

**DICTATORSHIP, FOOTBALL AND LITERATURE: FOR AN ANTIFASCIST EDUCATION**

***DITADURA, FUTEBOL E LITERATURA: POR UMA EDUCAÇÃO ANTIFASCISTA***

***DICTADURA, FÚTBOL Y LITERATURA: POR UNA EDUCACIÓN ANTIFASCISTA***



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**ABSTRACT:** This essay aims to explore football and literature with the intention of reflecting the history and memory, addressing issues that can help denaturalize and combat fascist thinking. In this manner, this writing proposes to think about football through an antifascist and democratic lens. In order to do this, we bring literature and sports into the spotlight, anchored here in poetry and football. From this perspective, two former players associated with the history of the Clube de Regatas do Flamengo (Sócrates Brasileiro and Adriano Imperador) are brought here to converge with two characters from Latin American poetry (Manoel de Barros and Pablo Neruda). By exposing two chronicles related to football and poetry, it is believed that it is possible to witness the inscription of a "non-fascist" desire, which should guide all forms of educational thinking that involve teaching and learning through reading.

**KEYWORDS:** Football. Fascism. Military Dictatorship. Literature. Antifascist Education.

**RESUMO:** *Este ensaio tem como objetivo interpelar futebol e literatura, com a intenção de refletir a história e a memória, tensionando questões que possam desnaturalizar e combater o pensamento fascista. Deste modo, o presente escrito se propõe pensar o futebol pelo viés antifascista e democrático. Para tal, traz ao palco a literatura e o esporte, aqui ancorado na poesia e no futebol. Sob esta mirada, foram trazidos dois ex-jogadores ligados a história do Clube de Regatas do Flamengo (Sócrates Brasileiro e Adriano Imperador) para fazer convergência com dois personagens da poesia latino-americana (Manoel de Barros e Pablo Neruda). A partir da exposição de duas crônicas, que relacionam futebol e poesia, acredita-se na possibilidade de acompanhar a inscrição de um desejo “não-fascista”, que deve orientar toda e qualquer forma de pensamento educativo, que envolve o ensinar e o aprender, através da leitura.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Futebol. Fascismo. Ditadura Militar. Literatura. Educação antifascista.*

**RESUMEN:** *Este ensayo pretende interpelar al fútbol y la literatura, con la intención de reflexionar sobre la historia y la memoria, planteando interrogantes que puedan desnaturalizar y combatir el pensamiento fascista. De esta manera, este escrito propone pensar el fútbol desde una perspectiva antifascista y democrática. Para ello, lleva al escenario la literatura y el deporte, aquí anclados en la poesía y el fútbol. Bajo esta mirada se trajo a dos exjugadores vinculados a la historia del Clube de Regatas do Flamengo (Sócrates Brasileiro y Adriano Imperador) para converger con dos personajes de la poesía latinoamericana (Manoel de Barros y Pablo Neruda). A partir de la exposición de dos crónicas, que relacionan fútbol y poesía, creemos en la posibilidad de acompañar la inscripción de un deseo “no fascista”, que debe guiar todas y cada una de las formas de pensamiento educativo, que implica enseñar y aprender, a través de la lectura.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Fútbol. Fascismo. Dictadura militar. Literatura. Educación antifascista.*

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## Introduction

In our recent history, more precisely since the 2014 World Cup held in Brazil, we have witnessed the rise of fascist demonstrations within Brazilian society. The iconic yellow jersey of the national soccer team was appropriated as a symbol by the militants of the Brazilian far-right, whose main slogan was "Our flag will never be red." For them, wearing the yellow jersey was a way to reaffirm their intentions. The boos directed at President Dilma Rousseff in the football stadiums during the World Cup planted the seed of the 2016 coup.

This is just one of many examples that demonstrate that fascism is a totalitarian political movement fundamentally based on nationalism. It opposes individual freedoms and expressions in the name of nationalist purity. Therefore, fascism is an authoritarian regime and, as a consequence, anti-democratic. As it is authoritarian, it advocates for the restriction of freedoms and the annihilation of its opponents.

In addition to the exacerbation of nationalist sentiment and the suppression of its opponents, fascism also revolves around the centralization of power in the hands of a leader; the alignment of its values with religious beliefs; the persecution of opponents, often through imprisonment, torture, and sometimes death; the use of militarism as a control mechanism; and the censorship of the media, arts, music, cinema, literature, and others.

Fascism is synonymous with violence, extermination, and the obliteration of differences. History, shamefully, offers numerous examples of totalitarian regimes around the world: Benito Mussolini's Italy (1922-1943), Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany (1933-1945), Francisco Franco's bloody Spain (1939-1975); Brazil's civil-military coup that installed the dictatorship from 1964 to 1985; Chile under General Augusto José Ramón Pinochet Ugarte (1973-1990). Unfortunately, the list is much longer. Fascism today reinvents itself, allowing world powers to continue flirting with fascist and anti-democratic regimes.

Thus, this essay positions itself as both antifascist and democratic. To this end, it brings literature and sports, anchored in poetry and football, into the discussion. It is worth noting that both football and literature are platforms through which fascism operates, but also through which resistance to it emerges. Nelson Rodrigues was right when he stated, "Many times it is a lack of character that decides a match. One does not create literature, politics, or football with good intentions" (Rodrigues, 2024, our translation).

The following writing is the result of an extension project titled “*Urubu de letra*”, which aims to narrate, through chronicles<sup>4</sup>, the passion for *Clube de Regatas do Flamengo*. However, this narrative seeks to go beyond a mere discussion of football fervor; it intends to connect Flamengo with themes related to the humanities and cultural studies, through the lens of literature. Thus, this text proposes, by focusing on a segment of the project, to link writings that connect Flamengo and its historical figures from a democratic perspective, juxtaposing two poets with two players.

The intentions behind this project involve the understanding that literature, as a sociocultural production of humanity, can build bridges between academic knowledge and life stories, thereby bringing academia closer to society through educational formation. It is in this context that we see the practice of writing, relating sport, poetry, and art, as a medium with the pedagogical potential to break free from the walls of the university and reach readers beyond the confines of educational institutions. According to Sarah Ipiranga (2019, p. 106, our translation):

Literary texts represent a repository of knowledge experienced by humanity and re-signified through language. In them, behaviors, profiles, and ways of life are outlined, revealing the often tortuous processes of human 'occupation,' and offering insights to reflect on our present and the conditions under which we wish to shape our future.

In alignment with our intent, Jorge Larrosa (2019) suggests that the reader creates a poetic stage marked by observation and the depersonalization of the object of contemplation and formal discipline. This allows the reading of a poem to transcend the poet's intimacy, turning it into a moment of distant contemplation that adheres to the reader independently. The author's suggestion is that reading is an exercise in listening and that, in itself, it can lead the reader to reflect on what has been read.

From this perspective, this essay brings forth two former players associated with the history of *Clube de Regatas do Flamengo*, converging with two figures from Latin American poetry. In this context, Sócrates Brasileiro and Adriano Imperador share the stage with two of the greatest exponents of Latin American literature: Manoel de Barros and Pablo Neruda. The

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<sup>4</sup> The two chronicles that we present below were published on the portal “*Ludopédio*” – the largest football portal in Latin America. This portal has a political scope linked to football and democracy. It is a media outlet that fights against gender and racial prejudice in the sports field, in addition to preserving the sports memory of football.

selection of these figures for the “game” of this writing is intended to challenge fascism and oppose all forms of antidemocratic ideologies propagated by this political ideology.

Thus, the present essay aims to intertwine football and literature with the intention of reflecting on history and memory, addressing issues that can form the foundation for antifascist education. It is through the path of reading that we dare to present the word as a lesson, as Jorge Larrosa (2019) asserts, a lesson is an invitation to reading. In some way, the chronicles presented here underscore the importance of the writer’s availability and the reader’s receptiveness. For this author, this educational process of teaching and learning occurs within a “*Mútua entrega: condição em um duplo devir*”<sup>5</sup> (Larrosa, 2019, p. 174, our translation).

It is in this context that Sócrates, one of the key figures of the Corinthian democracy, exchanges passes with Manoel de Barros, both having in common the persecution they faced during the Brazilian dictatorship. Following this, Adriano Imperador is highlighted alongside the Chilean Pablo Neruda to reflect on love and difference. Before that, in the next section, the analysis of the fascism phenomenon through the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari will be discussed.

### For a Non-Fascist Life

*How does one avoid becoming a fascist, especially when (and even more so when) one believes oneself to be a revolutionary militant?*  
(Foucault in “*Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*”, 1977, our translation)

In writing the preface<sup>6</sup> for the American edition of "Anti-Oedipus" by Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault highlights fascism as the central adversary or primary enemy of the work. However, Foucault (1977) insists that the fascism which the project of "Anti-Oedipus" combats is not solely the historical fascism of Mussolini and Hitler but, more importantly, the fascism that resides within all of us, permeating our everyday behaviors. In other words, fascism is not only an institutionalized form of government but also a way of life. From this perspective, Foucault (1977) interprets the Deleuzian-Guattarian work as an introduction to a non-fascist life.

To understand what allows Foucault to make such a claim, two key movements must be undertaken, which will be presented in the development of this section: 1) understanding how

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<sup>5</sup> Mutual surrender: a condition in a double becoming.

<sup>6</sup> FOUCAULT, M. Preface. In: DELEUZE, G.; GUATTARI, F. **Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia**. New York: Viking Press, 1977.

Deleuze and Guattari position desire as a fundamental element for comprehending fascism; and 2) how the articulation between micropolitics and macropolitics enables us to grasp both the production of fascism and the means to combat it.

In the thought of Deleuze and Guattari (2010, 2012), fascism is addressed by questioning how the masses can act against their interests, that is, why human beings endure exploitation for so long, to the point of desiring exploitation for themselves and others. In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari (2010) indicate that fascism is not merely a rational issue, in the sense that the masses were deceived and thus surrendered to power, but rather that the masses, at certain moments and under certain circumstances, have desired fascism. This is what needs to be explained, fascism in terms of desire.

This perspective arises from Deleuze and Guattari's (2010) understanding of desire not as a lack, but as production. What does this mean? Desire is not a lack; it is not deficient in some external object. Inspired by Spinoza, the authors conceive desire as the effort or inclination toward something useful to the desire itself. Thus, from this perspective, according to Deleuze and Guattari (2012), based on Spinoza, we do not desire something because it is good; rather, it is good because we desire it. Desire is the production of reality, whereas fundamentally, social production is, first and foremost, desiring-production.

Therefore, the desire circulating within subjects is neither self-contained nor stagnant but is modified by the encounters a subject has. This means that desire is socially managed, in that it is either expanded or constrained depending on the things (other subjects, work, music one listens to, books one reads, etc.) with which the subject interacts and how these relationships are established.

Within this line of reasoning, every mode of social production is a mode of circulation and production of desire (2010; 2012), such that society is fundamentally a circuit of desiring-production. The connection to fascism lies in the fact that all forms of submission do not occur exclusively through force or power but through the capture of this desire. Consequently, the key issue, according to Deleuze and Guattari (2012), is the analysis of the quality of desire, that is, what forms of sociability certain desires generate, as well as what subjectivities are invested in these forms of social relations.

This does not imply that Deleuze and Guattari disregard the materiality of social production, situated at the macropolitical level, in favor of desire, understood as micropolitics. There is no opposition between micropolitics and macropolitics, but rather an interconnection, such that the entire social fabric, for Deleuze and Guattari (2012), is simultaneously molar

(macro) and molecular (micro). At the molar or macropolitical level, society is understood in binary and oppositional terms, such as categories of social class, gender, or political position (left or right). However, these same categories, at the molecular or micropolitical level, are distributed in ways that force their deconstruction, opening space for new experiences beyond binarism and generating paradoxes within them.

In this sense, every social form, including fascism, is simultaneously molar and molecular, macropolitical and micropolitical. If both levels are equally valued, it is because Deleuze and Guattari (2012) understand that experiences occurring at the molecular and micropolitical level only have an effect insofar as they are capable of, in some way, redistributing the binary organizations of the molar and macropolitical level. Therefore, an effective analysis of fascism can only be carried out through the articulation between micropolitical and macropolitical levels.

Thus, there is a coexistence between the macropolitical and micropolitical levels, or between the social and desire, which is the key interpretive framework that Deleuze and Guattari (2012) provide for understanding the phenomenon of fascism. By proposing desire as a fundamental element of this analysis, the authors indicate that desire is the condition both for subjects to desire their servitude, moving toward fascism, and for the possibility of combating it.

It is essential to emphasize, revisiting Foucault's preface (1977), that desire is the condition for both fascism and a non-fascist life. It is, therefore, the same process, capable of mobilizing different ways of life. The central issue lies in the need for a keen perception, one capable of understanding which modes of life are implicated in our social practices. If fascism is, in its essence, a desire, as indicated by Deleuze and Guattari (2010; 2012), it becomes relevant to analyze which desires guide our forms of sociability, considering that every mode of social production is a form of desire inscription. It is up to us, therefore, to pursue those modes that point toward an "art of non-fascist living," as Foucault (1977) envisioned.

In light of this, we believe that both poetry and football present opportunities to accompany the inscription of a "non-fascist" desire, as both are privileged spaces for understanding the intersection between social production and desiring-production. In the following sections, we propose an analysis of two chronicles that address football and poetry, seeking to demonstrate the viability of combating fascism through the particular experiences provided by these two arts (yes, football is also art!).

## Sócrates and Manoel de Barros: On Poems and a Sinless Player<sup>7</sup>

“- And the words, do they have life?  
- Words to them have flesh, affliction, pubic hairs — and the color of ecstas”  
Manoel de Barros in “*O guardador de águas*” (Barros, 2010, p. 249, our translation)

Manoel de Barros (1916-2014), one of Brazil’s most illustrious poets, also known as “the poet of insignificant things,” released his first work in 1937, *Poemas concebidos sem pecado*<sup>8</sup>. Manoel emerged as a troubadour of simple things, exalting the grandeur of everyday occurrences in his verses. In 1972, 35 years later, one of the greatest players in the history of world football, Sócrates Brasileiro (1954-2011), was “conceived without sin” while playing for *Botafogo de Ribeirão Preto*, forging his life through the virtue of struggle. As for us, self-proclaimed sinners, we turn to Manoel de Barros when he asserts, “I have no mechanisms for sainthood” (Barros, 2010, p. 311, our translation), and dare to say that the greatest sin of Sócrates’ life was having played so little time wearing Flamengo’s jersey.

Due to his friendship with Zico, with whom he had been a loyal teammate on the Brazilian national team, Sócrates joined Flamengo at the end of 1985 but left prematurely at the beginning of 1987. “I am privileged. First Corinthians, now Flamengo. This is everything a player could aspire to in their career,” Sócrates once remarked. Wearing Flamengo’s red and black colors, Sócrates only played alongside Zico once. This encounter occurred in Flamengo’s 4-1 victory over Fluminense, where Zico silenced the rival fans who had called him “crippled” as he was returning from yet another knee injury. In that match, Zico scored three goals, showing the Fluminense crowd that “*A place without behavior is the heart*” (Barros, 2010, p. 309, our translation).

Sócrates played only a handful of games for Flamengo, totaling 25 appearances and scoring three goals. However, it was enough to secure a title with the Gávea team, as he was part of the squad that won the 1986 Campeonato Carioca. Even if Sócrates had only played once for Flamengo, he would still deserve a tribute in written form. After all, to write about him, one must evoke poetry: “I do not want the good reason of things. I want the enchantment of words” (Barros, 2010, p. 370, our translation). Therefore, in engaging with one of the most

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<sup>7</sup> This chronicle was published on the Ludopédio website on June 28, 2023 (Zoboli; Souza, 2023). Available at: <https://ludopedio.org.br/arquivancada/socrates-e-manoel-de-barros-ou-sobre-poemas-e-um-jogador-concebidos-sem-pecado/>. Accessed on: July 10, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Poems Conceived Without Sin.



lyrical figures in Brazilian football, we have chosen the poet who defines poetry as “The honey of words” (Barros, 2010, p. 370, our translation).

Thus, we enlist for this dialogue the distinguished member of the Brazilian poets’ selection, Manoel Wenceslau Leite de Barros, born in Cuiabá in December 1916. Throughout his life, Manoel, together with his wife, Stella Leite, had three children and passed away in Campo Grande at the age of 97 in 2014. His childhood, which permeates his verses, was spent in the Pantanal, where his father, João Wenceslau Barros, owned property. In his youth, he moved to the capital of his home state to study at a boarding school and later to Rio de Janeiro, where he studied Law and joined the Communist Party. Although he distanced himself from party activism, Manoel de Barros never severed his connection to communist principles, turning this ideology into a guiding force in his life. As he himself wrote: “Hunger is not a communist invention, uncle” (Barros, 2010, p. 30, our translation).

With this work, Manoel de Barros began the publication of his poetry and reflections, which largely focused on everyday elements and intimate observations of nature. His writing, though often colloquial, stood out for its avant-garde approach, valuing the ordinary and creating neologisms around the trivial. This accomplishment, though complex, was presented by Manoel in an accessible and unpretentious manner. He himself stated that, regarding nothingness, he had profound insights. “I am a picker of waste: I love leftovers like good flies. I wanted my voice to have the shape of a song. Because I do not belong to information technology: I belong to inventionology. I only use words to compose my silences” (Barros, 2024, our translation).

Sócrates Brasileiro Sampaio de Souza Vieira de Oliveira was born in Belém do Pará, but as a child, he moved with his family to Ribeirão Preto, São Paulo. His name, Sócrates, was chosen by his father, a lover of philosophy and literature, who paid homage to one of his favorite philosophers. Under the influence of letters, Sócrates’ father believed that “From the perspective of being an insect, man might better understand metaphysics” (Barros, 2010, p. 323, our translation). In 1964, following the military coup, Sócrates, then only 10 years old, witnessed his father setting fire to his beloved books, an event that would deeply mark his life. As he later reflected: “I am many shattered people” (Barros, 2010, p. 313, our translation). This episode contributed to Sócrates developing a passion for literary works, using them to fuel his thirst for knowledge and freedom. “Who walks the track is an iron train. I am water running between stones: — freedom finds a way” (Barros, 2010, p. 156, our translation).

In 1972, Sócrates joined the youth team of *Botafogo de Ribeirão Preto* (SP) while simultaneously beginning his studies at the Faculty of Medicine. In 1977, he won the São Paulo state championship with the Pantera da Mogiana team and graduated as a doctor from the University of São Paulo in Ribeirão Preto. Manoel de Barros, whose work frequently touched on childhood, might have dedicated these verses to Sócrates: “The boy is now a learned man who deals with quantum physics. But he longs for the cans. He misses pulling by a dirty string some sad cans” (Barros, 2010, p. 367, our translation). Between medical knowledge and the nostalgia of playing with a ball, Sócrates chose his childhood passion: football.

In 1978, Sócrates bid farewell to Botafogo and joined Corinthians<sup>9</sup>, where he became one of the greatest idols in the club’s history. Besides *Botafogo de Ribeirão Preto* and Corinthians, Sócrates also played for Flamengo, Fiorentina in Italy (1984-1985), and Santos, his childhood team (1988-1989). However, it was at *Botafogo de Ribeirão Preto* that he ended his career, once again wearing the colors of the team that launched him (1989).

In addition to the nickname “Doctor,” earned due to his medical degree, Sócrates was also known as “*Magrão*” because of his tall stature and slim physique. As Barros describes: “I was not made from the feet up” (Barros, 2010, p. 306, our translation). Due to his tiny feet, disproportionate to his height, Sócrates developed a distinctive skill with his heels, often being described as “a poorly planted post” (Barros, 2010, p. 316, our translation). On the midfield, however, Sócrates displayed his genius, capable of combining footballing technique with the poetic lightness that Manoel de Barros often described. He played with rare elegance, making the complex seem simple. With his lanky frame and masterful ball control, Sócrates turned football afternoons into spectacles of grace and beauty. “I am capable of inventing an afternoon from a heron” (Barros, 2010, p. 360, our translation).

Beyond the poetry expressed by Manoel de Barros with pencil and paper, and by Sócrates with a ball and heel, what unites these two legendary figures is their “downward gaze.” Both shared an ideology that championed equality and social justice, always keeping an eye on the oppressed minorities, as reflected in *Retrato do artista quando coisa*<sup>10</sup>:

I learn more from bees than from airplanes. I was born with this downward gaze. I grew up with this vision of the smaller being, the insignificant. The fact that society kicks around like a cockroach grows in importance to my eyes. I still do not understand why I inherited this downward gaze. I always

<sup>9</sup> For Corinthians, Sócrates played 298 games, scored 172 goals, and won three São Paulo championship titles (1979-1982-1983).

<sup>10</sup> Portrait of the Artist as a Thing.

imagine it comes from wounded ancestries. I was raised in the wild and learned to love the little things on the ground — before the celestial ones. Abandoned people move me as much as the superbly insignificant things (Barros, 2010, p. 361, our translation).

At the age of 18, during one of his militant activities, Manoel de Barros defaced a statue in the capital city of Rio de Janeiro with the phrase “Long live communism.” The next day, the police arrived at the boarding house where he was staying, intending to arrest him. However, the establishment owner spoke so highly of the young man’s good character that the officers were moved and let him go. Nevertheless, they confiscated his books and files, including the manuscript of his unpublished first work, *Nossa Senhora de minha escuridão*<sup>11</sup>.

Like Manoel de Barros, Dr. Sócrates also faced hardships under the fascist regime of the military dictatorship in Brazil. Along with other players such as Casagrande, Wladimir, and Zenon, Sócrates played a leading role in the creation of the movement known as “Corinthians Democracy” in 1983. This movement aimed not only to oppose the military dictatorship that had persisted since the coup of 1964 but also to promote the “*Diretas Já*” campaign, which advocated for the return of direct and democratic presidential elections.

Furthermore, within the internal management of Corinthians, the political movement established a new form of democratic governance in which significant decisions for the club, such as signings and internal regulations, were made collectively by the players, the coach, the kit manager, and other team members, with everyone having an equal say in the decision-making process.

Thus, Sócrates, as a citizen and a player, used his words and influence to make his mark in the fight for democracy, contributing significantly to shaping a new chapter in Brazil’s history. “We liked words when they disturbed the normal sense of ideas,” says Manoel (Barros, 2010, p. 450). For his struggle and significance both on and off the field, Sócrates is worthy of all the poetic license granted by Manoel de Barros. In his *Livro das ignorâncias*, Manoel Manoel mentions that “A sunflower appropriated God: it was in Van Gogh” (Barros, 2010, p. 301, our translation). Therefore, to conclude this writing, we proclaim in paraphrase: A player appropriated God: it was in Sócrates.

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<sup>11</sup> Our Lady of My Darkness.

## From Neruda to the Emperor... Some Love Poems<sup>12</sup>

*What will those who haven't touched my blood say of my poetry?*  
Pablo Neruda in “*Livro das perguntas*” (Neruda, 2009a, p. 27, our translation)

What are great poets made of, if not an emotion that is almost always on the surface, a cut capable of expelling blood through the pores, exposing their passions? For this visceral part of the text, we have summoned the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda (1904-1973) to declare our love for the great rubro-negro Emperor, Adriano Imperador (1982). In his vast body of work, Neruda has several books dedicated to singing love in the form of poetry. Today, we will explore fragments of those poems as we narrate Adriano's trajectory at Flamengo.

The Chilean poet was born with the name Ricardo Eliécer Neftalí Reyes Basoalto and later created the pseudonym<sup>13</sup> Pablo Neruda, which eventually became his legal name. “Is there anything more foolish in life than being called Pablo Neruda?” (Neruda, 2009a, p. 71, our translation). The rubro-negro player was born with the name Adriano Leite Ribeiro and during a devastating season between 2003 and 2004, playing for Inter Milan in Italian football, he was proclaimed “Emperor.” “Where is the boy I once was? Does he still live within me, or has he gone?” (Neruda, 2009a, p. 95, our translation).

The similarities between them don't stop there. Neruda never became an emperor, but he was elected Senator in Chile for a term (1945-1948) under the Communist Party. In the same year, he was elected, Neruda came to São Paulo to pay tribute to the political leader João Carlos Prestes, and on that day, Pablo read to a packed Pacaembu stadium of over 100,000 spectators. Adriano, on the other hand, never became a poet, but he crafted endless poems with the ball at his feet. For us Flamengo supporters, the most beautiful were the “verses and rhymes” he composed with Petkovic in the 2009 Brazilian Championship victory<sup>14</sup>. “Without a doubt, everything I owe you is starred, what I owe you is like a well in a wild zone where time stored wandering lightning” (Neruda, 2009b, p. 54, our translation).

Neruda began his career as a poet at an early age, at just 13 years old. His writing encompasses a rich variety of styles: from passionate love poems to surrealist poetry and even

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<sup>12</sup> This article was published on the Ludopédio website on July 22, 2022 (Zoboli; Correia, 2022). Available at: <https://ludopedio.org.br/arquibancada/de-neruda-para-o-imperador-alguns-poemas-de-amor/>.

<sup>13</sup> Pseudonyms are “fictitious” names adopted by authors to sign works without using their civil names. The function of pseudonyms is to preserve the author's identity or even to “look charming”. It is important to mention that this resource is not restricted to and exclusive to the publishing market. They are also used by journalists to preserve the identity and security of their sources when producing reports.

<sup>14</sup> In 2009, in addition to the title of Brazilian champion, Adriano was also the top scorer in the competition, along with Diego Tardelli, with 19 goals each.

political writings and manifestos. At only 17, he started his studies at the University of Chile, his Alma Mater. In 1965, he was awarded the title of *Doctor Honoris Causa* by the British University of Oxford. In October 1971, he received his greatest accolade: Pablo Neruda was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. In 2004, in celebration of the centenary of his birth, the Ibero-American Poetry Prize Pablo Neruda was established in his honor.

Adriano also began his career as a player at a young age. At 9, he joined Flamengo's futsal youth divisions and soon transitioned to football. He made his professional debut for Flamengo in 1999, and by the time he left in 2001, he had won two Campeonato Carioca titles (2000-2001) and the 2001 *Supercopa dos Campeões*. "My love has two lives to love you. That is why I love you when I do not love you, and that is why I love you when I do" (Neruda, 2009b, p. 54, our translation). However, his skill with the ball quickly took him to Europe, and in 2001, Adriano was sold to Inter Milan. Before establishing himself at the Milanese club in 2004, Adriano was loaned to Fiorentina and Parma.

Abroad, his most excellent club was Internazionale, where he won four national titles: two Italian Super Cups and two Coppa Italia titles. In 2006, following the death of his father, Didico (a family nickname) saw his career decline. Sadness, depression, and involvement with alcohol turned the emperor's life into the tones of "a desperate song." "He tried green sleeping pills and extravagant alcohols, swam in beer foam, sought doctors, read pharmacopeias and almanacs, chose love at that hour, but everything proved futile..." (Neruda, 2009c, p. 71, our translation).

In addition to being a poet, Neruda was a significant intellectual in politics and was always committed to social and humanitarian issues in Chile and Latin America. Pablo Neruda was actively involved in the Communist Party and was forced into exile multiple times due to political persecution. In 1970, he withdrew his candidacy for the Chilean presidency to support Salvador Allende, who won the election that year. However, on September 11, 1973, Allende was overthrown in a coup led by General Augusto Pinochet. Just days after the coup, on September 23, Neruda passed away. The cause of his death remains uncertain: some attribute it to the sadness resulting from the coup, while others believe it was due to prostate cancer.

After the coup, Pinochet ordered the looting of Pablo's house (*La Chascona*<sup>15</sup>), in the Chilean capital of Santiago and commanded that his books be burned. "At that moment, books

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<sup>15</sup> In 1953, Neruda built a house in Santiago to meet his lover Matilde. This house was nicknamed La Chascona. Matilde was one of Neruda's wives, and he dedicated his work "The Captain's Verses" to her – a beautiful book of love poems.

ended, the friendship ended, the tirelessly accumulated treasures, the transparent house you and I built: everything ceased to be, except your eyes” (Neruda, 2009b, p. 106, our translation).

In 2008, Adriano returned to Brazil, attempting to regain his passion for playing football. He spent six months in São Paulo before returning to Italy on loan. However, despite some improvement, the Emperor was unable to replicate his good form at the Milan club. In May 2009, Adriano decided to return to Flamengo, his childhood love. “And I wandered like a wounded man through the streets until I realized that I had found love, my territory of kisses and volcanoes” (Neruda, 2009b, p. 13, our translation). After eight years, Adriano returned to Gávea to wear Zico’s iconic number 10 shirt. “I want to do with you what spring does to the cherries” (Neruda, 2006, p. 15, our translation).

In the fourth round of the championship, the Emperor made his debut against Atlético Paranaense and scored one of the goals in the victory (2-1). “What is certain is that the dreadful night trembled, the dawn filled all the cups with its wine, and the sun established its celestial presence” (Neruda, “One Hundred Love Sonnets”). In the seventh round, Flamengo defeated the undefeated Internacional with a 4-0 rout. Adriano scored three goals, one of them from a free kick, reminiscent of the legendary Galinho. With another goal from Adriano, Flamengo beat Botafogo in the rematch after winning the Carioca tri-championship over their rival earlier that year. “Their hearts drunk with wine and dreams pass by me. I am a still bridge between the heart and eternity” (Neruda, 2009d, p. 77, our translation).

In the eleventh round of the first half of the season, Flamengo drew 1-1 at home against Barueri, and the fans bid farewell to coach Cuca. In the following match, under the leadership of coach and idol Andrade, Flamengo secured a victory over Santos at Vila Belmiro. “You may recall that sharp man who emerged from the darkness with a knife, and before we knew it, he understood: he saw the smoke and decided it came from the fire” (Neruda, 2009b, p. 86, our translation).

In the second half of the season, Adriano and Petkovic excelled. Adriano started scoring goals prolifically and established himself as the top scorer of the championship. Petkovic played with flair, scoring two Olympic goals—one against Palmeiras (0-2 Fla) and another against Atlético Mineiro (1-3 Fla). Flamengo jumped to third place with four rounds remaining and entered the title race. “It is I, my love, who knocks on your door” (Neruda, 2006, p. 44). In the penultimate round, after defeating Corinthians 2-0, Flamengo took the lead in the championship for the first time. “Everything belonged to others and to no one, until your beauty and your scarcity of gifts filled the autumn” (Neruda, 2009b, p. 52, our translation).

In a dramatic match in the final round, Flamengo came from behind to beat Grêmio 2-1 and was crowned Brazilian champions for the sixth time. The Emperor, Adriano, cried in front of 85,000 spectators at Maracanã. “It happened this month and in this homeland. What happened was so unexpected, but it was this way: from one day to the next, that country was filled with cherries” (Neruda, 2006, p. 64, our translation). In 2010, after founding the “Empire of Love” with forward Wagner Love, Adriano left Flamengo under turbulent circumstances. Although he attempted to return and play for the club twice more, his performance was not remarkable. In 2011, he won a Brazilian title with Corinthians. Currently, the Emperor is retired from football and frequently expresses his love for Flamengo in his public appearances and on social media.

Pablito is the king of poetry, a leftist intellectual. Here’s a pause for a litigious question: “Are there right-wing intellectuals?” “Did you notice that autumn is like a yellow cow?” (Neruda, 2009a, p. 41, our translation). Neruda was friends with Vinícius de Moraes, a declared Botafogo supporter. I believe out of embarrassment, Vinícius never took Neruda to the stadium to see Botafogo. “If Pablo Neruda had gone to Maracanã on a Flamengo game day, his poems would have been even better.”

### Final considerations

As stated in the introduction of this essay, both the arts and sports are targets of investment by fascist regimes. This effort can be either to promote and propagate fascist ideology or, conversely, to censor and erase dissenting thoughts. In the specific case of Football, this context is intensified by its sociocultural reach. As we can observe in the verses of Carlos Drummond de Andrade, “Football is played in the stadium? Football is played on the beach, Football is played on the street, and Football is played in the soul. The ball is the same: sacred form for stars and amateurs alike. The same thrill of kicking in the delirious World Cup or in the arid space of the hill” (Recanto do poeta, 2024, our translation).

The Latin American dictatorships described in chronicles about Brazil and Chile also had other literary victims, beyond Manoel de Barros and Pablo Neruda. In Brazil, writers and novelists such as Jorge Amado, Nelson Rodrigues, Érico Veríssimo, Rubem Fonseca, and Maria da Conceição Tavares did not escape the censorship imposed by the military regime. Similarly, in Chile, Augusto Pinochet’s regime also curtailed the freedom of expression of various writers. Novelist Luís Sepúlveda (1949) was imprisoned after the 1973 coup, and

Roberto Bolaño (1953–2003), a supporter of leftist ideologies, faced reprisals from Pinochet for his support of Salvador Allende’s revolutionary movement.

In Chilean Football, Carlos Caszely’s story is emblematic. A player for one of Chile’s most popular teams, Colo-Colo, Caszely refused to shake hands with Pinochet shortly before the Chilean national team departed for the 1974 World Cup, held in what was then East Germany. This act of defiance had severe consequences; while Caszely was competing in the World Cup, his mother was abducted and tortured by Pinochet’s regime. Carlos only learned of his mother’s abduction upon returning to Chile after *La Roja*<sup>16</sup> was eliminated from the World Cup.

In 1988, during the plebiscite that would determine whether the military would remain in power, Caszely campaigned against the dictators. He recorded a video alongside his mother campaigning for a “no” vote against the dictatorship. The revelation of the torture of the mother of *El Rey del Metro Cuadrado*<sup>17</sup>, deeply moved the public. This episode, which had until then been known only to the family and a few close friends, was brought to light.

Many attribute the end of the dictatorship to this video. While it is impossible to confirm, *El Rey del Metro Cuadrado*’s actions, both in 1973 when he refused to shake hands with Pinochet and in 1988 when he made the statement alongside his mother, certainly lent dignity to football and the Chilean people during one of the darkest periods in their history (Jardim, 2020, p. 104, our translation).

In Brazil, in addition to Sócrates’ companions in the Corinthians Democracy—Casagrande, Wladimir, and Zenon—other players who also fought against the military coup include Reinaldo and Afonsinho.

As a child, Reinaldo witnessed his neighbor and family friend being arrested by the dictatorship under the accusation of being a communist sympathizer. Years later, he became politically aware by reading books deemed “subversive” by the antidemocratic government. From these readings, he developed a gesture that he began using to celebrate his goals from 1976 onward: raising his right arm with a clenched fist. In the words of King Reinaldo, “I started giving a political connotation to the celebration. It was somewhat like the Black Power salute,

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<sup>16</sup> *La Roja* – *The Red One* – is the nickname of the Chilean national team. The color refers to the colors of the Chilean national football team’s jersey.

<sup>17</sup> *El rey del metro Cuadrado* – the king of the square meter – was the nickname of Carlos Humberto Caszely Garrido (1950). His ability to dribble and control the ball earned him this emblematic nickname.



which was used by African Americans<sup>18</sup>” (Jardim, 2020, p. 140, our translation). Due to his political stance, José Reinaldo de Lima (1957) had his national team convocations blocked. However, he did participate in the 1978 World Cup in Argentina, a country that was also under dictatorship at the time. The greatest idol in Atlético Mineiro’s history recounts that military personnel infiltrated the Brazilian national team and advised him to celebrate with both arms raised and not to mix politics with football.

Afonso Celso Garcia Reis, known as Afonsinho, is recognized in football for having achieved the “free pass.” At *Botafogo*, he began to be sidelined by the then coach, Mário Jorge Lobo Zagallo, due to his political stance. The team from General Severiano neither used him nor negotiated him, leaving him trapped in this predicament until he finally secured his freedom in court in May 1971. His long beard and hair were unwelcome at the club; one of the executives (from the military leadership) even remarked that he looked more like a ’60s pop musician than a football player. Due to his political stance, Afonsinho was left out of the 1978 World Cup. In an interview with UOL Sports, he mentioned that he harbors resentment for not being selected at the peak of his career, but he claims he would never have changed his actions to achieve it. “Being a national team player would have been very good, but it was better to have taken the positions I did. At least I feel more integral” (Gentile; Lima, 2020, our translation).

Among the select group of defenders of democracy, one can include coach João Saldanha, who led the Brazilian national team until a year before the 1970 World Cup. Saldanha refused to comply with the directives of then-President General Emílio Garrastazu Médici regarding the team’s selection, which led to his dismissal from the position. Due to his courage and integrity in not adhering to the president’s demands, João Saldanha became known as “João Without Fear.” He was replaced by the more compliant coach, Mário Zagallo.

Additionally, Zico’s older brother, Nando, who was a philosopher and professor outside of football fields, was also one of the former players persecuted by the military dictatorship of 1964. Fernando Antunes Coimbra:

A philosophy student, at the age of 18, had the "audacity" to participate, alongside his sister Zezé, in the National Literacy Plan, coordinated by educator Paulo Freire, in 1963. Following the military coup the following year, due to his involvement in the "revolutionary" endeavor, Nando was deemed subversive and had to leave the football fields after being sidelined by teams in Brazil and Portugal, which were also under dictatorship. Upon

<sup>18</sup> “Reinaldo cites the Black Panther movement, which emerged in the late 1960s in the United States to fight against racial segregation. The gesture became world famous when two black athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, both linked to the group, raised their arms to celebrate winning the gold and bronze medals in the 200m at the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games” (Jardim, 2020, p.140).

returning to Rio, he was arrested and spent two days and two nights standing, with his arms raised and a rifle pointed at his back (Jardim, 2020, p. 22, our translation).

Returning to the aim of this essay, which is to interrogate football and literature with the intention of reflecting on history and memory, challenging issues that might de-naturalize and combat fascist thought, it is considered that both arts can be privileged spaces for the analysis and fight against fascism. This is because they enable the perception of the social inscription of desire and the ways of life shaped by that desire.

By investing in education beyond mere schooling as a means of producing more powerful ways of life aligned with the principles of a democratic and republican society, the issue of fascism, as addressed here, leads to the understanding that its combat is not merely a matter of raising awareness. Instead, it requires the social production of desires distinct from those that sustain fascism. This implies that education, while not exclusively responsible, also bears the commitment to fight against all that aims to annihilate and repress the multiple forms of life that permeate the social fabric and against fascism deeply rooted in corporeal experience.

However, education must also take an ethical stance beyond adopting a critical tone. As Foucault (1977) reminds us, it is not necessary to be sad to be an activist, even if the object of our struggle, as is the case with fascism, is abhorrent. In this sense, both football and poetry can be instruments of a joyful and active struggle against fascism, since, as Foucault (1977) insists, it is the connection of desire with reality that possesses revolutionary force. Thus, both arts can connect us with an educational experience linked to the harshness of reality.

In light of this, it is concluded that the cited chronicles, by relating players, literature, football, and poets, promote meaningful learning through reading. This movement is symbolized by the ball, which, as João Cabral de Melo Neto asserts, has various representations: “The ball is not an enemy like the bull in a bullfight; and, although it is a domestic object used without risk, it is not the impersonal, always gentle tool of usual gesture: it is a semi-living tool, with reactions of its own like a creature” (Melo; Neto, 2024, our translation). Similarly, the word in a text behaves while awaiting its reader.

According to Larrosa (2019, p. 175), reading is an experience that involves both teaching and learning, intrinsically related to establishing connections with oneself and with others. The experience with words never occurs in isolation, just as educational processes—reading, writing, interpreting, learning, and teaching—are practices that require exchanges and can generate multiple meanings. “Therefore, giving the text is to offer it as a gift and, in that

very offering, to create a debt and a task of reading, the debt that can only be settled by assuming the responsibility of reading, and the task that can only be fulfilled through the act of reading.”

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