dribbling, Creole, mestizo football, has repercussions in Europe. The first wave of imported Latin American players in the 1930s was mostly composed of skilful players who were creators, not those with physical strength.

"Who is important to Europe? The creators matter, as they always have. The *stumps*, the *beasts* do not matter. They took insiders for a long time, insiders, wings and centre-forwards. The only centre-half they imported was Monti. For a long time that was the only way. And they get there, to Europe, and they stop it, step on it, pass it, they have "eyes in the back of the neck". Europeans begin to reproduce the myth. And then it helps to create the imaginary, propagate it (ARCHETTI, 1999).

Who is imported by Europe? The question can be asked in another way; from what social, racial and ethnic categories were sought the first South American players to go to Europe? The answer is surprising. In Argentina, the *criollo* evokes the rural, the gaucho – rugged cowboy types from the frontier. In Brazil, the skilled mulattos were black residents of urban favelas. It is interesting to note, however, that the first imports to Europe were white players from the urban milieu of Buenos Aires and São Paulo, beginning with Julio Libonatti, an Italo-Argentinean who left the New Old Boys club for Torino in 1925, becoming the first recorded transatlantic transfer⁶.

Let us briefly leave aside this imaginary of a footballer with special qualities to focus on demographic data that help explain the social provenance of these first imported players. Of the five million European immigrants who were in Brazil in the 1930s, 34% were of Italian origin. It was such a significant presence in the mid-1920s that there were more Italians in São Paulo than in Venice. The first wave of migration of Brazilian footballers to Europe was concentrated in this group of Italian immigrants and more precisely in Italian immigrants who worked at only one club: Palestra Itália.

This was not just any club. In the 1930s, it had a large contingent of members, five thousand, which was far more than the few hundred members of the Italian Cultural Associations and the Circle of the Fascist Party that was largely composed of Italo-Brazilians. Fourteen of the twenty-six Brazilian players registered as having left the country between 1929 and 1943 (LANFRANCHI; TAYLOR, 2001, p. 81) left Brazil for clubs in Italy. They took advantage of a market that paid much better salaries, and soon gained high visibility in the Italian football scene. The Brazilian presence in Italy was so strong in some clubs that Lazio, for example, was called Brazilazio (FONTENELLE, 1988).

It is important to note that legally, this was not immigration since the Italian descendants were seen as *rimpatriati* (returnees) and enjoyed the complete rights of any Italian citizen. Some players changed their name to better meet this profile, changing the nickname or first name with which they were known in Brazil for

⁶ The brilliant chapter 'South American Artists' in the book *Moving with the Ball*, by Lanfranchi and Taylor, provided most of the historical information for this text. And also *Football in Sun and Shadow* by Eduardo Galeano.

their surname. Thus Filó became Guarisina in Italy, and the first Brazilian to win a World Cup, albeit playing for the Italian team.

When Brazil joined the allied bloc in World War II, the Palestra Italia club was renamed Palmeiras and the emigration network was dismantled. But after the war, laws regulating access by players from abroad changed in Italy and then in other European countries. After 1947, the Italian Federation limited the number of players from a foreign federation who could play on a club to five, and only three could be foreign citizens (LANFRANCHI; TAYLOR, 2001, p. 90).

This embarrassed and restricted Italian descendants living in South America who had come from a foreign federation. Players who before the war were considered *rimpatriati*, Italian descendants came to be considered *oriundi*. They could request Italian citizenship but it was no longer automatically granted. There were, therefore, three categories of players: the natives, the *oriundi* (Italian descendants) and the foreigners, and the *oriundi* were seen as being closer to foreigners than to natives. So much so that in 1949 the Italian Football League began to equate the two, limiting the presence on the clubs to only three players from foreign federations, whether foreign or *oriundi*. The football laws were national and subordinated to the regulations of the federations as much as the laws of the country. Times of openness and restrictions on immigrants fluctuated. Another significant change in the commercial relations of South Americans to Italy concerned the home club of the exported player. The emigration was no longer from a single club, Palmeiras, although it was still concentrated from clubs in Brazil's Southeast.

Rimpatriati or *oriundi* were almost all white. Black players only began to be imported by European clubs after the Brazilian victories in the 1958 and 1962 World Cups, and as a result of Pele's success. Black players also began to be imported to Spain and France. The Brazilian star Didi played for Real Madrid in the 1950s at the age of 32, and had a frustrated season during which the team's white Argentinian idol Di Stefano and Puskas were unfriendly towards him.

The reasons for the continuity of this flow for the players was based on the monetary gains and for the European teams on the belief that only South Americans could deliver talented football. The

differences in the salaries paid between the continents was already large. Pepe Schiaffino, the best Uruguayan player of the 1950s, earned three times more by transferring to Milan in 1954, and his salary was seven times higher than Didi's, who had the highest salary in Brazil.

Nevertheless, among white and black players, after the great evasion of the first decades of the twentieth century, the departure of South American players to Europe declined considerably in the 1960's, in part because of the changes in the rules of national federations that made immigration more difficult and even impossible in some cases. France and Spain closed their borders to South American imports in 1962, as did Italy in 1966. Spain, however, continued to allow *oriundi*, but Spanish ascendancy was not the only criterion. For a player to be considered *oriundi* he may not have played for the national team of his country of origin. In 1973, Spain allowed the presence of only two foreigners on each club. Also crucial to the decline in imports was FIFA's decision in 1964 to prohibit a player from participating on more than one national team.

The closure of the borders to imported players influenced the migratory flow but does not seem to have altered the European imagination towards South American players. They were still considered to embody the 'beautiful game', have the most interesting football to watch, and be great dribblers. Precise data about the migratory flow from South America to Europe in the 1960s and 1970s is not available, but a table elaborated by Fontan (1963) shows that there were only one hundred Brazilian players acting abroad in 1963, eighty-four of them in the main divisions⁷. This was much fewer than the number of Argentines, a trend that continued throughout the twentieth century. Brazilians only established a numerically significant presence in their former metropolis, Portugal.

Meanwhile, in the twenty-first century, the data indicate a preference for Brazilians,⁸ not only in Europe, but in 78 countries (out of 93 studied by CIES), to the point that the country is

⁷ 32 played in other Latin American countries and the rest in Europe: 21 in Portugal, 18 in Italy, 12 in Spain, 1 in France and 1 in Austria.

⁸ We do not have online statistics from AFA as we do from CBF, so the comparison is difficult and inaccurate. CIES has accurate statistics about international transfers of players since 2006.

considered the only 'global worker in football'⁹ – a statement that should be considered relatively because considering its population, Uruguay and not Brazil would be the leading exporter in the Americas.

“Lazy and cuddly”

Just as this immigration flow did not encompass all of Europe, but was limited to only a few football centres in the South of Europe, it is also misleading to use the comprehensive category of “South American” to identify these players. But the European press lumped them together under this label.

From as early as the mid-1930s we found newspaper articles with biting criticism of South American players whose conduct was considered to be out-of-bounds: “We are tired of those ‘Italians’ who do not speak Italian, who do not watch the games of their teams. It may seem like xenophobia, but we prefer national products” wrote one journalist quoted by Leite Lopes (2009).

These accusations were not addressed exclusively to Brazilians in Italy, as we read in this excerpt from the sports magazine *Miroir Sprint* of February 15, 1960, where the Argentines Sivori, who won the *Ballon d’Or* in 1961, and Libonatti are represented as eccentric and lazy:

The anecdotes related to Sivori are rich and diverse, even if he is not as excessive as Libonatti, who used to buy twenty-five shirts at a time, or Cesarini who arrived one day to a training practice wearing only a night-gown. In general, the *oriundis* are extravagant. Before every match, Sivori bets with Juventus’ Chairman Mr. Agnelli, FIAT’s director: that if he scores a goal, he is allowed to smoke a cigarette

⁹See CIES Monthly Report 35 – World football expatriates: global study 2018 (<http://www.football-observatory.com/IMG/sites/mr/mr35/fr/>) . Even though they have multiplied by hundreds (in 1980/1981 there were only 27 Brazilians in Europe, in 2007/2008 658 Brazilian players were transferred to Europe), Portugal continued to be the leading country attracting Brazilian players in Europe, with about 30% of total transfers between 2002 and 2008, second place varying each year between Spain, France, Croatia or Italy and getting no more than 7%. In 2018, Portugal remains the principal destination for Brazilian expatriates footballers. In America, it’s the rich Mexican football and the emerging U.S. football that most attract Brazilians. In Argentina, in 2005, a total of 127 players left the clubs of the first division of Argentine football, and 102 players returned to the country. “Both from Argentina and abroad, almost 60% of the players are traded in the Latin American market. The main buyer of Argentinean players in Europe is Spain, with 18 players in 2005, and in America is Mexico with 26 players in 2005”(GODIO 2007).

as soon as gets back to the locker room. If not, the chairman would light a cigarette. Sivori is lazy. He likes to sleep until lunch time. He has missed training more than once and has had to be woken up to get ready for matches "(*Miroir Sprint*, 15 February 1960)Apud LANFRANCHI; TAYLOR, 2001, p. 93)¹⁰.

Libonatti's missing training and sleeping until noon in the 1920s and 30s, which returned in the 1960s with Sivori, echo the embarrassed reprimands I heard from the Dutch about the legendary Brazilian, Romario, who played for PSV Eindhoven between 1988 and 1993. The club was obliged to make the rules more flexible for him, since it could not repeatedly punish the team's leading scorer, a player who decided matches and championships, but who refused to train in the morning.

In Spain and France South American players were also seen as eccentric, rude and uneducated. The centre-half Fausto dos Santos and the goalie Jaguaré Bezerra de Vasconcelos, the first Brazilians to play for Barcelona, in the 1930s, did not last long at the club. Because of his spectacular skills, Fausto was named the 'Black Wonder' (*Maravilha Negra*) in the World Cup of 1930, and made plays with ease that for others required great effort – but he only played in friendly games in Cataluña.¹¹ Usually discreet, Fausto had moments of emotional outbreaks, according to records. Jaguaré, who also surprised fans and colleagues with moves not common in a goalkeeper, like defending with a bicycle kick or scoring a goal on a penalty, was threatened by referees and considered to be weird. Both returned to Brazil with no money, and died in poverty.

Two episodes involving Brazilians at Real Madrid reveal that prejudice towards Brazilians has not changed in the twenty-first century. The first involved a curious appropriation of an anthropological category, in which the Spanish press dubbed the team the "Brazilian clan", at a time when this global club had a

¹⁰ The Argentine Renato Cesarine signed for Juventus in 1929: "Cesarine was an extravagant character who was known to go out with a monkey on his shoulder, went to bed when his teammates were waking up and took every opportunity to smoke, drink and seduce women." (LANFRANCHI; TAYLOR, 2001, p. 77).

¹¹ "He does with amazing ease what others would do with superhuman effort. Fausto, with his wonderful football, came to teach Europe how to play a center-half " wrote a French football journalist. <http://observatorioracialfutebol.com.br/conheca-a-historia-de-fausto-dos-santos-a-maravilha-negra/> Consulted on May 15th, 2018.

Brazilian coach and five players, Roberto Carlos, Ronaldo, Júlio Batista, Robinho and Cicinho. These players began to celebrate their goals with choreographies rehearsed in the locker room and from which the other players of the team felt excluded. These dances and stunts were prominently featured in the press. While they were initially greeted as funny and entertaining, they came to be portrayed as an attempt to form a Brazilian clique, receiving bitter comments from journalists, columnists, players and fans of the club. In the article titled "The Dance of Discord", a journalist from *El País*, reported a controversial celebration:

In a locker room where a coach and four Brazilian assistants enforce the rules, the power of Roberto Carlos, Ronaldo, Baptista and Robinho is increasingly evident. The frog dance, therefore, is a display of power that other players watch warily. The Spaniards do are not living a prosperous season in the club: Raúl is tired of trying to lead a team in which more competitors are contracted each season, Casillas continues without renewing, Helguera thinks that they do not want him, Salgado plays threatened by the shadow of Cicinho, and Guti does not have trust from the coach, Vanderlei Luxemburgo – who was Roberto Carlos's godfather at his wedding. Ronaldo is not lacking in strength: his friend is Florentino Pérez. Club sources say the president does not like these theatrics, but prefers to let them pass. He doesn't want to disturb Ronaldo for something that is not considered a serious problem" (TORRES , 2005).

The editor-in-chief of the Real Madrid section of the *Marca* newspaper, José Félix Díez echoed the criticism, stating: "The division was clear. The best example was that bullshit of the cockroach celebration (players imitating cockroaches, lying face up, wiggling their arms and legs)".

Spanish defender Helguera, in a rare demonstration among players, confirmed the annoyance caused to the other players of the team by the Brazilians: "It does not seem like they play as a team, it's a lack of respect for the team, because when a goal is scored, it's a Real Madrid goal, it's the whole team".

The "clan", a black clan we should say, did not last long, and once coach Luxembourg was dismissed, the other players left one by one. The last to leave, Robinho, forced his sale to Manchester City for a record sum at that time, which triggered another moment of

strong demonstrations against the player and Brazilians in general. It is the second episode I want to discuss.

The reactions registered on the website of the newspaper *Marca* (the world's leading sports newspaper, with more than 3 million daily readers) show the negative representations that surround the identity of Brazilians in Spain (similar accusations were made years later when Neymar left Barcelona):

"Spanish teams should think a little bit more before hiring Brazilians. If you look around Europe, you'll see they are spoiled children, except in some rare cases".

"Brazilians, in the long run always cause problems on the team they are on. They come to make money and do not care about the colours [of the club] "

"Less samba and more work"

"The Brazilians have the talent to be on the white team [Madrid], but may lack the mental strength and the commitment that the most important club of all time requires."

"They came as PELÉ and left as POTATO(s) and still want to charge like stars. Get rid of these children who come from Brazil, who believe they are God and are nobody, get out, get out. Robinho de Sousa. Ah, how do Brazilians' ankles shake."

"Madrid takes its own medicine, so I don't feel sorry, but it's shameful behaviour by these football mercenaries, signing hyper-millionaire contracts to kick a ball and then do not fulfil them".

"Why do all the "rebels" speak Portuguese? And why not say that they are almost always Brazilians? Alves, Robinho, Ronaldinho, the latter last year, but also Rivaldo, Ronaldo, Romário .. and nothing, these teams continue hiring these pearls. "

"All the players are mercenaries ... like Raul or Puyol there are very few left ... and even more Brazilians, who could sell their mother for money ... Robinho = mercenary and fortune-teller"

"We are talking about a child and, moreover, a Brazilian."

"He is an ungrateful carioca who believes he is special because he has highlighted his ability to make 14 consecutive bicycle kicks".

The comments are eloquent: Brazilians are mercenaries, cowards, spoiled children with no mental strength. Another recurring idea among the fans' comments is that the Spanish club saved them from misery in Brazil:

"Admit it Robinho, you are after cash and that's it !!!!! How can you criticize the club that has saved you from starving. The ill-born like

you, like almost all Brazilians who see the money (...) and only dedicate themselves to going out to parties and not giving their all on the pitch. Mercenary!! ”

“Madrid gave you food and gave you a name in Europe, I do not think you should crap on the plate of someone who gave you food to eat, what you wanted was money and that’s it”

“Madrid saved you from misery when you were at your worst, with your mother’s kidnapping and all that.”

The fans’ comments are not supported by the fact that most of the players currently on the big European clubs were hired after they already had a solidly established position in Brazil, even if they did not receive the million-dollar salaries they earn at the global clubs.

Robinho (who was later found guilty in a collective rape in Italy) was also criticized in Brazil for forcing Madrid to sell him while he was still under contract. In his defence, however, it must be acknowledged that his salary of less than 3 million euros was half that of other Spanish players on the team, such as Guti and Raul, who did not have comparable importance on the field – less football capital, BOURDIEU, (1979) would say – but who held positions of political dominance in the club.

While it is true that until recently South American players were seen as forming an indistinct group and blamed en bloc for possible improprieties, over time some ethnic origins have come to be represented as worse than others. Thus, this more collective and encompassing identity of South American players was surpassed by the national identities. Brazilians came to lead the ranking of bad-boys in the view of fans and journalists.

Unlike Argentines, who in Spain have received special attention since the time of Franco’s fascist regime, echoing an imperial imagery in relation to the former colonies, Brazilians have always been admired for their talent in football, but viewed with suspicion for their personal qualities. This was well expressed by one fan, quoted in *Marca*; “they have talent, but not the necessary mental strength and commitment”. This is reverberated in the humorous statement I quoted at first from Mourinho, a former coach of Real Madrid.

Racism is also present. A journey abroad, as Lévi-Strauss pointed out, is a geographical displacement, but it also creates a

displacement in the social hierarchy and, in some cases, a displacement in the racial hierarchy. Players considered to be white (or mestizo) in Brazil are often considered to be black in France, Germany and the Netherlands, and may suffer from shouts of “monkeys” from fans who, as is well known, often express racism and homophobia in the temples of hegemonic white masculinity that are the football stadiums.

While the extravagant clothing tastes of the English male, working class born star Beckham are admired and copied as bold; the attire of Brazilian stars such as Daniel Alves and Neymar¹² are often portrayed as displaying bad taste. Taste is a matter of class (BOURDIEU, 1979) but also of race, gender and nationality.

Despite FIFA's campaigns against racism, there are many well-known episodes of racist aggressions in stadiums, although punishments are rare. Daniel Alves may have enacted the most creative response to racist taunts when he picked up a banana thrown at him and simply ate it, anthropophagically transforming a racist symbol in food, the insult into an offering.

Most of the players I interviewed, however, did not see themselves as black and would certainly be shocked to know that they are seen so in the European countries where they play. I remember asking a player about racism and he answered: “it exists, my brother who is black suffers a lot”, he himself does not consider himself black.

The prejudice of Madrid's fans cannot be generalized to all European clubs, and even in Spain it is necessary to recognize that there are clubs considered more Brazilian-friendly than others. Barcelona, for example, although the passage through this club of bad-boys such as Romario, Ronaldo and especially Ronaldinho, as well as the back door exit by Neymar have been disparaged.

Of course, there are Brazilian bad boys (as the football players call other players) but it is also very common to find those “from church”, as they call their colleagues who “have faith” (as they prefer to say, instead of mentioning church or religion). Most

¹² “He is passing an image of a believed, individualistic, selfish guy and the people who know him speak of him exactly the opposite. They say that he is very generous, cheerful, simple ... He is receiving a lot of criticism both in Brazil, France and Spain, I imagine that too, but all the people I spoke with speak of a very different Neymar.” Eric Frosio (“Neymar el Príncipe de Brasil” at Marca, 29/05/2018. (<http://www.marca.com/futbol/liga-francesa/2018/05/29/5b0d978d22601dd5618b45b6.html>).

religious Brazilian footballers are neo-Pentecostals and religious practices guide their life choices. Indeed, neo-Pentecostalism is growing rapidly in South America among subaltern classes, taking the place of Catholic and Afro-Brazilian churches. Those players who “have faith” have a completely different life style: they avoid drinking and night clubs, read the Bible daily, promote meetings among themselves and sometimes in the presence of a pastor, and family is a central value in their lives. Even though religion is omnipresent – in prayers, corporal tattoos, and symbolic gestures made during celebrations – it is largely invisible to fans and journalists, who continue to emphasise the reckless lifestyle of footballers in an incorrect generalisation. The expected moral career (as Goffman would say) for a football player does not include visits to churches.

Final considerations

Being Brazilian or South American is an ethnic identity that has been positively valued at many clubs I have visited. A Dutch manager told me that if a club had pretensions to stand out internationally, it needed Brazilian players: “all the big clubs have Brazilian players, we do as well”. Ethnic identity seems to function as stock in a global exchange with cyclical rises and declines. Although it is unofficial, an element of risk seems to be associated to different ethnicities that probably has an impact on their sale value. I do not have statistical evidence, but I risk hypothesizing that many of the active players in Europe were imported for the quality of their performances, while also considering their nationality, skin colour, name and, sometimes, even the region of their country of origin. Between two players with similar performance, a club will give preference to the one with the lightest skin, whose name is easier to transform into a trademark and whose nationality has a stronger tradition in international football. For Brazilians, preference is given to someone from the South rather than the North of the country

In this respect, I would like to share a curious email that I received from a director of a Dutch club, who placed me in an unprecedented situation as an anthropologist: that of counsellor. He wrote:

“Dear Carmen,

How are you? I just wanted to thank you for all the advice you gave me when we talked. It was very helpful to us. I have another question, if I may, for which I could use your advice. We are about to sign a young Brazilian player from the state of Bahia [in the country's Northeast]. We have heard that players in this area, in general, have much more difficulty in succeeding abroad than the Cariocas and Paulistas [in the Southeast]. Would you say that there is some truth to this? Would you have suggestions on how best to approach him, earn his trust, and help him succeed? The boy we are talking about seems very shy, almost suspicious. He comes from a dysfunctional family and spent most of his youth in the football school of one of the largest teams in the state of Bahia.

I really hope you can help, thank you so much for now!

Met vriendelijke groet / Cordially ”

It can be seen that the negative qualities associated with Brazilians are regionalized as well, and a new hierarchy appears, corresponding to Brazil's internal economic and social hierarchy: São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro are considered superior to the Northeast.

If we take a panoramic view of the immigration of Brazilian players since the 1930s and compare it with the immigration of Argentine and Uruguayan players, we can see that Brazilians were less successful and remained marginal until recent decades. The reasons given for this failure are the same ones that I found among the players abroad who suffered and returned home: they longed for Brazil and struggled with the rigorous European winters. The clubs saw this attitude as a lack of interest – a disinterest in learning the language, in socializing with local players and as a tendency to form clans, which led to tensions in locker rooms and increased rivalries.

Ethnic and racial stereotypes persist, have economic consequences when they involve commercial transactions and more seriously, perpetuate racist images that refer to the time of slavery.

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