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# “The People’s Joy” Vanishes

Considerations on the Death of a soccer player<sup>1\*</sup>

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## Ethnography of a Funeral

In his last period of his life, Garrincha was living in a house that the Brazilian Football Federation (CBF) had rented for him five years earlier on Rua dos Estampadores, a neighborhood originally built for the employees of Companhia Progresso Industrial — a textile mill in Bangu, a working-class suburb of Rio de Janeiro.

The fact that Garrincha died in a housing development built for the workers of a textile mill went unnoticed by the press, which covered in depth the somewhat bizarre events that followed the death of the former soccer star. Curiously enough, Garrincha died in a place quite similar to the one where he was born and lived until he became a famous sportsman: the Pau Grande housing development for workers built by América Fabril, a textile mill in a rural setting in the environs of Rio. Since Garrincha could not return to Pau Grande, it seems that Bangu was congenial enough to serve him as a refuge for his twilight years. Death would take him back to Pau Grande. This apparent coincidence points to the decisive impact of the relations that are part and parcel of social configurations — such as some workers’ neighborhoods — on Garrincha’s entire life, as the present article will show.

From January 16, 1983, a Sunday, to the following Wednesday Garrincha drank nonstop at the local bars. He was 49 years old. He had started out as a professional soccer player 30 years earlier, had reached the height of his fame

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<sup>1</sup> \* Early versions of this paper were published in *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* n. 79, September 1989, with the collaboration of Sylvain Maresca, and in *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, n. 20, October 1992.

20 years before, and had officially retired — somewhat belatedly — a decade earlier. When he finally went home, already feeling ill, his wife (the third) sought help from one of his friends, a former private secretary of his second wife, the singer Elza Soares. This man's presence was the only link with Elza in Garrincha's final moments. But Elza had played a key role in his career in sport after 1962. Garrincha's first wife, Nair, who had been a fellow worker at América Fabril, had died before him, but her family would later be present at the funeral, like just about everyone else in Pau Grande.

An ambulance was called from the Bangu outpatient clinic. Garrincha was given a tranquilizer and taken to Sanatório Dr. Eiras, a psychiatric hospital in Botafogo, where he had been admitted three times before. This medical routine seems to have definitely transformed the famous champion into a nameless drunkard: his record card, filled out at the Bangu clinic, instead of Garrincha's real name, Manuel Francisco dos Santos, read "Manuel da Silva" — quite close to "José da Silva," the Portuguese equivalent of "John Smith." This telling slip only reinforces Garrincha's own self-destructive tendencies. He was indeed at the nadir of his existence, the low point in the long process of deterioration that began after the 1958 and 1962 World Cups, when Garrincha became famous as the greatest Brazilian player, side by side with Pelé. So it was as an anonymous Manuel da Silva that he was admitted to the hospital, at 8 P.M., in an alcoholic coma. He was not given any special medical treatment, and was found dead at 6 on the following morning.

As soon as his death was reported, the children of Botafogo, who were on their summer holiday, began to converge on the hospital's chapel, together with the nurses and other hospital personnel. At 10 the body was taken to the Instituto Médico-Legal (forensic-medicine institute) for an autopsy. The press reported the names of the mourners present: Garrincha's last wife, who had been previously married to a little-known soccer player and had begun to live with him after she was widowed; Agnaldo Timóteo, a schmaltzy pop singer who had been elected to the federal Chamber of Deputies only two months earlier and was actively associated with Botafogo, Garrincha's soccer team; a CBF official; the producer of *Garrincha, alegria do povo* ("Garrincha, the People's Joy"), a documentary feature; two famous retired footballers. One of these, Ademir Menezes — the center-forward player in the 1950 Brazilian team and the head of the Professional Athletes Association — proposed that Garrincha be the first player to be buried at the Association's recently-built mausoleum

in Jardim da Saudade, a fashionable new cemetery. But Nilton Santos — who played left half for Botafogo and for the Brazilian team in Garrincha's time, was the godfather of one of Garrincha's children, and, most importantly, had sponsored his entry in professional soccer — insisted that the deceased be buried in the Pau Grande cemetery, in accordance with his last wishes. Santos's authority as Garrincha's friend and protector proved decisive.



Around noon, the body was transferred to the Maracanã stadium in a deluxe coffin — it is not clear whether it was paid for by CBF or by Deputy Timóteo. The fire engine carrying the body found it difficult to make its way through the dense crowd that had gathered in front of the Instituto; it was forced to stop for a few minutes while the crowd applauded. Apparently the decision to hold the wake in Maracanã was uncontested, unlike that concerning the place of the burial. It was generally felt to be necessary to rehabilitate Garrincha, to undo, if only symbolically, the unfairness of his tragic fate, thus celebrating certain traditions and interests that are part of the world of soccer, even if such interests are quite unevenly divided between the various participants in the ceremony. Club officials, retired players, fans of many different teams were all present at the wake, and rivalries between clubs gave way to a harmonious tribute (as was the case in England after the 1989 Sheffield tragedy). People queued up to venerate the body.

However, two incidents occurred on this day. In the first, Garrincha's

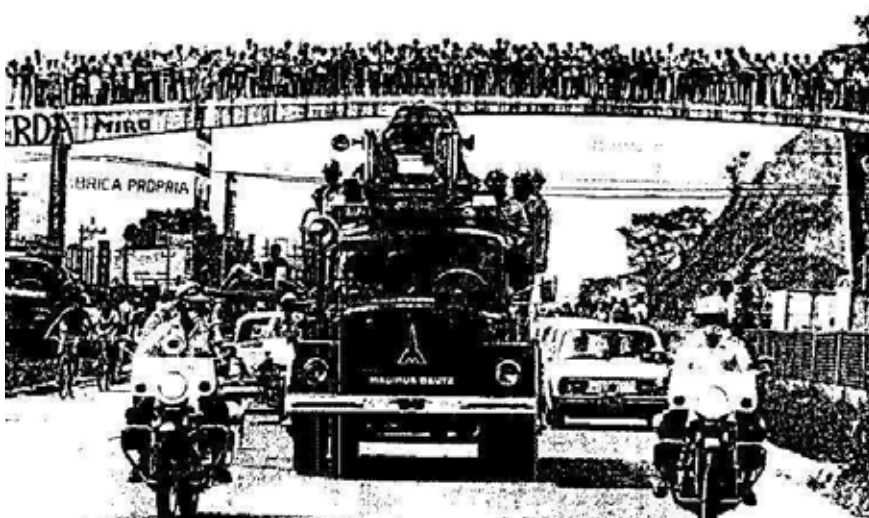
family clashed with his third wife, accusing her of having been partly responsible for his death. This was a revival of the conflicts that had erupted in 1965, when his family's opposition to his second marriage led Garrincha to move out of Pau Grande in order to live with Elza Soares, with whom he had been having a love affair since the 1962 World Cup. The dramatic eruption of a family quarrel in full view of the crowd of mourners was the natural sequel to the permanent spotlight that the press had kept focused on Garrincha's life throughout his last years. The police had to interfere to restore the peace.

The second incident occurred when a Botafogo fan covered the coffin with the flag of this team, with which Garrincha had played for more than ten years when he was at the top of his form. One of Garrincha's nephews objected to this, arguing that the deceased would have preferred a Brazilian flag. This was clearly an expression of the resentment that Garrincha's family — as well as Elza Soares — felt in relation to the team that had exploited the player, through measly contracts that took no account of his fame and an excessive number of matches that forced him to resort to repeated injections in his ailing knees. Once again Nilton Santos solved the problem, and finally managed, by rather emotional means, to persuade Garrincha's family to leave both flags on the coffin, symbolizing two glorious phases in his career. At this moment, Nilton Santos was the common link between Garrincha's fellow World Cup champions in 1958 and 1962, on the one hand, and an earlier tradition represented by certain players who had been members of the Brazilian team in the 1950 Cup, such as Ademir Menezes and Barbosa, the black goalkeeper on whose shoulders the burden of Brazil's defeat rested. Their presence in Garrincha's wake only made the more evident the absences of other great soccer stars of the past, such as Pelé, or of the moment, such as Zico or Sócrates, who were then active in devising new forms of association for professional players that would ensure them their rights.<sup>2</sup>

On January 21, at 8:30 A.M., the body was taken to Pau Grande on the fire engine that had transported it to Maracanã. It was on such vehicles that the 1958 world champions had been cheered by the population of Rio. All the organized cheering groups of the major soccer teams accompanied the cortege. Everywhere along the way windows flew Brazilian flags or the flags of

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2 About this new generation of players and their concern for the situation of soccer players, see Araújo (1980).



the various clubs, as commonly occurs when there are decisive matches in the national championship or the World Cup. This is so because since 1950, when the Cup was held in Brazil, soccer has been extraordinary popular; and this popularity increased even more after the victories of 1958 and 1962, reaching its acme with the 1970 victory in Mexico, the first to be broadcast live on television to an audience of millions, who took a break from work in order to watch the games. In June 1982 there was a huge popular mobilization — streets were decorated and murals painted — upon the occasion of the World Cup in Spain, which Brazil failed to win. The difference, in this particular case, was the predominance of working-class people throughout the event, as well as the unlikely destination of the funeral cortege of such a celebrated personality. For most celebrities, even those with a humble background — politicians, pop singers and songwriters, radio and television stars — are buried in Rio's major cemeteries. Garrincha was laid to rest in a graveyard located in an outlying working-class suburb, a place highly unlikely ever to attract such a huge, admiring crowd.

On Avenida Brasil — Rio's major exit route, a thoroughfare lined with warehouses, industrial plants, housing projects and shantytowns — a compact mass of mourners, with flags in their hands, could be seen on pedestrian crossings and overpasses. Traffic was completely halted, and drivers were forced to watch the progress of the funeral parade. The crowd thickened as the cortege came closer to the municipality of Magé, whose population felt

they had roots in common with Garrincha.<sup>3</sup> When news of the funeral began to be aired by the media early in the morning, thousands of people set off for Pau Grande, by train, bus, car or even on foot, in the case of those who lived in the neighborhood. From the town of Imbariê (20 kilometers from Pau Grande) on, the traffic flowed much more slowly, due to the large number of cars and pedestrians. Many abandoned their vehicles and walked the rest of the way, holding their transistor radios close to their ears, much as they did when they went to the stadium to see a game. Additional trains were provided, which stopped and blew whistles when they arrived at the station closest to the cemetery. At the entrance of a factory near Pau Grande a sign was fixed to a tree: “Garrincha, you made the world smile and now you make it cry.” It took the procession two hours to cover the 65 kilometers between Maracanã and Pau Grande. The first stop was at the local church, where a funeral service was held. The church — built in 1910 by América Fabril — seated no more than 500 people, and was entirely overwhelmed by a crowd about three thousand strong. By the time the coffin was brought into the nave, the tension was such that the priest decided it would be impossible to say Mass, as originally scheduled, and instead simply blessed the body. Garrincha’s family and his Pau Grande friends were pushed into the background by this anonymous crowd, made up of people from all over Greater Rio. Even so, some of them had a more active participation in the ceremony: it was Garrincha’s old department head at the factory who made the necessary arrangements with the cemetery administration for the burial.

In the cemetery, the situation was as chaotic as it had been in the church. There were about eight thousand more people waiting there since early morning, standing on graves, perched up in the trees, some even standing on the roofs of neighboring houses. The grave — where one of Garrincha’s brother already lay buried — had been opened in a haste; no tombstone marked it. Botafogo fans stood guard, determined not to let any “outsiders” get in, even if they were family members. When the fire engine finally arrived, the coffin was carried by persons unknown — probably fans — to the place of burial. And just then it became clear that the grave was too small for

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3 In fact, most of these people were entirely unrelated to the population of the region at the time when Garrincha lived there: since then, the inhabitants of the old workers’ communities such as Pau Grande had been surrounded by a peripheral proletarian population located in new precarious neighborhoods.

the deluxe coffin. All the adversities typical of a working-class funeral were evident in this improvised ceremony, with far too many attendants for such a humble cemetery: there was not enough earth to cover the coffin completely; the flowers — by then wilted — flung into the grave were supplemented with tall grass cut by the local population from neighboring lots. The Botafoço fans began to sing the national anthem, and the rest of the mourners soon joined in; this was followed by the official Botafoço anthem, sung by fewer voices. It was 1:30 P.M. by the time the crowd and the press left. The cemetery was left half destroyed.<sup>4</sup>

## A Media-Age Chanson de Geste

Clearly, these popular manifestations were generated by the media, which brought the news of Garrincha's death to the public as soon as it occurred and invested it with a strong emotional charge. Thus the media was largely responsible for the strong mobilization of soccer aficionados. Even so, the intensity of popular response went far beyond what was expected and became itself a major news event. Its sheer oddness and unprecedented character was documented by the press and underscored the need to explain Garrincha's life *a posteriori*.

In fact, his death proved a drastic reversal in the slow descending curve of his existence — which had reached its lowest point, a veritable social death, in its last phase — by suddenly highlighting once again his past triumphs and his status as a legendary figure in Brazilian soccer. It was as if some sectors of the press, from the best-known sportswriters to major political columnists, had decided to treat Garrincha's life as the raw material for a modern *chanson de geste*, using the media for this purpose.<sup>5</sup> In the following week, the major Rio and São Paulo dailies published long articles on Garrincha on their most important pages. The most famous sportswriters wrote about him or unearthed old articles. Armando Nogueira, a former sportswriter who at the time was news director of the Globo television

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4 A heavy summer rainstorm fell soon after and washed away all the earth that covered the coffin. A few days later Nilton Santos read about this in the papers and returned to the Pau Grande cemetery to solve the problem.

5 I have drawn freely from Duby's (1984) analysis of the burial of Guillaume le Marechal and the subsequent creation of the *chanson de geste* in his homage.





station in Rio, republished in the Rio *Jornal do Brasil* his “favorite column,” in which he proposed that a farewell match be arranged for Garrincha, as “a tribute to and in acknowledgment of the feats of a hero.”

Such a tribute seemed particularly necessary because — unlike most famous names in the spheres of politics, the economy or culture, who regularly speak or write about themselves, and even an athlete like Pelé, who has had sportswriters write autobiographies of him that were then translated into several languages — Garrincha was a man of few words, who spoke only, as it were, with his own body, when he played. Precisely because he was characterized by a peculiar playing style, by his love of soccer for soccer’s sake,

by an apparent lack of any strategy in his professional career — things that made him seem “pure” or “naive” — Garrincha had never made a public statement on any subject, not even soccer. Thus, on January 23, 1983, when a large number of articles about him were published, *Jornal do Brasil* printed extracts from one of his rare radio interviews, in which several sportswriters took part: his comments were of a personal nature, but did not dispel the mystery that surrounded his life. *O Globo*, Rio’s other major daily, preferred to accept Garrincha’s silence and publish, on the same day, a lengthy “exclusive” interview with his “authorized spokesman,” Nilton Santos, who, unlike his deceased friend, had much to say. Out of Garrincha’s silence arose an abundant interpretive literature, texts not only by newspapermen but also by serious writers dabbling in sportswriting, such as Nelson Rodrigues, and major poets and *cronistas*<sup>6</sup> like Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Vinícius de Moraes, or Paulo Mendes Campos. The most famous work focusing on Garrincha is still the feature film *Garrincha, alegria do povo*, a title clearly alluding to the common Portuguese name for J.S. Bach’s well-known cantata chorale known in English as “Jesu, Joy of Men’s Desiring.” This phrase has become ever since associated with Garrincha, and was widely quoted by newspapers upon the occasion of his death.

In the various newspaper accounts of Garrincha’s familiar but also somehow mysterious life, certain issues were repeatedly brought up. One of these was Garrincha’s stature in the history of soccer. Another was how he had been able to rise to glory in such unfavorable circumstances. The questions concerning the originality of his playing style and his behavior outside the field in the world of professional soccer always lead to discussions of his social background, of what Araujo Netto, a political journalist and correspondent of *Jornal do Brasil* in Rome, once famously referred to as Garrincha’s “peasant” character. He was once compared to Chaplin’s little tramp in a laudatory *crônica* by Carlos Drummond de Andrade because of the comic effect of his style; and indeed Garrincha, like Chaplin’s character, seemed to display a “simple-mindedness” often attributed to his humble origins. Such observations were in many cases full of the sort of class ethnocentrism that is so common in journalistic descriptions of events involving the Brazilian

6 A *cronista* is a writer of *crônicas*, a literary form native to Brazil. The *crônica* is a short piece, typically published as a newspaper or magazine column, that ranges freely from human-interest reporting to lyric prose. (Translator’s note)

working classes. Seen as a player in action, Garrincha was portrayed as a charismatic champion, a unique soccer star; seen as a social symbol, he was reduced to his roots, an uncouth peasant who had become a professional player by mere chance, and whose behavior was at best that of a simpleton, at worst a case of mental retardation. Although hinted at, the nexus between his playing style and his social background was never explicitly discussed, and the question remains an open one: Just how does Garrincha's way of playing betrayed or evoked — more in his case than in that of his fellow players — the popular roots that were constantly mentioned in his case, though most soccer players of his generation came from the same background?

### **An Unpredictable and Disconcerting Playing Style**

Garrincha became a professional soccer player in 1953, at the age of nineteen. He had been playing in the factory's major amateur team for four years. In a championship series involving factories and other companies in the interior of Rio de Janeiro State, he was spotted by a scout, a former Botafogo player, who gave him a letter of recommendation allowing him to train in Botafogo. Thus Garrincha followed the usual path of young workers or working-class children who eventually become professional players: at first, there are the informal barefoot games in the neighborhood, on any kind of field and using any kind of ball. Then the budding sportsman plays in some organized team until his superior talent or the patronage of an influential person wins him an opportunity to try his luck or train with a first-division team.<sup>7</sup> Before coming to Botafogo Garrincha had knocked on the doors of two other major Rio clubs: Vasco da Gama and Fluminense. Both had rejected him for medical reasons and for his "peasant" demeanor. Indeed, Garrincha's legs were deformed: they looked like parallel arcs curved to the right, as if a strong gust of wind had bent them out of shape. Perhaps because of this double rejection, or perhaps — as he later argued — because his working day at the factory made it impossible for him to train in a distant club on weekdays, it was only a full year after he was given his letter of recommendation that Garrincha went to Botafogo.

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7 See Simone Guedes's "Subúrbio: celeiro de craques," a study of the lives of workers who had experience in neighborhood soccer and professional sport in the Bangu workers' housing development. In DaMatta, Flores, Guedes, and Vogel (1982: 59-74).

## UM GÊNIO DA NATUREZA



A morte da "Alegria do Povo" na imprensa: na capa do semanário "Veja", com tiragem de 550.000 exemplares, duas pernas tortas que bastam para simbolizar Garrincha.

"Garrincha - Manuel Francisco dos Santos - era um camponês com o apelido de um passarinho raro e arisco. Menino de 19 anos, moreno, com as pernas incrivelmente arqueadas e tortas, protegidas e movidas por uma poderosa massa muscular, considerada aberração pelos professores de anatomia. Apareceu de repente. E, de repente, os estádios cariocas melhoraram de humor. Puseram-se a rir, outra vez. Risos que de repente também ganharam a força das gargalhadas: de uma alegria incrivelmente contagiante e reparadora. Onda de um camponês simples, imaturo, alegre, rival do talento histriônico do melhor Charles Chaplin. Alguém que não se limitava a contrariar as leis da estética e da gravidade. Não respeitava, sequer, a lógica e o convencional do jogo. Estranho driblador de um driblé só. O driblé pensado, planejado, ensaiado, previsto e executado infalivelmente pelo lado direito. Um individualista que,

ao receber um passe, nunca lhe dava sequência, sem antes divertir-se um pouco com a bola, com o adversário e, assim, divertir a platéia. Mas que estranho individualista esse que, em seguida, se transformava no mais generoso doador de passes e de gols conhecido pelo futebol mundial. Garrincha foi tudo isso para os estádios do Brasil. Mudou a face tão angustiada - até o seu advento - do futebol brasileiro. Curou uma grande enxaqueca do nosso torcedor. Com a camisa da seleção brasileira, enquanto os japoneses e a artrose não lhe atrapalhavam, sempre foi, sempre fez todo o que todos os brasileiros - em sonho - quiseram ser e fazer, um dia, contra seus adversários: pelas suas pernas nós todos driblamos, batemos e fizemos de bobos todos os gringos do mundo".

A. Nieto,  
"A morte do último gênio dos estádios",  
Jornal do Brasil, 23 de janeiro de 1983.

"Mas todo o esforço a que se dedicou o médico (para entender a depressão de Garrincha no fim de sua vida) só lhe permitiu uma conclusão de duvidosa utilidade terapêutica: 'Garrincha é uma árvore. Ele pertence à natureza'. Na verdade, talvez fosse mais adequado dizer que Garrincha pertencia a uma espécie determinada - e em via de extinção - do gênero humano brasileiro. Ele nasceu, cresceu e morreu homem da terra, ao mesmo tempo inocente e astuto como seus iguais, e, como eles, também, estrangeiro aos valores e formas de comportamento da cultura urbana. Pouco importa que menos 90 quilômetros separem Pau Grande do Rio de Janeiro - antes da irrupção da TV, a distância cultural entre os dois lugares era intransponível".

L. Weiss e J. Castello,  
"O último inocente. Garrincha morreu sem entender o mundo, sem o futebol".  
Isto É, 26 de janeiro de 1983.

There the recommendation was taken seriously, and Garrincha was submitted to the initiation rite that all prospecting players had to undergo: a game played with members of the club's main team. The story of Garrincha's performance in this test is part of his myth of origin. Placed in the outside right, he faced Nilton Santos, the left-half player of the Brazilian World Cup team, of whose renown he was entirely unaware. He not only dribbled past the famous player several times but successfully

aimed a kick right between his legs. Nilton Santos immediately asked the coach to have the newcomer hired, since he did not want ever to have to face him as an opponent in any other team. Garrincha's first professional match confirmed his talent: he entered the game only in the second half, when his team was losing, scored two goals and secured a victory for Botafogo. He then began to play a major role in his club's rise, culminating in the winning of the 1957 Carioca Championship. Garrincha was elected the best player in the competition, and in the following year became a member of Brazil's national team at the World Cup, which was to take place in Sweden.

The most notable characteristic of Garrincha's playing style is his reinvention of the role of the outside right. Traditionally, the outside-right (or right-wing) is positioned near the touchline, where he gets passes from the center-circle players; he then runs toward the goal line, trying to outrun the other team's left-half or any other opponent and to kick the ball to a teammate in the center of the field. Garrincha, however, often carried the ball from the midfield all the way to the goal. In addition, he had an unchanging way of dribbling to the right, which was entirely predictable but no less unbeatable for that. He attracted the opponent and dribbled past him, often several times in a row, in a series of duels most of which he won. The public was delighted, and — more importantly — the opposing team was disorganized and demoralized.

"With those bowlegs, both curving in the same direction, legs that were nearly crippled, it should not have been possible for him even to walk properly. His entire body was unbalanced, bent to the right, so that logically he ought to fall every time he tried to run. And yet this anti-athlete, this man who challenged physiology, was straight like a plumb line, and fell only when toppled. On the contrary, it was he who unbalanced other players. How to explain this phenomenon?" (*Jornal do Brasil*, January 21, 1983). The effectiveness of Garrincha's dribble seems to be related to his odd physical constitution, but also to his enormous ability to accelerate. The most amazing thing of all was the way he carried the ball forward slowly, his way of suddenly stopping before his opponent and, thanks to his superb impetus, breaking out of an apparently precarious balance into a fast race that disconcerted the other player, then halting again, with his foot on the ball, while the opponent kept on running, propelled by inertia. Other players then attacked, and Garrincha immediately made use of the gap opened in



the opposing team's defense. Sportswriters resorted to military analogies, and spoke of Garrincha's "guerrilla" style.<sup>8</sup>

He came into the opposing team's field and caught the ball: he froze. A second later came the sudden spurt, and a meter ahead he tensed his muscles and soared, light as a bird.... Then he would stop dead, again rush to the right, and in this way would destabilize the outside defenders. Mathematicians will find it interesting to hear that at times he seemed to shed his own center of gravity along the way and glide on, smooth as a waterfall. When he dribbled he was transfigured: he was like Chaplin, sculpturing in air a wonderful succession of comical gestures: he was a bullfighter, devising veronicas that elicited olés from the audience; he was Francis of Assisi, ennobled by the humility with which he suffered the kicks of desperate opponents.... He reached the goal line, the backs circling the penalty area, closing in on him — one meter, half a meter, the opponent thinks: "Well, he's finished, I'll spring on him now." No way: Garrincha could dribble out of a corner no bigger than a handkerchief. And then, from middle range, with a low or a high kick, he would land the ball right on the feet of his teammate placed in front of the goal. (Armando Nogueira, "Mundo velho sem porteira," *Jornal do Brasil*, January 23, 1983)

What is typical of Garrincha is this informal style, with its disregard for the unwritten rules and for the tension of the competition, although these resources were placed in the service of a highly competitive game. Unlike Didi, Botafogo's great black midfield player, or Pelé, or Zizinho, or Zico years later, all of them brilliant stylists, Garrincha performed outstandingly while giving the impression that he was merely having fun.<sup>9</sup> But with his relentless

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8 Though a more detailed comparison with Pelé will be made later, for the moment it should be stressed that the styles of the two players were quite different. Garrincha used an "ambush" strategy, out of the corners, while Pelé adopted a "Light Brigade" approach, attacking down the center of the field, facing his opponents always in full motion, using his impetus to outrun them, on the verge of falling.

9 One cannot be quite sure that he enjoyed himself as much as the audience. "The look on Garrincha's face was serious, even stern. And the more people laughed, the sterner his expression, as if he could not understand what was going on, or understood it less than anyone else. This explains why he was never attacked. Any other player who tried to pull that sort of trick would never attempt it again: he would certainly be punched in the face. Many a player, after being made to fall by Garrincha, got up with a mind to fight, but was disarmed when he realized that Garrincha seemed awkward, humble, almost apologetic. The only thing to do was to keep on playing, and try once more, uselessly, to take the ball away from Garrincha, only to fall once again, legs flying, raising guffaws from the crowd." Mário Filho (1964: 384). Garrincha's deadpan seriousness suggests a comparison not with Chaplin but with Buster Keaton, "the man who never smiles" — a comparison further encouraged by Garrincha's

penetration of the opposing team's defense, always using the same dribbling strategy, he gave a new importance to the position of outward forward at a time when it was seen as secondary to that of inside forward. In Sweden, Garrincha made a brilliant debut in international soccer in the match against the Soviet Union: from the very beginning of the game he used his usual dribble to advance and retreat, always with deadpan seriousness, even though fans laughed, before running toward the goal line, and from there he either passed the ball to a central player or kicked straight at the goal, at a very dangerous angle from the viewpoint of the Soviet goalkeeper.<sup>10</sup> In the final match against Sweden, the Brazilian team's first two goals, which offset Sweden's earlier advantage, both resulted from Garrincha's dribbles along the right touchline, followed by perfect passes to the center-forward Vavá.

But this debut is just as telling of the obstacles Garrincha encountered along his career: for, though he was a key player, he had not yet earned the trust of the coach and of the Brazilian team's managers. The world of soccer knew how indifferent he was to these people's attempts to subject him to their tactical schemes. It was only in the third match, after a tie with England, that a committee of seasoned players (Nilton Santos and Didi among them) managed to convince them to let Garrincha and Pelé (whose lack of experience was feared — he was only 17) play. Thus, once again Garrincha was subjected to a test, as in 1953, when he became a professional player; once again he had to prove his competitiveness, the effectiveness of a playing style that seemed amateurish, and — even more — his own ability to develop an original style.

## Racism in Soccer in the 1950's

Behind the expressions of concern over Garrincha's unpredictability and Pelé's inexperience there seemed to lurk old fears as to the weakness of black players in international matches. And what began to happen during

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melancholy decline.

10 "The Soviet player Boris Kuznetsov went down in history, on June 15, 1958, as the first 'João' [John] in Garrincha's career. From then on, 'João' was the name of every opponent covering him. They were all interchangeable, whatever their team or nationality, and none of them were able to stop Garrincha" (Folha de S. Paulo, Jan. 20, 1984). In this case, the press was merely picking up and popularizing a term used by Garrincha himself, with which he expressed his indifference as to soccer schemes and rivalries between players. The first "João" in his career was actually Nilton Santos, whom he made fun of when he was being tested in Botafogo.

the 1958 World Cup was the gradual “blackening” of the Brazilian team, first in the attack, then in the defense, with the inclusion of Djalma Santos, who had already played as right-half forward in the 1954 Cup games. Garrincha’s contribution to the 1958 victory and to the 1962 one (in which Pelé had only a minor participation, because he was injured in the second match) clearly underscores the achievement of this handful of great players: the two preceding Brazilian defeats in international soccer were forgotten, and the racist explanations that had been offered then were discredited. Surely it was no coincidence that so many veterans of the 1950 Cup were present at Garrincha’s funeral, whereas many of his contemporaries and players active at the time of his death were absent.

As Guedes, DaMatta, and Vogel show, the lost final match in the 1950 World Cup, held in Brazil — in which the Brazilian team, which had performed brilliantly throughout the tournament and was clearly the favorite, was defeated by the mediocre Uruguayan team — was the occasion for covertly racist evaluations of the left-half Bigode and the goalie Barbosa, two black players who happened to have contributed to the two goals scored by Uruguay and became scapegoats. This defeat — certainly experienced as “one of the greatest tragedies in contemporary Brazilian history,” as DaMatta observes, because it was collectively perceived as the loss of a historical chance of finally escaping the condition of a destitute people — acted as a metaphor for other defeats of Brazilian society, and brought to the fore once again the old racist theories about the causes of the nation’s backwardness.<sup>11</sup> It even provided a point of departure and an empirical basis for studies treating soccer as a “laboratory” where the major characteristics of the Brazilian people could be immediately seen at work.<sup>12</sup> The best example is provided by João Lyra Filho’s two books. The author, a self-described “social scientist,” a former member of the Audit Tribunal, a professor at and former rector of the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, was a sports director and the head of the Brazilian delegation at the 1954 Cup. In his first book, *Taça do Mundo de 1954* (“The 1954 World Cup”), published in 1954, Lyra Filho expanded the report he had submitted to the CBF in response to criticisms

11 See DaMatta, Flores, Guedes, and Vogel (1982: 31-32). These studies coordinated by DaMatta analyze the social specificity of soccer, which is, according to these authors, a dramatization of Brazilian society, underscoring some of its aspects and downplaying others.

12 Here I am indebted to Guedes’s (1993) analysis of this literature.



by the press. His second book, published in 1973, titled *Introdução à sociologia dos esportes* (“Introduction to the Sociology of Sport”), was clearly aimed at a different public, but it was essentially a reformulation of the theses presented in his earlier work. His empirical evidence consisted of his observations as head of the Brazilian delegation and a number of documents, among them the notes scribbled by players and sent to him during the competition, which were full of spelling mistakes. Lyra Filho made a comparison between Brazilian players and the members of the Hungarian team, which had beaten Brazil 4 to 2 in the quarterfinals. Seeing the Hungarians as quintessential Europeans, the author argued that the Brazilian players were always guided by their instincts rather than reason, and their behavior was marked by immaturity and nervous instability as opposed to maturity and self-control. These defects, he stated, were a consequence of miscegenation and the heritage of the black race.

It was, then, in a context where such explanations were taken seriously by soccer authorities that Garrincha appeared. But his practical sense of the game testified against these analyses and the facts on which they were supposedly founded. This bow-legged man bore on his body and his physical bearing all the stereotypical characteristics of the Brazilian working-classes and of the Brazilian poor, which were noticed even by his own teammates, who came from a similar background. But just as he turned his supposed physical handicap into a physical asset, he also capitalized on certain socially stigmatized traits, drawing from them to develop an unpredictable and disconcerting grasp of the game. He embodied, almost as a caricature, the traits and marks that provided a basis for racist ideologies and class ethnocentrism, and out of them he created the indispensable elements of the success of his soccer style.

### **Sense of the Game and Class Habitus**

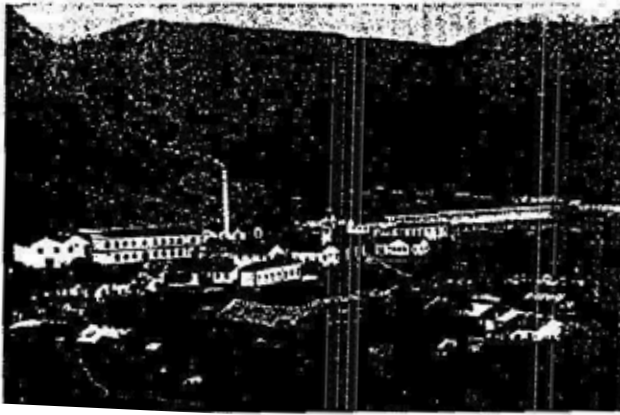
After Garrincha’s death, the mystery remained unsolved to the press, which had always reduced the virtues of this player to a single fact, an individual gift, a kind of genius, or simply a “nature.” However, we can see the unique excellence of Garrincha’s style as a successful recasting of an amateur style in the context of professional soccer. Garrincha was the product of a working-class tradition of amateur soccer, encouraged and practiced by sport institutions managed by factories and companies.

It seems that companies, particularly factories, played a major role in the popularization of soccer in Brazil. Historians say that the British-born Brazilian Charles Miller introduced the game in 1894. After his studies in England, he returned to Brazil and promoted the game among the members of the English clubs in São Paulo. The São Paulo Athletic Club created the country's first soccer team, involving British executives of the local gas utility, the Bank of London, and the São Paulo Railway. Another source of Brazilian soccer was the Mackenzie College, an upper-class school in São Paulo. Soon a number of elite clubs adopted soccer; other teams were created after the turn of the century, such as the Fluminense Football Club in Rio. Up to the 1940's many clubs, the Fluminense included, refused to accept black players, a situation that remained unchanged even after the rise of professional soccer. Other clubs, however, such as the Bangu Atlético Clube, founded in 1904 by British employees of the Bangu textile mill, quickly turned to working-class players, because there were not enough Englishmen to go around. So it was that Brazilian employees, most of them laborers, began to train in Bangu, and opportunities were offered to worker-athletes for the first time. Other clubs then began to find it necessary to resort to the working-class areas, where soccer was increasingly popular, to recruit new players in neighborhood, factory, or company teams. In Pau Grande, since 1919 the Companhia América Fabril, the local textile mill, which operated four other plants in Rio alone, had been creating soccer teams through the workers' association, in close cooperation with the administration.

The loose network of soccer leagues that had been developing since the turn of the century began to come under state control in 1941, although opinions diverged as to whether soccer should remain an amateur sport or whether, on the contrary, it ought to be further professionalized. The centralization of the sport's organization is one more aspect of the creation of a specialized soccer sector. Association football was to become Brazil's first mass sport, largely thanks to the introduction of radio in the 1930's. From then on, soccer could be professionalized without external support, and with its new autonomous status it would be able to generate extraordinary, if exceptional, careers such as that of Pelé — a world champion at the age of seventeen, in 1958.<sup>13</sup>

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13 On the social history of soccer in Brazil, see Mario Filho's *O negro no futebol brasileiro*, a book written in 1947, with a preface by Gilberto Freyre, and completed in 1964 to include the changes brought about by the 1950, 1954, 1958, and 1962 World Cups. See also Lever (1984) and Santos (1981).



Though his public image is less that of a proletarian than that of a peasant or a (lovable) tramp, in his youth he was a factory-mill worker, and his family lived in a workers' housing development in a rural setting.<sup>14</sup> Such corrections seem important for an explanation of the "mysteries" of Garrincha's free and unexpected style. Ultimately they can be effectively related to the mysteries of the everyday social existence of the workers' community from which he came, for one of the intriguing characteristics of workers living in these "paternalistic" towns, which have something of the "total institution" about them, is that, seen at closer range, these workers turn out to have a certain degree of mobility, license, and "freedom" within an environment under strict company control exerted not only on industrial production but also on workers' entire social lives. Even inside the factory a certain indiscipline and "floor culture" can develop; indeed, they seem to be almost a requirement of good production management.<sup>15</sup> In addition, thanks to the autonomous exploration of the resources offered by the company — such as the concession to workers of plots of land for cultivation, of the use of woodland for material exploitation (firewood) or leisure (hunting, particularly of game birds) — these workers, most of whom had a peasant background, had living conditions somewhat more favorable than their industrial jobs might lead one to suppose. There were yet other resources at their disposal, such as medical assistance, religious associations, folk groups, and this urban institution par excellence, the soccer club.

14 Many of the country's approximately 300 textile mills (as well as other kinds of factories) in the 1940's (when Garrincha was a boy) included housing for workers, and a large number of them were in rural districts or outlying suburbs. In Magé alone, in addition to América Fabril (with 1,200 workers at the time) there were three other textile mills.

15 See Willis (1978), Leite Lopes (1988, Ch. 2), and Alvim & Leite Lopes (1990).

Thus Garrincha followed the same course as many other employees of factories having housing for workers. Born into a family entirely dependent on a factory, Garrincha even changed his name when he was hired. Originally named Manuel dos Santos, he became Manuel Francisco dos Santos, adding part of his father's name (Amaro Francisco dos Santos) to his own in order to avoid confusion with the other men named Manuel dos Santos in his section.<sup>16</sup> According to some biographical notes published by the press, as well as the movie *Garrincha, alegria do povo*, it was thanks to his performance as a soccer player that Garrincha was not fired. Indeed, his ability as a sportsman was quickly noted, and it became possible for him to follow a sort of informal career as an athlete-worker that was allowed by factories, a career that was protected from conflicts with department heads and foremen and therefore from the succession of dismissals and rehiring that characterized the lives of young textile-mill workers.<sup>17</sup> So it was that Garrincha's undisciplined behavior and his frequent absenteeism, his habit of pushing the recreational side of a worker's life to its utmost limits, were tolerated because of his promising beginnings as a soccer player, while other young men had no other option but to submit to the disciplined training routine that might give them access to a foreman's post in the future.

16 Companies often tampered with workers' birth certificates, with the help of local notaries. In other textile mills, certificates were forged so that boys under 14 could be admitted, a violation of the law that was countenanced by parents. See Alvim (1985, Ch. 5).

17 Incidentally, the president of the Pau Grande Football Club was the head of Garrincha's department.

Manuel Francisco dos Santos was nicknamed Garrincha because from an early age he had shown an interest in hunting birds and raising them in cages.<sup>18</sup> Unlike peasant families, which tend to instill in their children a sense of responsibility concerning farm work, working-class families are usually quite permissive as to their children's leisure activities, as if in anticipation of the excessive load of industrial work that awaits them. In factories located in rural areas, children's play centers on the exploitation of the "natural resources" offered by the company. In adult life, this leeway might be expressed as engagement in more "productive" activities variously allowed or encouraged by the factory, such as individual or family cultivation of vacant lots or workers' plots, odd jobs, bricolage, or craftsmanship — in short, all kinds of work supplementary to salaried work.<sup>19</sup> Thus Garrincha belonged to a subset of workers who invested much time and endeavor in activities over which the company exerted less control, as opposed not only to factory work but also to study in the company school or to participation in the various forms of social work promoted by the company.

Workers today speak nostalgically of the relative freedom that in many factories ended around the 1960's, when employers lost all interest in anything not directly related to industrial production and canceled the non-financial advantages they had granted their workers until then. This led to protest and resistance movements that had the effect of undermining the legitimacy of their paternalistic domination.<sup>20</sup> The forcefulness of such nostalgic narratives brings out the ambiguity of this relation between employers' concessions and workers' practices: one perceives here all sorts of crevices, gaps, or contradictions in the system of domination, allowing working-class families the "recovery" of some paternalistic institutions; alternatively, one may see this illusion of recovery and the retrospective satisfaction

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18 Garrincha is a Northeastern term (many working-class families in Pau Grande came from the Northeast, including Garrincha's) for a bird known in Rio by a different name. The term was so unfamiliar that in 1953 sportswriters tried to change the young players moniker to "Gualicho," the name of a horse that had just won Brazil's major race. But unlike his real name, which was modified by the factory, his nickname survived all newspapermen's attempts to tamper with it.

19 These supplementary activities are treated as paradoxical "independent" work or "accessory occupations" of workers living in company housing developments in Leite Lopes & Silva (1979:16-17) and in Alvim & Leite Lopes (1991). Weber (1989) relied on the native category "travail à côté," used by French workers in her study of such activities in contemporary France.

20 Leite Lopes (1988: Chs. 3 and 11).

experienced by workers as the ultimate success of a social policy that aims to minimize frustrations and conflicts even as it organizes an effective form of overexploitation. Be that as it may, in his youth Garrincha seems to have struck a balance, first as an apprentice and later as a worker in the factory, capitalizing on the ambiguity between a minimum of discipline and diligence in his work and a maximum of extracurricular activities, particularly soccer, which — as a sport encouraged by the company — conferred on Garrincha the accepted status of worker-athlete.

Some sportswriters, as we have seen, perceived Garrincha's style of play and his behavior as typical of a peasant, so that his working-class background was suppressed in favor of a vague rural landscape. Other observers seem to see in him the miracle of inspiration spontaneously arising in an underprivileged boy.<sup>21</sup> Yet another view is Mário Filho's: according to him, there was a connection between Garrincha's soccer style and his social background, but his emphasis is on the player's childhood hunting habits, totally unrelated to the social universe of the workers' housing development. He writes: "One can understand Garrincha only by identifying him with the figure of the hunter — or rather, with that of the hunted animal. What is best in his style was taught to him by the birds, the pacas, the opossums. Garrincha dribbles the way a bird or beast flees the hunter."<sup>22</sup> Now, in addition to immediate evidence of a natural talent for sport, which apparently reveals no more than a personality well known and admired for a style of dribble that mimics the instinctive movements of a fleeing animal, would it not be possible as well to perceive more covert aspects of a social identity<sup>23</sup> — that is, the presence of such an ambiguous identity as Garrincha's in the context of a workers' housing development? Might one not indeed identify in his soccer style — which affirmed the effectiveness of a certain degree of amateurishness in professional sport, revolutionized dribbling technique, stressed the importance of the attack launched from the outside position, demolished tactical

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21 Typically, Garrincha, *alegria do povo* begins with scenes of working-class children and youths playing informal soccer matches in the street, on vacant lots, on Copacabana Beach, as if Garrincha were the ultimate expression of the popular passion for playing soccer in any circumstances whatever. A passage from Lever (1983: 137-37) — incidentally, a quite interesting book — stresses this populist view, reducing the starting-point and the end of Garrincha's career to what she calls "the slum," an umbrella term for any poor neighborhood.

22 See Mário Filho (1964: 390).

23 See Bourdieu (1977).

schemes previously established by trainers and their schools, demoralized the opposing team's defense and made the public laugh, while at the same time preserving the seriousness and humility of the craftsman who sticks to his work — some of the proclivities activated by a worker's creativity, however limited and inclined toward disobedience, and necessarily ambiguous and circumscribed to certain autonomous and marginal activities offered by the workers' community?

Garrincha was never quite at home as a professional athlete. To soccer aficionados, the awkwardness he displayed in his career only underscored the more the purity of his playing. If Garrincha was indeed the people's joy, it was because he was perceived less as putting on a show produced by professional means, through training and discipline, than as displaying an innate sense of "sport for sport's sake," which we might qualify as a *habitus* materialized as a physical body and a style of play, and in a manner quite different from that of other players.

Garrincha's best phase lasted only ten years, from 1953 to 1963. The high points of his career were the 1962 World Cup — where in the absence of Pelé he was the star of the Brazilian team, and was considered the best player in the world by sportscasters — and the 1962 Rio de Janeiro championship, which was won by Botafogo thanks to his extraordinary performance. Soon after began Garrincha's painfully drawn-out decline, marked by Brazil's defeat in the 1966 World Cup and the former star's relegation to the second division, then to the third. Worn out by medical attempts to mitigate the problems with his legs, he desperately sought an afterlife in a career that, from its very beginning, had had no other purpose than "sport for sport's sake."

Now the tables were turned on Garrincha: he was exploited by the world of professional soccer, which reduced him to the condition of a prematurely burned-out laborer of sport and did not quite know what to do with his retirement. It was as if the paternalistic mode of domination that had allowed Garrincha to develop his creative *habitus*, associated with the culture of working-class communities, now avenged itself on a subject that had been able to attain a certain amount of freedom through soccer. For it must be stressed that what companies encouraged was sport of a strictly amateur nature, a leisure activity that was not supposed to replace work in the factory; that Garrincha himself had assimilated this view to such a degree that it took him more than a year to take a test at Botafogo after he had been invited; and

that even after he became a great professional player he went on developing his creativity without ever realizing that it might lead to a long-term project, as though he believed it remained subject to the will of his employers. At each turning point in his professional career Garrincha was lucky enough to be able to count on the support of other players, particularly Nilton Santos. The deference and respect he always showed for this man — who in his life played the part of a *padrinho* (godfather) though he was actually his *compadre* (godfather to his child) — is reminiscent of the role some department heads had played in Garrincha's career in the factory, men who had the power to change his name and to determine whether or not he was to be allowed to play in the factory team. Garrincha's utter lack of control over his own professional life led him to accept outrageous contracts with Botafogo, contracts that took no account of his fame.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the parallel between his passivity in relation to his club and the situation of the Pau Grande workers, who had no means to contest company decisions concerning wages or work conditions, is reinforced by the fact that up to 1963 Garrincha still belonged to the world of Pau Grande, where he lived with his wife and his seven daughters. His glory was shared by his neighbors, who told the press, on the occasion of his funeral, how he used to come from Maracanã Stadium on the same truck that brought his fans and celebrate Botafogo's victories with them in the bars of Pau Grande.

After the 1962 World Cup, Garrincha's love affair with the singer Elza Soares distanced him from Pau Grande and put him in contact with the world of show business, but it gave him no help in getting a stronger grip on his own career. The eye-opening comments made by Elza, who had signed enough contracts with nightclubs and recording companies to realize how shamelessly he was being exploited by Botafogo, came too late: by the time he finally secured a decent contract Garrincha had developed arthrosis in both legs. Suffering acute pain, he refused to play, and as much as 50 percent of his salary was withheld. After an operation that had not been recommended by the Botafogo physicians, he recovered very slowly and was unable to return to the club's main team. In 1966 he was sold to Corinthians, a São Paulo club, but his playing was no longer what it had been. He played in the 1966

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24 Garrincha signed his contracts before they were filled out, and was paid about half of what the other major players in the team were earning.



World Cup, in England, in which Brazil was eliminated in the first phase. Dismissed by Corinthians, from 1966 to 1973 Garrincha moved to a succession of clubs, each weaker than the previous one. In 1973 an international match was held in Maracanã to mark Garrincha's official retirement — an event that was known as “The Thank-You Game.” Nevertheless, this Sisyphus of soccer went on playing in veterans' teams until his death without ever becoming a coach or turning to any other soccer-related activity.

Thus Garrincha's professional and private life after 1962 was a series of defeats. In 1967 and 1968 he was rejected by a number of clubs. Late in 1968 he was indicted for failing to pay alimony to his first wife for six months, and escaped jail only because a banker paid off his debts. In April 1969 he was involved in an automobile accident that killed Elza Soares's mother, and later in the same year he had to flee to Italy with his wife to avoid another brush with the law. In Italy, however, though Elza had no trouble finding work as a singer, Garrincha's attempts to play soccer failed dismally, and he was forced to accept a publicity job offered by the Brazilian coffee-exporting agency. In December 1973, the farewell match in his honor was a public manifestation of his defeat. His ex-wife died two years later, and he had to take in five of his daughters, who had not yet married.

Nevertheless, 1976 brought him a belated victory: after having another daughter with Elza Soares, at long last the son he had always hoped for was born. But the publicity surrounding the birth of the boy immediately led to trouble: a former girlfriend in Pau Grande publicly presented a putative son of his, aged 15. In 1977, Garrincha finally separated from Elza, after a year of very strained relations.

In 1978, the former player was hospitalized for the first time, a victim of hypertension. In the same year he got married once again, this time to Vanderléia, the widow of another retired soccer player. In July 1979 he was again in the hospital, suffering from cirrhosis of the liver. In the 1980 Carnival he took part in the samba-school parade on a float built in his honor by the Mangueira school. He cut a rather sorry figure in the midst of the merrymaking, still showing signs of depression and apathy — he had come out of the hospital in the preceding month. Although he was clearly in physical and psychological decline, Garrincha carried on as before: in 1981, yet another daughter was born; and on Christmas 1982 he went to Brasília for a friendly match. Soon after, he succumbed to deep alcoholic depression and died.

## The King and the People

In the early 1960's, the two top names of Brazilian soccer were in their prime: Garrincha and Pelé. But while Garrincha's career soon came apart, as we have seen, Pelé played professional soccer up to 1974 and was wholly successful in reshaping his career, so that to this day he remains immensely famous in Brazil and abroad. This calls for a comparative study, one that attempts more than — as is often done — simply to put down the different fates of these two sportsmen, whose class origin was similar, to mere chance.

Pelé, whose international career also had a spectacular beginning in 1958, was able to ensure his continued success, although his participation was slight both in the 1962 victory and in the 1966 defeat, due to injuries. Twice a champion in the world interclub championship, in 1962 and 1963, playing for Santos, he quickly consolidated his international status, culminating in the 1970 World Cup in Mexico, won by Brazil. Then Pelé left the national team and Santos to explore a market that, though technically less demanding, was of fundamental importance for the growth of soccer and for the reshaping of his own career: the U.S. and the New York Cosmos.

Pelé also comes from a working-class background. But unlike Garrincha, who always stressed his deep-rooted attachment to his origins, in public Pelé emphasized only his relation to his immediate family — father, mother, siblings, and grandmother. The more the press attempted to focus on Garrincha's private life, the less was found about his family. Concerning his father, who always held menial jobs such as sweeper, night watchman, or farmhand working for the textile mill, little more is known than that he died of cirrhosis of the liver. There is no information about his other close relatives. In short, information about Garrincha's origins — mostly of an apocryphal nature — involves his social milieu rather than his actual family. The case of Pelé is precisely the opposite: we know much about each individual in his family; his parents were often publicly presented early in his career; but his private life was kept out of the limelight.

Pelé was the oldest child of a little-known soccer player from Bauru, São Paulo State, who at an early stage of his career was deprived of an opportunity to join better teams because he injured both his knees while playing with Atlético a team in Belo Horizonte, the capital of Minas Gerais State. Since he was a boy, Pelé was determined to achieve the success his father had missed, thus making up for his bad luck. But such local fame as Dondinho — the

nickname Pelé's father was known by — had managed to attain allowed him to complement his salary as a soccer player with his earnings from a job as a minor official at a neighborhood outpatient clinic. It also gave him a chance to persuade his team's coach — Valdemar de Brito, a retired player of international renown who had also been forced to discontinue his career prematurely because of injuries — to take an active interest in the junior team in which his son was already showing his exceptional talent.

Pelé had joined this team after playing street soccer and trying to create a real team of his own, with what little money he managed to earn from odd jobs of various kinds. As can be seen, the material conditions necessary for the practice of soccer were a major concern of this boy who was obsessed with his father's failure and with the untimely end of his coach's career. While Garrincha was originally intended to become a laborer and became an athlete thanks to the factory's social initiatives, Pelé, who had always intended to become a professional player, did only a brief stint as a worker, at a shoe factory, at the age of 13, to help out his family and prove his sense of responsibility to his mother, who — made skeptical by her husband's failure — only then allowed him to go on playing soccer with local teams.

It was thanks to Valdemar de Brito that Pélé was accepted by Santos, a major club that had twice won the São Paulo state championship. Brito, a soccer coach and a Labor Secretariat inspector in Bauru, wanted to move to São Paulo City. For this reason he asked his former teammate, Deputy Athiê Curi, who at that time was president of the Santos club, to ask Governor Jânio Quadros to transfer him to the São Paulo branch of his department. In exchange for this favor — asked of a governor who was an unpredictable man and who was generally adverse to using political office for private purposes — Brito introduced to the deputy a very young player who had all the makings of an exceptional athlete. Brito, a friend of Pelé's family, was finally able to persuade his mother — for it was her opinion that really mattered — to let the boy go to Santos by himself. Since he had no relatives there and was only fifteen, Pelé was to live on a permanent basis in the "total institution" that characterized soccer in the period — the *concentração*, the boarding-house where players were kept in seclusion immediately before a game. There Pelé led a self-imposed ascetic life, going beyond his father's strictures against tobacco, alcohol, and night life, to concentrate solely on his athletic training.

With a professional discipline that amounted to a precocious internalization

of his father's frustrations, relying on the social connections in the world of soccer he had inherited from Dondinho, Pelé was able to develop his technical abilities, as exceptional as they were manifold, as well as an extreme sensibility to the material problems of a professional soccer player.<sup>25</sup> While Garrincha owed the essence of his talent to amateur sport, Pelé's gifts were fully developed only in professional sport. His twelve years of success have allowed him to preserve to this day a prestige that he can now bring to bear on other sectors of activity related to sport, such as advertising and entrepreneurship.

"King Pelé's"<sup>26</sup> extreme professionalism thus stands in sharp contrast with Garrincha's strong links to working-class culture: during his rise to fame Garrincha was the perfect example of what Richard Hoggart has called the Epicureanism of everyday life.<sup>27</sup> Garrincha's Epicureanism, expressed in sport as "sport for sport's sake" and outside it as a taste for irresponsible sex<sup>28</sup> and for the humble forms of entertainment indulged in by workers, kept him permanently in that short period of condoned license that is adolescence, so that he was mostly indifferent to and only occasionally concerned about his professional career. Had he remained a worker, his relation with soccer would probably have been smoother, for informal soccer games among forty-year-olds is, in working-class districts, a common form of leisure that naturally rounds off a life dedicated to the sport.<sup>29</sup> What is tragic about Garrincha's fate is precisely the contrast between his early brilliance, as he managed to raise the purity of his amateur style to the ultimate heights of professional competition, and his inability to act in accordance with his status as a professional athlete.

## Death of the People's Joy

Garrincha's tragedy, brought to light by the circumstances of his death, fascinated the public, particularly the working-class crowds that turned out to mourn him. These crowds were in some ways similar to those shown in the

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25 For information on Pelé's early life I have drawn on Mário Filho (1963).

26 The now-famous epithet was the title of the first movie about Pelé, made by Carlos Hugo Christensen soon after Joaquim Pedro de Andrade directed his portrait of Garrincha.

27 See Hoggart (1969, chap. 5).

28 In the late 1970's, one of Garrincha's illegitimate children came from Sweden to visit him.

29 See Guedes (1982).

movie *Garrincha, alegria do povo*, when Garrincha and his brilliant generation of Brazilian soccer players were at their best.

| <b>ALEGRIA DO POVO E ALEGRIA DO ESPORTE</b>   | <b>GARRINCHA, ALEGRIA DO POVO, 1962</b>   | <b>ISTO É PELÉ, 1975</b>  |
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| <p>É possível ilustrar essa comparação esclarecedora com Pelé opondo dois filmes: <i>Garrincha, Alegria do Povo</i> e <i>Isto é Pelé</i>. O primeiro foi realizado em 1962, no auge da glória de Garrincha, e o segundo em 1975, no fim da carreira brasileira de Pelé. Transformados em fitas de vídeo, atualmente ambos os filmes estão entre os mais pedidos no Brasil. Mas enquanto <i>Isto é Pelé</i> foi imediatamente transferido para vídeo, na previsão de um evidente sucesso comercial, o filme sobre Garrincha teve que esperar sua morte e reabilitação póstuma. Foi até mesmo necessário efetuar uma coleta para reconstituir a película, que já se deteriorara, como se houvesse sofrido o mesmo destino de seu herói. A morte de Garrincha permitiu que esse filme antigo, puro produto do Cinema Novo, tivesse, mais de 20 anos depois, devido à difusão dos videocassetes no país, um grande sucesso comercial, subitamente rivalizando com o sucesso permanente de Pelé.</p> | <p>Realizador: Joaquim Pedro de Andrade (1930-1988), um dos nomes importantes do Cinema Novo.</p>   | <p>Realizador: Eduardo Escorel, nascido em 1945, amigo assistente e montador de Joaquim Pedro de Andrade e de outros grandes cineastas do Cinema Novo, ele mesmo diretor reconhecido.</p> |
| <p>Ambos os filmes foram financiados por Luiz Carlos Barreto, produtor da maior parte das realizações do Cinema Novo.</p>   | <p>O filme começa com seqüências de pelada disputadas na praia de Copacabana, nas ruas e nas zonas periféricas.</p>   | <p>O filme começa com uma tomada de Pelé correndo e tremando sozinho à beira-mar.</p>   |
| <p>Esclarecimento sobre o defeito físico das pernas de Garrincha.</p>   | <p>Poucas imagens em movimento de seu estilo de jogo: era um ponteiro, salvo exceção, não marcava os gols. Muitas fotos.</p>  | <p>Demonstração das qualidades atléticas excepcionais de Pelé.</p>  |
| <p>Estilo inexplicável que continua inexplicado.</p>  | <p>Apenas um curto extrato de entrevista, além de um comentário em off.</p>   | <p>Muitas seqüências sobre seu jogo e seus numerosos gols: era um goleador de meio-de-campo.</p>  |
| <p>Nas cenas mundanas de cerimônias com políticos ou autoridades, Garrincha freqüentemente aparece em segundo plano.</p>  | <p>Muitas cenas filmadas em Pau Grande: Garrincha dança com as filhas, joga descalço com os amigos, bebe um café com eles. Algumas tomadas do trabalho na fábrica.</p>  | <p>Pelé aparece quase exclusivamente no campo.</p>  |
| <p>Muitas cenas filmadas em Pau Grande: Garrincha dança com as filhas, joga descalço com os amigos, bebe um café com eles. Algumas tomadas do trabalho na fábrica.</p>  | <p>Vista final sobre a multidão de torcedores, a importância social e os significados simbólicos do futebol. Considerações intelectuais sobre o esporte e o povo. Garrincha desaparece, sendo substituído pela entidade "povo".</p> | <p>Poucas cenas de alegria popular, sendo então vistas desde o campo. Nos encontros com o Papa, com Robert Kennedy, com a rainha da Inglaterra, Pelé está sempre em primeiro plano.</p>   |
| <p>A "alegria do povo" é uma emoção coletiva que estoura além da pessoa de Garrincha, dissolvida na multidão.</p>   | <p>Nada fora do esporte.</p>  | <p>O auge atingido quando de seu milésimo gol. Comentários de natureza essencialmente esportiva. Última parada na imagem: os pulsos de alegria de Pelé ao marcar um gol.</p>              |
| <p>A "alegria" de Pelé é a de "cada novo gol": é a emoção de um campeão individual que exulta diante da multidão.</p>   | <p></p>   | <p></p>   |

The film was shot at a time when many filmmakers in the Cinema Novo movement were focusing on the Northeast to capture the specificity of the Brazilian social drama: examples are Gláuber Rocha's *The Black God and the White Devil* and Nelson Pereira dos Santos's *Dry Lives*. But Joaquim Pedro de Andrade was mostly concerned with the urban masses. He began with a short subject set in a Rio favela ("Couro de gato," an episode in the collective movie *Cinco vezes favela*), then turned to soccer, a less dramatic and political

subject but one that was strongly associated with the working-class urban population, adopting a neorealist outlook. Andrade's film on Garrincha concentrates on the part of the public in the *gerais*, the cheapest section of a stadium, on a level with the field, providing low visibility. Here an essentially male crowd stands, pressed close together, and the difficulty in following the action of the game is compensated by the proximity to the players, when they celebrate their goals and victories. Their pathetic faces, tense with anguish or joy, faces of working men, atoms in a huge multitude, are singled out by a camera in search of "the people," whose hopes were exalted by intellectuals in the early 1960's.<sup>30</sup> The film's closing sequences show a throng of workers rushing off the trains and running toward the stadium on the day of a major match; these are the people who will watch the game from the *gerais*.

The film is much less interested in the spectators crowded on the bleachers, who are the majority and are also the most vocal forces in the stadium, the organized cheering groups. It should be noted, however, that these groups developed particularly since the late 1960's, when different factions of fans of the same club competed against each other by making themselves quite visible and audible in the bleachers, setting off firecrackers, waving giant flags, chanting slogans, and so on. In addition, these groups encouraged the growth of a flourishing trade in shirts, pennants, collective transportation, etc.

These same workers' faces can be seen on the crowded trains blowing their whistles as a final tribute to the dead soccer star, a multitude that grows ever denser, now including women and children, as it approaches Pau Grande. Throughout the ceremony, however, one notices the conspicuous presence of the organized cheering groups; particularly evident are the Botafogo fans, who try to capitalize on this tragic moment in order to celebrate the faded glories of their club, which at that time — 1983 — had not won a championship for fifteen years. One might see in the appropriation of Garrincha's funeral by these new organized groups a sign of professional

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30 As convincing, pliable raw material, Garrincha was much more attractive than Pelé to this sort of intellectual and artistic consideration of the working classes. The two films on Pelé are not even mentioned in the catalog of the Brazilian movie retrospective presented at the Centre Pompidou in 1987 (see Paranaguá 1987). Garrincha, *alegria do povo*, however, is praised as "certainly one of the most intelligent Brazilian films about soccer ever made, for the multiple interpretations it suggests," as well as for the realistic innovativeness that makes it "a new phenomenon in Brazilian cinema: the language of the streets is heard in the movie" (p. 170).

soccer's increasing autonomization, its tendency to turn into a world apart, with its own rules and troops.<sup>31</sup> But it can also be seen as the ultimate proof — is such proof were necessary — of the utter misery to which Garrincha was reduced; for it was his own and his friends' desire to be buried with his family in peace and quiet.

Though the public's intrusion in Garrincha's burial unintentionally added a final tragic note to his life, we can also interpret the public fervor as a tribute and a redress to a player who had fallen so low after a period of glory, and whose end illustrated so vividly the miserable lot that typifies the existence of the poor. Upon his death, even the "sins" that had made him unpopular seem to have been forgiven. His marvelous soccer style, his indifference to professional competition and the ascent in social status it might confer on him, his strong links with his social background and the sacrifice this forced on him were some of the factors that contributed to the collective grief over his death.

The feeling of loss, however, was brought about not just by the awareness that a great age in Brazilian soccer was closing, but also by the sense that the social conditions which had made possible the rise of a player like Garrincha, with the particular sort of style that had made him famous, no longer existed. Gone with them were a brand of worker, the sort who lived in the traditional housing developments built by factories. On a more general plane, his death symbolized the end of a certain style of working-class life, the memory of which was the only remnant of it that had survived the growth of the difficulties of the present. The "euphoria" of the years 1950-1964 — a period relatively favorable to workers not only on the economic plane<sup>32</sup> but also as regards politics and civil freedoms — was followed by a certain degree of sadness and of wild violence that one is tempted to associate with the intensification of economic exploitation and political oppression since the military coup — a kind of violence that was particularly common in the 1970's, especially manifested as riots in the urban trains of Rio and São Paulo. Garrincha's miserable death was the ultimate symbol of the end of the "people's joy" generated by

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31 It would be necessary to place in a wider perspective the changes experienced by the working classes in the last thirty years in order to establish the social significance of these new forms of organized support to soccer teams. For some ethnographic data and explanations on the organized fans of Rio and São Paulo teams, see Lever (1983: Ch. 5), and Toledo (1996).

32 From 1940 to the present, the 1950's were the decade in which real minimum wages were the highest.



the successes of the 1950's, in particular by the victory in the 1958 World Cup, when Brazil at long last made a mark abroad, even if only through soccer — that is, through its working classes.

— translated from the Portuguese by Paulo Henriques Britto

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