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'A good goal can't be told': Narration and memory in the soccer stories of Pablo Santiago Chiquero

Abstract:
A common obstacle to effective sports writing is the challenge of capturing the excitement of the live moment as it unfolds on pitch, field, or court. The burst of emotion of the mass sports spectacle is easily lost when an author attempts to translate the experience to textual narration. In his 2016 short story collection, *Once goles y la vida mientras* [*Eleven Goals and Life Goes On*], the Spanish journalist and author Pablo Santiago Chiquero approaches this tricky literary terrain through an intimate examination of the personal power of soccer in everyday lives. By focusing on one particular historical football goal in each of his stories, Santiago Chiquero subtly examines the multiple facets of personal, collective, and counter-factual memory. The goals, dating from 1983 to 2013, serve as pretext for exploring why sport has been both criticised and celebrated as an "escape valve" for contemporary society. Santiago Chiquero's stories demonstrate how a public event, such as a soccer goal, transcends the time and place of its occurrence and is recreated in personal memories in ways that both alleviate and enhance individual joy and suffering.

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Introduction

In the opening story of Spanish author Pablo Santiago Chiquero's 2016 collection *Once goles y la vida mientras* [*Eleven Goals and Life Goes On*], [1] an elderly man named José lives alone on his small orchard and is occupied with catching a fox that threatens his chickens. Because of this personal crusade, he misses the weekly football broadcast, which features a goal scored by Real Madrid's Emilio Butragueño against Cádiz CF. The day after the match, when everyone in town wishes to talk to him about the goal, he interrupts them because he wants to see it for himself on the television since "un buen gol no se puede contar" ["a good goal can't be told"] (Santiago Chiquero, 2016, p. 13). That evening, he climbs up to his rooftop to adjust his antenna so that he can watch the highlights on the news, but the fox catches the corner of his eye and José slips off a ladder and breaks his collarbone. While he waits for an ambulance, he allows his grandson to tell him about the goal over the phone. After detailing how Butragueño dribbles around several defenders and the goalkeeper to score, the grandson says, "Para los defensas fue como tratar de capturar a un animal que es demasiado rápido y astuto para ellos" ["For the defenders, it was like trying to capture an animal that was too quick and too smart for them"] (p. 23). José smiles through his pain; in the end, it is not the narration of the goal that brings it to life for him, but how his grandson's simile connects the goal to his personal story.

Personal stories are how Santiago Chiquero approached each of the eleven goals in his debut in fiction writing. In doing so, the Andalusian entered the vast field of football literature, a genre that has both delighted and perplexed authors and critics because of the complicated relationship between pitch and page. Soccer, a working-class sport for much of its history, has often been approached tentatively by the literary world (McGowan, 2017). Part of this has been political, but much of it has also been narrative: how can an author capture in words the drama and tension of the live match? The Norwegian author, Karl Ove Knausgaard, has gone so far as to call writing about football "nonsense", though he has done plenty of it, because

> all the pleasure lies in seeing it unfold before our eyes, this minute, happening right now … When football is written about it is already over, and when the article is read there is no longer any value in the match; all that exists is the value of the writing. (Knausgaard & Ekelund, 2017, p. 155)

In his collection of short stories, Santiago Chiquero confronts this narrative difficulty not so much by attempting to recreate real-time activity, but by expressing what the sport means in the lives of each of his fictional protagonists. If writing about the action on the field is an effort to hold onto something ephemeral, in Santiago Chiquero's stories, each goal is significant because it helps his characters retain specific moments in their lives. That is, in the same way that literature has struggled to grasp the transience of football, our human experience is filled with moments that we struggle to fix in our memory. In this article, I will examine how Santiago Chiquero approaches football and its goals through the lens of personal, collective, and even counter-factual memory in order to reveal one possibility of overcoming the gap between sport and narrative. Through his stories, the author demonstrates how a public event,

such as a soccer goal, transcends the time and place of its occurrence and is recreated in personal memories in ways that both alleviate and enhance individual joy and suffering.

Narrating soccer

Recent book-length studies in English and Spanish, including *Football and Literature in South America* by David Wood (2017), *La jugada de todos los tiempos: Fútbol, mito y literatura* [*The Greatest Play Ever: Football, Myth, and Literature*] by David García Cames (2018), and *Football in Fiction: A History* by Lee McGowan (2020), examine the huge amount of literature now dedicated to the sport and the long history of the relationship between soccer and narrative. This relationship makes for fertile analysis thanks in part to a "redundancy" identified by Jorge Valdano, the Argentinian player, coach, sporting director, editor, and author: "El juego es como la literatura, una recreación de la realidad. Si los dos universos tardaron en confluir debe ser porque sus caminos fueron siempre paralelos. Había algo de redundancia en la literatura futbolística" ["Games are like literature: a recreation of reality. If the two universes took a while to meet, it must be because they followed parallel paths. There was some sort of redundancy in football literature"] (Valdano, as cited in García Cames, 2018, p. 30).

Improbably, though perhaps because of the immensity of each goal, the short story has been the fictional form that has had the most success in capturing it. Julio Cortázar, who was not necessarily a soccer fan but who knew what it took to write an effective short story, published an essay in 1971 titled "Algunos aspectos del cuento" ["Some Aspects of the Short Story"]. In it, Cortázar compares a short story to a photograph, whereas a novel is more like a film. Photography, he says, is a type of paradox, "la de recortar un fragmento de la realidad, fijándole determinados límites, pero de manera tal que ese recorte actúe como una explosión que abre de par en par una realidad mucho más amplia" ["One that extracts a fragment of reality, giving it certain limits, but in a way that this extract acts like an explosion that opens up to a much larger reality"] (1971, p. 406). As such, the short story seems to be the form most suited to capturing soccer because the goal, like the narrative, expands beyond the limits of space and time.

In a similar sense, Laurent Dubois (2018) has written that "the works of literature that do try to narrate soccer, including many remarkable short stories, often do so by piecing together fragments of story, attempting to capture the way moments on the pitch somehow condense the drama of life" (pp. 5-6). In his texts, Santiago Chiquero does attempt to "narrate soccer", because the goals are the catalyst of his stories. Each story includes a brief paragraph in which either the narrator describes a goal as it happens or one character makes an effort to relay the emotion of the moment to another character who does not witness the goal for themselves. The eleven goals of the collection are a mix of both world-famous, top-level moments from the last forty years of international soccer history and more obscure goals that might only be familiar to devoted fans of the Spanish or English club game. The descriptions of the internationally memorable goals usually come from the narrator's point of view, which recognises the

historical significance of the moment, often connected to UEFA Champions League finals or World Cup finals, such as Andrés Iniesta's game-winner for Spain in the 2010 World Cup Final:

> Torres centró desde la izquierda; el rechace de un defensa le cayó en la frontal del área a Cesc Fàbregas, y este se abrió ligeramente hacia la derecha para no ser molestado por los centrales y le entregó la pelota a Iniesta, que la dejó botar y esperó el segundo más largo de la historia de un país antes de lanzar un pelotazo cruzado al fondo de la portería.
>
> [Torres crossed from the left side; a rebound off a defender fell in front of Cesc Fàbregas at the top of the box, and Cesc veered slightly to the right to avoid the central defenders before passing the ball to Iniesta, who let it bounce and then paused, for the longest second in the history of a country, before blasting it across the goalmouth and into the back of the goal.] (Santiago Chiquero, 2016, p. 68)

Another goal, scored by Sweden's Zlatan Ibrahimović in an international friendly against England in 2013, may not have been as consequential, but the narrator of "El jugador" ["The Player"] grants it historical proportions because of its beauty and rarity:

> Un jugador sueco se deshizo de la pelota de un patadón y el portero inglés salió del área para despejarla con la cabeza. No fue un despeje brillante, e Ibrahimović se volvió, saltó al aire como un ángel que se ha dejado en casa las alas y lanzó una chilena a más de treinta y cinco metros de la meta. El balón trazó una bolea perfecta y acabó en el fondo de la red. Goles como ese se ven una vez cada dos siglos, así que de momento es el único de la historia.
>
> [A Swedish player sent a long-ball forward and the English keeper ventured out of his box to clear it with his head. It wasn't a great clearing, and Ibrahimović turned, jumped like an angel that has left its wings at home, and hit a bicycle kick from more than thirty-five metres away. The ball followed a perfect arc and ended up at the back of the net. Goals like that happen once every two centuries, so for now it's the only one in history.] (Santiago Chiquero, 2016, p. 150)

Lesser-known goals, while perhaps not as vivid in the average reader's memory as the international goals above, are treated with equal care. Further, while these goals may not be as easily recognised by the typical fan, the author has a tendency to present the details in dialogue rather than in narration, leaving it up to a character to convey the thrill of having seen it. For example, the goal by Emilio Butragueño in the initial story was a league goal scored against Cádiz CF in February of 1987, and it is left up to José's grandson to describe the goal to the protagonist. In "Ramirez es demasiado viejo para volar" ["Ramirez Is Too Old to Fly"], the man who runs the concession stand at a village grounds explains to one of his regulars why the local boys are staying late after training to try to emulate a goal scored by Atlético Madrid's Fernando Torres in a league match against Real Betis in 2003:

> Pero fue un golazo. Recibió un centro lejano desde la izquierda. Era un buen centro, pero tal vez tenía demasiada potencia y era demasiado largo para que cualquier delantero pudiera rematarlo. Torres dio tres o cuatro zancadas y saltó con la pierna derecha por delante y quedó suspendido en el aire hasta que logró enchufarla. Fue un tiro increíble. El balón hizo una pequeña parábola y se coló por la escuadra.
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> [What a goal. {Torres} received a long cross from the left. It was a good cross, but maybe a little strong and too long for most forwards to reach. Torres took three or four strides and jumped with his right leg leading, and he remained suspended in the air until he managed to knock it in. It was an incredible shot. The ball rose on a small parabola and slipped into the opposite top corner.] (Santiago Chiquero, 2016, p. 75)

Even in our age of YouTube highlights, these short paragraphs of vivid detail help the reader visualise each goal. Still, Santiago Chiquero recognises that to only tell the goal would not be enough to sustain the tension of each short story. As Yvette Sánchez (2007) has noted, authors who write about soccer are forced to compete with the action already seen, heard, and felt in the stadium. They must find a space "not filled by the sport itself" and surprise their readers by shifting the readers' perspective to a time and place that are different than the ones that unfolded on the pitch (p. 131). Santiago Chiquero achieves this by incorporating the goals, famous or otherwise, into the plot, not for the goal itself or for its significance on the field for the player or the team that scored it, but as a significant moment in the lives of the stories' protagonists. The relationship between the goal and the plot varies: characters may watch the goal live on television, hear about it the day after, or may recall every detail of the goal years later. They may experience the goal at home, at a crowded pub, from a prison rec room, a hotel room in a foreign country, or a betting parlour. This separation in time and place affirms the intimate link between goal and memory.

Bread and football

Santiago Chiquero's stories fit into the tradition of football literature because their exploration of soccer's meaning in everyday life both confirms and contradicts one of the oldest criticisms of the role that sport plays in our societies: that of an opiate, a social drug meant to distract people from the supposedly more important issues in their lives. This idea goes back to the Roman poet, Juvenal, who coined the term *panem et circenses* ["bread and circuses"] (2004, p. 372) to describe a strategy employed by governments to keep their populace happy by filling their bellies with bread and distracting them from more nefarious goings-on with games and sport. In his history of the origins of the football codes, Tony Collins (2019) links the early years of football in Scotland to the classical period through the novelty that soccer brought to the lives of nineteenth-century workers:

> For perhaps the first time in human history since the age of the Roman colosseum, one could pay a small amount of money to experience extremes of emotion. For two hours or so, the world of work and daily life could be set aside while the spectator rode a collective

> roller-coaster of intense highs and lows, joy and despair, exultation and frustration. (pp. 49-50)

Since then, sport as an "escape valve" is a common trope that has been cause for both celebration and derision.

In Spain, this relationship has real historical meaning, and for a time, reinforced the tension between soccer and literature: the Franco dictatorship (1939–1975) co-opted the sport as part of its propaganda machine while the nation's intelligentsia rejected the brute force of the authoritarian regime. "Bread and football" evolved during the dictatorship to become even stronger than the traditional popular distraction, "bread and bulls" (García Candau, 1996, p. 85). Franco and his administrators were well aware of the power of mass sport to distract citizens from the hardships of the postwar period and its political realities. Both Santiago Bernabéu of Real Madrid and Vicente Calderón of Atlético Madrid, legendary club presidents during the dictatorship, made this very clear in two well-known quotes. According to Bernabéu, "Estamos prestando un servicio a la nación. Nosotros lo que queremos es tener contenta a la gente. Le digo que estamos prestando un servicio porque a la gente le gusta mucho el fútbol, y con el fútbol los españoles hacen más llevaderos sus problemas cotidianos" (Shaw, 1987, p. 106) ["We are offering a service to the nation. What we want is to keep the people happy. I tell you that we are offering a service because the people like soccer a lot, and with soccer, the Spanish people's daily problems become more bearable" (Ashton, 2013, p. 26)]. When asked if he thought that soccer made the country less intelligent, Calderón added: "Ojalá el fútbol entonteciera al país y ojalá pensaran en el fútbol tres días antes y tres días después del partido. Así no pensarían en otras cosas más peligrosas" (Shaw, 1987, p. 106) ["I hope soccer makes the country dumber and I hope people think about soccer three days before and three days after each match. This way they will not think about other, more dangerous things" (Ashton, 2013, p. 26)]. Depending on how one felt about the dictatorship could affect how nefarious a threat its use of football and sport would seem.

The stories of Santiago Chiquero acknowledge this charge against soccer but present the power of the goals in a much less cynical fashion. Miguel Pardeza (2018), the former Real Madrid player and PhD in Spanish literature, recognises that:

> Cierto es que un gol de Messi o de Cristiano no tiene la facultad de convertir el vino en sangre, pero sin duda tiene la de hacernos olvidar que mañana es lunes, que nos agobia el recibo de la hipoteca y que el jefe capullo espera el informe semanal. Es decir, el fútbol actúa, según tantos han criticado, como un impar y concienzudo alienador. Pero es que el hombre, acosado por las miserias de su existencia, lo que busca precisamente es enajenarse.
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> [It is true that a goal by Messi or Cristiano cannot change wine into blood, but there is no doubt that it is able to make us forget that tomorrow is Monday, that we are worried about the mortgage, and that our jerk of a boss is waiting for the weekly report. That is, football acts, as so many have condemned, as an unmatched and thorough alienator. But

> man, constantly hounded by the miseries of life, searches precisely for that alienation.] (p. 20)

Santiago Chiquero himself, in an interview for the radio programme *Historias de papel*, makes a direct connection between the "escape valves" of football and literature: "El fútbol y la literatura son dos de las válvulas de escape más importantes que tiene el hombre moderno. O por lo menos para mí son las dos más importantes, la lectura y ver el fútbol, porque me hacen las dos cosas muy feliz" ["Football and literature are two of modern man's most important escape valves. At least, for me they are – reading and watching football – because both make me very happy"] (Pedraz, 2016, 04:42). The goal at the centre of each of his stories, whether seen live or in memory, drives the story's plot and often gives it a setting: Pep Guardiola's first professional goal helps a boy impress the new girl at school; four friends in a London pub cheer on a Liverpool comeback sparked by Stephen Gerrard; an addicted gambler falls further into debt and despair after watching Zlatan's miracle volley against England in an otherwise meaningless friendly match. We know that goals are temporary, that the ecstasy or disappointment they bring only last a moment. This is why soccer literature has often been dismissed; however, Santiago Chiquero's stories do not deny this ephemerality. Rather, they show that no matter how high or how low the moment of the goal may be, it is only a moment, and life goes on [*y la vida mientras*]. The circus of football, even for the most obsessive fan, is only a small, though meaningful, part of the circus of life. In this way, these stories provide for the reader what McGowan (2017) identifies as one of the true benefits of football fiction: "It brings vivid colour to the detail and lesser aspects of a game... It provides the opportunity to digest and meditate on the game's meaning, to consider the lives of those it affects beyond the million dollar wages" (p. 231). In other words, these stories provide "quiet periods" for the football fan, which, as McGowan sees it, have become non-existent in the modern game.

Santiago Chiquero's stories bring the reader these quieter periods by shifting the focus of his narrative from the activity on the pitch to the trace of each goal in the lives of his characters. Though most of the action of these stories occurs while, or very soon after, these historic goals take place, the implications of the goals on how the characters' lives move forward connect their past, present, and future. For example, in "Treinta vacas, un gol, noventa años" ["Thirty Cows, One Goal, Ninety Years"], an elderly father who suffers from dementia dies at the exact moment that Andrés Iniesta scores his World Cup winner in 2010. For the man's family, the thrill of the goal is balanced by the shock of his death, which leads to his sons, estranged until this moment, having a kick-around in the yard as they did when they were children. In "El dios de las Malvinas" ["The God of the Falklands"], an Argentinian veteran of the Falklands War deals with his past trauma as he watches Maradona exact revenge on the English. Finally, in "Los ídolos nunca mueren" ["Idols Never Die"], a father consoles his son after his parents' separation by reassuring him that his favourite goal, scored by Eric Cantona at Old Trafford in 1993, will remain with him, "aunque tengas noventa años y Cantona ya esté muerto. Ese gol irá contigo y te hará feliz una y otra vez" ["even when you are ninety years old and Cantona has died. That goal will remain with you and make you happy over and over again"] (Santiago Chiquero, 2016, p. 163). Our football idols, like our fathers, may eventually disappoint us, but the story assures us that the memory of their best moments will remain pure.

Football and memory

Of the eleven stories in the collection, three are built upon especially strong connections among soccer, narrative, and memory. As in the stories already mentioned, the type of memory in these stories varies from the personal, to the collective, to a sort of "counter-factual" memory. The divisions between these different types of memory are rather indistinct, as any personal memories are inevitably tied up with the collective context in which they are created, and every life is filled with "what-if" moments that could have led to a different reality. By touching on all three, Santiago Chiquero's stories test the reader's memory and imagination so that even when the reader may not be familiar with a particular goal, they can relate the emotions felt by the characters to their own experiences.

The protagonist of "Un gol para la eternidad" ["A Goal for All Eternity"] is Patrick Schneider, a German man on a business trip to Heidelberg, the same city where Santiago Chiquero was living when the short story collection was published in 2016. Schneider, a Bayer Leverkusen fan, is upset that he will not be at home to watch his team face Real Madrid in the 2002 UEFA Champions League Final. His dismay turns to surprise and confusion when he enters his hotel room and discovers that a ghost has already tuned into the match and occupied the best seat in the room. After the initial shock, the conversation takes on the typical tone and rhythm of two rival fans watching their teams, with each one celebrating and fretting as the match goes to 1–1. Schneider asks if there is football in Heaven, and the anonymous ghost reveals that in the afterlife, certain moments of human history are replayed on a loop, including man's discovery of fire, the Great Flood, and the Allied landing at Normandy (Santiago Chiquero, 2016, p. 118). So, according to the ghost, football in Heaven takes the form of certain goals that are shown on eternal repeat, such as Maradona's second goal against England in the 1986 World Cup or a Romário goal in a Clásico from 1994. As they watch Zinedine Zidane score a left-footed volley to secure Real Madrid's ninth Champions League trophy, Patrick understands what it takes for a soccer goal to join the list of immortal moments.

However, this story is not just about Patrick's and the ghost's reaction to the goal; it is one in which Santiago Chiquero confronts Spain's, and Germany's, collective memory. The ghost reveals that he was a *Gastarbeiter* (Santiago Chiquero, 2016, p. 114), a "guest worker" from Alicante among the approximately one million Spaniards who went to Germany and Northern Europe in the 1960s to find work. The ghost was a Valencia fan, he says, but became a Real Madrid fan in Germany because it was the only Spanish team shown on television.

Real Madrid's history with emigrants is a complicated one. On the one hand, the club was closely associated to the Franco dictatorship. The team's success in winning the first five European Cups (1955–1960) established its international popularity, which was soon harnessed by Franco's government to improve the regime's reputation abroad (Shaw, 1987, p. 170). After a sixth title in 1966, Spanish Foreign Minister Fernando María Castiella praised the club and its players because "they know how to travel the world with the utmost decorum in the name of Spain. Their players act like true ambassadors, and their actions contribute to the prestige of our homeland" (Shaw, 1987, p. 170; Simón, 2020, pp. 57-58). On the other hand, for many political exiles and economic migrants, like this ghost, Real Madrid was the only popular

connection to their homeland that was available to them. Especially for political refugees, "normal people who missed home" (Lowe, 2014, p. 189), supporting Real Madrid, a team so closely identified with a Spanish state to which they could not return, could be a contradiction. Santiago Chiquero recognises this complicated history and how it may still haunt many in Spain by creating some clever "rules" of ghostly interaction with Earth that convert his ghost into an eternal refugee: spirits may only return to Earth for thirty years after death and are limited to a radius of one hundred kilometres from their burial site. Because he died in 1984, the 2002 Final is one of the ghost's last chances to see Real Madrid on Earth, but Zidane's wonderful goal will be repeated in Heaven, thereby ensuring his link to home. Finally, by setting the goal against the history of the 1960s, which forced many Spaniards to look for work outside their homeland, Santiago Chiquero inserts his own story of living in Germany in the present day, when once again, a significant number of Spaniards have migrated to other parts of Europe in search of improved economic conditions.

The goals move from the collective to the personal in the story "¡Gol de Señor, gol de Señor!" ["Señor Scores! Señor Scores!"]. The opening paragraph stresses the importance of repetition and routine for Diego, a banker in Seville who for over eight years has arrived to the city early in the morning to have breakfast in a rotating array of cafés before going to work. Santiago Chiquero emphasises how much Diego cherishes the "moments" of his morning routine, which include buying a newspaper, taking a seat at one of his favourite bars, sipping his coffee, and listening to the waiters and patrons chatter around him. Among the local characters who wander the city at that hour is Juan, a slightly unbalanced man who earns a bit of money by entertaining others with an exact retelling of the Spanish National Team's 12–1 victory over Malta to qualify for the 1984 European Championship. Thirty years later, Juan is able to repeat from memory every word of the 1983 television broadcast of the game. Juan's imitation adds a different dimension to the concept of retelling the goal. In other stories, as examined above, Santiago Chiquero describes the goals through his narrators or through the voice of his characters. Here, the goals appear in a sort of meta-narrative: the actual goals first pass through the voice of José Ángel de la Casa, the original television announcer in 1983, and then to Juan, who has memorised the entire broadcast. Rather than a description of the goal, the text includes only de la Casa's words, channelled through Juan, which depend on the reader supplying the visual support usually provided by the television image. For example, the climactic twelfth Spain goal scored by Juan Señor includes only one detail that offers any sense of the movement on the pitch: "Víctor… Señor y Víctor… ha caído [he has fallen]… Señor, Señor, goooooooooooool, goooooooooool de Seeeeeñor, goooool de Señor, el número doce, señores [number twelve, ladies and gentlemen]…" (Santiago Chiquero, 2016, p. 86).

Diego and Juan develop a cordial friendship, united by the significance of that match for each of them. For Diego, Juan's narration brings memories of the life he had in 1983 with his pregnant wife and infant daughter: "por eso eran importantes para él aquel partido y aquellos goles … porque muchos años después seguían recordándole, con más fidelidad que todas las poses e ingenuas imposturas de las fotografías y los vídeos caseros, quién había sido entonces" ["That's why that match and those goals were important to him … because many years later they continued to remind him, more precisely than all the fake poses of the photographs and

home videos from that time, of whom he had been then"] (Santiago Chiquero, 2016, p. 87). When Juan is killed by a car shortly after the match's thirtieth anniversary, Diego visits Juan's elderly mother in their poor neighbourhood and she explains the match's meaning for her son: he attended the match, held in Seville at Real Betis' Benito Villamarín Stadium, with his fiancée. A few weeks later, she dumped him for another man, and Diego fell into a downward spiral that led to alcohol, drugs, prison, and an impaired mental state that left him wandering the city with his parroting routine as his only skill (Santiago Chiquero, 2016, p. 95). The melancholy that both Diego and Juan feel through their memories of the match and its final goal are not just because of what the unlikely triumph meant for Spain, but because the moment, relived in every one of Juan's retellings, is linked to the happiness that each man felt for what they had around them that night in 1983, now lost.

Finally, "Un cañonero en prisión" ["A Cannoneer in Prison"] is narrated in the first-person by a prisoner named Santiago who is recruited by his warden to start an inmate newspaper. The focus of the story is not Santiago's relationship to soccer, however, but that of Ricardo, the inmate that Santiago chooses to profile for his first edition. Ricardo is known to all in the prison as "Koeman", after the Dutch international and FC Barcelona star of the early 1990s. Like the professional, Ricardo has the strongest leg in prison and a skill for hitting unstoppable free kicks and penalties. Ricardo is a solitary man who does not speak much and has few friends,; however, he brings delight to his fellow prisoners with his powerful right leg. During the interview for the newsletter, Ricardo and the narrator talk for hours about Ricardo's childhood in Galicia, of how his father taught him to take free kicks, and of how no one recognised his talent early enough to send him to a football academy where he could have cultivated it. Of Ronald Koeman, Ricardo says, "Él ha tenido la suerte de ser el futbolista que yo hubiese sido, en el mejor equipo de la historia" ["He has had the luck to be the footballer that I might have been, on the best team in history"] (Santiago Chiquero, 2016, p. 47). When the newsletter is published, Ricardo becomes a celebrity in the prison community. His minor fame backfires, however, as the profile includes so many reminders of Ricardo's youth as a football player whose life took a bad turn that he tries to kill himself when faced with the reality of the eleven years that remain on his sentence.

This story stands out within the collection because it is the only one of the eleven with a narrator in the first person and because of the class of memory with which it engages. McGowan (2017) notes that "a majority of adult football fiction narratives are written in the male third-person perspective" (p. 228), but the first-person narrative here allows the author to express the complexity of transforming real-life events into written texts. Santiago Chiquero (the author) blurs the line between fiction and reality by making Santiago (the narrator) an aspiring journalist, one who is initially quite proud of how his article has brought hope and fame to someone he admires. He goes too far, though, by including details in his profile that go beyond the personal memory or the collective memory of other stories and into the realm of a "counter-factual" memory. The prison newsletter evokes in Ricardo not just memories of his past, but overwhelming reminders of what might have been. Santiago (the narrator) includes in his profile, "sus recuerdos futbolísticos, y cómo su padre lo enseñó a disparar, y también otras muchas cosas de cosecha propia" ["his football memories, and how his father had taught him

to shoot, and many other things that I invented myself"] (Santiago Chiquero, 2016, p. 49). These assumptions by Santiago about Ricardo's past are what break Ricardo's spirit, as Santiago later realises that his article violated an important rule of prison life because, "mis palabras habían despertado en él una ilusión infantil dormida en el fondo de su alma, pero también lo habían hecho consciente de los once largos años de cautiverio que le quedaban por delante" ["My words had awoken in him a childhood dream at the bottom of his soul, but they had also made him more aware of the eleven long years of imprisonment that he still had ahead of him"] (p. 52). Thus, the first-person narrator of this story must face the implications of his writing in ways that the omniscient narrators and fellow characters of other stories are able to ignore. Fortunately, Ricardo's suicide attempt fails, and the story ends with the entire prison, gathered to watch the 1992 UEFA Champions League Final, celebrating Ronald Koeman's game-winning free kick as if it were scored by Ricardo.

Conclusion

Ricardo, Santiago, Diego, Juan, Patrick, and the rest of Santiago Chiquero's characters know that soccer is just a game, but they also know that this fact does not make it any less meaningful. The goals in Santiago Chiquero's stories are simply a way for the author to get to something much larger, outside "the frame" of the moment frozen in time that each goal represents. David García Cames (2017), in placing soccer fiction as part of the "culto a la memoria" ["cult of memory"] that has characterised much Hispanic literature of the last two decades, suggests that "la narrativa balompédica propondrá una reivindicación de los lugares en los que el juego aparece aún libre, incontaminado" ["football narrative proposes a recognition of the spaces where the game still appears free, uncontaminated"] (p. 496). In his collection *Once goles y la vida mientras*, Pablo Santiago Chiquero does care about the football, very much, but his stories are not about recreating the innocence of football's great moments. Rather, through personal, collective, and counter-factual memory, Santiago Chiquero captures what those great moments could mean in a variety of contexts, then and now. As Diego, the protagonist of "¡Gol de Señor, gol de Señor!" reflects

> un partido inolvidable se parece a un buen libro. Con los años se acaba olvidando casi por completo lo que pasó en él, y los personajes y la trama o el estilo se van emborronando en la memoria hasta casi desaparecer, pero nunca se olvida las circunstancias en las que se leyó y la dulce felicidad que entregó
>
> [An unforgettable match is like a good book. Over time we almost completely forget what happened in it, and the characters and the plot or the style fade away until they nearly disappear, but we never forget the circumstances in which we read it or the sweet happiness that it brought us] (Santiago Chiquero, 2016, p. 87).

The power of memory in these stories is to confirm and to reassure that meaning is in the eye of the beholder, and to appreciate how a collective, ephemeral event such as a soccer goal can

play a lasting role in an individual's life. For Santiago Chiquero, football is not about forgetting or avoiding everyday life, but about holding onto it.

Notes

[1] At this time, the collection has not been translated to English. All translations, including titles, are by the author, unless otherwise noted.

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