

## THE HISTORY OF FOOTBALL AND LITERATURE IN BRAZIL (1908-1938)<sup>i</sup>

A história do futebol e da literatura no Brasil (1908-1938)

La historia del fútbol y de la literatura en Brasil (1908-1938)

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the emergence of literary texts in Brazil that centre on the relatively new practice of football in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Primarily published in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, the nation's centres of football practice and literary production, these texts mediated competing visions of the place of football in Brazilian society, and of Brazil itself. Through a combination of textual analysis and socio-political contextualisation, we see how a number of the country's key literary figures – male and female – drew on football to construct a sense of nation for the new Republic, and their place within it.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Football; Literature; Brazil; 1920s; 1938 World Cup.

## RESUMO

Este artigo explora o surgimento de textos literários no Brasil que se centram na prática relativamente nova do futebol nas primeiras décadas do século XX. Publicados sobretudo no Rio de Janeiro e em São Paulo, os centros de prática de futebol e da produção literário do país, esses textos mediarão visões conflitantes do lugar do futebol no Brasil e do próprio país. Por meio de uma combinação de análise textual e contextualização sociopolítica, vemos como algumas das principais figuras literárias do país – homens e mulheres – recorreram ao futebol para construir um sentimento de nação para a nova República, e seu lugar dentro dela.

**KEYWORDS:** Futebol; Literatura; Brasil; Década de 1920; Copa do Mundo de 1938.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo examina la aparición de textos literarios brasileños que enfocan la práctica relativamente nueva del fútbol en las primeras décadas del siglo XX. Publicados sobre todo en Rio de Janeiro y São Paulo, los centros del fútbol y de la producción literaria, estos textos mediaron visiones diferentes frente al lugar que debería ocupar el fútbol en Brasil y del país mismo. A través de una combinación de análisis textual y contextualización sociopolítica, vemos cómo algunos de los escritores nacionales más destacados –hombres y mujeres– se inspiraron en el fútbol para construir una idea de lo nacional para la nueva República, y de su propio lugar dentro de él.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Fútbol; Literatura; Brasil; Años 1920; Mundial 1938.

In comparison with some neighbouring countries in South America, football's arrival in Brazil in the final years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was relatively late. The country's size and its federal structure, enshrined in the 1891 constitution, contribute to the contested origins of football in Brazil, with clubs founded independently in the states of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, Recife, and Belo Horizonte between 1895 and 1904 (Alabarces, 2018: 43-45).

The fact that many of these clubs were founded by Brazilians who were returning from schools in Europe where football was played ensured that the sport was rapidly and enthusiastically adopted by local elites, in contrast to the situation in Argentina, Uruguay and Peru, where football had arrived earlier but, until the 1890s, had tended to remain in clubs and schools founded by and for British ex-patriate communities.

The first match in Rio to involve a team, comprised of members of the local elite, took place in 1901 and attracted fewer spectators than the number of players on the field. Nevertheless, a similar encounter that occurred five years later at the stadium of Fluminense Football Club attracted around 1,500 spectators. From the city of São Paulo, Charles Miller wrote to his former school in Southampton to tell them that by 1904 there were at least 60 football clubs where he lived. In addition, nearly 2,000 balls had been sold in the previous 12 months, and crowds of 2,000-3,000 people were the norm at league matches as non-whites and working-class players began to enjoy the sport (Mason, 1995; Damo and Oliven, 2009; Rosso, 2010; Goldblatt, 2014).

As elsewhere in Latin America, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, physical exercise was a subject of intense debate among medical, political, and intellectual circles in Brazil, and the fact that the country had only become a Republic in 1889 gave particular urgency to consideration of the ways in which individual and national bodies could be improved. Haberly describes the period between 1890 and 1930 as "perhaps the most difficult of all for educated Brazilians interested in their nation and its future" (1983: 123), referring to the country's fundamental problems, blamed primarily on slavery and the Portuguese monarchy, which remained unresolved.

As Skidmore and Smith noted, "Neither the abolition of slavery [which definitively ended in 1888] nor the overthrow of the Empire in themselves brought structural change in Brazil" (1989: 148), and in the absence of a desire to bring about social and political restructuring, physical exercise and other corporal practices became a key way of addressing shortcomings in the body of the nation.

By the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in keeping with concepts at the heart of positivism, influential figures in medical-intellectual debates were encouraging the new Republican state

to introduce physical exercise to schools and military institutions to improve the physical health of individuals (Góis, 2014) and, thereby, of the nation. One such figure was the writer and physician Afrânio Peixoto, whose opinion carried particular weight: Peixoto had been Public Health Inspector in Rio de Janeiro (1902-04) before being elected to the Brazilian Academy of Letters in 1910.

He was subsequently appointed Director of the educational institution Escola Normal do Rio de Janeiro (1915) and, a year later, became Director of Public Education in what was at the time the country's capital. Peixoto publicly expressed his enthusiasm for football in a speech in 1918, where he made it clear that he saw *o esporte bretão* as a means of combining physical and moral benefits for the nation's inhabitants: "Esse jogo de *foot-ball*, esses desportos que dão saúde e força, ensinam a disciplina e a ordem, fazem a cooperação e a solidariedade, me enternecem, porque são grandes escolas onde está se refazendo o caráter do Brasil" (cited in Rosso, 2010: 48).

In the same year as Peixoto made his speech on the benefits of football, two texts celebrated as the first examples of Latin American football literature were published: Horacio Quiroga's short story "Juan Polti, half-back" appeared in the Buenos Aires magazine *Atlántida* on May 16, 1918; and Juan Parra del Riego's poem "Elogio lírico del fútbol" was published in the journal *La Semana* (Arequipa, Peru) on November 14, 1918, and also featured in *La Revista Nacional* (Montevideo) in August, 1919.

These were not, in fact, the first examples of football literature in Spanish-speaking Latin America. In 1899, a poem from Peru had a good claim to that honour (Wood, 2019: 9-11), and the enthusiastic acceptance of football in Brazil by local elites from the century had led to several examples of football literature in Rio de Janeiro before either of the 1918 texts had been written.

The first work of Brazilian literature to include football as a significant feature is Henrique Maximiano Coelho Neto's 1908 novel *Esphinge*, which centres on the residents of Miss Barkley's boarding house in the Rio de Janeiro district of Paysandú. One of the boarders is James Marian, a wealthy young English immigrant whose muscular physique contrasts with his delicate features, as suggested by the combination of a male first name and female second name; indeed, it is the lack of any trace of masculinity in his face that gives rise to the title of the novel, as other – Brazilian – residents of the boarding house conclude that he has a "rosto de esphinge" (p.29).

Among the habits that lead to him being considered eccentric is his Sunday routine of leaving the house dressed in white to play tennis or football, and notions of sport and

masculinity come together after a football match at Fluminense's stadium, after a local who mocked Marian's feminine appearance was thrown against a wall. Later that evening, Marian's lack of social graces provokes outraged comments from his fellow lodgers, who feel that his treatment of them would be appropriate if dealing with Africans, but not with members of Rio's social elites. The representation of James Marian reveals the tensions between physicality and the civilised values that modern European sports were felt to exemplify, as well as the desire to adapt football to Brazilian norms of behaviour that members of local elites sought to develop as the basis for the young Republic.

Just six years after Coelho Neto had included the English football player James Marian in his novel *Esphinge* (Sphinx), and four years before Quiroga and Parra del Riego published their celebrated football works, the first Brazilian literary text devoted entirely to football appeared in the form of Ivan Ney's enthusiastic poem "Schootando... (Às cariocas footballers)".<sup>1</sup> [Shooting... (To Rio de Janeiro's Football Players)]. Published on May 23, 1914 in the first number of the short-lived Rio journal *O Football: Semanario dos Sports*, "Schootando" echoes the continent's first football poem, published in Lima's *El Sport* in 1899, both in the nature of its publication outlet and in its celebration of the value of the team.

However, through the use of the neologism in the poem's title and by dedicating the piece to Rio's footballers, Ney (who played for Olympico F.C.) attests to the rapid appropriation of the game among the citizens of what was then the capital city and to the incipient "Brazilianisation" of the sport's lexicon. The poem, which consists of seven stanzas of four verses each, is written from the perspective of one of the players, who expresses the team through the use of a first-person plural, and at its heart is an acute awareness of the interplay between the players on the pitch and the passionate support of the watching fans. Notable among the crowd are young women, and "seus olhos, brejeiros... / Torcem por nós com fervor!" (their brazen eyes... / Give us their fervent support!) encouraging the players to perform at their best. The poem opens and closes by affirming that football "É elegante e é chic/ É distinto, é de escól" (It's elegant and it's chic/ It's distinguished, it's the best), part of a wider campaign to ensure that Brazil benefited from the sport's perceived physical and moral attributes.

In marked counterpoint to Ney's highly positive representation of football stands the 1916 poem "Match de Football" by Apparácio Fernando de Brinkerhoff Torelly. Also known as Apporelly, and later as the self-appointed Baron of Itararé, Torrelly was a political satirist in Rio during the 1920s and 1930s for the newspapers *O Globo* and *A Manhã*, where he published humorous sonnets that made fun of the establishment. Written when he was a medical

student, “Match de Football” provides ample evidence of the use of literature to deliver social satire as its eight rhyming couplets recount the action of a game on a lovely day that is ruined by violence both on the pitch and in the crowd.

A player kicks the ball “feroz” and when it knocks off the top hat of someone in the crowd the contrast with Ney’s text and the simultaneous juxtaposition between barbarism and civilisation is established. However, in a twist on the conventional presentation of these traditional poles of thought in Latin American intellectual circles, it is the modern and urban European practice that is barbarous in its assault on a good Brazilian family man. In an inversion of the vision for the civilising role of football on Brazilian society espoused by Coelho Neto and others, here it is the violence of the sport that is contagious, spreading to “a louca multidão, bruta e malcriada” (the mad crowd, brutish and rude).

Following further people being knocked to the ground, and booing from the crowd, the poet concludes in the penultimate couplet that “Parecia aquilo, em meu pensar profundo,/ Vinte e duas fúrias, perseguindo o mundo” (All of this seemed, in my considered opinion,/ Twenty-two furies, chasing the world). The final two lines highlight the ultimate futility of so much running around and violence: “E, depois da hora e meia de combate,/ o juiz apitou./ O jogo estava empate” (And after an hour and a half of fighting,/ the referee blew his whistle./ The game was a draw). Despite the support for football to be a key means of improving the nation among many members of Brazil’s intellectual elites of the time, the sport also had its opponents, perhaps most notably in the figure of Lima Barreto, whose debates with Coelho Neto are fully explored by Mauro Rosso (2010) as *Um Fla-Flu literário*.

## COELHO NETO AND LIMA BARRETO: A FOOTBALL RIVALRY

Coelho Neto was one of the leading figures in Rio’s literary circles during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, his prolific work characterised by a highly refined and ornate style in which references to classical mythology and European ideas were to the fore.

After becoming a member of Fluminense Football Club in 1912, when it functioned as a social club for local elites, Coelho Neto effectively emerged as the club’s public orator and brought together nation and football in the speech he gave to open the 1919 South American Championship, for which all matches were played at Fluminense’s new stadium in the district of Laranjeiras, completed in 1917. Following his public prominence at the 1919 South American Championships, Coelho Neto was the figurehead for a group of writers and intellectuals who embraced the civilising function of football, and in 1920 he became director-editor of *Athletica*, a new magazine that defended eugenics and the moral benefits of practising football and other sports.

By contrast, mulatto novelist and journalist Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto was firmly opposed to the influence of foreign practices and ideologies in the newly republican Brazil. This included football, which he denounced as a violent, divisive and racist practice, and the sport became a convenient battleground for their conflicting political and literary ideologies through a series of articles and letters in Rio de Janeiro's printed media (Rosso, 2010). Campaigning against football was at the heart of Lima Barreto's journalistic essays and articles from 1919 onwards, but he also included it as the feature that drove the plot in several of his short stories.

"A Biblioteca" (The Library) (*Careta*, 13 March 1920) tells the story of a man whose son's fanaticism for football and inability to study leads him in desperation to burn his extensive library, while "Quase ela deu o 'sim'; mas..." (She nearly said "yes"; but...) (*Careta*, 29 October 1919) has as its protagonist the lazy and football-mad João Cazu, "Um moço suburbano, forte e saudável, mas pouco ativo e amigo do trabalho" (A suburban youth, strong and healthy, but not very active and no friend of work) who spends most of the day "com outros companheiros, em dar loucos pontapés numa bola, tendo por arena um terreno baldio das vizinhanças da residencia dele, ou melhor: dos seus tios e padrinhos" (with other friends, madly kicking a ball, using for a pitch a patch of wasteland in the vicinity of his home, or rather that of his uncle and aunt).

The negative portrayal of a football player speaks for itself, but it is worth noting that the story apparently takes as suburban normality the presence of rough pitches and enough players among the working classes for spontaneous daily matches. On encountering a young widow who has her own house (and two young children) Cazu decides to marry her to ensure his future, and to allow him to move out from his straitened circumstances with his uncle and aunt. Ultimately, however, his plan is frustrated because of his lack of income and unwillingness to work, epitomised by his love for football.

Representations of football players as being lazy, unintelligent, and unproductive became a recurrent theme in Lima Barreto's texts, exemplified by his final story "Herói!", published shortly after his death at the age of 41 (*Careta*, November 18, 1922). The story features two friends, one a doctor and the other an engineer, both with sons for whom they struggle to find gainful employment. The doctor says of his oldest son that "não dera para nada. Tudo estudara e nada aprendera" (he didn't come to anything. He studied everything but learnt nothing) and is frustrated by the fact that he earns no income and just wants to play football.

The engineer reveals that his son is similarly useless and eventually secures him a job as a guard in the docks. When the men meet some considerable time later, one son has moved up to the position of clerk in the docks and the other has become a national hero, having

been in the team that won the South American Championships. The story closes with the doctor proclaiming “E dizer que ele não dava para nada!” (And to think I said he was good for nothing!). For Lima Barreto, indignant at the public acclaim for football players, the story’s closing words are charged with irony as the doctor fails to realise that success in football confirms – rather than contradicts – his sense that footballers are good-for-nothings.

By taking a doctor and engineer as the protagonists of the story, Lima Barreto gives expression to his positivist vision of Brazilian society, in which science and technology will enable the country to develop. At the same time, the story is given social and political immediacy via Brazil’s triumph in the 1922 South American Championship, hosted again at Fluminense’s stadium in Laranjeiras and won by the host nation in the month prior to the publication of “Herói!”. The staging of the 1922 tournament in Rio de Janeiro was part of the country’s celebrations of the centenary of Independence from Portugal, a clear marker of football’s position as an element of Brazilian national identity for local and regional audiences, a process to which Lima Barreto was vehemently opposed.

Rosso considers “Herói!” to be emblematic of Lima Barreto’s criticism of football for its failure to cultivate the intellectual dimension of the nation, as well as its manifestation of institutional racism that prevented non-whites from finding a place in national society (2010: 192-3). Almost a century later, it is clear that the issues that lay at the heart of the very public debates about football between Coelho Neto and Lima Barreto (violence, national identity, racism, corruption, and relations with Europe) have continued to shape discourses around the sport in Brazil since that time. Things have undoubtedly changed significantly in terms of how football is perceived, but the series of texts discussed above marked a decisive moment in football’s emergence as a symbol, as a means of addressing broader political and social concerns through literary texts and through written narratives more widely.

The deaths of Lima Barreto and Coelho Neto’s son brought the debate to an abrupt end in Rio de Janeiro in 1922, but not before the two protagonists had constructed a series of foundational oppositions that would underpin discussion of the subject to the present day.

### A PIONEERING POETESS: “O SALTO” (THE LEAP)

In the year of Lima Barreto’s death, inspired by visits to watch her husband Marcos de Mendonça play for the Fluminense Football Club and supported by Coelho Neto, Anna Amélia de Queiroz Carneiro de Mendonça was the first woman to produce a work of football literature, not only in Brazil but anywhere in the world. Women formed an enthusiastic and important part of match-day crowds at this time (Bocketti, 2016: 186-200), as is evident from Ivan Ney’s



poem “Schootando...”, discussed above, and from an article by João do Rio, who described “moças de vestidos claros perfumam o ambiente com o seu encanto” (young women in pale dresses perfume the atmosphere with their charm) in a report on his visit to Fluminense’s stadium in 1905 (Rio, 1905).

Born in Rio de Janeiro, into a family of considerable means, Anna Amélia de Queiroz (1896-1971) was privately educated in Minas Gerais by a series of European tutors after her father, a pioneer of Brazil’s steel industry, moved there in 1897 to establish a factory. Fluent in English, French, and German, she wrote poetry from an early age and published her first collection in 1911, later becoming renowned as a fine literary translator and a leading figure in Brazil’s early feminism. Her interest in football was evident from her twelfth birthday, for which she requested a ball and boots as a present, and she took an active role in organising matches with the workers in her father’s factory, having translated a rule book from English.

After the family moved back to Rio her interest in football led to her going to watch Fluminense, the club of Rio’s elites, where in 1913 she met Marcos de Mendonça, a figura “emblemática do período áureo do amadorismo elitista” (the emblematic figure of the golden age of elite amateurism) (Wisnik, 2008: 212) and “o primeiro ídolo do futebol brasileiro, [...] a própria encarnação do ideal grego do intelectual-atleta” (“he first idol of Brazilian football, the very incarnation of the Greek ideal of an athlete-intellectual”) (Coutinho, 1980: 115-6). Mendonça merited such acclaim: he won a *tri-campeonato* as a Fluminense player (1917-1919) and was the first goalkeeper for the Brazilian national team, winning the South American Championship in 1919 and 1922, before becoming a respected historian.

Anna Amélia de Queiroz’s sonnet “O salto” may not be the first text devoted to football in Brazil, but it can be said to be the first self-consciously literary manifestation of the sport in the country, drawing on references to classical antiquity and clearly marked by European literary influences. By the time “O Salto” was published, football was a regular feature of newspaper reports and chronicles written by Lima Barreto and Coelho Neto, and had been celebrated in songs such as Pixinguinha’s “Um zero” that marked Brazil’s triumph in the 1919 Copa America.

In short, football was an increasingly visible part of the cultural landscape in Rio de Janeiro (and São Paulo, as will be discussed below) by 1922, though this does not make it any less noteworthy that the sport should be brought into the realm of literary creativity by a female author, whose personal enthusiasm for the game would appear to have been the decisive factor. “O Salto” adopts the form of a sonnet, and while it may be tempting to attribute this to Queiroz’s experiences as a translator of Shakespeare (who, apart from his sonnets, mentions football in both *King Lear* and *Comedy of Errors*), the poem does not adhere to the conventions of European traditions of the sonnet in terms of verse length or rhyme patterns.

Instead, it conforms to Brazilian Modernism's tendency simultaneously to absorb and reject European modes of expression—as was occurring in debates around football, and would subsequently be made famous in Oswald de Andrade's 1928 "Manifesto Antropófago" (Anthropophagic Manifesto)—in order to establish a national literature and a national-popular culture.

At the level of content, the poem praises the athletic grace and beauty of the goalkeeper (not named, but presumed to be Marcos de Mendonça) as he leaps to meet the ball in the air. As a result of seeing his form, which is compared to a figure from *The Iliad*, the poetess notes that "todo o meu ser vibrou num ímpeto frenético" (my entire being trembled in a frenetic impetus), a bold expression of female physicality for the time. References to classical antiquity abound: in addition to *The Iliad*, there are references to an Olympic hero; Apollo; Olympus; a dryad; and the perfection of an ancient Greek's build, explicitly evoking the ancient athletic games as justification for the exaltation of a football player, while implicitly practising the celebration of sporting success exemplified by Pindar's Olympian odes. However, by describing the action as being inspired by a "*heliconíada*", a neologism that references both the submerged Greek city of Helike and the exuberant and colourful heliconia flower typical of tropical climates, Queiroz establishes a bridge between the world of classical antiquity and Brazil, drawn together through athletic endeavour.

The first eight verses provide a personal, even intimate, response to the figure of the goalkeeper, but after the classical "volta" of the sonnet the closing six verses locate the action in a packed stadium that sees the star player transcend, through the leap, his status as a local football player, and when he lands back on Brazilian soil his athletic prowess has earned him a place among the ranks of the acclaimed Greek Olympians. Football, then, enables the poet to give voice to her position in relation to the private and public domains alike, and to take her place as a subject in both of them, whilst also helping to shape Brazil's early relationship with the sport. Despite admiring the game from the touchline, she does so in terms that are of her own making as her body and her intellect provide responses that challenge expectations surrounding the place of women.

## SÃO PAULO AND FOOTBALL AS MODERNIST ART

In São Paulo, the first Brazilian city to witness the arrival and development of football, the 1920s were also decisive in the relationship between football and literature, although the writer Monteiro Lobato (subsequently owner and director of the influential journal *Revista do Brasil*) was an enthusiastic player and advocate of the game as early as 1904 (Rosso, 2010:

209). The staging of São Paulo's 1922 Week of Modern Art, another event that celebrated the centenary of Independence from Portugal and has proved to be a touchstone for subsequent cultural debates and practices in Brazil, marked a conscious rupture with the country's conservative past that was based on the continuation of elitist colonial structures and values.

As a cultural revolution against the influence of neo-classical European models, Brazil's Modernists sought inspiration instead in primitivism and the rapid rise of urbanisation, industrialisation and technology that were especially evident in São Paulo at the time. Mário de Andrade, one of the leading figures of the 1922 Modern Art Week, published in the same year the founding text of Brazilian Modernism. In his epic poem *Paulicéia Desvairada* (Hallucinated São Paulo City), which consists of a series of scenes of daily life in the city, football is the subject of "Domingo" (Sunday): "Hoje quem joga? O Paulistano./ Para o Jardim América das rosas e dos ponta-pés!/ Friedenreich fez gol! Corner! Que juiz!/ Gostar de Bianco? Adoro. Qual Bartô/ E o meu xará maravilhoso!/ – Futilidade, civilização..." (Who is playing today? Paulistano./ Let's go to America Gardens with its roses and kicks!/ Friedenreich scored a goal! Corner! What a referee!/ Do you like Bianco? I love him. Which Bartô/ He is my favourite namesake!/ Futility, civilisation...).

Football is presented as an established feature of the weekly routine, but despite admiration of the star players of the day, including the poet's namesake Mário Andrada, the game's European origins and its associations with local elites meant that it was not embraced as part of the Modernist cause for cultural regeneration and a new national identity. Indeed, by concluding the description of the match with the leitmotif "Futilidade, civilização..." de Andrade marks football as another pointless frivolity imported from Europe in the supposed search for civilising influences in Republican Brazil, even if the presence of the mulatto Friedenreich hints at the racial democracy that would be championed through Gilberto Freyre's notion of "*futebol mulato*" from 1938.

Mário de Andrade incorporated brief descriptions of football in other poems of the period, notably in the 1926 collection *O Losango Cáqui* (*The Khaki Lozenge*), in which the poet celebrates victory in a match against a team from Rio de Janeiro amid the opening lines of the first poem. In poem XI football's violent practice is highlighted via a reference to the sergeant on the pitch, while the flow of attack and defence is depicted in terms of a battle between Paulistas and Uruguayans, in which the former "Vencemos facilmente/ como sempre" (We win easily, as always).

In addition to noting the use of football as a proxy for national sentiment and military conflict, it is interesting to note the location of this football poem as number eleven in the

collection: this was similarly the case with “Domingo” in *Paulicéia Desvairada* and exemplifies the Modernists’ search for poetic expression in unconventional sources of inspiration as well as their desire to experiment with poetic structures. Also in São Paulo, Oswald de Andrade – no relation to Mário but another leading figure among the Modernists who had organised the 1922 Modern Art Week – published in 1924 “Bungalow das rosas e dos pontapés” (Bungalow of roses and kicks), the title echoing the words of “Domingo” cited above.

This short poem depicts football as part of the cosmopolitan lifestyle of the São Paulo’s elites, alongside electric trams, tennis, and afternoon entertainments, while the title’s inclusion of bungalow, roses, and kicks pokes fun at the incongruous coming together of elegance and violence through a practice that was still characterised by its use of anglicisms. Author of the hugely influential 1924 *Manifesto Pau-Brasil* (Brazil-Wood Manifesto) and 1928 *Manifesto Antropófago*, Oswald de Andrade sought to free Brazil from its dependence on European cultural models and to project a new basis for the country’s national identity via a series of rapid snapshots of everyday life. In 1925 he published *Pau-Brasil*, a collection of poems that brought to literary form the principles of the previous year’s Manifesto, including a defence of popular cultures that had previously been shunned.

Football is the subject of “E a Europa curvou-se ante o Brasil” (Europe Bowed Before Brazil), a visual poem that presents the results of matches from Paulistano’s tour of Europe in March-April 1925 (the first ever by a Brazilian team), during which they lost just one game. The sole defeat suffered by Paulistano, the amateur club of São Paulo’s elites, is described as “A injustiça de Cete” (The Injustice of Sète), while the final match of the tour brought a resounding 6-0 victory against a combined Portuguese team in Lisbon, a result that was granted particular significance in the Modernists’ attempts to forge a Brazilian culture independent of influences from the former colonial power.

The title of the poem, which inverts the traditional relationship of subservient deference between Brazil and Europe, foreshadows the manner in which Brazil’s success in the international football arena could constitute a means through which the country might transcend what Nelson Rodrigues would later describe as “o complexo vira-latas” (stray dog complex) (Rodrigues, 1958). At the same time, it revealed that figures such as the mixed-race Friedenreich (who scored eleven goals on the tour) had the potential to enjoy agency and acclaim as national heroes, something previously afforded only to those from social elites.

Another modernist writer, Antônio de Alcântara Machado, published the short story “Corinthians (2) vs Palestra (1)” in his collection *Brás, Bexiga e Barra Funda* (1927), which focused on the daily lives and experiences of Italian immigrant communities in the São Paulo

districts that gave the work its name. Football is also present in the story “Gaetaninho”, in which a game on the street leads to the death of the protagonist, run over by a tram, but is at the heart of “Corinthians (2) vs Palestra (1)”, which centres on Miquelina, a very knowledgeable fan whose former boyfriend Biagio plays for Corinthians and whose attentions have switched to Rocco, who plays for Palestra.<sup>2</sup>

Alongside these players, mentions of Heitor and Neco, early idols of Palestra and Corinthians respectively, lend the story an air of undisputable realism in keeping with the desire to engage literary production with social issues of the day. This is enhanced by further references to contemporary football reality, such as describing Corinthians as “campeão do Centenário” in allusion to their triumph in the São Paulo Championship of 1922 and their subsequent victory over América (Rio’s champions) to be declared Brazilian champions of that year. Alcântara Machado’s familiarity with football in São Paulo is evident in the details he provides, and through a narrative that largely takes the form of a match commentary, combined with comments from an enthusiastic working-class crowd, the portrayal of the action from the stands effectively captures the excitement of a derby match and simultaneously displays the Modernists’ penchant for unorthodox modes of expression.

Miquelina’s pleas for Rocco to kick Biagio, which lead to the penalty that allows Corinthians to score a last-minute winner, together with the insults that rain from the crowd onto players and referee alike, serve only to reinforce depictions by Lima Barreto and others of football as a violent and divisive sport. While the derby match emphasises the passions of the spectators, it also demonstrates football’s capacity to bring together a crowd of 20,000, in which the presence of men and women, whites, blacks, and mulattos, as well as Brazilians of Italian, German, and Portuguese descent, symbolises a cultural practice with which all Brazilians can uniquely identify.

In 1928, São Paulo Modernists published two works that sought to draw on a combination of historical, anthropological and folkloric sources to re-invent Brazil as a fusion of indigenous, European and African influences. Mário de Andrade’s novel *Macunaíma* is a foundational text of modern Brazilian literature that follows the journey of the eponymous protagonist from the jungle of his birth to the modern cities of twentieth-century Brazil, defeating along the way a European giant. After arriving in a São Paulo of radios, motorcycles, and telephones, Macunaíma invents football: in revenge for jokes he plays on his brothers Maanape and Jiguê, involving bugs and weevils that bite Maanape’s tongue and suck Jiguê’s blood respectively, they make a brick into a ball of hard leather, which Maanape kicks at Macunaíma, whose nose is crushed.

He in turn kicks the ball far away but the three incidents have far-reaching consequences for the nation: “O bichinho caiu em Campinas. A tatorana caiu por aí. A bola caiu no campo. E foi assim que Maanape inventou o bicho-do-café, Jiguê a lagarta-rosada e Macunaíma o futebol, três pragas” (The bug fell in Campinas. The caterpillar fell somewhere. The ball fell on the [football] field. And that was how Maanape invented the coffee-bug, Jiguê the cotton weevil and Macunaíma football, three plagues) (p. 64-5). The plague of football clearly spreads quickly, for in the following chapter, in which the hero travels to Rio de Janeiro, among those who attend an Afro-Brazilian magic-religious ceremony are “Os ladrões os senadores os jecas os negros as senhoras os futeboleres” (Thieves and senators and hicks and blacks and women and footballers) (p.79-80). Such scenes indicate that football was commonly found in the country’s major cities, and that those who played it were part of the national culture that *Macunaíma* sought to construct. At the same time, Macunaíma’s supposed creation of football in the novel represents perhaps the first explicit example of the “invented tradition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) of the sport as part of Brazil’s cultural landscape.

By contrast, Cassiano Ricardo Leite’s epic poem *Martim Cererê: O Brasil dos meninos, dos poetas e dos heróis*, also published in 1928 as part of the Modernists’ nation-building endeavours, portrays football in a far more positive light, notably in the section “Martim Cererê – Jogador de Futebol”. In this representation of Brazil, which draws on a blend of historical and folkloric sources as part of efforts to give greater prominence to popular culture, a beautiful indigenous woman is courted by a Portuguese sailor, but before she will marry him, she insists that he brings to Brazil the dark of night in the form of African slaves.

In the Brazil that emerges from these beginnings, football is the favourite pastime of Martim Cererê as a young urchin, playing in the streets by day and dreaming about the game at night, imagining the full moon to be God’s ball kicked across the sky, to be replaced by a red ball kicked from behind the hill in the morning. Such metaphors contribute to Ricardo Leite’s depiction of football in what might be considered conventionally poetic terms, and for poet and protagonist alike the sport provides a route to intellectual creativity as well as physical practice. Playing football is not, however, without its problems, and almost all of the windows on the street are broken as a result of Martim’s shots, resulting in his ball being confiscated by a policeman who thinks that boys should be in school.

Positivist ideals of public education were well established – at least in principle – by the end of the 1920s, but there is implicit criticism of the restrictive and over-bearing presence of state institutions, here represented by a policeman who is “o homem mais barrigudo deste mundo” (the man with the biggest belly in the world). The juxtaposition of the athletic young

footballer and the obese public official also highlights football's capacity to achieve the public health goals championed by leading medical figures and widely embraced in the early decades of the century through the introduction of physical exercises to the schools recommended by the policeman. Moreover, the fact that Martim is described as wearing a green and yellow shirt as he plays football establishes a further symbolic connection between the sport and the concept of the more widely inclusive Brazil whose roots the Modernists sought to create.

### THE 1930s: GILKA MACHADO

The rapid rise of football literature in the 1920s declined in the 1930s as new electronic technologies began to mediate football for increasingly large audiences, simultaneously moving away from the elite domination of the sport that had characterised the early years of its practice in Brazil. *O Campeão de futebol* (The Football Champion), starring Arthur Friedreich, was released in 1931, the first of many films to incorporate football, and the same year witnessed the first live radio commentary on a football match, via São Paulo's Rádio Educadora Paulista (Goldblatt, 2014: 46).

Although the numbers of football texts published by the country's leading writers may have decreased in the 1930s in comparison to the 1920s, it was during this decade that mass media enabled football to become more closely connected to notions of national identity, most notably around the 1938 World Cup in France, an event that constituted "a base simbólica do futebol brasileiro" (the symbolic foundation of Brazilian football) (Helal, 2018: 1). Brazil's third place at the tournament represented the country's best performance on the global stage and the performances of afro-Brazilian stars Leônidas (the tournament's top scorer) and Domingos da Guia in particular formed the basis for the development of Gilberto Freyre's concept of *futebol mulato* (mulatto football) as a defining mode of national identity (Freyre, 1938; Helal et al, 2001; Maranhão, 2006; Kittleson, 2014).

Following the publication of Anna Amélia de Queiroz's poem "O salto" in 1922, women's participation as football players was documented from the early 1930s (Mourão and Morel, 2005; Goellner, 2005), but there were no further literary representations of football by women until Gilka Machado's "Aos Heróis do Futebol Brasileiro" (To the Heroes of Brazilian Football), published in celebration of the 1938 World Cup team. Included in the anthology *Sublimação* (Machado, 1938), "Aos Heróis do Futebol Brasileiro" is a poem of 53 free verses arranged into seven stanzas of irregular length, the lack of conventional poetic structure suggestive of the ways in which the poetess was breaking from the conservative social norms of elite society.

This may be seen particularly to be the case in the expression of female eroticism evident in her previous works, as it had been in de Queiroz's "O salto". Indeed, both Machado and de Queiroz were early feminists, active in efforts to secure women's rights, and in 1910 Machado was the co-founder of the Partido Republicano Feminino in Rio de Janeiro, which campaigned for women's suffrage, which was eventually introduced in 1932.

The poem opens in the first person, echoing the intimacy of Machado's earlier work, but here the purpose is not to explore the self, but rather to salute the "heróis do dia" (heroes of the day) who, "escrevendo com os pés" (writing with their feet) have created "uma epopéia internacional!" (an international epic!). In this first stanza, then, the poet establishes a distance between herself and the heroic football players, whose creativity is recognised as a "linguagem muda" (silent language) that elevates them to the status of Greek warriors or Olympians. The second stanza develops these notions, but extends her admiration for the players to the nation as a whole, and while the Brazilians' souls are physically distant from the players, they overcome the geographical separation to join them in their footballing endeavours for the glory of the nation.

The distance is highlighted stylistically as the Brazilian public is referred to in the third person, while the players are addressed in second person, and "distantes" stands out as the only word on the second line of the stanza. The rise of radio as a key means of narrating football matches to local audiences has already been mentioned, but for the World Cup of 1938 match commentaries were relayed direct from France for the Brazilian public to hear via speakers strategically installed in public places (Wisnik, 2008: 184). By referring to the manner in which Brazilians are able to join the players as part of an imagined community and share in their exploits in France, Machado appears to be implicitly acknowledging the convergence of politics, football, and radio as a means of securing national cohesion.

In the third stanza, we find hints of the poet's eroticism as she celebrates the "penetração dos gols de Leônidas" (penetration of Leônidas's goals), which cannot be matched by any work of art or science and generate an emotional attachment from people around the world. Celebrating the exploits of a black player, not to mention investing him with an erotic charge, is in marked contrast to de Queiroz's "O salto", and Machado here reflects the changes that had taken place in Brazilian football during the intervening years. In contrast to the team that represented Brazil at the 1930 World Cup, the *seleção* that travelled to represent the nation at the 1938 World Cup contained several black players, with striker Leônidas and central defender Domingos da Guia widely acknowledged as the two stars of the team.

In the penultimate stanza, Machado foregrounds the question of skin colour as she affirms that "qualquer raça" (any race), even those far removed from Brazil's character, can



understand the sporting expression of multiple versions of Leônidas and Domingos, whose names are both given in the plural. The stanza closes by pointing out how such players bring to the attention of foreigners “a milagrosa realidade / que é o homem do Brasil” (the miraculous reality/ that is the Brazilian man), the synecdoche making it clear that it is the two black footballers who are at the heart of this new sense of national pride on the international stage.

“Novo” (new) is highlighted at the end of the fourth stanza, where it has been separated from the accompanying “povo” (people), and in the context of the period associations are inevitable with the dictatorial Estado Novo of President Vargas, whose daughter was officially named “madrina” (godmother) of the World Cup team. To read Machado’s poem as an endorsement of the Vargas regime would be misguided, however, and the “new” should instead be understood in the context of the influential writing of Gilberto Freyre, whose re-evaluation of the contribution of black culture to Brazil marked a turning point towards more positive views. Machado’s poetics appear to draw directly on Freyre’s discourse of *futebol mulato* in the celebration of the players’ “improvisos/ em vôos e saltos,/ ó bailarinos espontâneos” (improvisations/ in flights and leaps/ of spontaneous dancers) before asking the “atletas franzinos” (skinny athletes) to transform themselves into giants on the pitch through their “astúcia e audácia” (cunning and bravery).

At a structural level the poem practices such spontaneity and improvisation through its use of free verse, suggesting that the footballers’ poetics have an influence that extends well beyond the field of play into the fields of sociology, politics and literary aesthetics alike. Moreover, the inclusion of Domingos alongside Leônidas ensures that attacking creativity is balanced with defensive solidity and organisation, with “tenacidade e energia” (tenacity and energy), thus avoiding the stereotypical association of afro-Brazilians with flair and natural ability and encouraging readers to value equally the contributions of all.

The poem closes with an image of the players creating “um debuxo maravilhoso/ do nosso desconhecido país” (a wonderful drawing/ of our unknown country), of football putting the country on the map thanks to the exploits of the primarily black team and its newly described style of play. While the poem opens with the poetic “I” saluting the players in the second person, and the Brazilian public presented in the third person, the “nosso” of the closing line sees all of these elements converge into a shared plurality made possible through the success of the football team.

Also of note is that, as a woman involved in radical politics of the era, Machado feels football to be an appropriate vehicle for the exploration of social issues, and that she includes herself among the national community that is created around it; indeed, with *Aos heróis do*

*futebol brasileiro* she plays a central role in creating this nation and in redeploying Freyre's discourse to new ends.

Ironically, however, just three years later such possibilities ended as women's football was banned by the Estado Novo's National Sports Council, an act that effectively closed the door to women's engagement with the sport for several decades. Similarly, the optimism expressed by Freyre and Machado around the contribution of afro-Brazilians to the nation, further developed in Mario Filho's *O Negro no Futebol Brasileiro* (Blacks in Brazilian Football) (Filho, 1947), crumbled with the *Maracanazo*, the country's loss to Uruguay in the 1950 World Cup final, for which Barbosa, Bigode and Juvenal (the team's black goalkeeper and defenders) became scapegoats.

## CONCLUSIONS

As can be appreciated from the numerous examples discussed above, Brazilian authors have drawn on football for over a century to explore national issues and the nation's sense of self. In the first period of Brazilian football literature, which developed rapidly in the early 1920s, several of the country's most influential authors saw football to be a foreign and decidedly un-Brazilian practice to which they were strongly opposed. At the same time, writers who championed football as a model of civilising and gentlemanly European modernity, a means of combating the supposed degeneracy of miscegenation and improving the physical condition of the nation, became disillusioned with the sport as it was rapidly appropriated by the working classes and underwent growing professionalization of players through the 1920s.

Following the "Semana de Arte Moderna" organized by the São Paulo Modernists in 1922, several of the city's leading literary figures drew on football in their literary creations as they sought to develop a new model of *brasilidade*, but on the whole they failed to see it as an example of the cannibalistic culture that was imagined in Oswald de Andrade's *Manifesto Antropófago*. Instead, Wisnik asserts that it was "o futebol que se formou fora das agremiações, ou tangente a elas, que se tornou o laboratório informal da apropriação original e antropofágica do jogo inglês" (it was the football created outside clubs, or tangential to them, that became the informal laboratory for the original and anthropophagous appropriation of the English game) (2008: 207).

The reading of *Martim Cererê* undertaken above certainly suggests that this early Modernist text conformed to such practice and this work, together with the others discussed here, served to embed football as a distinctively Brazilian cultural practice as local elites and

intellectuals sought to create a new sense of nationhood. Added to this was the manner in which football crystallised contemporary debates around modernity, social Darwinism, eugenics, public health, and physical education. The opposing sides taken in these debates by Coelho Neto and Lima Barreto in Rio de Janeiro around 1920 established several of the parameters within which discourses around football would be expressed over the following decade (and beyond).

However, the São Paulo Modernists brought a significant new creative dimension through their self-consciously innovative practices in the 1920s, establishing in the process a connection between football and a newly imagined conception of the nation that drew on popular practices as the basis of Brazil. The two football poems written by women are isolated examples of the incursion of female voices in this domain, something that remained the case during the four-decade long ban on women's football in the country and has only recently begun to be challenged. These features have served as the foundations for the position of football in the country into the twenty-first century, and for many of its literary (and other) representations in the intervening decades.

## NOTAS

- 1 I am grateful to Gregg Bocketti for facilitating access to this poem.
- 2 The club's use of "Italiana" in its name would result in a forced change of name to Palmeiras in 1942.

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