tainly be mourned. But, it will not be a lamentation for the heroic individual and the era that made him. Instead, the public will mourn the passing of a simulation, the end of a televisual life, as occurred on a rather more grandiose scale with the death of Princess Diana in August 1997.

7

The Goal of Winning? Football, Science, Tactics and Aesthetics

Beyond the Functional: football aesthetics

Having discussed the social and economic background of players, I seek in this chapter to consider the various historical and cultural aspects of football play. My first point is that academics have contributed relatively little to our understanding of football's playing styles and techniques. The sporting body has attracted much attention, but sociologists and anthropologists have rather ignored its tactical and aesthetic dimensions. Exceptionally, Norbert Elias employed a football metaphor to elaborate upon his 'process sociological' perspective. The unfolding match between team-mates and opponents illustrated the nature of all social life: the interdependency of human beings, and the 'flexible lattice-work of tensions' generated through their social bonds. Power flows fluidly between players jockeying for possession and moving between attack and defence (Elias 1978b: 130–1).

Perhaps Elias was too much of a sociological maverick for this metaphor to be explored more fully. Yet, for any sociologist, football does illustrate how the ontological tension between social action and structure is dramatized eternally. Players are locked into structured relationships which emphasize the collective over the individual: divided into teams, with their own division of labour (playing positions), and preprogrammed into maintaining this 'shape'. Even in receiving the ball, players pursue the collective interest and follow procedure, 'clearing the danger' in defence or passing to team-mates. Yet, in doing so, the 'actor' is required to select from a number of options – who exactly to pass to, at what speed or angle, and with what accompanying instructions. Occasionally breaking from his 'set position' may also benefit the team, but again the decision remains with how the player reads the game, and his willingness to shape its pattern. The agency aspect of play offers a theoretical antidote to the oppressive Marxist view discussed in chapter 6, that players'

actions are predetermined by coaches. Yet even its most individualistic exponents are caught up within the collective; their 'free' creativity should be directed to help the team cause.

In football management, a similar interdependency exists between inspired decision-making and strong social networks. The UK's most successful managers (Alex Ferguson, Bill Shankley, Matt Busby and Jock Stein) were reared in the Scottish mining and ship-building heartlands, where a rich seam of pragmatic, 'communitarian' values existed *avant la lettre*. The Calvinistic culture dictated that individuals should exploit their talents, especially in sport, to enlarge their constrictive horizons. Liverpool managers Bob Paisley and Kenny Dalglish were raised in similar circumstances in Tyneside and Glasgow respectively. The charismatic status of these football heroes may suggest that their managerial masterstrokes were purely instinctive. But, their blending of players or adaptation of playing styles was rooted in their early socialization, when they had learned how specific characters respond to different treatment and how particular personalities mix most effectively.

This balance of individual and collective, action and structure, suggests a further sociological problem in explaining playing styles and techniques. On one hand, the aesthetic perspective appreciates that football generates its own panoply of actions, styles and productive creativity. On the other hand, the more functional position views football culture as a straightforward reproduction of wider social relations. Here, I am at pains to tread a path between these two positions. Football is certainly shaped by and within the broader society, but it produces its own universe of power relations, meanings, discourses and aesthetic styles (see Wren-Lewis and Clarke 1983). I am therefore at odds with one strain of cultural studies that explains the popular culture of the lower classes in terms of its functional necessity rather than its aesthetic content (Willis 1990; Fiske 1992, 1993). (A similar problem is apparent in the work of sociologists like Lash (1990) who in writing on post-modernity, privilege the middle classes with an aesthetic sensibility that is intangible to other classes.) This kind of critical functionalism identifies a latent connection between the practising of popular culture and the material conditions of exploitation and oppression. Watching a soap opera or playing in a rock band does not really involve an exercising of critical distance, aesthetic appreciation or acquired 'taste'. Instead, the viewer or popular musician is merely 'grounding' culture according to his or her 'objective' conditions. The problem with this perspective is its haughty tone and privileged epistemology. As Banck (1995) and other anthropologists have argued, the cultural studies position reclines on the indefensible assertion that (the) 'common people' are somehow incapable of producing or appreciating an aesthetic within their cultural practices.[1] For those of us who have grown up with football, the game is replete with aspects of beauty and grace.

In examining football's technical and aesthetic development, we find that body culture and social environment are closely related. Football skills emerge from a 'bio-psycho-sociological complex of body techniques' (Loy et al. 1993: 72). Technique in this sense is based on the Maussian definition, that is, the array of 'traditionally efficacious acts' which are physiologically enabled, culturally defined and (re)produced through socialization. Similarly, football's aesthetic dimension is not ahistorically given, but instead derives its meaning from the wider socio-historical context. As Walter Pater noted in 1873, 'The aesthetic critic will remember always that, beauty exists in many forms. To him all periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal. The question he asks is always: in whom did the stir, the genius, the sentiment of the period find itself?' (quoted in Lambourne 1996: 12). Sociologically, we must add that the aesthetic will reflect the political struggles and ideological interests of dominant and subaltern social groups: young against old, scientists against artists, middle classes against working classes, the old world versus the new world. The aesthetics of football are both a medium of ideological control and a weapon for resisting such domination. In short, they are 'an eminently contradictory phenomenon' (Eagleton 1990: 3).

In this discussion, therefore, I begin with a historical study of football's aesthetic and tactical changes. In the process, I seek to periodize these changes into 'traditional', 'modern' and 'post-modern' phases. Some of the major problems underlying this historiography are explored, particularly those relating to team formation; individual stylistic developments are less problematic. Football's globalization ensured the rapid spread of tactical and aesthetic innovations, although it initially dramatized cultural differences. The final two sections discuss the impacts of other sports on football: first, in terms of football tactics; second, more organizationally, with regard to rule changes and the management of new technology. My overall intention is to generate debate among football academics, since playing techniques, styles and their aesthetic appreciation have been notably absent from scholarly work.

From 'Kick and Rush' to WM: the transformation of UK football style

Football's earliest playing styles reflected the game's middle-class imprimateur in favouring the rather entrepreneurial values of risky, individualistic attack. Until the 1880s, English football was predisposed aesthetically to the exhibition of each player's unique skill, notably by flamboyant dribblers who left the pack behind. As football became a working-class passion, the crowd's favour soon switched from middle-class pseudo-artistry to professionally earned victories (Walvin 1994: 74–5). A more successful, rationalized form of play – the 'passing game' – gained ascendancy, featuring a more advanced division of labour in which players were allocated spatial positions to perform their allotted tasks. Only gradually did this playing style influence football in England, where the more atavistic, 'kick and rush' approach predominated. The passing

game did display a strong symmetry to the industrial experience of its Scottish, working-class proponents, but it was also enabled by the sudden popularity of football itself. More and more young players were learning the rudiments of ball control and passing, skills that were essential for the passing game to survive and become aesthetically meaningful. Hence, this 'traditional' period established a trinity of tactical and aesthetic virtues: teamwork, technical skills and final results.

The attacking manoeuvre remained football's principal tactical and aesthetic concern, although more prescient teams paid increasing attention to defence. Ayrshire football in Scotland had already established the four defenders and six attackers model by the 1880s.[2] In late Victorian England, the eight forwards were gradually reduced to seven then six, to bolster the defence and midfield. After the First World War, as the clubs sought again to increase attendances and thus profitability, attention turned to the apparently widening gap between attacking popular aesthetics and defensive pragmatism. To rectify the situation, club directors sought to alter football's playing structure, to 'spectacularize' the game. Specifically, the 'offside game' of defenders was held up as a major problem, although continental observers argued that only English forwards could not counteract it (Meisl 1955). In 1925, FIFA accepted English submissions and instituted the new rule; players were now offside if fewer than two opponents stood between them and the goal (previously it had been three opponents).

The rule change provided a new framework for team organization, coinciding with a global receptivity to tactical and stylistic diversity. Many football coaches, born in the UK but exiled abroad, had managed to win the favour of their host clubs and nations. Foreign tours and international fixtures allowed them to test their innovative playing systems. Meanwhile, in the UK, football club directors were gradually learning the benefits of devolving greater powers to team coaches.

In England, the new offside rule brought further defensive modifications. The centre half dropped back from midfield to become the 'stopper', a kind of third 'full-back'. The new 'pivot' robustly repelled attacks; the distance between attackers and defenders increased. No longer were teams beseeched to attack in sheer numbers, like soldiers pouring out from the trenches, in waves of five forwards and three half-backs. Instead, as the attackers stayed upfield, so the full-backs patrolled the defences.

The first genuine form of early modernization came from Herbert Chapman, who won five championships and two FA cups as Arsenal manager during the 1920s and 1930s. Chapman founded the 'WM' formation: three forwards and two attacking half-backs were buttressed by two defensive half-backs and a final line of three full-backs (including the 'stopper'). Chapman was football's arch-Fordist and first modern manager. 'In his view, every device used by the industrialist to speed up the production of goods could be used equally well to speed up the production of goals' (Davies 1992: 30). He established his managerial autonomy at the club, spent heavily in the transfer market and shaped his team to exploit the new laws. He fed off the extended publicity given over to managers in the popular press, skilfully marketing the club and its players to the general public (Holt 1989: 311).[3] A hallmark of Arsenal's playing style was their composure in defence, relaxed in the knowledge that their devastating counter-attack would probably win them the game. In this way, Chapman relied heavily upon the unsophistication of Arsenal's opponents, who felt obliged to attack in the old style, gallantly but recklessly.

In southern Europe, leading clubs under the tutelage of Danubian coaches developed similar responses to the rule change. During the 1930s, Spanish and Italian teams introduced three obdurate defenders, led by the destructive 'stopper'. The tense, replayed World Cup semi-final between the two national sides in 1934 provided the fullest illustration of this new tactical thinking on the park, Italy winning 1–0 after the first game had finished 1–1 (Lanfranchi 1995: 133). In Italy, this system became known as *il metodo* ('the method'). Differences with English play centred on the prevailing fascistic notion, that footballers were the nation's warriors without armour, that individual skill remained aesthetically and practically important (De Biasi and Lanfranchi 1997: 89). Some Italian clubs continued to play *sistemo*, keeping the 'centre-half' as a genuine midfield player (Meisl 1955: 27). The tactical debate continued until the early 1940s, when Fiorentina and Genoa borrowed the 'WM' system from England and *il metodo* won out. By that stage, football had established its own global 'ideoscape' for the circulation of tactical plans and aesthetic statements. Often, WM would be creolized to fit the local conditions. During the 1940s, it was significantly embellished by Russian tactical thinking. Iakushin, the coach of Moscow Dinamo, introduced greater flexibility to this 'bourgeois' system of play. He encouraged his five attacking players to change positions constantly during the game, and so unsettle opponents. The strategy was a notable success during the UK tour in November 1945, though it has left football analysts struggling to explain it tactically. Some argued that Iakushin anticipated the 4–2–4 formation later popularized by Brazil (Edelman 1993: 91); alternatively, I would suggest the great mobility of players presages the Dutch 'total football' model of the 1970s.

Post-war UK Decline and Modern Football Tactics

The major post-war tactical and aesthetic innovations came from outside the UK, reflecting its declining stock in world football. Under the tutelage of Karl Rappan, the Swiss side of the 1950s added a further, defensive variation to 'WM'. The resulting 'Swiss Bolt' system was exceptionally fluid and difficult to describe geometrically. Two central defenders (with one 'sweeping') were supported by attacking full-backs; two proto-midfielders controlled the centre while the two attackers were assisted by wingers. Players were never statically

situated in three playing lines, but were instead to advance or retreat according to the game's flow, thus demanding high levels of tactical intelligence.

The Swiss Bolt's enduring influence was its creation of the 'sweeper', which the *catenaccio* system developed further. *Catenaccio* was founded by Helenio Herrera, initially at Barcelona, then with Internazionale throughout the 1960s, and dominated the technical and aesthetic principles of Italian football for over two decades.[4] Herrera's system was rooted in the ultra-professionalism of football's full modernity: discipline, concentration, regimental training, careful planning, and an astute use of possession. But it was also a hybrid form, exploring the aesthetic and technical capabilities of defensive players, demanding fuller use of their intellectual and creative capabilities. The *libero* ('free man') swept behind the defence, reading the play guilefully to spot and extinguish danger before it could spread. The first *libero* was Armando Picchi who played for Internazionale during the early 1960s (Wolstenholme 1992: 307–9). Its greatest exponent was perhaps the late Gaetano Scirea of Juventus and Italy. However, one should avoid overlooking the *libero*'s colleagues in defence, the 'man-markers' employed to stop strikers by tracking them all over the pitch. These defenders read the play of their opponents, knew how to psyche them out of games, and were highly judicious in timing and weighting their tackles. *Catenaccio*'s emergence reflected the growth of football's commerce and status during the 1960s, in which anxiety about defeat had supplanted the old aesthetic reference to attack. The early post-war flood of goals was reduced to a trickle. More broadly, *catenaccio* actuated the cultural politics of the Cold War, the phoney war of attrition, with bluff-calling and nerveless deception played out before huge defensive stockpiles.

Two other playing strategies were advanced with notable success during the 1950s and 1960s. The first was the adventurous 4–2–4 system made famous by Brazil's 1958 World Cup winning side. This style symbolized the survival of football's aesthetic commitment to attack and goal-scoring within the modern age. Although its pragmatism should not be underestimated, given the illustrious forwards who were at its spearhead, this attacking Brazilian style is still looked upon throughout the world as the purest and most pleasing form of football as the game's own specimen of 'high modernity'. Although the Brazilians gradually accommodated one forward in midfield, the attacking fluency remained. Its zenith came at the 1970 World Cup in Mexico with the 4–1 dismantling of Italy in the final. Significantly, colour television coverage brought, for the first time, the full spectacle to millions of television viewers in Europe and the Americas, with the game's first global superstar, Pelé, at its epicentre. Constant television replays of the Brazilian triumph provide a crucial referent for the mythologizing of football's ultimate team.

The second playing strategy was the 4–3–3, 'Wingless Wonders' system devised by Alf Ramsey as manager of England's 1966 World Cup side. Ramsey's study in Anglo-Saxon empiricism dispensed with individualistic players in preference for the 'sweat and versatility' of midfield workers (Critcher 1994: 83). His philosophy resembled the equally scientistic, ill-fated rhetoric of Harold Wilson on the 'white heat' technology that would save the nation's economy. Although Ramsey's champions were trounced at Wembley a year later by an exuberant Scotland side, his artless heritage was extended by his successors. Don Revie's highly Fordist managerial style took the reproduction of knowledge to new lengths when preparing for key matches in the mid-1970s. Squads of professionals (sometimes over fifty in number) would gather for meetings. Thesis-sized dossiers on opposing teams would be circulated among young England players, many of whom had failed to complete their secondary education. Meanwhile, a rich lineage of gifted ball-players and wing craftsmen was increasingly passed over for the number 7 and 10 shirts.

At this time, 'scientific' approaches dominated modern football. The FA coaching supremo, Charles Hughes, was promulgating the functional purity of 'direct football' (see Macdonald and Batty 1971; Batty 1980). Through the simplified method of management by objectives (MBO), teams were instructed to play the 'long ball' as data analysis 'proved' that up to 90 per cent of goals came from less than five passes (see Wilkinson 1988: 93, 107). This Taylorist aesthetic eroded working differentials between players who filled different positions; collectively, it amounted to industrial deskilling (see Braverman 1974). It said nothing about the other goal-less 88 minutes of matches (Taylor and Ward 1995: 295–7); nor could it explain its disastrous effect on the English national team during the 1970s and 1980s; or how teams like Glasgow Celtic were able to triumph in Europe by playing fluent, attacking football. Nevertheless, off the park, even Brazil were influenced: for their doomed World Cup campaign of 1966, they spent £300,000 on 'scientific preparation', including a four-month training camp for players who were monitored by two hundred medical staff. Across the world, psychologists started to research players' habits; some were hired to do pre-match team-talks, although the players retained a jokey disdain for the resulting psychobabble (see Yaffé 1974; Sik 1996).[5]

During the late 1960s and 1970s, the Dutch side Ajax fashioned 'total football', a more fluid and attacking style of play. All team players needed to be highly adaptable and capable of playing in most outfield positions. Total football's industrial philosophy was nearer to an 'enskilling' than a 'deskilling' model. It resembled Japanese labour practices (then beginning to impact upon global markets) which required all factory managers to be adept on assembly lines, while workers contributed new ideas for improving productivity. Its superiority to English 'science' was rooted in the mature relationship between Dutch players and coaches, compared to the antediluvian class distinctions between the British 'Boss' and his 'lads'. Although the Dutch produced some 'crack' players (notably Cruyff), the majority acquired a basic technical virtuosity that enabled them to play anywhere. The resulting style of constant movement and positional realignment was strikingly similar to the 'style of the future' predicted by Willy Meisl (1955) over a decade earlier. Meisl's 'Whirl'

style had been envisioned to 'rotate on individuality rooted in all-round capacity'. For it to be executed as a 'non-stop switch' during games, the Whirl needed 'all-round' players; 'every man-jack must be able to tackle anybody else's job temporarily without any ado' (1995: 189).

Notwithstanding the appeal of the Dutch model, by the mid-1980s most club and international teams had become Taylorist in their suspicion of wing players' productive worth. Tactical variations involved tinkering with defensive strength: whether to play a sweeper/*libero* or a 'flat back four'; whether to play one winger (two would be profligate) or an extra man in midfield. Football's late modernity saw the 4–4–2 system predominate, particularly in England, from which the British colonial squads of Liverpool, Nottingham Forest and Aston Villa won a procession of European Cups. In an era of deskilling and the erosion of craft differentials, the overlapping full-back could double as a winger, while play-makers were forced to do some labouring by tackling.

By the late 1980s, the baton of European football club power had passed on to Italy. There, the *catenaccio* system had met its nemesis in the *zona* style, favoured by Arrigo Sacchi at Parma and AC Milan. The *zona* game borrowed the late modern English flat back four and added a rigorous midfield 'pressing' tactic against opponents in possession. It abandoned *catenaccio*'s skills of craft, subtlety and situational psychology, and despatched players to patrol specific spaces on the park. Sacchi's idyll foresees players fitting into the system (rather than the other way round). They learn an exhaustive series of actions and manoeuvres through simple repetition. According to one of his fiercest critics, the former Italian manager Enzo Bearzot, the robotic players are caught, not in real football, but in 'virtual football, based on a geometric scheme'.[6]

Post-Modern Football Styles: a return to creativity?

In the early 1990s, European football underwent a period of tactical *perestroika* for several conjunctural reasons. Following the defensive dourness of the 1990 World Cup, FIFA were convinced that a more attacking, flowing game was needed to conquer new sports markets in North America and the Far East. Referees were instructed to get tough on the most mundane of 'professional' offences (see Blake 1996: 209).[7] Meanwhile, coaches began to deconstruct the fixed Fordist 4–4–2 model, to create a more flexible, post-Fordist system of play, to suit specific match circumstances. Again, attention turned to the team's defensive formation. In some, the addition of a third centre-back (playing as a *libero*) allowed the full-backs to attack more consistently. Italy's Maldini has been the leading exponent of the new *fluidificanti* position; others have included the late Fortunato of Juventus, Romania's Petrescu and the Brazilians Jorginho (of Bayern Munich) and Roberto Carlos (of Real Madrid). In the UK, the term 'wing-back' is affectedly employed to designate this new specialism,

although the team formation is often indistinguishable from the old 4–4–2 with overlapping full-backs. Introducing wing-backs is not necessarily an attacking tactic, as they can overcrowd the midfield. In playing 3–5–2, managers must decide where their advantages lie, by choosing between players brought up as traditional full-backs or orthodox wingers.

In Italy, since the late 1980s, the post-modern solution has been found in attack. Much has been made of the role of the *mezzopunta* who plays a creative role between midfield and attack. Usually, the *mezzopunta* has the exceptional vision, ball-control and dribbling skills of the classic inside-forward. He receives the ball early and in some space, facing the opposition rather than with his back to goal. Defenders face uncertain choices when confronted with this anomalous player, who is like matter 'out of place', being neither forward (to be marked closely) nor midfielder (to be left to midfield colleagues). Great *mezzopunta* players include the gifted Italians of the 1990s, such as Mancini, Baggio and Zola; all learned their position at a time when the peerless Maradona was reinventing Napoli. The *mezzopunta*'s influence is now inscribed in the numerical geometry of football tactics, as coaches and fans alike speak of teams playing in four digit formations, just as they had done with WM.

However, perhaps the strongest split between modern and post-modern tactical thinking involves a post-modernist scepticism towards the scientific predictability of team coaching and management. Contemporary coaches are resigned to the fact that, ultimately, the result is out of their control. The Argentinian coach and football *penseur*, Jorge Valdano, captures this mood well: 'No coach can guarantee results, the best you can do is guarantee a way of playing; results are in the hands of fate' (quoted in King and Kelly 1997: 1).

To summarize, we may note that football's aesthetic and tactical development has contained 'traditional', 'modern' and 'post-modern' stages. The traditional game mixed individualism, the teamwork of passing and endeavour, and the pressure for results. In England, it was manifested by an emphasis on strength, particularly the 'kick and rush' game, while in Scotland the teamwork of smaller players was important. The early modern period is signified by the offside rule-change of 1925, the creation of the WM tactical system to take advantage, and by the new homogeneity in playing styles across Europe, manifested especially by moving the old centre-half into the defence. The full 'modernity' of post-war football introduced scientific approaches to the game, though cultural differences remained important. In Italy, *catenaccio* was the science of defence, rooted in an unbreakable will to win. In England, flairless 'direct football' held sway in tandem with the late modern, productive reliability of 4–4–2. The skills-centred philosophy of 'total football' was eclipsed by the earlier, more attacking, but equally efficacious Brazilian system of 4–2–4, which remains football's aesthetic form of 'high modernity'. Later, 'post-modern' styles have slackened the scientific shackles through their 'post-Fordist' flexibility. Once again, key players are those in 'marginal' positions, either between midfield and attack or playing along the flanks. Usually, these players

need exceptional attributes, such as great technical skill or pace, but they still need to be 'team-players' in the old modern sense, by tackling, running hard and organizing colleagues.

Writing the Histories of Football Styles: some analytical problems

To this historical narrative, I would append some analytical caveats. First, besides the tactical or aesthetic style that is formulated, there are also the circumstances and demands of the match to consider. A key question here is whether it helps to play 'aggressively' or to take the sting out of the game. Research suggests the answer lies in which side is playing at home. Early studies found that teams tended to play aggressively away from home (as they felt themselves to be in a hostile environment), and when positioned low in the league (due to their inferior skills and more desperate circumstances) (Yaffé 1974). Yet, aggressive play seems to backfire on the away team. Research from North American ice hockey found aggression was efficacious, especially when deployed early in matches (Widmeyer and Birch 1984). Subsequent studies indicated that home teams were particularly advantaged; aggressive play drew local fans into greater participation, to the detriment of visiting sides (McGuire et al. 1992). Hence, while a playing system is crucial for structuring the team, the social psychology of the players (notably, their 'attitude') will greatly influence their results.

Secondly, there is the availability of playing resources to take into account. Only the best football nations or richest clubs can afford the luxurious selection between 'total football', 4–4–2, 3–5–2 or 4–2–4. Football's harsh economics mean the majority of managers must operate as *bricoleurs*, tailoring their aesthetics and tactics to fit the players available. Most valued are 'utility' players, who fit in as full-backs for one game and as inside-forwards for the next. The most perceptive managers may detect a latent talent in a player's poise or touch, and successfully convert him, for example, from a centre-half to a centre-forward.

While the finest managerial *bricoleurs* cannot be easily copied, they have no way of disguising the tactical changes that they introduce. Unlike other 'knowledge' industries, there is no patent on innovative playing styles. The greatest compliment may lie in imitation, but managers run the risk of losing to their original style, and then finding that the victor claims the credit for innovation. Gilles Deleuze (1995: 132) noted that 'sporting bodies show remarkable ingratitude toward the inventors'. As in other forms of history, football's is written by the victorious against the vanquished.

A notable victim of this process is the small South American nation of Paraguay. In 1926, while competing in the South American championship in Chile, the Paraguayans introduced the notion of the 'third defender' as part of

a 3–2–5 team formation. This system soon became much discussed throughout the world, but Paraguay's contribution was ignored. More momentously, the Paraguayans innovated further in the South American championship of 1953, by introducing the 4–2–4 formation to defeat Brazil in the final. Brazil's manager, Feora, adopted the system for his 1958 World Cup-winning side, to much misdirected tactical acclaim (Giulianotti 1997b).

Hence, my third point is that the exact origins of most cultural paradigms or genres are very difficult to establish. Football's status as one of the first truly transnational cultural practices means that pinning a particular style down in time and space is a hazardous exercise. Roy Hodgson, cosmopolitan manager of Blackburn Rovers and formerly of Internazionale, saw the *mezzopunta* position first played by Eric Gates at Ipswich Town in the 1970s (*World Soccer*, June 1997). Others point to the mesmeric Hungarian side of the 1950s as first demonstrating the arts of the deep-lying forward (Duke 1995: 98). This clashes with the argument that Puskás, Kocsis et al. inspired not the *mezzopunta* but the 4–2–4 system of Brazil (Taylor 1996). And this latter claim, of course, goes against my point on the innovative Paraguayans (whom Brazil encountered far more frequently than Hungary).

One difficulty here is that a legendary team's 'system' of play cannot be easily classified according to modern categories. The attempt to do so becomes an exercise in a historical kind of ethnocentricity. We begin to expect players and managers to have shaped up to geometrical and tactical notions that are 'common sense' in the contemporary game, but which were then unknown or unrecognized. We might rationalize these styles in quasi-scientific terms, reifying their historical inevitability. But the greatness of these teams and their players lies in their immediate *creativity*, their capacity to traverse the barriers of what was considered possible within football, and take it off in new directions.

This leads us to ponder how some playing styles come to be seen as better than others. Thomas Kuhn's (1962) model of scientific 'paradigms' has strong currency here. Applying this model, we may argue that football people at any one time are brought up to value one or two 'traditional' playing styles. A 'revolution' occurs in this footballing community when the dominant tradition loses power to a new model. The community of followers, once seated firmly in the old tradition, experiences an epiphanic 'gestalt shift' and deserts to the new style. This perspective helps to explain sudden changes in football styles. It also illuminates how nations or clubs can deliberately forsake their playing traditions, and attempt to harmonize their tactics and aesthetic viewpoints with those that are successful elsewhere, for example, Brazil's switch from *futebol arte* to the rugged *futebol forca* in the early 1970s (Helal 1994: 9), or Italy's switch from *catenaccio* to *zona* defence in the 1980s.

Significantly, we may speak with far greater conviction about the individual origins of particular playing skills. Two of the great innovations in striking the dead ball came from Brazil, reflecting the deep cultural emphasis on individual

skill and its public display. During the 1950s, the Brazilian forward Didi developed the art of the curved shot or 'banana kick'. A generation of compatriots, notably Rivelino, showcased this skill at international tournaments, and it became a standard weapon in the attacking artillery of most sides. In the late 1970s, the Brazilian forward Zico added a second aerodynamic movement to the ball. Zico's shot combined a swerving horizontal movement with a dipping or rising lateral one. To achieve this extraordinary feat, Zico would strike over and across the ball in the manner of a tennis player rather than a standard footballer. Direct free-kicks became a disorientating experience for uninitiated goal-keepers. In a Brazil–Scotland friendly in Rio in 1977, for example, Alan Rough stood dumbfounded as a Zico shot that seemed certain to miss veered back into his net.[8] Since then Zico's double banana shot has become a new technique to learn and master for free-kick specialists.[9]

Some commentators have argued that the kick would not be possible without the new, synthetic football which is more receptive to variations in strike. At about the same time, the football world had been stunned by the spectacular, long-distance goals scored with this new ball at the 1978 World Cup finals. No similar number of such goals had been amassed in the heights of Mexico eight years earlier. As Zico's shot became established in world football circles, it was perfected by dead ball specialists such as Maradona and the Brazilians Branco and Roberto Carlos. While Branco went primarily for power, Roberto Carlos combined velocity with swerve. Following his spectacular goal at a France–Brazil friendly in June 1996, it was noted that he typically places the ball to strike its air-valve, thus exaggerating the swerve. Yet, it would be churlish to emphasize the weight or texture of the ball in explaining this lineage of Brazilian innovation. All of these master craftsmen bring to bear their considerable physiological capabilities (in power, direction and timing), acquired through insightful tuition and endless practice. To this, they add their willingness to challenge the cultural and historical parameters that initially confront them when striking the standard football.

Aesthetics and Modernity: playing the other

The globalization of football information and knowledge may obscure the origins of particular playing styles, while simultaneously enabling their circulation. Yet, different localities and societies do generate distinctive understandings of football style, tactics and aesthetics. Globalization enables clubs, nations and continents to experience this exotic dimension of football, that is, the encounter with decidedly 'other' approaches and philosophies. In discussing these different styles, we often find a fine line between celebrating diversity and reimposing old racial stereotypes. Sociologists routinely attack the national media for racializing foreign athletes, but academics too may slip into this lexicon.[10]

Historically, serious encounters with the most exotic 'others' have often reflected the limited cultural empathy between the sides. The great Uruguayan team of the interwar period had a particularly violent tour of Europe in 1936; then there is the battle of Highbury in 1934 between England and Italy, and the many violent World Cup matches during the 1930s, 1950s and 1960s. Since the 1960s, football's rising number of international competitions may have been cloaked in the marketable discourse of international fraternity and cultural exchange. But, events on the park have often transmuted from the physical clashing of playing styles into illustrations of Orwell's famous refrain, that sport is 'war minus the shooting'. Curiously, the most aggrieved (and injured) parties from these encounters have often been Scottish players. One thinks here of the 1968 World Club Championship match between Glasgow Celtic and Racing Club of Argentina; the 1974 European Cup semi-final between Celtic and Atlético Madrid; the 1986 Scotland v. Uruguay World Cup match in Mexico. Matches played in North America between European and South American club sides as part of the North American Soccer League (NASL) in the 1960s and 1970s were regularly peppered with undisguised violence (Murray 1994: 267–8).

These clashes demonstrate that football carries very different social and symbolic meanings for the opposing sides and their cultures. From the Western viewpoint, it is easy to fulminate against southern European and Latin American sides for their 'violent' or 'cheating' play. Yet, in the latter societies, the meaning of football is bound up within an ensemble of core Mediterranean values involving localist chauvinisms, masculinity, honour and shame (Goddard, Llobera and Shore 1995: 4–11). Football is but one cultural medium through which these values are dramatized; folksongs and bullfights are two others. Indeed, we may add that the 'brutal' *futbol da muerte* practised by Atlético Madrid and other Latin sides represents a rich fusion of football and bullfighting. To the Western eye, the bullfight is a savage and sickening event, overly real in its representation of death. But, to the Spaniard or the Mexican, the *corrida* has many ritual qualities and functions, through which personal fear of death may be confronted and controlled. It dramatizes the natural fragility of masculine power and virility, and imagines the mortal consequences of competitive social relationships (see Pitt-Rivers 1984; Zurcher and Meadow 1967). Turning some of these aspects of the *corrida* back onto an analysis of football may help to explain more empathetically the cultural rationale and aesthetic beliefs surrounding physical Latin playing styles.

Neither popular nor sociological discourses are fully equipped to formulate a neutral yet celebratory, cross-cultural but non-racial discussion of football styles and social identities. For this to be possible, analysis must focus more fully on the construction of racial and national identities. 'Discourse analysis' is a useful methodological tool in this regard, and has been employed to excavate the narrative frameworks which are common to most international sports media (Blain, Boyle and O'Donnell 1993). A strong relationship exists

between the geo-political locations of nations and their sports typologies. The more powerful, 'core' nations are deemed to have peoples of sound morality, character and temperament; peripheral nationals are the opposite. Northern nations (Scandinavia, the UK, Germany) produce calm, reliable, cultured individuals. The further south one goes, the more this stereo-type changes. Southern Europeans are 'emotional'; South Americans are 'fiery'; Africans are 'magical' and 'irrational'. While it is possible to highlight the contradictions or anomalies within these international discourses, the stereo-types remain impervious to fundamental change (O'Donnell 1994).[11]

Of all the social disciplines, anthropology has produced the most sophisticated readings of football traditions within clubs or nations. In the Mediterranean, Bromberger (1993: 120) found that, aesthetically, 'the styles of Olympique Marseille and Juventus are strongly opposed, each reflecting a particular vision of the world, of mankind, of the city". He discusses at length the value system of Juventus as symbolized in the three Ss: simplicity, seriousness, sobriety. *La Vecchia Signora* (the Old Lady) are committed to the industrial rigour and discipline espoused by the Agnelli family who own the club and the Fiat motor empire (Bromberger 1995b: 148–53). This Juventus style has been embodied in the endeavour of Cabrini and Tardelli and, most famously of all, the graceful power of Charles.

In South America, Archetti (1996, 1997a) has written perceptively of the symbolic importance of football players who refuse to fit into the professionalism of positional play and tactical systems. Players such as Maradona, Valderrama and Romario are lauded as *pibes* ('boys') by the fans, not only for their sublime skills, but also for their carefree and joyous play, which kindles personal memories of childhood games and formative experiences, uncluttered by the burdens of adult life. The poor origins of such players also help confirm the collectively held myth that football genius is most readily found and cultivated in the urban *potreros* (wastelands) and slums of Buenos Aires or Rio de Janeiro. Archetti's thesis finds ready evidence in the UK through the adulation of street-kid geniuses such as Paul Gascoigne, George Best and Jimmy Johnstone (see Inglis 1977: 122–3). Indeed, it is often said, as a kind of counter-myth to explain the sudden disappearance of such players, that the natural habitat for their rearing, the inner-city backstreet, has long since gone.

Within Brazilian football folklore, the relationship of severe urban deprivation and fantastic football style is embodied by the *malandro*, another mythological figure. The *malandro*'s qualities are found in his indefatigability, his ability as a streetwise trickster, skilled at surviving by fooling fortune and authority alike.

> If you go to a *favela* . . . you will see a woman – there is no man in the house – who takes care of her five or six boys. The smartest of these boys, who can flee from the police if he needs to, who can put up a fight, is a good football player. He can dribble past life's difficulties. He can provide food for his mother. There is a deep connection between tricking defenders on the football field and being a smart boy in real life. This boy is a *malandro*.
>
> (Prof. Muniz Sodre, quoted by Kuper 1994: 197–8)

Yet the vast economic, social and geo-climatic differences in Brazil mean that the *malandro*'s position in the cultural imaginary is cross-cut by other regional traditions. Rio's teams are true pioneers of the South American aesthetic, through play that is flamboyant and rhythmic, flowing between careful build-up and sudden attack. In the urban sprawl of São Paulo, the football is more industrious, routinized and geometrically fixed. Pôrto Alegre's teams employ a more 'Uruguayan' approach, playing without stars and often with a violent determination to win, regardless of the means.[12]

Moreover, just as Spanish football interleaves with the *corrida*, so the Latin American game sits within an ensemble of other popular cultural practices, most notably national dance. Brazil's *carioca* rhythm is an extension of samba music. The Colombian striker, Faustino Asprilla, is a renowned fan of salsa and other gyrating forms of body culture. During the 1978 World Cup finals, the balletic skills of Oswaldo Ardiles were likened to those of a tango dancer by the foreign media. Indeed, a deeper understanding of the complexity of Argentinian football style is provided through a closer appreciation of the tango. According to Archetti (1993, 1994), one of the corporeal poetics of the tango centres upon a ritual drama of masculine honour. The *compadrito* is a young male, a ready seducer of women, with a criminal past, strong and potentially violent, but with a willingness to cheat if necessary. In keeping his woman, and beating off the attention of rivals, the *compadrito* may find himself confronted by a humiliating loss of honour, and 'the choice between courage and death or pardon'. Hence, while a bourgeois audience might be wooed by the grace of the dancer's poise, the violent semiotics of his movements remain equally instructive. Within this idiom, a violent tackle on a dangerous opponent is just as redolent of the tango as a dextrous turn on the ball, and deemed to be equally suitable by the crowd.

In marking out the 'traditions' of these styles, we must, of course, avoid assuming that they say something essential about the relevant nation. The flowering of football traditions in Brazil and Argentina owes a great debt to international pollination, particularly by early UK sides and the 1960s exploration of European 'science'. Perhaps this process is most visible in a relatively small nation such as Sweden, which has reached the last four of the World Cup finals on three occasions, and won the Olympic final in 1948. Swedish football places a decidedly Nordic, collectivist emphasis on *esprit de corps*, thereby extending the early national sports culture and the regimen of gymnastics long taught in the educational system (Levine and Vinten-Johansen 1981: 24). But, in the early post-war period, large numbers of Swedish players played abroad under different tactical systems. The Swedish FA adopted the English coaching style from the 1960s onwards, and acquired the German defensive habit of

close marking with a *libero*. English coaches working in Swedish club football developed the zonal game in the late 1970s, before Sven Goran Eriksson at IFK Göteborg encouraged players to perform more creatively (Peterson 1994). The Swedes' success would therefore seem to rest on an adaptability and openness to outside influences, a pragmatic football strategy which also represents a remarkably honest intellectual assessment of their national position within a global setting.

Style in Post-Modernity: sports globalization and football's response

The globalization of football therefore has long involved the inter-penetration of sporting aesthetics, techniques and tactics. Such hybridity can only expand as we enter the post-modern milieu of increased labour migration, television coverage and international competition. Yet it may be that the post-modernization of football's aesthetics is most acutely experienced within the structural relations of the game to other sports. In chapter 1, I discussed the common genus of association football and many other ball sports. In true modernist fashion, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, football and other sports became increasingly differentiated and specialized, in terms of rules, playing positions, tactics and body technique. The cultural integrity of every modern sport was protected by the assumption that each was *sui generis*.

Nevertheless, the differentiation of these 'modern' sports was always incomplete. Football players have tended to share the same age and fitness levels as other sports performers; indeed, it has been argued that modernity homogenizes these sports further, by demanding particular 'performance levels' and athletic body shape from the professionals. Spatially, with the exception of pre-industrial cricket, most outdoor team sports share the same approximate size and rectangular shape of playing field. Temporally, English sports follow calendars designed to fit with other popular sports.

There are several models employed by sociologists to explain the globalization of sports. An important one is 'Americanization' and this certainly has ramifications for football. Some cities or nations are highly receptive to the incursion of American and other sports. This is particularly apparent where the status of professional football teams has declined markedly or is unable to compete effectively with more powerful opponents. In Greece, for example, basketball has virtually displaced football as the national sport, primarily because of the latter's poor international standing; a similar situation obtains in Poland (Andrews and Mazur 1995). In Argentina, the dominance of Buenos Aires clubs has encouraged cities from the interior to adopt other sports at which they can be more competitive.[13] As European football also becomes increasingly dominated by a select elite, it may be that supporters of smaller clubs, invariably to be found in the provinces, will also follow suit.

Yet, the Americanization of global sports need not be an oppositional one for football. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Nike transferred their National Basketball Association (NBA) marketing strategies to football, which were soon adopted by more established football companies like Reebok and Adidas. Most European leagues have adopted the American practice of numbering players at each club as part of their squad (or roster), rather than for individual games. Hence, one of the most coveted shirts for young players is no longer the number 10 (immortalized by Pelé) or number 14 (of Cruyff), but is instead the number 23 (retired by Michael Jordan at the Chicago Bulls).

More substantively, it is argued by some coaches that a close tactical relationship exists now between football and other sports. For example, the Irish national team's attritional style during the late 1980s and 1990s may have replicated England's 'direct football', but it also drew heavily on the hard tackling and kicking skills found in Gaelic football or hurling (Giulianotti 1996b). In southern Europe and the Americas, it is thought that basketball has significantly influenced football techniques and tactics. The relative warmth serves to promote the popularity of small-team games, such as five-a-side, which is played indoors, on the beach or on small, multi-sport floodlit pitches during cooler evenings. Players find themselves operating within the same kind of spatial and competitive parameters as basketball, the indoor sport *par excellence*. The pitch area is the same size, marking tends to be tight, the teams have five members including a guard / keeper minding the hoop/goal, while play moves repeatedly from end to end. In the search for skills and strategies that will defeat opponents, it seems quite logical to look to another sport where solutions to similar problems are much more evolved. Today, the more obvious examples of basketball's influence would seem to include triangular or diamond shaped passing patterns, to hold possession or maintain attacks; zonal defensive systems; and the use of cross-field passing during fast counter-attacks.

Football has sought to curtail the appeal of American sports by going on the offensive itself in terms of 'Americanizing' the game's aesthetic and technical principles to attract new audiences (especially American ones). In doing so, FIFA has tended to be stuck in the old modernist, Taylorist mode of thinking, which assumes that the aesthetic aspects of football can be measured and made more efficient in terms of time and motion. Productivity on the park is deemed essential: time-wasting and feigning injury have been attacked; the old pass-backs to goal-keepers are banned; injury time often runs into five or six minutes; several match balls placed around the pitch keep up the tempo. The rule changes have altered football's geometry and temporal pattern, but contribute little to the pleasure of playing or watching. The increase in the effective time of play has primarily confirmed football's emphasis on player fitness and the standardization of playing patterns. The new pressure on players to keep the game moving has given them less time, either to think before passing the ball, or to gain some respite during breaks in play. Further changes have been

mooted along similar lines: replacing 'throw-ins' with 'kick-ins' and banning any form of tackling. The latter measure would destroy one of football's most elementary skills and part of its aesthetic attraction for all but the most inexperienced of spectators.

Rule changes such as these are aimed at Taylor-making the aesthetics of football to fit with the fast entertainment typically favoured by passive television consumers. Some innovations have proven successful already: specifically, the digital clocks in Italy showing how much injury time the referee is playing, and the time-outs employed in Brazil for advertising space and for coaches to intercede among their players. Yet football's highest authorities have some major problems in limiting the political impact of television and new media technology upon the game. Slow motion action replays are almost as old as televised football itself and have long concentrated on crucial refereeing decisions over goal-line saves, penalties, fouls, corners and throw-ins. Inevitably, many have been shown to be wrong, but 'human fallibility' was accepted by most associations as a natural hazard of the game. However, some associations (including FIFA and UEFA) have come to accept videotaped evidence as part of any enquiry into matches, thereby implying that television should be used for making crucial decisions during games. Since 1994, the German Football Association (DFB) has ordered three league matches to be replayed because of refereeing mistakes that came to light from television evidence. The DFB's actions brought them into direct conflict with FIFA who remain committed to the pre-television principle that the referee's decisions are final and irrevocable. Some leagues have experimented with a 'second referee' in the stands, using television consoles to adjudicate on key incidents. FIFA's refereeing experts have been reluctant to support such changes, fearing that it would create a two-tier game (where aids were available at most professional games, but not semi-professional or amateur level), and effectively institutionalize the belief that problems in matches originate with the referee rather than the players. Moreover, a 'humanist' view has been put forward by some coaches, notably Javier Clemente, that technology would destroy the interpretive soul of football, ending the debates and arguments over player actions and refereeing responses. Ironically, Clemente's empathy towards referees has been undermined by FIFA's authoritarian ruling, that giant screens inside stadia cannot replay controversial decisions for spectators. New computer software is already shifting the argument further against FIFA's position. One recent innovation is the computer simulator which traces and projects the exact timing and path of shots or passes, and is used by television stations in match post-mortems. The device measures the speed and angle of shots, but also determines the veracity of offside decisions from oblique viewing angles by simulating the likely path of the ball.

For the spectator, the relationship of television to the aesthetics of football can underline class inequalities. Football players or matches exude a certain 'aura' that cannot be reproduced by photography, television or any other medium (see Benjamin 1975, 1979). This auratic element of football involves a 'strange weave of time and space'; close and immediate proximity is essential to experiencing it. The 'aura' of playing cannot be replicated by watching on the sidelines, which is why so few ex-professionals attend matches. The 'aura' of 'being there', at the match, cannot be replicated by watching at home, no matter how advanced the technology. Yet, as I noted in the conclusion to chapter 4, access to this fundamental aesthetic of spectating is increasingly controlled by commercial interests. The claim to have 'been there' is restricted increasingly to the wealthy. Even the finest simulations of 'aura', as afforded by leading televisual technology, still necessitates a sizeable financial outlay. For those who struggle to afford entry, the 'anti-auratic' medium of ordinary television cannot come near to the 'auratic' match. Little wonder, then, that so many disenfranchised fans seek to bridge the gap by watching their club's players during mid-week training sessions. In this at least, the aesthetics of football may be imagined or studied in their studio production, although public display of the completed work remains a commodified experience. I turn to examine more fully the role of these contemporary class distinctions in chapter 8.