

Sport, Identity and Nationalism in the Hispanic World

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From Marxism to fascism across the ideological palette, sport has engaged politics and power in diverse ways. Nationalism, nation-building and identity construction has occupied a prominent place in, and produced some of the most seminal works of sport studies. More particularly, the works of Joseph Maguire and Alan Bairner inspired the application of nationalism, globalization and identity theories in diverse geographical contexts. Sport studies have integrated and complemented the most significant theoretical currents and conceptual toolkits of mainstream sociology, history, political science and anthropology (Giulianotti). Sport and physical culture have been variously presented in terms of “imagined communities” (Palmer, Harris, Gleaves and Llewellyn) and “invented traditions” (Brandes, Foster and Hyatt) for purposes of nation building. Due to the ubiquitous presence of multi-billion dollar sports in the media, as well as global mega-events, sports yield themselves easily as prime manifestations of “banal nationalism” (Billig) as quotidian, unselfconscious vindications of the nation. Theories of globalization and glocalization inform sport in a swiftly changing global world, where sport and physical cultures find themselves affected by glocal encounters and their homogenizing or heterogenizing tendencies (Giulianotti and Robertson). Sport studies have intensely engaged the most influential social theories of identity construction: primordialist and social constructivist (see Smith “The Ethnic” and “National Identity”, Geertz) manifestation of identity construction, as well as performance theory (Goffman), including the gender dimensions of performed individual and collective identities (Butler, Yuval-Davis).

This special issue deploys the approaches above in a Hispanic context. While diverse in focus, the single greatest common denomi-

nator to all analyses is that their subjects belong to the particular geographical unit of the Hispanic world, which we take to include nations and cultures that speak Spanish, and have a historical-cultural link to Spain. This Hispanic dimension allows us to examine sport colonialism and post-colonialism, race-relations and indigenous politics, sport in authoritarian regimes, and the use of sport to break with European roots in quest of South American nationhood and identities. We understand the concept of “sport” quite broadly, including elements of body culture and gaming that some would question as “sport” or “physical culture.” As long as an activity has competitive dimensions and/or involves strenuous, ritualized, rule-driven or choreographed physical activity, however, we considered it as sport, broadly defined. Moreover, we find that crossbreeding sporting elements with other realms of culture such as art and ritual, as with the bullfight; or cognition and logic, as with chess; or folklore, as with human tower building, only yield more exciting and exact conclusions about their social and political embeddedness. In the following, I will briefly review the contributions of this special issue in light of their national or sub-national cultures, as well as the theories and literatures that inform them.

Sporting Nationalisms in Spain

Sporting nationalisms in Spain will be organized around three main pillars for our purposes: the Franco regime, due to its authoritarian nation-building dynamics through sport; soccer, due to its import as the most popular sport that has aligned with regional nationalist movements; and the current Catalanian independence movement, which provides a case study to observe the way politics engage physical culture for its nation-building purposes.

Sport and Identity under the Franco Dictatorship

Their ideological compass notwithstanding, dictatorships across the world have routinely espoused sports and physical culture for nation building purposes. Authoritarian regimes have equated physical superiority with national superiority, and the Greek ideal of the strong, healthy body soon assumed ethnic and racial characteristics in order to establish biologically rooted hierarchies among groups of people. The first sport documentary *Olympia* (1938) by Leni Riefenstahl, in itself a landmark in the history of documentary cinema but highly controversial due to its political context, suggests the ease with which the physical

prowess and competitiveness of the individual may translate, through their iconicity, into the prowess and competitiveness of the nation. Sport, politics and nationalism intertwined in ideologically as diverse regimes as in Nazi Germany (Carr, Hart-Davis), Communist China (Brownell), the Soviet Union (Riordan “Sport in Soviet”) and Eastern Europe (Riordan “Sport, Politics”), Fascist Spain (Shaw, Ofer) and Italy (Martin). While these and similar regimes fought major wars due to their ideological antagonisms, they all remained remarkably similar in their treatment of the sporting body as never an end in itself, for effort or for pleasure, but as a means to political agendas such as social control, conformist coercion, the establishment of the custodial role of the state, the inculcation of world views, division and rule, or placating social tensions. For authoritarian political establishments, sport variously served as embodiment of their own political successes, or as “opium of the people” (Lever, Redeker) that placates slumbering discontent.

The Franco regime (1939-75) was characterized by extensive control over all realms of life, sport included. The Falangist National Sports Federation oversaw three sporting areas: national federations, clubs and leagues; sports events and tournaments established in the model of Nazi and Italian ideological institutions; and the less relevant military sport (Quiroga 205). As far as the first category was concerned, soccer had a strategic importance for Francoist politics. The regime used the sport to improve its image abroad, and to promote Fascist ideology through, for example, the adoption of Eastern European players as political refugees of communism. Soccer stadiums became a field where Fascism could be “normalized” as quotidian: the ubiquitous display of Fascist symbolism, greetings, anthems and chants, the central appointment of presidents instead of democratic club voting, the forced Hispanicization of all foreign, non-Spanish club names, the control of stadium language use and behavior (Shaw) aimed to homogenize the sporting arena in terms of Hispanic and Fascist identity.

Inbal Ofer’s work filled a lacuna on sport research under Franco, as she identified the interfaces of physical education, Fascism, and women’s social roles during the dictatorship. In the current volume, she examines the ambiguous results of ideological sentimental education launched by the Department of Physical education of the Sección Femenina, or Women’s Section of the Fascist Falange party. The objective of the movement was to improve the Spanish “race” through training strong women for motherhood, spreading the Fascist doctrine,

and reaching more diverse female populations by universalizing physical education. The spread of physical education, however, had a dual effect for Francoist Spain: while it reinforced control over the female body, it also became an arena of resistance, liberation and progress. The care of, and pleasure in one's body, which in national-Catholic, Francoist Spain was suspect at best and anathema at worst, ended up undermining the official discourse on the role and capacities of women: they learnt how to take care of their bodies, "and exercise muscles no one even dared to speak about" (Ofer, present issue). In spite of itself, Francoist physical education became a site of transgression for women and female PE teachers. The very fact that all primary school children (boys *and* girls) should be entitled to weekly hours of physical education, the training of thousands of women as teachers with competitive salaries, and less restrictive sport wear including bathing suits inadvertently promoted progressive ideas of female agency. Ofer points at what I call sporting women's double bind elsewhere ("Soccer", 105): to the political right, those who thought women should stay at home, PE teachers were too revolutionary and "forward;" to the left, they were too conservative because of their association with the Falange.

"Poor Spanish mailman," American chess grandmaster Bobby Fisher said to Arturo Pomar, chess prodigy of the 1940s in Francoist Spain. "What a shame. You play so well, and you'll have to return to Spain to the life of affixing stamps" (cited by Escourido, present volume). The splendors and miseries of Pomar's career were symptomatic of a rarely explored facet of the Francoist sport establishment: the glorification and subsequent abandonment of a sport personage at a whim, and overnight. Few things demonstrate so poignantly the regime's utilitarian approach to people, which often treated sport clubs and athletes in function of whether they contributed to the advancement of fascist ideologies. Franco was not much interested in sport himself, and his dictatorship did not substantially finance sport, unlike other authoritarian regimes like Italy or the Soviet Union (Shaw). Arturito the child player became the embodiment of the "Iberian Fury," and his sporting successes were appropriated by the regime as properly Spanish. In spite of the child's sensitive psychological disposition, Arturito was dragged across Spain in display of chess and Spanish exceptionalism. His parents dared not protest in order to protect Arturito from burnout — another characteristic feature of regimes that silence people even when their most elemental human rights were violated. As Arturito grew into Arturo, he took up a job at the Spanish

Postal Service. The Swedish qualifiers for the world championship made his abandonment by the regime most salient: Pomar made the trip without a team of analysts, on borrowed money. He put on such an impressive game in spite of sleep deprivation due to the lack of a team that he earned the admiration of the greatest chess grandmasters of his time. Escourido's conclusions show the determining impact of the regime on the sportman's career: Arturo was not even upset with his treatment, as if it was only natural that a career the regime started would also be finished off by the regime. His nonchalance reveals a particular feature of authoritarian regimes: their capacity to alienate individuals from their own talents, lives and careers.

Soccer in Spain: National and Sub-national Perspectives

Soccer in Spain has so closely aligned with nationalist movements during their twentieth century trajectories (Noci, Gómez, Shobe, MacClancy "Nationalism") that it often spectacularly visualizes the country's political and identificational impasses (Vaczi "Bilbao Catch-22"). The Spanish national team in particular is a contested ideological terrain: throughout its history, regional players have been fundamental in the development of the sport, and for the national team, while they were often anti-Spain Basque or Catalanian nationalists (Vaczi "The Spanish Fury", O'Brien). National team performance is often viewed as a barometer for regional, sub-national relationships: poor performance in the past was considered as a sign of antagonism, and more recent international feats have been celebrated as unity in diversity (Delgado). Spanish national identity narratives through soccer have tended to split dramatically according to loss or victory: if a sport team, especially the national football team won, it was variously proof of the "vigor," "fury," "passion," and "race" of the nation and the unity of its nationalities, while losses would generate the fatalism of failure narratives (Quiroga).

Complementing qualitative and historical research, Ramón Llopis-Goig offers a quantitative analysis of soccer fandom and political sentiments with regards to the four most politicized and symbolic teams in Spain: Real Madrid, FC Barcelona, Athletic Club de Bilbao, and the Spanish national team. These teams have been major icons for Spanish, Catalanian and Basque identity construction, respectively, throughout the twentieth century. Llopis-Goig explores the larger questions of regional nationalism, identity, and left vs. right political leanings through fans' self-identification, their following of the Spanish national soccer team, their preferences with regards to regional auto-

nomy, and their left vs. right ideological orientation. According to this study based on representative sampling and a national survey, the fans of FC Barcelona are most left-leaning, and are most in favor of reforming the current state by increasing the autonomy of the region. This resonates with the larger social impetus of the current Catalanian sovereignty process (see Vaczi current issue). The fans of the Basque Athletic Club de Bilbao have the strongest regional identification with their Basque heritage: fans identify as either only Basque or Basque and Spanish, but not exclusively Spanish. At the same time, they are not as discontent with their autonomous regional arrangements as Catalans, which coincides with the current Basque nationalist (PNV) agenda of not pursuing independence. And finally, the fans of Real Madrid are the most right-wing leaning, and most likely to define themselves as entirely or partly Spanish. Llopis-Goig's research concludes that the symbolic import of these clubs remains important for political-ideological identifications, while radical, exclusive and homogenizing loyalties are not as prevalent as stereotypes would have us believe.

The Basque Athletic Club has been subject of sport studies research for a recruitment philosophy that is singular in the world of elite sport: the club only signs Basque born, or Basque trained players. Several studies have addressed the assumptions this philosophy has of Basque identities and their impasses, and their relationships with the Basque nationalist movement. The contributions in this volume will approach the club's signing philosophy from novel perspectives. While the club's identification with its Basque fan base has inspired much analysis (Vaczi "Bilbao Catch-22", Carlos Castillo), Gutiérrez and Aquino set out to explain a conundrum: why do non-Basques support a team that, on a practical level, discriminates their own athletes because they are not Basque? With 165 official fan clubs, Athletic Club is the fifth most supported club in Spain, and the third most successful historically. The impasses between keeping the localist Basque-only philosophy and winning more games and titles also resonate in fan communities Spain-wide, as Gutiérrez shows. However, it also remains clear that without its unique roster, the club would lose much of its fan base outside of the Basque Country.

Basques are a heavily ethnicized people (MacClancy "Biological") due to their ancient, obscure, and insular origins: in his 1950s BBC series "Orson Welles Around the World," the American director presents them as "the Red Indians of Europe." Never, however, had Basqueness been conceived in terms of Blackness until the first Black soccer player

was signed by Athletic Club de Bilbao. Aquino explores the integration of Iñaki Williams in the club, and how it produced the symbolic, if not necessarily real, inclusion of African immigrant communities within Basque identity. The integration of non-white players in European national teams has gained considerable media attention for the past decade, “signaling as it does,” Aquino writes in the current issue, “the destabilization of normative white European identity.” The case of Iñaki Williams is a particular breakthrough in a club where, because of its Basque-only philosophy, the discussion of player pedigrees in Bilbao actively constructs the boundaries between Basques and non-Basques. Aquino revisits some of the special chapters of defining Basqueness through player recruitment, and also rejections. Each case reveals a particular idea of ethnic identity in terms of primordialist, social constructivist, or performative definitions: birthplace, upbringing, genealogy and national belonging have variously established ingroup and outgroup boundaries. In all its variations, however, Basque identity was white until Iñaki Williams, whose eruption in the field provoked several race related commentaries Spain and Basque Country-wide, arguing that it should be perfectly natural that Blackness and Basqueness go together. This aggressive “rhetoric of colorblindness,” however, as Aquino remarks, was ultimately just as “othering:” it was precisely this loud defensiveness that revealed that Black Basqueness, instead of quotidian, remains a major breakthrough.

Sport for Catalonia’s Independence

As of this writing in 2017, Catalonia is preparing to vote on a referendum about the region’s independence in spite of a Constitutional ban. The current Catalanian sovereignty process is the result of accumulating conflicts and disagreements over cultural, social and political issues with the Spanish government, and has become particularly intensive over the past ten years. The present contributions explore the role physical culture has played in rallying Catalonians, formerly unconvinced of secessionism, behind the idea of independence: banning the ultimate Spanish symbol, the bullfight in Catalonia, and promoting the ultimate Catalanian symbols, soccer and human towers, for nation-building purposes.

Bullfighting is part of a complex we might find unique to Spain: the coexistence of cutting edge modernity and social progress with almost Medieval traditionalism, all with utter naturalness as if such contradictions were a problem for lesser spirits only. If soccer is some-

times viewed as a barometer of Spain's state of the union, the bullfight is viewed, by its opponents anyhow, as a barometer of Spain's reluctant modernization. In spite of its shrinking base, bullfighting still reflects important dilemmas between tradition and modernity (Douglass), state vs. region, centralism vs. secessionism (Brandes current issue), including social issues like the role and possibilities of women in popular culture and public performances dominated by men (Pink).

Stanley Brandes explores Catalonia's alienation from the bullfight as symptomatic of its alienation from Spain. Catalonia's outlawing of the proud and masculine black bull, I write elsewhere, was "a ritual act of territorial demarcation" (Vaczi "Football", 7). In July 2016, a 29-year old matador was gored to death in the bullring of Teruel. The incident caused international criticism of the practice of bullfight in the European Union; more importantly and surprisingly, the anti-bullfight public reveled in the matador's death. Two adjectives constantly emerged in the international and national media: "barbaric," as allusion to the bullfight's opposition to civilization, and "sport," which meant to distract from its cultural value defined by its *aficionados* as "art." The Osborne bull, once a commercial for liquor displayed by highways, has turned into a national symbol. Catalonia used the abolition of the bullfight as a conscious strategy of rejecting not just the practice, but the entire culture that endorsed it: a "backward" Spain. The last bullfight was held in 2011 in Catalonia, and bullrings were quickly converted into other social spaces such as malls or arenas for folkloric events, making sure the specter of the Spanish bull may never return for the lack of a place. Banning the bull is widely considered as one of the most important symbolic cultural policies for the Catalanian sovereignty process. While animal rights were cited as one of the reasons, a political agenda was quickly revealed as Catalonia did not ban its own variations on the bull sport, the *correbous* and the *bou embolat*, which some argued also qualified as abuse.

The bullring of Tarragona, south of Barcelona, now homes the region's emergent national symbol: the Catalanian human towers. I discuss the iconic significance of this old folkloric traditional sport for the Catalanian sovereignty process elsewhere (Vaczi "Catalonia's"), and Erickson has noted its potential for community formation. The article here was inspired by an episode I witnessed of sub-national solidarity in Basque and Catalanian desires to vote about independence. The iconicity of tower building, and the sport's ethos of collaboration and cooperation embodied Basque and Catalan sub-national solidarity in

their pursuits of regional autonomy. In this chapter, I take the emblematic Catalan liberty song, Lluís Llach's *L'estaca* or "The Stake," as a metaphor for the agonic state-region relationships of Spain. The stake was a metaphor for the Franco dictatorship that tied its peoples, and did not allow them to walk freely — a logic Basque and Catalan *independentistas* argue they continue to feel. Pulling the stake from several sides, however, wears it out and eventually causes it to collapse. The metaphor's two fundamental motifs map a particular political geography of Spain: the agonic relationship between the center (stake) and the periphery (pull away regions), as well as solidarity and united struggle among them. I examine how the two political peripheries have progressively conspired to "wear out" Spanish sovereignty through sport and physical culture, which are particularly apt to present these agonic interactions due to their physicality. After a historical overview, this chapter will focus on the diverse ways Basque and Catalan sport and physical culture have challenged Spanish centralism throughout the current Catalan sovereignty process (2009-2017).

Hispanic Nationalisms in the Americas

Sport in Hispanic America was much influenced by its Spanish colonial heritage, as well as its proximity to the United States. Soccer and baseball have become "national" sports in many South American countries, structuring both internal, post-colonial relations, and external ones with the hegemonic and nearby "Other," the United States. Sporting nationalisms in these countries therefore often assume an anti-capitalist, anti-hegemony character, which also permeates political relations in the North and South Americas. At the same time, South American countries used sports in order to distance themselves from their European roots, in quest of their own independent nationhood and identities.

As we transition from the Iberian Peninsula to the Americas, we will start with the United States and the way its Basque game, the *jai alai*, grew into a site of resistance to capitalism as Basque sport migrants drew on values and features of political struggle inspired by the Basque-Spanish conflict back in Europe. We will continue the theme of resistance to capitalist exploitation and US hegemony in Dominican baseball. Baseball in Cuba bears the mark of irony as the "Cuban national sport" to the extent that it becomes quotidian even in literature, in spite of US-Cuban relations. Finally, Argentina is approached from two of its most relevant perspectives: the links between Argentine soccer and

Peronism reveal how politics used soccer for its nation building practices, and Argentine rugby shows the encounters of state nationalism with indigenous peoples' resistance.

Confronting US Capitalism: Jai Alai and Baseball

At the height of its game in the late 1980's, González Abrisketa tells us (present issue), jai alai was a 700-million-dollar business a year, with 14 active frontons throughout the United States, which would routinely fill with gamblers and *aficionados* of the "world's fastest sport." González revisits the two golden ages of the Basque sport in the United States: the 1950s-60s, and the 1970s-80s. The author argues that these two eras were also a generation gap not only in terms of age, but the political culture jai alai players brought with them. Overwhelmingly from the Basque Country, sport migrants in the 70-80s responded very differently than previous generations to what the game had to offer in the United States. While the first generation of Basque players were relatively content with the socio-economic opportunities sport migration offered them in comparison to the early Franco regime, the author argues that the emergence of ETA, considered revolutionary, left wing and socialist back then, had an impact on how Basque players viewed their situation in US capitalist culture. The emergent Basque political culture lent ethos and vocabulary to US based jai alai players: an ethos of resistance and struggle, the strategy of *hordago* or all or nothing, and deeply politicized resistance strategies like hunger strikes were borrowed from their original Basque context and deployed in the American one of maximum capitalism and zero unionism. These resistance strategies had great success in players' struggle for greater job security and fair treatment.

"Americans cough, and we get pneumonia," they say in the Dominican Republic (Klein, present volume), with reference to the pervasive American influence in all walks of life, except baseball. Alan Klein presents Dominican baseball as an example of relational nationalism in which the Global South is reacting to the exploitation experienced from the Global North. Dominican baseball nationalism is intimately embedded in a context of the neocolonial hegemony of Major League baseball, which used the DR as a resource for players. Baseball has become the country's great resistance movement to American dominance, and the exploitative behavior of MLB. The first "no" came from a player, Fellito Guerra, who was sought after by American teams.

He loudly said no, citing the occupation of the Dominican Republic by US Marines between 1916-24. Dominican resistance through baseball would escalate into an “engaged acrimony” between the two countries, and the Dominican resistance consisted of circumnavigating US laws and rules wherever they could. Dominicans were engaged in age and identity fraud as a reaction to strict MLB regulations, and the so-called *buscónes* (scouts) emerged in US media as manipulating scoundrels. Conflicts were exacerbated by different cultural approaches to rules, law, and ethics, which point at an arrangement where the North makes the laws and rules, and the South can’t afford to keep them. The conflict reveals the cultural difference between the dominant, who create and observe the law, and the powerless, who take the risk of breaking laws in an environment that is devoid of opportunities. The struggle for baseball is a struggle for political and economic sovereignty.

“Before the republic, there was baseball,” Pérez writes about Cuba’s dominant sport. “After the revolution, there was baseball. And during all the years in between — there was baseball” (493). That baseball should remain Cuba’s favorite past time is not without irony, the author continues: “the quintessential American game, at the service of the Cuban revolution, [became] the quintessential anti-American embodiment” (494). But then, sport history thrives on similar ironies as colonized subjects attempt to insert themselves, as agents, into history by beating the master in their own game, whose most poignant exponent was C.L.R. James’ book on Trinidadian cricket. Baseball arrived on the island in the mid-19th century, just when Cuba looked increasingly towards the United States, and away from Spain, in its quest of identity, autonomy, and relationships. Among this quest of a Cuban nation was the deployment of de-territorialization strategies from Spain: among others, the endorsement of baseball by Cuban *criollos* and the Havana elite. They adopted the American game as modern and progressive, and the rejected the Spanish bullfight as backward and inhuman (Pérez 505), whose logic was not unlike contemporary sub-national views of the bullfight in Spain, as we see in this issue from Stanley Brandes. While the Castro regime achieved its primary objectives of socialism and nation-building through a sport sector that was governed entirely by the state, and it opened to the south in a counter-hegemonic move (Huish), baseball kept its dominance throughout the era. Ballet too became a hallmark of Cuban identity as another politicized instance of physical culture. The Ballet Nacional de Cuba, famously spearheaded by Alicia Alonso and supported by the

Castro regime, became a pride of Cuban identity in its characteristic mixture of classical style and Latin sensuality.

Poetry was “one form of political commentary that shaped *criollos*’ debates on the politics of Cuba,” and it often made references to baseball (Carter 143). In this volume, Alan Bairner complements nineteenth-century poetry and baseball by approaching twentieth-century Cuban national identity through the Havana Quartet novels of Leonardo Padura Fuentes. Bairner proceeds along three basic premises: that the concept of national sport is a useful lens to examine national identity; that works of fiction can be legitimate data sources for sociological research; and that baseball is the national sport of Cuba. Beyond the habitual approaches of primordialist interpretations, “imagined community” and “invented tradition, ethnic vs. civil nationalism as backgrounds to the establishment of a sport as “national,” the use of a literary source allows Bairner to examine sport as “banal nationalism” (Billig): the everyday, discreet but consistent presence of sport in Cuban imaginary and daily life. How does a sport become national? Through a people’s priority in inventing it, like the Gaelic games, or the Basque pelota; through success and influence, like soccer everywhere; through symbolization in spite of decline, like cricket in England or bullfighting in Spain. On the basis of the novels, Bairner argues that below and beyond the spectacular, traditional or official, baseball discreetly emerges in the fissures of everyday existence. In a novel that is not a sport book but a detective story, thinking baseball is a routine and unconscious process as sport similes abound. The main character detective Conde uses baseball language to describe an admired woman; a school notebook; a murder weapon and homicide; streets, building and people, among other descriptions. Baseball emerges particularly as nostalgia and historical memory to articulate a feeling of spleen, “one of the many collateral damages of an unfulfilled country’s destiny,” Bairner writes. Baseball’s significance for Cubans emerges as it becomes a subtext to narratives other than sport.

Argentine Rugby and Soccer

With regards to Argentine sport and body culture, soccer and tango comes to mind immediately due to Eduardo Archetti’s by now classic ethnography about Argentine masculinity performed through soccer, tango and polo. Archetti’s work reveals the diverse ways play style and body technique engage gender politics, and essentialized as well as contextual national identities. Substantial research has been done on

sport's role as national representation through Argentina's twentieth century political history: the commodification and massification of tango and soccer during the economic boom of the 1920s (Karush), race, politics and national narratives of soccer (Alabarces), the Peronization and de-Peronization of sport (O'Brien, present issue), or what anti-Peronists saw as the regime's encouragement and promotion of sport as proof of its "Nazi-Fascist" character (Rein); the military Junta (1976-83) and its control of the 1978 World Cup for foreign and domestic politics (Smith "The Argentinian").

Anthropologist Christopher Golias complements these macro-analyses with a study that addresses race relations and post-colonial encounters through a sport rivalry between the indigenous Qompí and Aborígen rugby teams in the northern Argentine province of Formosa. The Qom is an indigenous people whom the Argentinian authorities settled in a separate area called Lot 68. Rugby was introduced among the Qom by ex-European rugby player and Argentinian nationalist Eduardo "Loco" Rossi, who went from Nazi sympathizer to establishing a rugby team among the Qom with the intent of social integration in 1993. Aborígen was the first indigenous team of Argentina, and its story inspired an award-winning documentary, *A Chimera of Heroes*. The film celebrated not only one man's ideological journey and conversion, but also Argentina's outreach to its indigenous people, and players for whom the team, so was presumed, meant a leap out of the ghetto into mainstream city life. The Qom themselves, however, displayed "active non-participation" by rejecting the new coach and his methods, as well as Argentinian nationalism represented by that team. They founded their own club, the Qompí, in Lot 68, which recruited only indigenous people, while Aborígen sported a mixed team of Qom and *criollos*. This aboriginal self-segregation was subsequently labelled racist by Aborígen sympathizers. The rivalry reveals the dilemma between integration vs. ethnocide, while it makes salient such markers of difference as somatic body type, practice location, skills, uniform, and the use of the indigenous language so that the other team does not understand it.

While soccer in Argentina served to break with the country's European roots in quest of its own national identity or *Argentinidad*, it also bore a ghostly resemblance to Spanish soccer, especially its national team: very much like the *Furia Española* and Spanish soccer, the *La Nuestra* and Argentine soccer was influenced by twentieth-century politics. And very much like the Spanish national team, *La*

Nuestra too came to be a barometer of Argentine national unity and consciousness in its splendors and miseries during the turbulent history of the country. O'Brien's present chapter follows Argentine soccer as a symbolic representation of the Peronist impulse during Peron's first period in power (1946-55), the post-Peron era and his brief return in 1973, as well as his legacy beyond his death. The pre-Peronist values of soccer, which celebrated individualism, the romantic escape and ascent of the poor boy to stardom, and a special Argentine play style cultivated in impoverished barrios, were fertile ground for Peronist mass populism and class identity to emerge. While not particularly interested in soccer himself, Peron used the sport to promote the objectives of *justicialismo* or social justice; to permeate working class populism; to establish the regime's political legitimacy, containment and distraction; to project positive iconography around himself and Evita Peron; and to project his regime internationally. A close link such fixed between soccer, *Argentinidad* and Peronism, the artificially bloated sense of cultural coherence dissipated as the national team *La Nuestra* sank into disarray, mirroring the country's split consciousness, doubt and malaise beyond the first Peronist phase, through the dictatorship of the military junta, up until today.

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