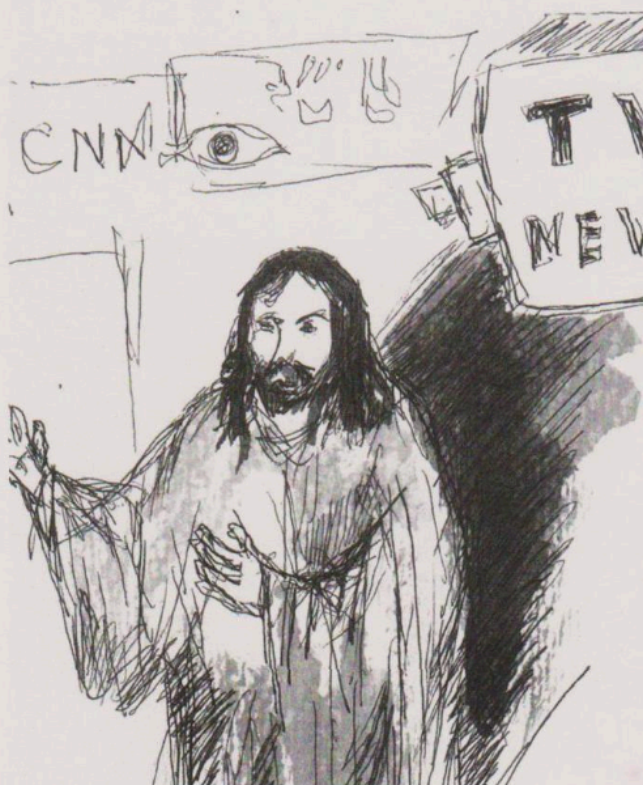


# The Popular Tradition

## *About Tales of Other Customs*

*Enrique Anleu-Díaz*



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## About Tales of Other Customs

Enrique Anleu-Díaz

### *Introduction:*

Generally, references are made to the writers and the intentional content of their expressions when a personal experience is clearly manifest, one that most people have endured at some point. These experiences, which initially served merely as a way to voice my discomfort through protest, were shaped into short narratives that were published in 1998 by Artemis 4 Edinter. Some were released under the title *Portraits of Other Guatemalan Customs* as part of the Yesterday and Today collection. I chose to approach them with irony while writing. Now, thirteen years later, I have written new "portraits" within the same framework of social critique, interwoven with personal experiences regarding contemporary social issues. Before compiling them into a book, I have presented some excerpts that intellectuals from our community have reviewed. To address the challenge of indulging in "I-ism," I appreciate the generosity of these intellectuals, such as Celso Lara, jurist, writer, anthropologist, and folklorist, who has provided a significant analysis of them.

### *Portraits of Other Guatemalan Customs*

By Celso Lara.

These narratives by Enrique Anleu-Díaz fall within the boundary between short story and nineteenth-century critique. In terms of style, they align with picturesque and ironic storytelling, while thematically

they belong to the realm of criollismo, so deeply embedded in Guatemala, especially in Guatemala City, they belong to the realm of criollismo, so deeply embedded in Guatemala, especially in Guatemala City, officially known as the Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción. With his characteristic mastery, Anleu-Díaz attempts, much like the esteemed José Milla y Vidaurre in the mid-nineteenth century or Ramón A. Salazar towards its end, to portray the daily life of contemporary Guatemala City and the social circumstances surrounding each moment, each fleeting instance of the Guatemalan who roams this Magical Wrapping that is Guatemala.

The characters in Anleu-Díaz's work are ordinary people, "the common folk," who could very well be the reader himself, facing everyday situations that unfold around them. Rendered with a high degree of irony, the stories employ the language of middle-class Guatemalans in the city, at times poetic, at times somewhat crude. The author skillfully manipulates the symbols of popular speech. Through his narratives, Anleu-Díaz unveils both the frustrations and the joys of fin-de-siècle Guatemala, the reality we have lived. These vignettes depict the life of the average Guatemalan, the anxious individual striving to survive in this metropolis that fancies itself a city but is, in truth, a colossal village plagued by all the struggles of an underdeveloped eighth-world nation.

For example, in one of his finest stories, *The Roman Office of Aviatega*, he narrates a deeply moving personal experience that highlights the innate solidarity within mankind. Meanwhile, *Bus Ride* presents a scene that will resonate fully with the thousands of Guatemalans who have, at some point, relied on Guatemala City's urban transportation service. What Anleu-Díaz captures in this story is almost Macondo in the style of García Márquez or the unusual forms of Franz Kafka, unmistakably surreal.

The portraits compiled in *The Seven Plagues* carry a profound human message within the context of Guatemalan culture and identity, particularly regarding the nation's knack for getting into trouble and finding a way out, employing every possible resource, much like Pedro Urdemales, that fascinating figure from Eastern Guatemala's popular folklore.

In *Portraits of Other Guatemalan Customs*, the author's skill in intertwining major national issues is particularly evident, ranging from the exasperated, furious, and uncompromising mindset of some, who "see the devil even in devil's ham," to the tender yet fierce letter the author sends "to the horned one" on Guatemala's traditional Burning of the Devil celebration, December 7, 1997. This letter exposes the clash between powerful international and utilitarian interests, the personal motives behind Guatemala's environmental movements, especially Greenpeace, and the authentic Guatemalan popular culture struggling to withstand the pressures of globalization and cultural homogenization.

These *Portraits of Other Guatemalan Customs* serve as a faithful reflection of Guatemalan society at the end of the 20th century. When compared with their 19th-century counterparts, one can see how little Guatemalan society has changed, its idiosyncrasy endures, though the circumstances have evolved.

Within Guatemalan historiography, these narratives become essential documents, capturing the true essence of our national soul. With irony, irreverence, and precision, Anleu-Díaz's collection of contemporary customs will hold a prominent place in any attempt to define the Guatemalan identity at the close of this second millennium.

Finally, through this book, the author demonstrates his profound sensitivity and keen psychological insight into Guatemalan society, bringing full circle his multifaceted and prolific artistic vision.

Celso A. Lara Figueroa  
Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción, Feast Day of Saint Venantius Martyr, May 18, 2011.

## ***The Dangers of the Musical Arts***

**Enrique Anleu-Díaz**

Since time immemorial, the profession of a musician has been a perilous career, some enter it out of talent, others as punishment, and a few simply out of sheer curiosity. There are also those who, due to various circumstances, find themselves thrown into this little gig. This profession is so ancient that it dates back to prehistoric times, with claims that the first humans who hunted using bone weapons when blowing like a blowpipe or launching an arrow, produced, besides a lethal tool, a musical instrument.



This is why musicians are sometimes called bone players, and in musical jargon, bone refers to playing at a mass, a closing ceremony, or a service. Thus, when a musician lands a job of this nature, the expression applies: I got a bone.

As history advanced, being a musician in ancient Sumer or Egypt came with serious consequences that the musician was initially unaware of. If skilled in his craft, he would become part of the palace or court ensemble, and although he did not hold a special rank in the social hierarchy, he was guaranteed food, lodging, and occasionally some wine and extra coins. The tricky part was when the pharaoh or king died, because the musician was then required to join the orchestra in the afterlife, meaning he was killed so that, instrument in hand, he could musically accompany his patron in the next world. This practice was fully evidenced in the burials of tomb 8G in Sumer and in mausoleum TR, G2 in the Valley of the Kings in Egypt.

There are different cases of musicians who suffered accidents due to the instrument they played. The prestigious Maya musician "Tun Sayabil," which translates to "Stone of Nine Waters" in Christian terms, according to accounts from Halach Huinic of Uaxactún, "Balam Ac," is said to have drowned during the festivities of the great rain god "Chac" while playing a "Sacred Cenote water flute." This incident greatly enraged the warrior chief "Water Thunder," who, as minister of war, was irritated by the ceremonial performances before battles, preferring to arrive at war like thunder itself. Since these preliminary ceremonies required the "flute players" to perform dances and "magical-type" songs to invoke the gods' favor for victory in battle, he strongly opposed what he

saw as a waste of time. Taking advantage of the musician Tun Sayabil's accident, he presented the matter of the "danger of music" to the courtiers, successfully obtaining an edict banning its teaching, particularly the techniques and training related to the "Sacred Cenote water flutes." Some ill-intentioned musicians, envious of the deceased musician's prestige, claimed that "he drowned because he was swimming in the musical scores, meaning he was lost in the musical language, he had no idea where he was swimming... that is, playing.

The aforementioned edict was promptly enforced upon learning that another musician, a trumpeter from Sayaxché, had died with his trumpet wedged between his ears during another battle. He played so out of tune that the enemy became even more enraged upon hearing him, resulting in a terrible consequence for his humanity, through his sense of hearing.

The remaining trumpeters refused to go into battle playing those instruments, leaving the role of warrior music to drummers and "tun players." By the end of the Classic Maya period, however, all musicians were eliminated, deemed a danger, especially for contributing to the devastation of vast lands planted with Hormigo trees, whose resonant wood was used to craft tuns and drums. This deforestation ultimately forced migrations and the eventual abandonment of Maya cities due to the loss of green areas.

History, which has not lied, at least regarding music, has uncovered a parallel issue in battles and music during the Spanish conquest. Since sounds influence moods, the Iberians were emboldened by their chirimías, adufes, trumpets, metal clarions, timpani, and matracas used in their warrior festivities.

In contrast, the Indian boys felt irritation and anger upon hearing these ensembles and their harmonies, purely due to cultural differences. They perceived them as "random music", unfamiliar to their trained ears, as contemporary music was absent from the musical curriculum across the ancient Maya region. As a result, they reacted like Miura bulls before entering the arena, forcing the Hispanics to alter their sonic tactics to weaken their opponents.

The Inquisition then forbade the conquistadors from using such instrumental musical practices and threatened that if they persisted in using these instruments, given the unexpected reaction from the natives, they would be burned at the stake, along with the wind instruments and indigenous writings where they were depicted, or any similar flutes, along with all musicians who disobeyed. This led to a new phase in which different instruments were used.

Thus, music emerged in the Christian church, performed with violas d'amore, violas da gamba, string organs, guitars, vihuelas, and rabels. These instruments raised the issue of strings made from cat gut, which also concerned Maya musicians. Under the threat of the "Society for the Protection of Gut-Bearing Animals," they were forced to use only wind and percussion instruments, but not strings.

The Castilians, following their saying "make a virtue of necessity and a violin out of guts," took on the task of obtaining and manufacturing strings, which led to the extinction of the Antigüño wildcat, the primary source of material. Alongside the ecological issue of rat proliferation due to the lack of cats, and the costly prospect of bringing in the Pied Piper of Hamelin to exterminate them, came another musical problem: instruments using these strings

produced noticeable meowing sounds and discordant tones in religious ceremonies, distracting the faithful. Thus, music was sacrificed instead of the clergy, leading to the ban on such string instruments in Christian religious music. This accelerated the dominance of profane music, which did not rely on these types of string instruments, a phenomenon observed around the 17th century AD.

Historian Peláez states that in 1773, during the Santa Marta festival, the parades of trumpets, adufes, rascabuches, along with the Indians' flutes, drums, and chinchines, and the ringing of the temple bells, reawakened the Santiago Fault, triggering an earthquake so severe that it leveled Santiago de Guatemala. Following this, the "terronista" musicians and the displeased "traslacionistas", terrified by the chaos caused by the philharmonic instruments, likened the disaster to the fall of the walls of Jericho, which had resulted from a rehearsal of out-of-tune trumpeters blasting before that wall. Overcome by panic from this musical earthquake, they sought to distance themselves from musicians, who had now become a symbol of latent danger, and decided to establish a city free of musicians, as they believed. Thus, they founded Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción in the Valle de la Virgen.

To this new city, the only musicians who arrived had studied in France, and the Guatemalan aristocracy allowed them to settle, believing that, having trained in Europe, they wouldn't cause problems. But these cunning individuals, well aware of certain events, including a revolution sparked by Rouget D'Isle, a musician, who had composed a song called "La Marseillaise", which led fighters to rise against the monarchy after learning it had failed to pay its musicians, posed a new concern.



Similarly, a rebellious violinist named Haydn had initiated a protest through his "Farewell Symphony," making musicians leave without saying farewell. This led the aristocrats to enslave the spoiled favorites of St. Cecilia, that is, the philharmonic musicians.

Given this perspective in *Guatemala*, they sensed the possibility of staging a criollo revolution in the same way and for the same reason. Only instead of "La Marseillaise" in France, the anthem here would be "El Mishito," considered the country's second national hymn. This certainly unsettled those in power, known as "próceres" by the people, since they did not exactly proceed correctly, and who also descended from a genealogical tree full of thorns, which was reflected in their actions. Fearing they might be cut down, they found themselves compelled to declare independence in 1821. The aristocrats, frustrated by what the French-trained musicians had done, dismissed "that little tune" as something that did not represent them and preferred to remain part of the "Empire of Iturbide", at least until a piece emerged that suited their tastes.

A new conflict caused by musicians erupted in 1871 during the Liberal Revolution led by General Miguel García Granados, whose command was swiftly taken by another opportunist, better known as "el Malacate." The nickname, given by the clergy, actually stemmed from "mal-cante," since the man had a terrible singing voice. He was mocked so much by the priests in the West that they expelled him from the parish choir, leading him to take revenge once he seized power from García Granados. And so he thought: "...If the priests expelled me from the choir, I'll expel them from the country." No sooner said than done, he banished them, earning the public's infamous nickname: "Injusto Barrios." Ah, the trouble music causes when someone insists on being a singer or performer without realizing it's an art best left to those with true talent!

Christian religious music, which had been taught to the people by the expelled clergy, was banned, allowing the rise of another perceived danger, empty, noisy songs labeled "protest songs." Those who sang them were called "protestants"

At this point, already a bit tired of the whole music topic, it remains to say that a division in music emerged: "música culta," meaning cultured music, and "música de masas," so-called because bakers sang it while kneading dough. From this came a type of mass music, including rock (from "roca"), which originated in prisons, where inmates broke rocks as punishment, hence the term "heavy music," as each hammer strike weighed heavily, with songs rhythmically following each blow. Then there was "música de onda," associated with those said to be detached from reality, living in another "wave," and "corridos," a lighter music, just like the chases police from "Tu Muni" would give to sellers of pirated records, displeased with these mass-produced tunes.

All of the above led to music being regarded as a true menace, likened to an epidemic of "cholera morbus," a cyclone, or a flood, effects that, according to its opponents, it supposedly causes in the domain of Euterpe's craft

That is why governments view the inclusion of music education in citizenship training with great suspicion, arguing: "What examples can be drawn from individuals who have dedicated themselves to this profession? Take, for instance, Mr. Chopin, a Pole (from Poland, the country, not "polaco" as Guatemalans call uniformed police), author of rebellious music such as his Revolutionary Étude, which led him to compose a Funeral March after receiving death threats over that revolutionary piece. Or consider how musical works supposedly cause deafness and bad temper, as in the case of Mr. Beethoven, who went deaf



because of it. Or the physical altercations between musicians and audiences, like with a certain piece by Mr. Stravinsky. One wouldn't have enough space in a dictionary to list all the harm music has done! Which leads to the conclusion that perhaps those broken instruments and samples of medicine handed out, only to be forced upon unfortunate patients who fall into the clutches of today's much-maligned profession (not musicians, but doctors).

To close this essay on the dangers of musical art, the issue has become so deeply ingrained that, in an imaginary country called Guatemala, a "mystery", sorry, Ministry of Inculture and Sports, was established, though its true purpose was deporting those dedicated to the arts. Thus, institutions like the National Symphony Orchestra fell under the watchful eye of this ministry, all because a poet had dared to write:

*The flutes and violins are the weapons of these Guatemalan musicians.* This caused an uproar among ministerial authorities, as a spy sent to listen mistakenly reported that they carried bows for arrows, confusing them with the bows of violins and cellos. He also identified war blowguns instead of flutes and clarinets, bazookas instead of bassoons, and even mistook a bomb for the bombo, the largest drum in percussion.

Faced with such misinformation, the heads of the institution, considering this a threat, came up with the brilliant idea of sending the orchestra on a concert tour in Iran and Iraq, dedicated to the camels, hoping that, since the locals were engaged in battles against northern invaders, they might either be struck by a few bombs or perish from thirst, thus eliminating the musical menace. Alternatively, someone might "half-orient" them toward the Red Sea, where they could drown, since their closest connection to water is playing Swan Lake or Water Music, meaning their chances of

succumbing to the waves of the Mosesian Sea are quite high.

The scope of these guttural policies extends to other aspects, including accepting students into the National Conservatory of Music only if they are under four years old, considered the ideal age to eliminate them while still small, ensuring they won't cause trouble later on. This aligns with the infamous saying, "muerto el chuchó se acabó la rabia," which, translated into more familiar terms, means "extinct musicians mean no more revolutions." Not that this associates certain musicians with chuchos for charging fees at masses, but rather because the phrase fits like a crown on a king.

About the latest on music, well, that'll be for another day...—ciao! No, woof!

## *The Second Coming of Christ*

**Enrique Anleu-Díaz**

Christ, after more than a thousand years, decided to return to Earth around the year 2000 to see if, after nearly two centuries of repeating the song of His coming, humanity or at least some were truly prepared for it.

The decision was quite difficult, much like the one God his Father had to make in searching for "a just man" in the city of Sodom, the old one, not New SodomaYork, where it is clear that no just men can be found, to prevent its destruction.

So he came, though as we will see, no one noticed. People were too focused on creating new sects with auditoriums to attract more clients, feeding them nonsense to convince them to give more money to whoever talked the most. They intensified sales of Bibles, records, and DVDs with supposed messages of salvation, crucifixes, retreat trips, special food for believers, and aerobic equipment to stay in shape for when He arrived. They misunderstood



what being in shape meant, as it referred to the soul. He was even amazed by technology that now offered trips to hell and heaven to let people test where they preferred, just before taking a fall. The Internet was also being used for sales, as members of a sect claimed they could directly secure visas at low prices, complete with celestial autographs... Geez, what frauds!

Well, Jesus first decided to seek out a remote little town, far from Piazza di San Pietro in the Vatican or the walls of Jerusalem, where everyone claimed those were the only places where, according to the scriptures, He was supposed to "Jesucitate." However, a New York sect argued otherwise, stating that Christ's return had to be in a place worthy of Him, at the Waldorf Astoria, arriving in a convertible down Fifth Avenue.

But Jesus imagined that instead of arriving on a great cloud with trumpets and fanfares played by the great masters of music who were already in glory performing concerts in the Philharmonic of Paradise, with solos by the trumpet group "Tear Down the Walls of Jericho" and a front row featuring Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, Stravinsky, and Penderecki for better tuning, it was too vain to bring such distinguished performers. He chose to leave them rehearsing with Saint Cecilia, the patron of musicians. Just as instead of "star-landing" like He did two thousand years ago in Bethlehem, or "cloud-arriving" at Piazza di San Pietro in the Vatican, in front of the walls of Jerusalem, or in Tel Aviv, where many claimed those were the only places where, according to scripture, He could "Jesucitate". There were always new versions about His arrival. A New York sect claimed He would appear at the Twin Towers, but since they were destroyed, that was no longer possible. It made more sense for Him to appear at Cape Canaveral or Cape Kennedy. Instead, the Master appeared in a cave in a very poor place in Asia.

Like that, he arrived in a remote village in the region of Iran, as the country was in the spotlight due to invasions and wars fueled by oil interests. He appeared in a grotto, his figure drawing attention with great presence, a kind and gentle expression, and of course, an appearance considered "strange" in that environment. Given the features of the local inhabitants, they knew He was a foreigner. The only similarity to His first coming was that a blind man wandering near the grotto asked, "Who are you...?" to which Christ replied, "Look at me, and you will know!" He then touched the man's eyes and restored his sight.

The formerly blind man ran to the village, and upon seeing him, everyone marveled at the fact that his sight had been restored. They searched for Him, and seeing that they were hungry and thirsty due to the poverty in that small village, He revived what He had done in the past. He transformed stones into champurradas, as they would say in Guatemala, and made water and wine flow from dry rocks, just as Moses had done.

When He clearly told them He was Jesus Christ and that this was His Second Coming, some did not understand because they did not follow the Christian faith, while others pondered the matter. Knowing human nature, He explained, partly to test them and partly to convince them, but none of it worked. The news spread throughout the region and eventually reached the Western world. Television programs picked up the story, including the news show "Curiosities" and the program "The World is Crazy, Crazy..." from CBN. Some paid attention, others laughed. Members of religious sects exclaimed, "What audacity, claiming to be Christ on His second journey, as if He were Columbus." Just like the Pharisees of old, some saw Him on TV and thought that, with His bearded appearance and clothing resembling how He had come the first time, just as Rembrandt had portrayed



Him, He might have been part of an advertisement for soap or razors. Others believed He was a secret Iraqi weapon.

Christian groups, from Christian Catholics to Orthodox, Torcido, and various other sects, each convinced they held the truth, reacted differently when they saw the news. In Nueva Guatemala, they dismissed it as nonsense, insisting that according to Mayan prophecies of the Kaí Baktún, Christ would appear in Parque Central, in front of Guatemala Cathedral. The same claims emerged across America. In the sect "Aquel ya Viene", in "Cristianos Mojados de Arizona", and in "Barbas y Barbados" of the Antilles, theories spread. For the most science-minded, calculations from planetoid alignments in the Bible's secret code pointed to His arrival, supposedly predicted by Julio Verne, at Kennedy Space Cape. That made sense to some, as they believed Christ was an astronaut.

As the matter escalated, authorities dismissed it, arguing that the Messiah, by protocol, would first have to present Himself to high-ranking religious leaders, including the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, His Holiness the Pope, and the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople. He would also need to be acknowledged by political figures such as Fidel Castro, the President of Russia, U.S. leaders, the European Union, and major media networks. Smaller religious groups echoed the same doubts, blending cries, theatrics, business deals, and fabricated miracles. The international market had already prepared commercial strategies for His arrival. They planned to sell cross-shaped keychains, vehicle decals, figurines of Jesus, wooden and plastic crosses, and fisherman-style sandals. Anything that could be linked to the Messiah's return was turned into merchandise.

So, appearing in a small cave with no publicity clearly proved the whole event was a fraud. The controversy had already grown too loud.

Master Jesus, as He had imagined, thought His arrival would be received differently. Yet He saw the same disbelief, even worse, as they used His own name to deny Him. What irony! Some, in their frenzy, wanted to lock Him in an asylum, others to operate on His brain to study Him. Geez! Seeing all this wasted time, He returned to His paradise. Soon, it was just another TV news story.

At this point, everyone keeps repeating that He will come, but "Nonsense!" said Christ. "Let them keep waiting. They don't deserve another attempt."

The sad epilogue of this true story is that, while many believed He had come a second time, others did not. Those who did believe think that if humanity and its interests behave this way, the others will never believe, even if He decided to come a third time. No matter how He arrives, He would surely find the same situation.

And you, my friend, if Christ truly returned and told the people, "I am the Messiah, and I have come again, just as has been foretold," would you believe Him?



Enrique Anleu-Díaz  
Holy Week 2006



### *The World Cup of Soccer*

*Seen by someone who doesn't understand that  
pastime.*

This year, meaning 1999 when I observed the sports events, and now in 2006 as the excitement returns, you may ignore everything happening in the world, wars, famine, epidemics, invasions, politics, religious disputes, revolutions. But one thing is unavoidable, whether you want it or not, the World Cup of Soccer. Propaganda, advertisements, and promotions revolve around this "patatetic" practice, not pathetic but derived from pata (foot) and tico (the obsession with kicking). The true meaning of "patear" follows its etymology, meaning to kick with the foot, not to kick the leg of the opposing player. Pata here does not mean the duck's mate but the foot or leg itself. Expressions like "no meter la pata" and "pata de palo", found in the Royal Spanish Academy, illustrate this. Expanding further, even players themselves still wonder, does "patear" mean kicking the ball, kicking the opponent's leg, kicking the referee, or even kicking the audience? Depending on the circumstances, any interpretation could be valid.

The audience, including myself as a viewer of TV movies, gradually gets to know some of these players from the so-called patiuno event, not because of interest, but simply because nothing else airs on television or appears in newspapers. The term patiuno does not come from pato and uno, but rather from pie de uno or the action patié a uno.

For example, they say there's a "huevoón", and you might think it's an insult in our slang, but no. The nickname comes from the player's egg-yellow wig, similar to those worn by clowns begging for money on buses. He looks like a small-town angel, and his last name resembles "rana", maybe because, as some say, he "does the frog", meaning he acts clueless. Curious to see the so-called amphibian, I found him in a soccer match. Watching the game was painful. He never held onto the ball, almost afraid of what to do with it. Whenever it reached his feet, he quickly kicked it away to the nearest teammate, then kicked it again as if thinking, "If I don't have it, they can't blame me when the opponent steals it." Anyone watching him play understands, if he holds onto the ball for too long, in a blink, someone takes it from him.

The same fans say that the so-called "rana" is mostly known for his wig, but that without it, he would look like any other bald player in the game. Others, driven by passion as always, believe the only distinctive thing he has done is set a soccer trend with the yellow wig or at least the habit of dyeing his hair yellow. This trend first appeared among Japanese players and some dark-skinned English players. However, no matter how bald they go, how much they dye their hair yellow or red, grow stallion-style ponytails, or braid it like the decorations on Andalusian horses at the Seville fair, and wear multi-colored soccer shoes, none of these magical tricks seem to help them score goals.

One thing to admire is the players' skill in throwing themselves to the ground, pretending to be injured or even playing dead. This act of deception rivals the trickery of TV commentators, who mislead the listener just as the players fool the viewer.



These commentators confuse people just like INSIVUMEH, where announcing a storm often means clear skies. It's the same with sports narration. What they describe has nothing to do with what's actually happening, something you see with your own eyes. It makes you wonder if signals got crossed and they're talking about an entirely different game. Many of these commentators have worked in both fields, INSIVUMEH and sports media, which explains their similar approach to informing the public.

Regarding other references to the topic, criticizing players, teams, or soccer is risky. Besides being considered ignorant, some passionate individuals, equivalent to fans in this case, might hit you.

It has been confirmed that if a spectator freely comments on what they see in a soccer match, which is obviously not the same as what the passionate fans wanted to see, an argument breaks out. They cite the entire "soccer new testament" to call the person "dumb" and add that they are blind for not seeing what they believe they see. As the saying goes, "for proof, a single example is enough."

There are two games, said a now-departed American, who disappeared precisely for criticizing sports. He thought they were stupid, referring to a bunch of guys, as he put it, who, in American universities, not being fit to study since their brains don't work, are punished by professors and sent to these nonsense activities. They run around wearing helmet-chamber pots on their heads, chasing a watermelon-ball, tackling those who don't have the mentioned object. These are the words of the self-proclaimed expert. What's the point? That is one of the absurdities of the game. They tumble like cars, get up, and repeat the same boring foolishness over and over again.

The other game is similar but with a variation. A man wearing a cap throws a small ball to another who waits with a bat in hand, thinking he might hit someone he dislikes. The so-called batter starts swinging, though the expert corrected me, saying it's not "palazos" but "batazos," from "bat," like a bat that flies and flies, and they never seem to hit the ball. The analogy with the bat comes from the radar these animals possess, making it difficult to strike them, just as happens in this game. Finally, after a countless number of attempts, when someone does manage to hit the ball, everyone runs until someone catches it. Then, the same nonsense repeats, and the audience attending these dull spectacles seems unaware. They are either eating hot dog sandwiches, popcorn, and drinks, reading a magazine, or watching the crowd in the upper or side stands. The major difference from the other game is that those who run, bat, or catch the ball wear visors. And the most important part that gives meaning to all this running around is that they must constantly chew gum or tobacco like ruminants, ensuring that neither the audience nor the players confuse it with the other game involving the *"watermelon-chamber pot helmet."*

Returning to participation in the World Cup of Soccer and the mix of all these incidents, one important thing is to be cautious when attending the stadium. There is one advantage when receiving verbal insults for supporting one team or another. Since fans come from many neighboring countries, no one understands what they are yelling due to the diversity of languages in which they miscommunicate, like a modern Babel. Only their gestures are clear. What is risky, however, is wearing the colors of any participating team. Instead of looking colorful, one might look attacked, confused by some colorblind spectator who mistakes them for the referee due to the approximation of color.



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And about colors, what seems easy to understand for those who know the game is quite difficult for those of us who don't. To analyze this, as a researcher at CEFOL from the very noble, royal, loyal, and glorious University of San Carlos of Guatemala (how do you like that, dear reader?), I decided to investigate some points, especially one about why all the players raise their hands when one of them, "accidentally," lands a strong kick on another. This stops all action, and they place the ball in front of someone who jumps side to side inside a large open frame that, instead of glass, has nets like those used to carry avocados by Indian boys.

I didn't want to ask a friend who is an expert, a fan, and a center forward player, named Celso Sombrerón Lara, better known as "Envoltorio Mágico." He has always played this game, as I was told, alongside two friends named Hunbatz and Hunchouen at a stadium in a place called Xibalbá, wherever that may be. And fearing that he would go on talking about it for hours, as they say he tends to do, to the point that this center forward Lara stops listening to his operas and cantatas just to talk

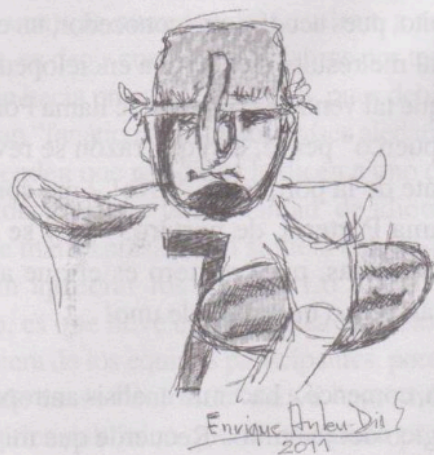
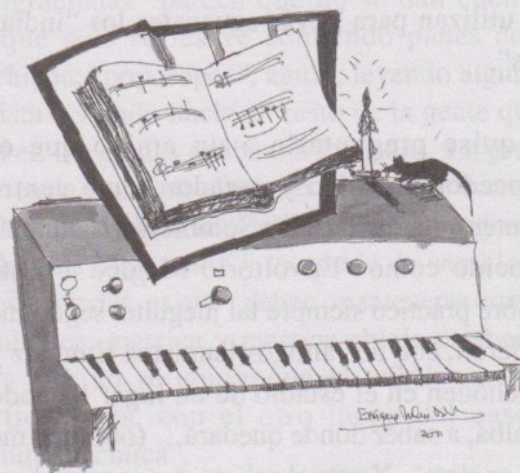
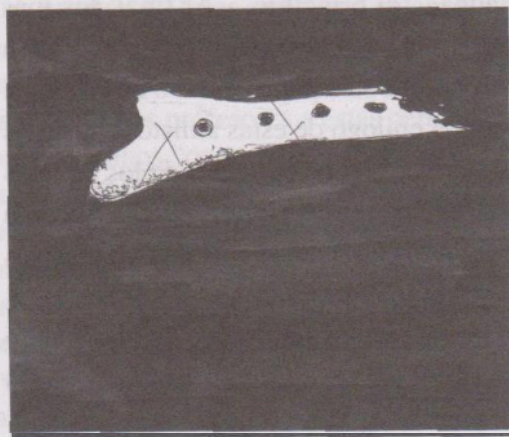
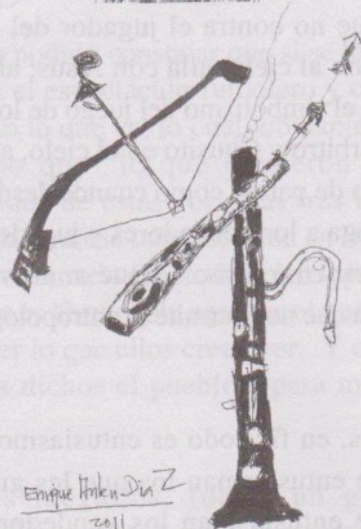
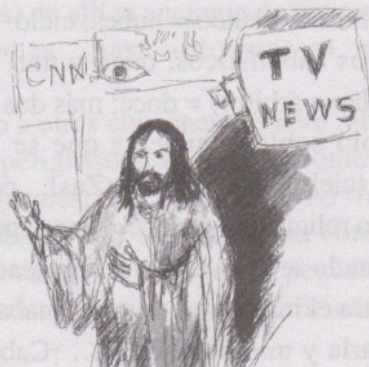
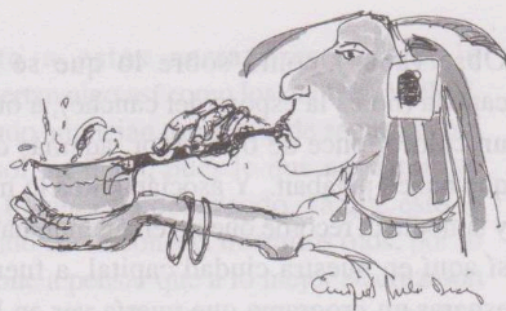
about this game, I turned to another expert, a Scottish man, who turned out to be a walking encyclopedia. He told me that the window with nets is called *Porquería*. I thought, Of course, from "*puerco*", that explains why the guy kept rolling around in the *porquería*. "No!" he corrected me. "It's called *Portería*, from *portero*, and today they call it 'goalkeeper' because *portero* means 'the one who opens doors.'" You never stop learning!

In short, I began conducting an anthropological and mystical analysis of the game. Remember, my field is research at CEFOL.

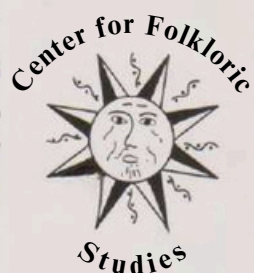
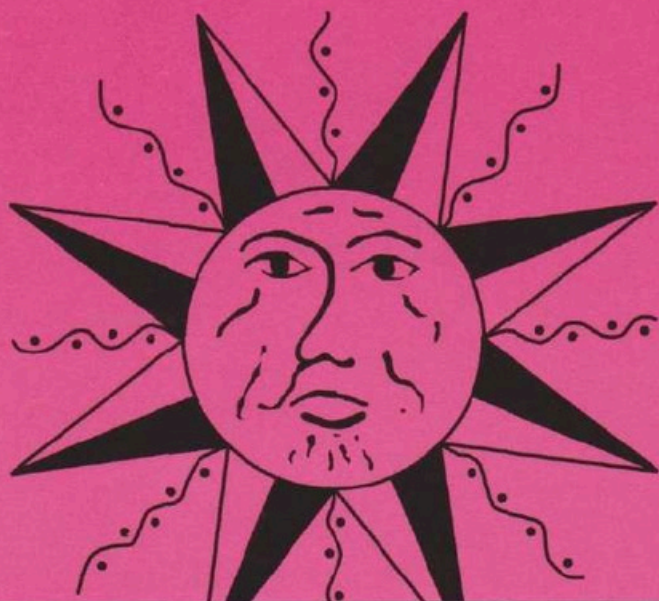
I observed a field with eleven players of one color, eleven of another, and three who never played. Associating it with magic and symbolism, I recalled seeing eleven red and eleven white players in our capital city while waiting for a TV program. Red equaled fire, hell; white, clouds, heaven. Then came the cabalistic numbers. Eleven plus one non-player, the referee, made twelve, plus two flag-waving assistants representing heaven and hell. Since it was religious symbolism, twelve equaled the twelve apostles. Before kicking toward the goal, the player crossed himself and looked up to the sky. The ball did not go toward the goalkeeper but straight to Jesus in heaven. The game's symbolism became clear—the twelve apostles, the referee, Jesus in the sky, and the act of kicking, like when Jesus cleared the synagogue of merchants and soccer players.

Okay, then, in the World Cup, everything is enthusiasm. Fans get excited, vendors get excited, TV broadcasters get excited, and joy is everywhere, at first. By the end, the most passionate become sad, tearful, or downright miserable because their team lost or didn't qualify. The final chapter of these friendly and wholesome competitions falls upon the losing teams, who must sneak back into their country. Otherwise, the understanding fans will not just punish them with disdain and oblivion but with kicks, to stay within the sporting context, or bullets for missing goals. And bullets never miss.









Avenida La Reforma  
0-09, zona 10 Tel/fax/  
2331-9171 y 2361-9260

***Director***

Celso A. Lara Figueroa

***Assistant Director***

Zoila Rodríguez

***Principal Researchers***

Celso A. Lara Figueroa

Alfonso Arrivillaga Cortés

Aracely Esquivel Vásquez

Artemis Torres Valenzuela

***Musicologist Researcher***

Enrique Anleu-Díaz

***Interim Researchers***

Anibal Dionisio Chajón Flores

Matthias Stöckli

Fernando Urquizú

Deyvid Molina

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***Interior Layout and Cover Design***

Cristian Alexander Hidalgo

***Cover and Interior Inks***

Anleu-Díaz