

morality – they were not very many but this is not the point. The men depict their lives as full of misery, but we do not know how they perceive themselves. It is obvious in my analysis that the life of the deceived men is not full of happiness. Therefore, the tango can be considered as having a highly moral discourse.

6. Most of the tangos analysed in this chapter are still central to the contemporary repertoire of some of the best singers and orchestras of Argentina. Other themes besides gender relations existed and developed in the 1940s and 1950s, but they were more marginal in the construction and representation of masculinities. Moreover, in the 1950s and 1960s the tango was challenged by traditional folklore and the impact of European rock (De Ipola 1985; Vila 1991). At the same time, as Manucho told us, a revolution inside the tango was taking place: Astor Piazzolla, the famous Argentinian *bandoneonist* and composer, produced a new tango, in which words and traditional rhythms were replaced by a complex and elaborate music (only incidentally accompanied by lyrics). My hypothesis is that the type of 'silent' tango created by Piazzolla was the only one able to challenge the classicism of the latter. The classic tango is that of an existential masculine discourse related to a model of romantic love that perhaps still pervades Argentinian gender representations and relations. However, Piazzolla has, in the last three years, been transformed into a 'classic composer' played by classic interpreters like Barenboim, Yo Yo Ma, Kramer and Aix.
7. The Mediterranean construction has come under attack recently (Llobera 1986; Pina-Cabral 1989). However, the importance of gender relations and perceptions related to ideas about love, sexuality and marriage and their changes over time has not received adequate attention.
8. In the Buenos Aires of the 1920s and 1930s the practice of 'aristocratic and bourgeois duelling' survived the legal prohibition of such acts implemented at the beginning of the twentieth century (Viale 1937). It is interesting to notice that the division of the Socialist Party in 1915, the second largest in the city of Buenos Aires between 1904 and 1930, was provoked not by controversies concerning political principles or revolutionary tactics, but by disagreement regarding the morality and legitimacy of duelling. For many socialists of immigrant origin, the duel was a European aristocratic and feudal practice that ought to be abandoned. For many important and charismatic party figures of Argentinian 'aristocratic' origin, on the contrary, to enter into contests of honour was unavoidable. They were irremediably duellists (see Walter 1977: 113–34; García Costa 1986: 7–56).

CHAPTER SIX

Masculine National Virtues and Moralities in Football

Introduction

While talking about the importance of football in the daily life of so many *porteños*, Carlos, who in 1988 was in his early forties, said: '*Los argentinos somos de raza futbolística*' ('We Argentinians are of the football breed') and added, anticipating my answer, 'Yes, I know, women are not of the same breed, although they accompany us; they tolerate us, and there are men who do not agree with the majority of us.'¹ He continued:

You know what I mean. We must learn to think as a united people, as a society. Argentinians are very individualistic, with little national feeling ... except when the national football team plays. Then our patriotism emerges, including many of the people who feel that football is not important. We enjoy being well represented, that the national team plays well, and we like to win. In many senses it is a demonstration of what we are.

In some ways I thought he was right, and he expressed an argument that I had heard many times before, but many of my informants could contradict him. Manucho, Tomás and Manuel, for instance, always insisted on the fact that Argentinians (male) are very nationalistic – *patrioteros* according to Manucho. Manuel said to me once that '*our patriotism*, our chauvinism reaches a climax in the field of football: we always expect to win'. Manucho emphasized this need for victories as something negative, 'an indication of our insecurity', and contrasted the need with the tango: 'you do not need to win in the tango'. I remembered my answer: 'but in the tango we do not have competition'. I did not find Manucho's answer

in my notes because he, perhaps, agreed with me, and there was no answer.

Working on football narratives and national male imageries was, sometimes, difficult. My informants were supporters of different clubs, and, as can be imagined, they were more chauvinistic – and in many cases ‘racists’ – in relation to their clubs than to the national team. Juan José, supporter of Boca Juniors, confessed to me that he did not care about the results of the national team during the last three years; this was because the coach – Passarella – was an emblematic figure of River Plate, the historical enemy of his club, and always preferred River Plate’s players. He even said that he enjoyed the defeat of the national team in 1995 against Brazil because Passarella replaced Maradona with a mediocre River Plate player. He considered Passarella’s attitude a ‘joke’ and his decision ‘an offence to Argentinian football’. Fortunately, Juan José was joined by only three of my other informants in his refusal to talk about national teams and national styles.

Euphemistically, Argentinians call the national team *la selección*, ‘the selection’, in the sense of the pick of the best, while the players are called *los seleccionados*, ‘the selected’, the chosen. One of the favourite pastimes of many of my informants was to imagine an all-time best selection, ‘the eternal selection’, made up of players who had played on the national team during different historical periods with unequalled success. They relied on their experience or on the selections made by the experts, radio or television journalists. Since 1928, when Argentina reached the final of the Olympic Games in Amsterdam, generations of Argentinian men have heard on the radio, read in the newspapers and sport magazines and seen in television presentations of their national football teams and footballers playing all over the world. It is quite interesting to note that Argentinians are very proud that their players are playing well and gaining admiration in Europe. Still, Europe remains the place where the fame of Argentinian players must be recognized. The gaze of the relevant other creates meaning. This archive of memories has been considerably increased by the massive production of videotapes on football in the last decade. The different *selecciones* and the most successful players have been perceived as models and mirrors of what Carlos described for me: an expression of the Argentinian breed and a display of national male virtues and qualities. In this chapter I shall concentrate on the historical, social and cultural meaning of the national team. In connection

with this I shall touch superficially upon the variations of identities related to the history of the great clubs of Buenos Aires and the impact that these have had in the process of producing a national imagery.

The Masculinities and Moralities of Football

In the presentation of my findings I shall place special emphasis on the way morality is constituted as a discursive practice when Argentinians reflect on the historical achievements and defeats of the national team. I shall show, following some of the ideas advanced in a previous chapter, that at moments of crisis morality is presented and experienced in terms of moral choices. This perspective renders possible an analysis of the plurality of male identities and moralities as constructed public narratives in Argentina. I hope to be able to show that, while it is crucial to get to know what is defined as good in itself, it is also crucial to determine what is perceived by the different social actors as worthwhile and desirable.

After an unforgettable match in the South American Cup between Independiente from Argentina and Olimpia from Paraguay one Wednesday night during the very cold winter of 1984, I was sitting with 29-year-old Héctor, a devoted fan of Independiente, in an old café on the main plaza of Avellaneda, an industrial neighbourhood of Buenos Aires. We had decided to escape from the crowd fighting to get into the buses going to the centre of Buenos Aires. While waiting for the cappuccino and the traditional glass of Bols Geneva, Héctor insisted on telling me a story which, according to him, was a beautiful synthesis of the philosophy of football as a game: the contradiction between elegance and force. He began:

When I was a child, in the 1960s, my father slowly introduced me to the history of Independiente. He would say that it is not possible to experience every situation in life at a football arena, but he repeated again and again that a vast number of situations and ceremonies of life are part of the game. The heroes and villains, who were always players, were transformed into victims, orators, judges, killers, jugglers, workers, bureaucrats, usurers, impostors, criminals, mercenaries, magicians and survivors. My father insisted that, under the influence of the passion and the involvement of the game, different types of men coexist – expressing generosity, misery, enthusiasm, tragedy, comedy, magic and hope. He told me a very beautiful story, one that he believed represented

the contradictions of football. He remembered that in the 1920s Independiente had a good team, with an excellent right insider – Lalin, a juggler – and a very effective killer – the centre forward Seoane, called The Pig. The episode happened in a match against Estudiantes de la Plata. During the first half Lalin kept the ball for himself, all the time, danced and dribbled with it. ‘Can you picture, my son,’ my father asked me, ‘when you play football with an orange until it softens and you see the juice? Well, Lalin transformed the ball into an orange; in each match the ball was transformed into an orange. Seoane did not like it at all. His job was to produce goals and to win. You know, to make goals is indeed the most dramatic moment of football. Lalin was postponing the moment when winners and losers are divided and joy and disappointment are experienced. Seoane did not like it. In the break, Seoane insisted on getting the ball: “Lalin, if you can give me the ball, just one cross-ball, and that is what we need. If give you my guarantee, one cross-ball, one goal.” At the beginning of the second half’, my father said, doubling for a moment, ‘I think it was in the second minute, Lalin sent a cross-ball, a perfect cross-ball, and Seoane, like the goal-machine he was, volleyed it into the goal. Goal! what a nice score’, my father added. ‘Seoane, very happy, ran to embrace and to thank Lalin and said: “You see, if we play like this we shall win; we shall always win.” Lalin answered laconically: “Yes, I am sure we can always win, but if we play in this way I do not enjoy the game.”’

I remembered this story and each time I met Héctor during 1984, and again in 1988, we agreed on the ambivalent meaning of joy, of happiness and of feeling happy expressed in the story told by his father. For Lalin, we imagined, to feel happy was not ultimately related to victory, which was the real meaning of football according to Seoane. For Lalin the pleasure of the game was not to inflict moral pain on the losers; in his world, there was no compelling place for efficient and determined centre forwards. Lalin knew that in football the loser has an opaque destiny of forgetfulness. In my discussion with Héctor, he mentioned that his father used this story in order to counterpoise ‘the romantic figure of the juggler to the cold and metallic role played by the killer’.

Several years later, during my stay in Buenos Aires in 1993, I understood that the story of Héctor’s father was, in a way, part of an Argentinian historical narrative in which the oral sources are mixed with heterogeneous authoritative texts (see Humphrey 1997). Borocotó, the journalist known from previous chapters, writing with his real name referred to the event in a short article. All the theatrical elements in Héctor’s father’s story are present, but the

end is different. Lalin’s replay to Seoane states the importance of victory: ‘Yes, but I do not enjoy myself. Is football to mean just goals? How horrible!’ (Lorenzo 1946: 47).

Ernesto Sábato, the great Argentinian novelist who reflected on the tango and who is a supporter of Estudiantes de la Plata – and because of this he obviously knew the story – incorporated the event into his classical novel *Sobre héroes y tumbas* (Sábato 1961: 86–7). The setting here is located in a bar in Parque Lezama, a neighbourhood of Buenos Aires. Some friends, drinking the traditional afternoon vermouth, exchange ideas about the negative changes in modern football which have brought about an extreme aggressivity among the players, only interested in winning and less and less in the creation of beauty. One of them refers to the Lalin-Seoane story in order to illustrate the overriding importance of goals. In this story, the reply of Lalin is: ‘Yes, but I am not enjoying myself’, and the narrator concludes: ‘You see, if you like, here lies the problem of Argentinian football’ (Sábato 1961: 87). The conflict of Argentinian football is, then, the abandonment of elegance and beauty and the consolidation of a way of feeling the game based on the cult of efficiency and results. The narrative indicates a profound and irrevocable change in which the ethos represented by Lalin can be seen only as an anachronism, belonging to the time of amateur football.²

In 1986, in a long interview just before the World Cup in Mexico, Jorge Valdano, a player with Real Madrid in Spain and a striker on the Argentinian national team, remembered the story of *Sobre héroes y tumbas*. In his narrative the names of Lalin and Seoane had disappeared as main actors; nevertheless the roles that they played were retained. The setting was moved from a football stadium to a *potrero* – the mythological space where the national style of playing was modelled, as we have seen earlier. Interestingly enough, Seoane is transformed into ‘a practical player’ and Lalin into ‘a crack’. At the end of the story, the practical player, after scoring, says, ‘You see; you passed me the ball, and I scored’, and the crack answers, ‘Yes, I see, but I enjoyed myself much more than you.’ Valdano explains: ‘For Sábato, this was the problem of football, but for me this is its great secret, nothing more or less. The struggle between two kinds of apparently incompatible bodily practices, elegance and force, determine at the end the popularity of the game’ (*El Gráfico* no. 3479, 1986: 11). Thus, according to Valdano, the main contradiction of football implies that the pre-eminence of ability

over force or vice versa must be understood as a permanent feature of the contradictory character of Argentinian football. Male individual virtues are transformed into contrasting styles and moral attitudes, as I have shown in the first part of this book. Lalin and Seoane represent different, contradictory and competing male styles. The competing masculinities are thought of as either problematic or enigmatic. Through the performance of football players this contradiction is transformed into a public concern. In Valdano's interpretation, masculine styles in football are multiple and permanent.³ The story illustrates how meaning is dependent on who is performing or speaking (see Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994: 12). The original 'juggler' in Héctor's tale was converted into a 'crack', representing virtues such as ability, dribbling, elegance and beauty, while the 'killer' was seen as expressing force, efficiency, determination and practicality. Héctor always insisted that these styles were moral choices. He suggested that searching for and realizing different football styles convey information concerning 'our and their beliefs about how we see what the world is like' (*muestras creencias en el fútbol, y las de otros diferentes, indican cómo vemos el mundo*). He told me:

You see, I feel a strong sympathy; I can identify with players like Lalin, and this is not purely irrational. Even I can recognize that players like Seoane are needed, but they must never take over the game. My feelings are reasonable; I am choosing what I think is right for keeping the essence of the game. This is my truth.

Héctor gave me some 'reasons' for his moral considerations and his knowledge of football in a way that showed that he accepted a possible disagreement. He added: 'I know very well what I prefer and I know what kind of players and games and styles will affect my basic attitudes.'

I discussed the relationship between ability and force in relation to male moral choices and the Argentinian style of playing with many of my informants. Juan, or Juancho, in his late forties, introduced a dichotomy based on *serio* (serious) and *alegre* (joyful), which I also later found when reading the sports magazine *El Gráfico* of the 1920s and 1930s, but he rejected its validity for understanding the history of Argentinian football.⁴ He argued:

You see, many people believe that Argentinian football, as represented by the national team, has moved like a pendulum between seriousness and joyfulness. Joyful football has been identified with creativity,

imagination, dribbling, doing things in an unexpected way, and serious football exactly the opposite, like total tedium (*el tedio total*). I do not agree. For me, being serious means to play with engagement, with discipline and with a real will to achieve victory. To play well always implies creativity and imagination. It is possible to be serious and to play well. You see, in Argentina, seriousness has been identified with the cult of force and masculine courage, with the myth of the Uruguayan Indian grip (*la garra charrúa*). Courage will never replace imagination. The Uruguayans defeated us in two finals, at the Olympic final of 1928 and in the World Cup of 1930, because, we were told by many, they were more macho than us. You see this way of explaining these two dramatic defeats confirmed the myth of the ability of Argentinian players and their lack of strength.

Juancho refers to the traumatic defeats, accepting, in a way, the myth of the generosity of Argentinian football as opposed to the systematic use of tactical considerations that could guarantee a victory. The history of the final at the Olympics in Amsterdam in 1928, when the Uruguayans defeated the Argentinian team, 2-1, was repeated in 1930. The written accounts tell that in the final of the World Cup in 1930, which was played in Montevideo, the capital city of Uruguay, the Argentinians controlled the match due to their technical superiority and were leading by 2-1 at half-time. The Uruguayans then 'humiliated' the Argentinians, winning 4-2. Bayer, in his history of Argentinian football, which, as we have seen in previous chapters, was used as the basis of a script of a popular movie in 1990 and watch by millions of Argentinians including Héctor, Juancho and Tomás, commented on the two defeats:

The River Plate [an expression that included Buenos Aires and Montevideo, the two cities of the River Plate] placed the two finalists in Amsterdam. And again the Uruguayan Indian grip (*la garra charrúa*) wins. Two to one. An indisputable triumph. The Argentinians play well but the Uruguayans show more personality; they are not intimidated; they stand up (*mejor parados*). In order to gain some consolation, the Buenos Aires newspapers write: 'The River Plate football (*el fútbol rioplatense*) has won'. Argentinians must wait two years for vindication... For the final of the (first) World Cup thousands and thousands of Argentinians take the boat to Montevideo... In Buenos Aires thousands and thousands listen to the radio transmission in front of the newspaper buildings of *Crítica* and *La Prensa*... In the stadium, a real climate of war predominates. The Uruguayans must not win, as they did in Amsterdam. The Argentinians would like to be rid of the

complex of paternity. Luis Monti, the Argentinian centre half, has received thousands of threatening letters telling him that, if the Argentinians win, he will be killed. The Uruguayan supporters knew Monti very well: he is a great player but fragile and unstable. In spite of the tremendous pressure, Argentina lead 2-1 at the end of the first half. Forty-five more minutes and Argentina will be World Champions. The Uruguayans do not surrender but, on the contrary, play with more stamina. Using violence in a couple of situations, and insulting Monti when the referee cannot see them, is enough. Monti crumbles. . . . The Argentinians show signs of physical weakness, and the defence is a sieve. The Uruguayans score three times, and that is that. They became the first World Champions of football. Argentinians will continue to be their sons. (Own translation Bayer 1990: 34-5)

As in the story about Lain and Seoane, we can see that victory in decisive situations is intimately associated with the deployment of some male virtues: courage, physical strength, tactical rational planning and moral endurance. In addition, these virtues are seen by Bayer as constitutive of paternity and the relations of father and son. Before the match, equality was recognized and accepted, but the defeat transformed Argentinians into sons and Uruguayans into fathers. Bayer (1990: 35) contrasts the figure of the Argentinian Monti, 'good player but fragile and unstable', with the great Uruguayan 'heroes': Nasazzi, a man of great energy; Fernández, a centre half covering all the ground with his physical strength; Scarone, the technical player; and Gesido a 'real male' who always stands up. The fragility of Monti was perceived by the press and the fans as the main reason for the Argentinian defeat. Monti was called 'double breadth'. His nickname was an indication of his impressive physical figure, and he was a very strong athlete, a technical but rather aggressive player, even violent; his style of playing contributed to the public recognition of 'The Cyclone' as the *nom de guerre* of his club, San Lorenzo de Almagro.

The defeat of 1930 was so traumatic that Argentina sent a third-class team from the amateur league to the World Cup in 1934; this was a disguised protest against the purchase of their players by European clubs, and they refused to participate again until 1958. Juancho told me:

I will not deny our fascination with technical ability and the cult of dribbling. This is our tradition, what we usually call *la maestría* (our style), but it has always been under threat. You see, you can have a nice style

of playing, fantastic individual players, players with success in great international club teams, but you need victories, international victories by the national team. Without victories, I mean important victories, you cannot have a tradition in football. To get a tradition you have to be known. Others have to accept your way of feeling for the game; other teams have to respect you and even be afraid of playing against you. A tradition in football is related to a certain aesthetics and to criteria for defining a correct style. It is again *la maestría*. We failed in the two finals of 1928 and 1930, and we decided not to expose ourselves; we decided not to take risks. We sent hundreds and hundreds of individual players to Europe, to South America. In a way we exported quality. I will give you an example: in the winning Italian team of the World Cup in 1934, there were four Argentinian players, almost half of the team. Well . . . it was much more than half because they were one inside forward, the centre half and the two wings. We stayed in South America; we won the South American tournament many times, and we defined ourselves as 'the best of the world'. For many, many years it was enough to defeat Uruguay and Brazil. But we knew that the power, the international recognition and the consolidation of a tradition really happens in the World Cup. My father always said that winning the South American tournament was like playing in the patio of a house – the patio of a house in a *barrio* – while playing in the World Cup was like playing in the shop-window of an important department store on Florida Street, in the centre of Buenos Aires.

I insisted on discussing why Argentinians, including the players, football authorities and, of course, supporters, perceived themselves, despite the evidence to the contrary, as belonging to a 'football tradition' that was 'the best in the world'. Juancho, without hesitating, answered me in the following way:

You must remember that Argentina had problems in being identified by others as an important nation. Football made it possible for us to be recognized as something in the world [I thought that perhaps he exaggerated, leaving apart the tango and polo]. An authentic masculine passion was developed, and, for many men, the majority of men, football becomes a part of what I will call an internalized national identity which includes the sense of football. We thought: well, at least, we play good football and we export football players. . . . Because of this the defeats and the failures are particularly painful for us. When the national team is defeated in very important matches it affects me and many, many others like me. Sometimes I ask myself, why is this so important to me? Perhaps it is childish, but in each defeat there is more than football. It is our prestige and self-esteem that is at stake. You see, each time we

lose an important match, we asked ourselves why. How was it possible? And we hope that it will never occur again, never again. The failures showed our fragility and our weakness. At the time, when the football authorities, supported by the government – especially under the government of Perón in the 1940s and 1950s – decided not to take part in the World Cup, not only were we exporting players, but the best club teams dominated in South America and played with brilliance in Europe during their tours. We were 'the best'. We truly believed that the best football in the world was played every Sunday in Argentina, but we were never really convinced that we were invincible. The myth of invincibility was a creation of the Uruguayans after they won the World Cup in 1950, defeating Brazil in the Mecca of football: the Maracanã Stadium in Rio de Janeiro. You see, we had not participated in the World Cup after 1930, and when we decided to participate again in 1958 we had created an image of ourselves that we were the best... Too many expectations, great, great expectations... we were defeated in the first round by Czechoslovakia. This we had never imagined. We always considered England, Italy and Germany as the great powers – but Czechoslovakia? Never! Unthinkable... Well, we were defeated by the devastating score of 6–1. What a shame! You must understand that this was the end of the world. The crisis of our tradition. A moral crisis. From that time, for many, many years we could not distinguish right from wrong.

Juancho is touching upon one of the dark chapters, perhaps the darkest, in the history of Argentinian football: the débâcle with Czechoslovakia in the World Cup of 1958. Juancho is not exaggerating. In their recently published dictionary on Argentinian football, Fontanarrosa and Sanz (1994: 17) define Argentina as 'the country where until 1958 everyone believed that they had invented football'. Juancho is telling us that, through the world of football, Argentinians created a powerful imagery, producing a collective memory based on selected images and stories referring to a beautiful style of playing. He also talks about this style as *la muestra*, which literally means 'ours' – but implying 'our way of playing' – and the defeat is seen as provoking 'the crisis of our tradition'. His narrative is prototypical concerning the importance of 'a national tradition' in which there is a description of the constitution of identity in opposition to difference, and inside against outside; the superiority of the inside (*la muestra*) is assumed as a requirement to resist the possible invasion of other forms, others styles of playing football. Thus, the sudden superiority of the outside, of outsiders, needs an explanation, especially when it is perceived as a 'moral crisis',

as the crisis of 'our tradition'. It is important to keep in mind that for Juancho the sign of crisis is associated with a state of confusion: Argentinians could not distinguish 'right from wrong'. Juancho expanded his arguments on the Argentinian tradition and the style of *la muestra* in the following way:

Our style, *la muestra*, is related to the football played in the *potrero*, a small field where twenty play against twenty. There, if you get the ball you must keep it; you must hide it; you must treat it with love; you must protect it; you must flatten it; you must not give it away because if this happens you will never get it back. *La muestra* is the cult of dribbling... the ball should be kept on the ground, never in the air. Our style is neither English nor Brazilian. They like to have the ball in the air; the English like to get into the penalty area as quickly as possible, and the Brazilians are known for performing the ballet they are used to. *La muestra* is not natural; is not atavistic; it is the product of two historical circumstances: the ideology of the *potrero*, and the development over time of a certain taste (*el desarrollo de un cierto gusto*).

I observed to Juancho that what he said to me was developed many years ago by the best journalists of *El Gráfico*. He replied that 'the history belongs to all of us, and the *potrero* is a common belief in Argentina', and he added, 'I doubt if you will find someone in disagreement with the importance of the *potrero* and of taste.' Then, I asked him whether – accepting *la muestra* as historic and related to given circumstances – changes were possible. Juancho replied:

Of course. This happened after our defeat in Sweden in 1958. We imported what we called 'the European tradition (*la tradición europea*)', a kind of football based on physical strength and planning, collective planning with no possibility of being ourselves. No more freedom; no more creativity. The most important aspect of football was not to play but to win. We got confused, and we did get good results in the following World Cups. We must never forget our roots.

I again mentioned *El Gráfico* and the historical opposition between the creole style and the English. He remembered moments of the film of Bayer, because that opposition is presented in it, and concluded: 'Yes, we developed our style in opposition to the English, and, after all, they are Europeans.'

As I mentioned before, Durkheim insisted on the importance of taking into account moments of crisis for the analysis of moral-

ties. Juancho is explicitly relating the crisis of a tradition to a moment of effervescence in the history of Argentinian football. He also accepts the possibility of another football morality based on other principles. He is not an essentialist, he is just traditionalist in the sense that tradition provides roots, continuity and identity. He gives morally derived interpretation based on history in the sense that choosing what is right or wrong is open. Styles of playing as a means of producing and/or reproducing identities can be seen as possibilities, as moral choices. He recognizes the existence of *la nuestra* in contrast with a style called *la tradición europea*. *La tradición europea* remains as an alternative. Thus, for Juancho, a certain football practice is a moral selection (see Evens 1993: 111–13). In his analysis, the Argentinian style, *la nuestra*, is fragile and its reproduction uncertain. He insists on *la nuestra* being an authentic style – in a typical Borocotian way of reasoning, as the social product of a collective practice in the *potrero* and as a consequence of the existence of a certain 'taste', as something that, perhaps, for many Argentinians is not fully conscious (see Evens 1993: 111). Obviously, the same could be said of others choosing *la tradición europea*.

Juancho is not alone. He presents a socially accepted narrative of the events, Bayer writes:

The greatest shame of Argentinian football was Czechoslovakia's 6–1 victory... The front pages of the newspapers expressed disappointment and anger: 'Even crippled, they (the Europeans) run more than the Argentinian players', 'Argentinian football remained in the past; it exists in pre-history'. And as a reaction against the justificatory arguments of the players, a newspaper wrote: 'You must not cry as women for what you did not defend as men.' Openly, many newspapers accused the Argentinian players of lack of maleness. When they arrived at the airport of Buenos Aires they were received by a shower of coins and insults. Hundreds of fans waited with the intention of attacking them. By order of the political authorities, the tax officers confiscated all the gifts that the players had bought for their families during their stay in Europe. (Own translation 1990: 85–6)

Bayer adds: 'the 1960s provoked a total mess in Argentinian football. They tried to change it, to modernize it, imitating the Brazilians... But the result was the formula of "every player back, every player a defender". Defence gained priority to the detriment of offensive football' (1990: 89).

Lázaro, in an interesting essay on the ethical and political language in Argentinian football, also comments on the events of 1958:

We were prepared to show to the entire world our daring stamp, our childish tenderness, our innocent wiliness, and we were quite sure that when they saw us they would love us. We thought to sow in the sons of school discipline, in the sad kids of the cold European countries, the joy of the *potrero* and the feast of abundance. In this spirit our players, the coach and the happy and optimistic journalists, guardians of the purity of the doctrine (*la nuestra*) and the doctrine of purity, left Argentina... The disaster in Sweden is the origin of the maelstrom of Argentinian thought. More than a maelstrom, it will be a whirlwind. The old chain of virtues that distinguished the Argentinian creole will break into halves. One half will softly whisper about the 'past times' when it was a great pleasure to watch Argentinians play football. The other half will always find arguments for demanding a radical change of mentality. This bifocal ethic will sweep across the world of football transforming it into a fertile field for ethical and political debates. (Own translation 1993: 31)⁵

With Juancho as well as with Lázaro some common key arguments are at work: the importance of the *potrero*; the style of *la nuestra* as an expression of virtues related to childhood; innocence, creativity, tenderness and the picaresque; the acceptance of the quality of football as an innocent game will vanish if maturity, speculation and planning replace the childish spirit that every man has inside; the concern for the purity of a doctrine (*la nuestra*); the relevance of keeping a tradition in order to avoid intellectual and moral confusion. The *potrero* as a perceived space of freedom is related to childhood. We can say that football, like other games, is opposed to work, duties and family obligations. It is interesting to note that in Argentina many of the great players are defined as *piques*.⁶ They also agree, like Bayer, on the historical impact of the *débâcle* in Sweden because, since then, two moralities have coexisted in Argentinian football.

It is interesting to notice that in this narrative the image of a 'child' (without a father) is seen as very positive, as a potent image of freedom and creativity, while being a 'son' (with a father) is defined as negative, as an indication of subordination and control. Creativity in Argentinian football has often been related to players being imagined as 'children' who will never reach maturity, as we shall see also in the next chapter. As I pointed out before, these

narratives confront us with a plurality of male identities and moralities as created and transformed in the culture of football.⁷

In one of my latest conversations, Juancho continued to elaborate on this problematical issue:

We tried and tried to play like the Europeans but we lost and lost and, at the same time, we continued to export talented, skilful players to the best European clubs. It was terrible; we were without moral strength until Menotti was appointed coach of the national team at the end of 1974. With him we entered into a period . . . well, I am not afraid perhaps exaggerating, we entered a period of moral regeneration. Menotti insisted on playing *la maestría*, our style, while accepting that in order to beat Europeans what was needed was to equal them physically . . . I always say that with Menotti we remarried our past, our tradition. You see, this marriage was successful. With him as coach we won the two World Cups of 1978: first, with the senior players in Buenos Aires and with the junior players in Tokyo, a year later.

Juancho is right: Menotti presented himself as a kind of crusader and his victories transformed him into a successful prophet, a very influential and powerful prophet. He summarized his success as coach of the national teams in the following way:

It was necessary to find a path pooling together all our efforts in search of one identity. I thought that this was the secret: we had lost our identity; we lived running behind the 'last word' in football, trying to catch the last system or recipe that lay behind the last success, and in this way we forgot what our idiosyncrasy was. (Own translation Menotti 1980: 15)⁸

And more recently he has added:

Who will put in doubt the existence of an Argentinian football style? An authentic national football exists, in the same way as an Argentinian way of life exists, and it was modelled since the origins of our nationality with passion, with sacrifice, with patience and with rebelliousness. . . . Once I heard somebody say that 'there is no national football because football is universal'. I would say that man is universal, but that the best way to reach universality in any activity is 'to paint one's own village'. And the Argentinian football players who left the country, from Julio Libonatti to Diego Maradona, became well-known because they painted the village with the magic of the Argentinian dribbling, which is bantering, different, with a hallmark of identity. I dare to say that

I could recognize in any pitch of the entire world an Argentinian player. . . . In our past the way of playing was intimately related to our sentiments. . . . This made possible the survival of a line, of a style, modelling *la maestría*. It was the acceptance of the good taste that was not only present in football but also in the way of clothing, in the music, in the dance, in the customs. . . . Football must also be measured with aesthetic criteria. . . . Happily, the aesthetics and the good taste of Argentinians are unchanged, and they believe more and more in our style, in *la maestría*. (Own translation Menotti 1994a: 51)

On the day of the victory of the Argentinian team in 1978 in the finals against Holland, Menotti coined a phrase that has since become installed in the collective memory of Argentinian football lovers: 'our victory is a tribute to the old and glorious Argentinian football' (Bayer 1990: 113).

The crucial defeats are not seen only as acts of treason. Tomás, in his late forties, always insisted on pointing out the fact that these kinds of defeats are critical because they bring about unhappiness in the way that victories obtained with beauty and elegance bring about happiness. In our conversations Tomás consistently presented non-controversial assumptions related to the importance of conative-emotional dispositions for the analysis of morality in football. He insisted on the importance for a football lover to allow himself to become emotionally aroused by various types of situations experienced in a football stadium (for example, being ready to feel shame or indignation if beauty was lacking, or becoming happy when it was manifested). I believe that he is a convinced relativist: he accepted the existence of different values, exemplified by the successful coaches Menotti and Bilardo, which represented the contrasting values of *la maestría* and of discipline and tactical organization; he also acknowledged the fact that these differences are fundamental for achieving a proper understanding of Argentinian football history. He contended that these disagreements could not be eliminated, since they were important for maintaining ethical diversity. He said to me several times: 'it is important for Argentinians to agree on the issues that divide us'. He made an important distinction between 'being happy' and 'feeling happy'.⁹ He explicitly denied that football will bring about a well-balanced psychological state in which one's total life pattern and the general circumstances permitting 'being happy' are matched. For him, 'feeling happy' at the terraces was related to certain emotions. Happiness in this way is associated to a species of joy in regard to one's partial situation.

Tomás accepted that, in this sense, football can function as a compensation to one's negative total situation, but 'this is not my case', he frequently told me.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented an ethnographic account of some of the complex relations between masculinities and moralities in Argentinian football. The presentation of findings followed four empirical fields:

1. Male virtues.
2. The importance of traditions, roots and historical continuity.
3. The meaning of styles and ways of playing football.
4. Ideas, concerns and definitions of 'happiness' and 'feeling happy'.

In considering the process of hybridization in football the first three fields were also treated. It is obvious that many possible topics could have been taken into account, particularly those pertaining to the field of rules and sanctions governing the game (see Nilsson 1993). One of my main theoretical aims has been to show that the analysis of moralities needs to combine the aspect of desire and the emotive character of male morality in concrete ritual practice. Football is, and I hope that this has been made clear to the reader, a very privileged arena in a country like Argentina.

The narratives of Argentinian football are presented by my informants in a prototypical form, using common discursive symbols and producing a plurality of moral meanings (see Rapport 1997). The actors themselves, through their narratives, bring time and history into the fabric of their lives and vivid experiences. Johnson (1993: 152) argues that a central task for any moral theory must be to explain how actors narratively construct their lives and how their deliberations are framed by those narratives. In this chapter the focus is on the moral discourses and concerns of mature football 'aficionados'. From this perspective the Durkheimian moments of effervescence, which make possible critical moral reflections, will vary for different social actors who represent different generations and class. To my informants 1930, 1958 and 1974 – the defeat by Holland in the World Cup in Germany – were key years; these

were the years of shame and humiliation for Argentinian national football – and, as a consequence, for male Argentinians' national self-esteem. For the young supporters the year of 1993 has been, and, I am quite sure, will be in the future, a year of shame and confusion. In October 1993, in a qualifying match for the World Cup in 1994, Colombia defeated Argentina 5–0 in Buenos Aires.¹⁰ Juancho expresses what many Argentinians felt when he said:

In the future, even for us old people, the defeat by Colombia will be seen as perhaps more important than the other setbacks. You see, Argentinians taught Colombians to play football; they were, for years and years, our son; they respected and admired us, and now they humiliate us. I feel bad, not only because of the five goals but mostly because they play our way; they play *la nuestra*, and we play nothing.

I was at the stadium of River Plate that night, and I think that what I, together with seventy thousand supporters, experienced was quite special. I agree with Juancho that Colombians played our way; the public applauded them, and as it did so the Argentinian national team was morally punished. During long periods in the second half, the crowd did not support the national team; it just cried: 'Maradooo... Maradooo... Maradooo... Maradooo', demanding his comeback – which he did after the match, announcing that he was going to save the national team from this disaster.

The story of Lalin and Seoane and the confrontations on the meaning of different male virtues, styles of playing and ways of achieving happiness illustrate the 'painful coexistence', as one informant put it to me, of contrasting moralities in Argentinian football. Social actors are exposed to contradictions and paradoxes in the construction of moral meanings. Thus identity, *la nuestra*, can be seen as atavistic or as a product of choice. Tomás, with his relativistic position, accepting and tolerating contradictory moral standpoints, is a clear example of the dynamics of moral choice.

The histories of Argentinian football have been written about in popular books and are continuously written, every day and every week, in journals and sport magazines. Moreover, in a regular fashion its visual history is displayed on television or can be bought via the extremely large collection of football videos that now exist in the Argentinian market. My main argument in this chapter has been the following: the present moral discourses of social actors are embedded in history; the actors use history and their own life

stories, or, better perhaps, they construct historical representations of football and themselves as supporters in order to find meaning and to argue about what is correct and what is wrong or what are the ways of feeling happy. I believe that by using the voices of Héctor, Juancho, Juan José and Tomás this argument has been made clear. This chapter can be seen as an example of the imaginative synthesizing power of moral narratives. The importance of Maradona in the epos of Argentinian football will be analysed in the next chapter.

Notes

1. Large sections of this chapter have been published elsewhere (Archeiti 1997a). The structure of argument has been maintained, although changes have been introduced.
2. There is an important emotional dimension in this story. Lalin, the most celebrated insider in the late 1920s, was supposed to play in the World Cup of 1930. He was injured in 1929 and, after an unsuccessful operation, was obliged to retire from football at the age of 23. Seoane, on the contrary, played on the Argentinian team without great success. It is my firm belief that the dramatic end of Lalin's career was important in the creation and reproduction of the story. We shall see in the next chapter, moreover, that Lalin, being so young and technical, belonged to the plethora of *pibes* (young players), whom Argentinians admire the most.
3. Valdano was a successful player who, after leaving Argentina at the age of 19, triumphed in the Spanish teams of Alavés, Zaragoza and Real Madrid. He played for the World Cup winning national team of Argentina in 1986 in Mexico. Retired, he began a new career as a journalist and writer. Valdano's writings on football are of excellent literary quality (1997), and he has edited a beautiful book in which well-known 'serious' South American and Spanish contemporary writers write on football (1995).
4. The dichotomy *serio* and *aligre* was related to the style of different first-division teams (see *El Gráfico* 1949, 1549: 8–12). We can see that the Lalin–Seoane contradiction is reproduced at the collective level, creating contradictory styles. If we accept this historical reconstruction which was also related to the 'taste' of the supporters, Argentinian football, since its beginning, was divided into different club identities and styles (see *El Gráfico* no. 636, 1931: 13). *El Gráfico* was obliged to find in the 'joyful style' the expression of the Argentinian style, of *la maestra*. In the essentialist perspective of *El Gráfico* the 'national style' must be a product of a superior and more authentic tradition.
5. Behind the pseudonym 'Lázaro' hides a prestigious Argentinian professional philosopher educated at La Sorbonne.
6. For example, Diego Maradona is called *el pibe de oro* (the golden young boy). To be a *pibe* is related to freshness, authenticity of feelings and extreme creativity. In Argentina, a football aficionado usually expects to see 'real football' when it is played by the *pibes* and the *fútbol-pibe* is opposed to 'normal football' (see *El Clarín Deportivo*, 2/5/1994: 4). The calculating and conservative style of playing is always associated with maturity, with losing freshness (*perder la frescura*). This will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.
7. The Argentinians have always enjoyed the victories of the national under-21 junior teams. The junior teams have played four World Cup finals and won three, while the senior teams, playing the same number of finals, won only two. The last two junior World Cup was won by the Argentinians.
8. Dante Panzeri, a brilliant writer and sports journalist of *El Gráfico*, defended the Argentinian style, *la maestra*, in the 1950s and 1960s against the imposition of European systems and tactical discipline. For Panzeri the essence of football beauty was expressed in the unexpected, in the improvising and creative capacity of individual players. He believed that 'systems' kill fantasy. His concise definition of *la maestra*, as a matter of 'Argentinian taste', is, for me, the best: 'our taste regarding good football implies a way of playing with short passes, low balls, penetrating, subtle, from the backs to the strikers' (*El Gráfico* no. 2020, 1958: 39).
9. Menotti has elaborated on the meaning of 'happiness' in football (see Menotti 1993, 1994b). He has constantly repeated the formula: 'Football was always a beautiful pretext for being happy' (*el fútbol fue siempre una hermosa excusa para ser feliz*).
10. Since the 1930s Colombia was a 'land of mission' for Argentinian coaches and players. This was made evident in the late 1940s when some of the most important players of the Argentinian professional league emigrated *en masse* to Colombia after a long strike for better wages and contracts (see Pedernera 1993: 72–6). In 1941, Fernando Paternoster, a mythological full back of Racing Club and the national team which played the World Cup finals in 1930, emphasized the importance of Argentinian football as both a model and an ideal for Colombian youth (*El Gráfico* 1941, 1123: 9; see also Giordano 1955: 533). Also Colombians from very early on adopted and adored the tango. The mythical Argentinian tango singer Carlos Gardel died in 1935 in an aeroplane crash in Medellín, Colombia.