Transformations in National Identity through Football in Brazil: Lessons from Two Historical Defeats[1]

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In many Latin American countries football has been central to the formation of identities in the twentieth century, whether these be national, ethnic, local, generational, or gender identities. In this light, a comparison between the explanations given for the Brazilian defeat in the 1950 World Cup, which took place in Brazil itself, and that in the 1998 World Cup Final in France can serve as an illustration and starting point for a consideration of some transformations in the construction and the sentiment of national identity through football in Brazil.

If imagined communities are built upon specific regional elements of local traditions, these collective movements are, on the other hand, greatly inspired by ideas that circulate internationally.[2] This type of construction affected European countries, starting at the end of the eighteenth century and continuing throughout the nineteenth century. The national identity of Latin American countries, on the other hand, was consolidated only in the twentieth century. This is the case of Brazil during the first half of the century. Like its neighbours, Uruguay and Argentina, the country went through an intense period of nation building and invention of tradition. At the same

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[2] It is well known that the construction of a national identity is, paradoxically, mediated by international factors such as shared social and historical transformations, common channels of communication, and a sharp attention to what other countries consider to be markers of nationality: see Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983; Anderson 1983; and Thiesse 1999.

time, football was appropriated and diffused throughout the country while, on the international scene, the World Cup was created in 1930.[3]

In instances of international competition such as the World Cup, as well as regional tournaments, such as the Copa América, for example, the public representation of nationality finds adequate support for the elaboration of its qualities. The impact of victories in such tournaments on the display of national traits is well-known.[4] However, what can be said about the impact of exemplary defeats such as those of Brazil in the 1950 and 1998 World Cup Finals? What reflections and collective fantasies derive from such results?

There is a considerable journalistic and academic bibliography in Brazil regarding the 1950 World Cup defeat. However, although the 1998 defeat received a significant amount of journalistic coverage, only a handful of academic essays have been published on it.[5] Comparisons between these two defeats have also been elaborated, but in a somewhat non-systematic fashion. The tentative comparison presented here aims to offer at least a first look at the transformations that affected Brazilian football between 1950 and 1998.[6]

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[3] Prior to 1930 the only significant international football competition involving teams from different continents took place during the Olympic Games.

[4] For the importance of Germany's victory in the 1954 World Cup for its national identity after World War II, see Gebauer 1999. For the Italian victories in 1934 and 1938 World Cups in the context of the fascist regime, see Papa & Panico 1993, pp. 185-201, and Milza 1990; for the case of Argentina, see Archetti 1994.

[5] For the journalistic literature about 1950, the most complete account is in Perdigão 2000; the most important items of academic literature are DaMatta 1982; Vogel 1982; Guedes 1998; and Moura 1998. For a journalistic account of 1998, see Caldeira 2002, and for academic interpretations of its significance, see Leite Lopes 1999b; Guedes 2000.

[6] At this early point in the essay an important change that occurred during this period should be identified. Between 1958, the date of its first World Cup victory in Sweden, and 1970, when it won its third victory in Mexico, Brazilian football became increasingly prominent on the international scene, but Brazilian players still based their careers at home. However, during the

The 1950 World Cup: collective self-reflection after a national tragedy

The 1950 World Cup represents the culmination of an earlier process of football democratisation. The defeat affected this exemplary course of things in a negative manner. Brazilian football was ready to be presented to the world in 1950 as a greatly improved version of a British product, that is, an example of import substitution *par excellence*.[7] The seventeen years of improvement in the standards of Brazilian football from 1933, when the top level of Brazilian football became officially professional, to 1950, the year when it hosted the World Cup, were marked by the linear progression of football modelled on Europe and, closer to home, on Argentina and Uruguay.

Although Brazil participated in the first two World Cups, it was in the games of 1938 that it stood out with a team that already reflected the democratising improvements of professionalism. This occasion, twelve years before the 1950 World Cup, encouraged intellectuals, representatives of the cultural industry, and the expanding public, to begin a collective process of constructing national identity through football.[8]

1980s and 1990s, a period of global professionalism, there was an intensification of player circulation around the world, especially to European teams.

[7] The process of Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) was central to Brazil's economic development from 1930 to 1964. Such a process, which in the 1930s and early 1940s seems to have been unintentional, but which then became an official policy of industrialisation, supplied the population with increased confidence. As for Brazilian football as an English import, see Hamilton 2001; for the rapid spread and diffusion of football from elites to working classes and the ways in which it was appropriated in the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro from the early 1920s, see Pereira 2000.

[8] Competitions such as the Olympic Games or the World Cup offered emergent countries a context for the display of national qualities that would otherwise go unnoticed due to the peripheral position these countries held in the economic, political, and cultural realms. Unlike the European nations, which had gone through a process of nation building earlier, in Brazil

Attentive to the process of discovery and invention of national traditions, Brazilian intellectuals pointed out national folkloric traits in football. These reached the international sphere of competition where Brazil's national qualities were underscored (see Leite Lopes 1999a). The traits which folklorists since the 1930s had regarded as the principal qualities of Brazil's popular art and traditions were precisely those that were recognised in the body movement and techniques of football players (such as the dance evident in popular religious feasts: see Vilhena 1997). During this period, a semi-clandestine type of self-defence called *capoeira*, which was created by slaves and ex-slaves, was also slowly being developed as a sport (Röhrig Assunção 2005). None of this went unnoticed by intellectuals such as Gilberto Freyre and writers such as José Lins do Rego. After the 1938 World Cup, these intellectuals, with the help of the insights of the journalist, Mario Filho, developed two original interpretations of the country based on the practice of football and its diffusion in Brazil: first, the actualisation of the country's African heritage, and, second, the incorporation of music and dance into a particular style of playing.[9]

The analogy with music gave football the legitimacy to become a cultural representative of nationality. In the same way as modernist intellectuals from the 1920s had detected in music the criteria and sources of Brazil's national character, some of these intellectuals now recognised football as a new field that brought together modern urban practices and the traditional authenticity of the recently discovered popular culture (Buarque de Hollanda 2003, p. 40).

While this incorporation of invented traditions by Brazilian football was beginning at the time of the 1938 World Cup, it became consolidated as a particular national style of football only in the 1940s. The 1950 World Cup was seen as the perfect opportunity to show this style to the world, and possibly an occasion for a marriage of style and victory. Brazil had presented its candidature as host in 1938, after a good performance

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this process happened simultaneously with the impressive diffusion of football among the country's urban population.

[9] See Freyre's preface to Filho's seminal book (Rodrigues Filho 1964); see also quotations from Freyre in table 1.

in the competition that year, and during the post-war period this proposal seemed opportune to a Europe undergoing reconstruction. Taking on the challenge of constructing a stadium in the capital, Rio de Janeiro, when there was already a group of stadia in other cities, confirmed Brazil's responsible organisation of the event even before the team's performance on the field. The inauguration of the Maracanã, the biggest stadium in the world, which was ready only one week before the World Cup started, demonstrated the confidence of the organising committee in meeting such a great challenge.

Flávio Costa, the coach of the national team, had been responsible for two of the most popular teams in Rio de Janeiro in the 1940s: first Flamengo, which won three state championships between 1942 and 1944, and then Vasco da Gama, which won three championships in the next five years.[10] The rivalry between Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo was strong and influenced the politics of team selection. São Paulo has competed with Rio de Janeiro, the capital of the country at the time, for control over the sport ever since the arrival of football in Brazil. After a drawn match against Switzerland that disappointed supporters in São Paulo, in the games that followed, which took place in Rio, the team improved, winning matches against Sweden and Spain by a large margin. A new form of cheering based on a much larger crowd of supporters than that usually present in the games between regional teams came into existence. The presence of children and women or whole families contrasted with the normal crowds, composed mostly of men, that usually filled the stadia. Besides this, the size of the Maracanã, which could hold 10 per cent of Rio's 1950 population, produced a new and extraordinary demonstration of collective sociability which could be instantaneously visualised. The carnival melodies improvised and adapted for the context of the matches, along with a tentative organisation of supporters, brought

[10] Both teams went into competition after hiring the best players from the working classes who were making the transition from amateur to professional football. Most of the players on the team in 1950 were from Vasco; the remainder came from other clubs in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The national team of 1950 replaced the 1938 generation, which had been relatively successful with players of the quality of Leônidas da Silva and Domingos da Guia.

about a collective dramatisation of a cultural and playful sentiment of nationality dissociated from politics and from the habitual military and patriotic context.[11]

The defeat in the final game in 1950 was completely unexpected and traumatic for this collective construction. Having played much better than the team from Uruguay in the earlier matches, the Brazilian team, greatly influenced by the public -- which had reached the anticipated pleasure of the collective sentiment of nationality -- and by the press, was regarded as certain to come out victorious. But imagination did not secure victory in the face of an experienced and determined adversary, and the team did not do as well as expected. Unlike the other games, which had been won by a large margin, the stalemate was broken only after half time when Brazil scored the first goal. The supporters finally broke out in joy and everything suggested the result they expected, especially since a draw in the final match, under the rules of the competition in 1950, would mean a Brazilian victory in the World Cup as a whole.[12] But silence filled the stadium when Uruguay successfully counter-attacked, scoring a goal. The silence persisted, contributing to the sentiment of deception and failure in the face of what should have been a display of artistry. The sentiment of fear seemed to spread among the players, helping Uruguay break the tie with another goal. The end of the game, after Brazil's desperate attempts to score again and obtain the draw that would be enough to win the trophy, was marked by collective silence and the display of intense social mourning through the following days, months and even years. No other World

[11] The actual construction of the Maracanã during the period of democracy that followed the end of the authoritarian Estado Nôvo in 1945 was different from the construction of the Pacaembu stadium in São Paulo in 1940. The latter was a project carried out by the dictatorial government of Getúlio Vargas in order to appease the regional upper classes who had just lost a civil war.

[12] On the reasons for the unusual organisation of the 1950 event, see Glanville and Weinstein 1958, pp. 122-30.

Cup finals represented a tragedy on this scale for the supporters of the team hosting the event.[13]

A defeat can also be an important marker of the sentiment of nationality. It is often a way of collectively sharing a profound culturally constructed loss. It is not a coincidence that many national monuments are built after traumatic defeats (the most common being those that result from military failures). This was the case in the 1950 defeat. Various reasons were given to explain the defeat. One of them ended up greatly affecting the construction of national sentiment that was underway before and during the World Cup.

Many explanations for Brazil's failure were produced, ranging from the excessive optimism of politicians and the press, which supposedly affected the concentration of the players, to the coach who advised the players not to react to the provocations from Uruguay's team, which might have suppressed the aggressiveness of the Brazilian players too early. The coach counted on the fact that if there was fair play, the best team, Brazil, that is, would naturally win. Ironically, it was the public that, at the end, showed fair play and civility by staying in the stadium while the winning team received the trophy, and then silently leaving the Maracanã in a state of enormous grief (Perdigão 2001; Moura 1998).

This display of civility was suspended only during an isolated moment when the bust of Rio de Janeiro's mayor, situated at the entrance of the stadium, was violently destroyed. But at the same time, the self-restrained behaviour of the team during the match was viewed as displaying a lack of will and energy. To this claim of a lack of energy were added conservative explanations from Brazilian social thought about the

[13] The only other defeat suffered by the host team in the final match of the World Cup was when Sweden lost to Brazil in 1958. In that case, the Brazilian team was considered to be superior; therefore it was expected to win. Moreover, Sweden did not rely on football for the construction of its nationality in the same way that Brazil depended on it in 1950. All of the other countries that hosted the World Cup either won the final match or did not reach it.

inadequacy of Afro-Brazilian players in achieving favourable results and victories in competitions.

It was not a coincidence, according to these claims, that the two goals scored by Uruguay supposedly resulted from the mistakes of two specific defenders and the goalkeeper, all of whom were black. Such explanations, which are hardly present in the written records (see Table 4.1 at the end of the chapter), were related to the earlier practice, during the period of amateur football in Brazil, of excluding players from the lower classes from teams. While this practice had continued in some of the elite clubs after professionalisation, it seemed to have diminished due to the success of the most lower-class clubs of the 1930s and 1940s. Mario Filho draws attention to this type of explanation, and highlights it critically. The explanations of this journalist and militant for the democratisation of Brazilian football have been followed by other journalists and social scientists such as Roberto DaMatta, among others (see DaMatta 1982; Vogel 1982). The difficulty of pointing out the weight of stereotypes resides in the fact that these frequently constitute very subtle forms of common-sense knowledge. Anyway, this type of observation was present in the formulations regarding the Brazilian team prior to and after the 1950 World Cup (see Table 4.1). It was against the background of these stereotypes that an intellectual such as Gilberto Freyre had gained the motivation to interpret the entry of outsiders the other way around. Based on the exploits of the Brazilian team in 1938, Freyre became the prophet of the success of a new style of football, linked to national traits that he was constructing positively.[14] The old stereotypes however make a strong comeback in 1950 with the defeat bringing about collective self-blame on the one hand (resulting from the social Darwinism present in

[14] The commentary of Gilberto Freyre, about Brazilian football being a marker of national traits, can be interpreted as being homologous to the physical techniques resulting from a socialisation process that included traditional practices usually defined as folkloric. Our appropriation of these revolutionary arguments must nevertheless guard against the possibility that an essentialist interpretation could also be made of the contribution of black ethnicity to Brazilian football as a response to racist adversaries. The use of this interpretation must emphasise relationships rather than intrinsic properties and qualities.

Brazilian social thought in the beginning of the century), and a commentary on the deficiencies of the Brazilian people's mixed ethnicity on the other.[15]

The effects of the World Cup victory finally achieved in 1958 and repeated on two further occasions in the next twelve years, in 1962 and 1970, were incorporated into Brazilian consciousness as a strong sentiment of nationality, due in part to the collective suffering and reflection that the 1950 defeat had provoked. This alternation between an opportunity lost at home (elaborated as tragedy) and the victories abroad (attributed to a special style of football) ended up providing an opportunity for the display of national qualities, where cultural characteristics could be detected in physical techniques within, of course, the limitations and possible variations permitted by the rules of football.

The 1998 World Cup and the politicisation of the defeat that denies tradition

The interpretation of the 1998 defeat, Brazil's only other loss in a World Cup Final, is very different from that of 1950. This time there was no process of blaming players who had traditionally represented the flaws and needs of Brazilian people or nationality. In the case of the defeat in 1998, the explanations were directed towards globalised professionalism and football commercialism, as well as the inadequate use of this structure by the sport's administrators in Brazil.

In the 1998 World Cup the process of player internationalisation, which had begun in the 1980s, reached its peak (Giulianotti 1999, chap. 6). The great era of Brazilian football had taken place when players spent their entire careers at home. From the

[15] It is not a coincidence that the writer and journalist Nelson Rodrigues defined this self-depreciating sentiment as a 'stray-dog complex' in order to extinguish it prior to the 1958 World Cup and to recover the success of Brazilian football. The performance of the Brazilian team during the 1958 World Cup signals its internal changes, that is, an inversion of the prior stigmatization with the progressive 'darkening' of the players, with the presence of Pelé, Garrincha, Vavá, Zito and Djalma Santos (see Leite Lopes 1997).

second half of the 1980s and through the 1990s, however, most of the biggest Brazilian stars were playing abroad.[16]

Much like the 1950 World Cup finals, the days prior to the 1998 World Cup Final were decisive. While in 1950 the team's concentration was disturbed by politicians and journalists who were certain of a victorious result, the defeat of the Brazilian team in 1998 had its beginning on the same day, during the players' rest period after lunch. The striker Ronaldo was exhibiting signs of stress due to the globalised football being experienced by the whole team. First there was the pressure of contracts with many different companies which divided the team, such as when players had to go to Nike's sports centre in central Paris during time set aside for training. Second, Ronaldo was feeling the pressure of his injured knee and the close interest shown by the press in his girlfriend. And finally there was his personal history of somnambulism. This disturbance in his sleep provoked a dramatic convulsion, controversially diagnosed, which was witnessed by his team-mates and, as a result, disturbed the team emotionally. The lack of communication between the managers and the players during the crisis provoked a complete disorientation of the team (for details see Caldeira 2002).

In contrast to the game in 1950 against Uruguay, Brazil played in 1998 in front of a predominantly French public. In 1950 Brazil had been on course to win the World Cup until the 34th minute of the second half, when Uruguay scored their second goal with only eleven minutes of game left. In 1998, Brazil started out very differently from all its previous games and was already losing 2-0 before half-time. The team was not able to

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[16] This tendency has been increasing and spreading: in a little over a year in the late 1990s approximately 700 footballers left Brazil 'to take their chances in 59 countries' (*Le Monde*, 4 July 1998). Also, Brazilian coaches and assistants, who had less chance of making it in Europe than the players, started going to the Middle East in the 1970s, opening a secondary field of possibilities for players. Coaches of Brazilian national teams such as Zagallo, Parreiras, Telê Santana and Felipão worked in the East where they built or consolidated good careers. Soon afterwards, Japan also started hiring Brazilian players.

reverse the situation after the interval, and the game ended with yet another goal for the French. The whole team played poorly; no specific player could be made responsible for the flaws in the game, unlike 1950 when a goalkeeper and two defenders were blamed. Nonetheless, Ronaldo attracted attention as the icon of the defeat due to his health problem prior to the game, which created the perfect conditions for defeat even before the game itself.

It is worth taking a few moments here to outline briefly the peculiar trajectory of this player. Ronaldo presents many of the traditional characteristics of the Brazilian players from past World Cup teams. Brought up in a peripheral, lower-class neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro, Ronaldo endured financial difficulties in order to play indoor football and then regular football for the São Cristóvão team, a traditional second division starting place for many players from Rio. In this team he came into contact with the 1970 World Cup champion Jairzinho, who pointed Ronaldo out to the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF), which then chose him as a forward for the Brazilian team taking part in the South American under-17 tournament. As a result of this Ronaldo went to play for Cruzeiro, a team from Minas Gerais, where he was coached by Pinheiro, an ex-player from the 1954 World Cup team. Ronaldo progressed from the Cruzeiro junior team to the first division team where he played very well. Like Pelé in 1958, Ronaldo went to his first World Cup in 1994 at the age of 16. But unlike the icon of Brazilian football, Ronaldo did not play on that occasion. The great difference between this player's career and that of traditional players was the fact that Ronaldo's managers (initially connected to Jairzinho) prepared contracts for Ronaldo's image to be linked to brand names early in his career. Even before Ronaldo was called to play in the national team, his managers were able to transfer him to PSV Eindhoven, which he agreed to on the advice of the leading Brazilian striker, Romário, who had also played there. Romário also indirectly mediated the arrangements for Ronaldo's medical care. Romário had taken the specialist Nilton Petrone (Filé) from Rio de Janeiro to Eindhoven, and Filé was subsequently hired by PSV to treat Ronaldo's knee problem. The physiotherapist diagnosed a disproportion between Ronaldo's upper leg muscles due to the accelerated muscle development of the young athlete. The player was later transferred to Barcelona and then to Inter Milan. Ronaldo signed contracts

with the beer brand, Brahma (as did other players from the national team from 1994), and with Nike, Pirelli, and Parmalat. Nike had just abandoned basketball as the basis of its globalisation campaign strategy and was then looking at football, investing greatly in the Brazilian team. However, Ronaldo was the only one of the Brazilian players to sign a life-time contract.

The 1998 defeat in France took place when Ronaldo symbolised the contradictions of globalised football for the Brazilian public. High salaries represented good performance in clubs and occasionally in World Cups, but the contradictions of globalised football with its excessive demands in terms of training time, matches, and business commitments had a strong impact upon Ronaldo's body, his knee especially, not to mention his mind.

Moreover, Ronaldo was a radical and successful illustration of what was happening with a great number of young footballers from Brazil and elsewhere. The increasing commercialism associated with the era of global television transmission sustains this international market of well-paid players and in various countries ends up disturbing the balance between the lower football divisions, comprised of semi-amateur and semi-professional football, and the top-level divisions. This disrupts the ordinary communication and circulation of players between these divisions, which normally emphasises the importance of a sport practised by a large part of society's young population. The selection of a small group of youths who learn and train in the big European clubs from a young age and thus stand out from the average good players in Brazil ends up creating a restricted circuit of well-paid super-players, eliminating the channel which connects local football with its sources of renewal.

Another remarkable illustration of the globalisation of football was the fact that many of the Brazilian spectators in France wore green and yellow shirts displaying names of powerful companies, whether state-owned enterprises or more recognisable multinationals (Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Panasonic, Cyanamid, ABN-Amro, etc.). Many of these companies brought employees or clients to France, such as ABN-Amro, which brought 900 clients in all, 300 at a time, to watch two games of the national team each, staying in France for two weeks with all expenses paid. These clients, for the most part

employees of the car dealer financed by this bank, were rewarded for their productivity and sales efficiency. Other companies brought employees of intermediate status, providing in this way a kind of salary bonus which in some ways resembles, under different historical conditions, the extra-monetary concessions to workers and employees that maintained factory football clubs and their worker-players during the early period of football expansion in Brazil. In fact, in its early days, football owed its rapid process of appropriation by the popular classes to company sponsorships, especially from the industrial sector.

The reasons given for the 1998 defeat by the press and people in daily conversations during the days after the game were also different from those given for the previous defeat. In 1950 journalists and intellectuals manifested disappointment regarding Brazil's incapacity for international distinction even in an activity at which the country was good, the defeat being a consequence of the flaws of the whole population as represented by the players. In the days after the 1998 defeat, the arrogance that had anticipated certain victory was criticised in the same manner as in 1950. But the arrogance in France was at least backed up by a successful history of victories (1958, 1962, 1970, and the most recent, reinvigorating one of 1994). This favouritism was further increased by the promotions of the Brazilian team which were done by the international press and sponsors such as Nike. Brazil's team was a special attraction in the World Cup, appearing in countless publicity campaigns. Brazil also held a special place in the hearts of the public since it was the only team whose practice sessions in a small stadium in the suburbs of Ozoire-la-Ferrière were open to the public.[17]

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[17] I was present at these public training sessions, and was able to observe that admission tickets sponsored by the Brazilian airline, Varig, were distributed by the city authorities, which also improvised a restaurant in a tent next to the training ground. Besides the Brazilian supporters and the local population, children accompanied by their parents would come from all over Paris to see their Brazilian idols play. In another tent the postal service received and displayed an enormous amount of letters sent to the Brazilian players. There was also a press-conference centre sponsored by Coca-Cola and equipped with 400 licensed journalists near the training ground.

However, this time the reasons given for the defeat, unlike 1950, were directed not so much at the players as representatives of a people with low self-esteem and in search of a collective expression of national identity as at the administrators who had made poor use of the team's position as favourites for the trophy and of Brazil's well-known expertise in football. Ronaldo, who was positioned at the centre of the drama of the incomprehensible defeat, could be seen as the broken piece of a much bigger structure made up of an opaque administration and a budget full of secret contracts with Nike that eventually cost the team victory. The players were also criticised as mercenaries without sufficient love for their nation, playing for high salaries in foreign countries.

The disappointment with the results of the 1998 finals ended up triggering a politicised flood of explanations as a consequence of a collective football history which had slowly formed in Brazilian thought. National identity through football had already been consolidated, and was no longer at stake. As already noted, the stylish success of the 1970 team (the 'beautiful team' as it became known across the world) had marked the consolidation of national character through football by reversing, as in 1958 and 1962, the situation which Brazilians had experienced in 1950. In 1970, the first live television broadcast of the matches gave the general public the same visual access that those who had been in Maracanã in 1950 had had. In 1970 there was even a celebrated victory, or 'revenge', over Uruguay earlier in the tournament.[18]

The rivalry between Rio and São Paulo also decreased during this period as a consequence of the good performance of important teams and World Cup players from Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul after the 1970s. The defeats in the World Cups

[18] Since the military dictatorship was then at its peak, some authors highlight the paradoxical participation and autonomy of the players in relation to the technical staff and officials of the 1970 team. The participation of the players in important decisions perpetuated the little tradition of experiences that had began in the 1958 World Cup, and had continued in teams such as Botafogo and Santos in the 1960s, culminating in the profound and explicit 'democracy' of Corinthians, a team from São Paulo, in the 1980s, when the country went through a process of social movements and redemocratisation.

between 1974 and 1990, which were received with sadness, especially in 1982 due to the quality and performance of the team that went to Spain, did not in any measure reproduce the reaction to the 1950 defeat. There was no longer a threat to national identity. Pelé's prestige, for example, persisted well beyond the occasion of the athlete's retirement, as Brazil retained its status as the 'country of football' throughout the world, despite having achieved no World Cup victory since 1970. In 1994, the team won although there was a lack of emotion as a result of its defensive strategy in the final game. This victory is remembered as well due to the difficult penalty kicks, during which the hero was the goalkeeper, Cláudio Taffarel. The 1994 victory also contributed to Brazil's status as favourites in 1998. It was because 1998 brought on another defeat in the World Cup Final that questions related to national character arose once again. But this defeat did not bring about any kind of negative judgment on the population in the light of the performance of the players. The question of representation was no longer in the forefront. On the contrary, the questioning arose about the manager's decisions, the lack of transparency, the accusations of corruption, and the lack of will on the part of the players. The 1998 defeat, the loss at the Olympic Games shortly thereafter, and accusations that the coach had profited from the participation of certain players in the team, led to two investigating committees in the National Congress, one concerned with the CBF-Nike contract and the other with alleged illegal contracts among the administrators of Brazilian football.

Epilogue: the victory of 2002

Although Brazil's participation in the 2002 World Cup occurred in the context of the further globalisation of the sport and a recent crisis in the administration of the country's football, the problems that the national team had to deal with from the previous World Cup paradoxically strengthened it, leading it to a final victory against Germany. The failings of the national team between 1998 and 2002 seemed to reflect the political crisis that plagued Brazilian football. The weak performance of the national team in the qualifying games was the culmination of a long trajectory marked by failure, from the constant change of coaches, to the final choice of Felipão, a

pragmatic and disciplinarian coach who had been successful in recent years. The pressure and discredit that surrounded the team at the beginning of the World Cup in 2002 exposed it to a situation of apparent inferiority, requiring perseverance to overcome the difficult conditions it faced. This promoted unity among the players and attenuated the internal privileges and rivalry that characterised the work conditions of the globalised players (which was the case in 1998), reproducing in part the situation of 1958, 1970 and 1994 when the team also had to overcome unfavourable conditions (the ghosts of 1950 and 1954 in 1958; the failure in 1966, present in the preparations for 1970; the long series of failures with an emphasis on the 1982 defeat before 1994).

There was also the drama lived by Ronaldo, who, after the 1998 defeat, had to face the threat of retirement due to problems in his knee, subsequent surgical operations, and a spectacular rupture of his patellar tendon in April 2000. The player served as a symbol of the tenacity of all the players, the coach, and the medical team, highlighting the attempts at recovery by players such as Rivaldo and Roberto Carlos, besides reinforcing the team's spirit of unity. All of these difficulties, lived out by renowned players with high salaries, who had experienced a fast ascent to wealth and fame, reminded us of the low-income origin of most players, represented by the emblematic '100% Jardim Irene' which the captain of the team painted on his shirt before holding the trophy over his head. 'Jardim Irene' is the name of the poor neighbourhood in São Paulo where Cafu came from, like the other peripheral suburbs such Bento Ribeiro in Rio de Janeiro or Paulista in Recife, where Ronaldo and Rivaldo originated. These neighbourhoods were under the spotlight on the day of the final game. The 2002 team presented to the public what the 1998 team had not offered: asceticism, tenacity, team spirit, sacrifice, and homage to their modest origins as a sign of allegiance to the majority of the Brazilian population itself.

Thus, in different ways the 1950 and 1998 defeats brought about a collective reflection that would only come to dramatise and valorise the later victories. The reverberations resulting from the reflexive moment that arose from the 1950 defeat gave a pessimistic and guilty tone to the optimism that had followed Brazil's discovery of football since 1938 as a type of 'emergent folklore' incorporated as a national sport. But the force of the democratisation of talents in football and the improvement of the

technical and administrative departments of the team led to victories that were highly valued due to the former difficulties. Also, the political implications of the interpretations of the 1998 defeat put Brazilian football under the scrutiny of two parliamentary investigations that aimed to recover the honour and tradition of the most victorious football of all times. The idea was to recover the quality that had characterised Brazilian football between 1958 and 1970, and even 1982 and 1994. The wealthy, globalised Brazilian football had to return symbolically, in 2002, to the modest origins of most of its players in order to recognise the myths that surround the origin of the victorious Brazilian football of the 1950s.

Table 4.1

Significant Contemporary Comments on the Causes of Brazilian National Defeats in World Cup Finals.

1938
The Brazilians, mostly with black faces and mixed blood of black input, have possession of marvellous natural qualities that make them born football players. Unfortunately, the idea that football is a team sport did not arise in their brains. (Gabriel Hanot, *Miroir des Sports,* 1938, cited in *L'Équipe Magazine*, no. 837, April 1998, p. 38.)
I think that one of the conditions of the Brazilian victories in European matches is due to the fact that we had the courage this time to send to Europe a team frankly Afro-Brazilian (Gilberto Freyre, writing in *Correio da Manhã*, 15 June 1938)
Our style of game contrasts with the Europeans' by its qualities of cunning, surprise and slightness, by an individual spontaneity through which we show our mulatto characteristics (Freyre 1943).
1950 and 1954
Brazilian football champions 'are generally lads of mixed blood, badly fed and with irremovable perverted health (taras de saúde)'. Soares attributes defeat to the fact that players would have been 'infected people, who in the way that they practise their sport compensate for their lack of force and health with agility'. The journalist of *Jornal dos Sports* replies stating that some of our great players 'are men of pure blood and some even have blue blood'. This would be the only explicit reference where the idea of an inferior mixed race is clear in the aftermath of 1950 cup (Moura 1998).

The Brazilian players lacked what is lacking for the Brazilian people in general... The causes... touch on the foundations of social science in the comparative study of races, environment, climate, eating habits, spirit, culture, and individual and common living processes...

Our people's psychosocial state is still *green* [i.e. immature or unripe], and the athletes emerging from amongst the people cannot improvise the conditions and tools for overcoming [such immaturity] in athletic contests, requiring the mobilisation of greater organic resources and reserves...

Given the state of the Brazilian people, only by chance or contingency might we become world football champions and establish hegemony in this sport... In Brazilian football, flashy trim lends artistic expression to the match, to the detriment of yield and results. *Exhibition* jeopardises *competition*. It would be easy to compare the physiognomy of a Brazilian all-star team, made up mostly of blacks and mulattoes, with that of Argentine, German, Hungarian, or English football. (Lyra Filho 1954, pp. 49-64).

1998

Maybe this was the final World Cup of nationalism. The supporters painted their faces with the colours of their flags in order to say a tribal farewell to any notion of a country. In the future the supporters will be composed of false savages and World Cups will be what this one was in a disguised manner, a tournament of trade-marks or *griffes* (Luís Fernando Veríssimo, writing in *Jornal do Brasil*, 17 July 1998)

Put into jail those who have stolen from the street cleaner the joy of brandishing the national football shirt to the whole world. Put into jail those who have shot at our major glory. Yes, I know, it's only football. But it is only football that makes mad the only genuinely mestizo country in the world, where we are proud of being the demoralisation of this stupidity which is the notion of race, when we proudly have

descendants of people from Nigerians to Finnish, from Japanese to Arabs; and now they shamefully take away our football (João Ubaldo Ribeiro, writing in *O Globo*, 19 July 1998).

I hope that the defeat has served to finish with some myths. Players that think that life can be summed up in jewellery and the latest model cars. Maybe it is their distance from the reality of the country. Maybe it is to ignore what it means to be a world champion for the guy in the street corner [for ordinary people] (Sergio Noronha, writing in *Jornal do Brasil*, 13 July 1998)

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