Bodies, football jerseys and multiple male aesthetics through football in Turkey
Yağmur Nuhrat
SIEF 2019 – April 15, 2019

This paper discusses differing aesthetics of football jerseys in relation to the bodies they adorn, focusing particularly on Turkey. Footballers are increasingly glorified as depicting a specific version of the perfect male body. The popularization of Cristiano Ronaldo's dietary and exercise regimen, footballers' appearance in fashion magazines or advertisements are just a few examples. Jersey designs have, to some extent, conformed to this emphasis by encouraging tighter models over the last few years. It has thus become customary to see well-trained, muscular footballers whose bulging biceps and pecks almost find it difficult to contain themselves underneath snug-fitting shirts.

Besides valorizing the meticulously crafted male athletic body, this particular aesthetic also casts a specific light on the kind of footballer who has a more indulgent relationship with his body – someone who trains less, is on the verge of being overweight and perhaps banks on skill, rather than agility or fitness. In addition, the fit athlete's relationship to his body and his jersey invites an aesthetically stimulating question in regards to fan bodies that sport exactly the same jerseys. At times composed of children, sometimes of overweight adults or sexually conspicuous young women, fan bodies allow us to observe the reappropriation of the jersey, thereby creating new aesthetics. In addition, fans in Turkey often customize their jerseys, inscribing not only their names but also humorous puns or short slogans on the backside, further contributing to this reappropriation and resignification.

In this talk, I juxtapose the fit male athlete and the out-of-shape male fan vis-à-vis their relations to the same garment. Through this analysis, I critically engage with how different bodies claim or represent the site of football through differing and non-discursive masculine aesthetics. This talk is based on my ethnographic research on football in Turkey, ongoing since 2010.

As the football jersey went from being "athletic wear" to "leisure wear" it has differently constituted multiple types of male players as well as men. My main question is: "How do these men emerge through these jerseys – in different occasions as different subjects with different bodies that don these clothes? And, what do those emergences offer us aesthetically?"

The anthropology of "dress" has asserted, against the semiotic perspective" that dress is constitutive rather than reflective (Miller 2010). This points to three main principles:

- There is no inner core to be reflected (poignant re: the veil)
- Being concerned about dress is not superficial
- Dress is something in its own right

And these principles bring with themselves a major approach to understanding agency, practice, and performance especially as regards the questions of power, identity and capital accumulation. Examples include: How the sari is worn in India, the context of denim in England and discussions around "rentboy" and "apaçi" fashions in Turkey.

Regarding jerseys in particular, the literature illuminates the following as key topics:

- Historical approaches to kit fashions
- Transformations in design, including retro/vintage shirts
- Technological innovations
- Commercialization, sponsorships, etc. / protest shirts
- As a consumer good
- Shirt as totem (meanings, rituals, etc.)
- Authenticity

Specifically significant for my argument here, the jersey is understood to "constitute" the player in the following forms: as an athlete, as a specific footballer with a number, a name or

a nickname, as an object of statistics (with new tech innovations), as a machine to be protected (there are mentions of perspiration, UV rays, etc.), as a billboard, as a rule breacher exposing body/other shirt, as a gift giver/exchanger and as a professional vs. a committed affiliate of a team. The jersey can also signify commitment as players talk about finding the opportunity to "wear the shirt," the "love of the badge," "perspiring the jersey" (and there are fan cheers in Turkish about this and discourse around it in Argentina too), "respecting the shirt," and "being able to handle the weight of the shirt."

Aesthetically the jersey "constitutes" the (male) player as a specific kind of man when it accentuates a fit body that is read as a disciplined body. This is clearly opposed to the hedonistic body evidenced by fat usually in the form of a belly. My observation is that football jerseys have been going through changes in cuts and becoming tighter to reveal pecks, abs, etc. and that jersey ads highlight such musculature even when they are not displayed without people actually wearing them [show photos here]. The change began with the 2002 Kappa design. And footballers are increasingly glorified as depicting a specific version of the perfect male body. The popularization of Cristiano Ronaldo's dietary and exercise regimen, footballers' appearance in fashion magazines or advertisements are just a few examples. (2010 Vanity Fair)

Besides valorizing the meticulously crafted male athletic body, this particular aesthetic casts a specific light on the kind of footballer who has a more indulgent relationship with his body – someone who trains less, is on the verge of being overweight and in some cases banks on skill, rather than agility or fitness. Here is a quote from a wiki in Turkish:

> "[Kappa] is the sportswear brand which became attractive through their most recent AS Roma and Italy kits but faced an obstacle in the Turkish market; i.e. men with bellies." Ekşi Sözlük – online wiki in Turkey (2001) (notice the connections between dress, body and gender)

The motif of the belly thus indexes an inappropriate lifestyle for a footballer or demise after quitting and this is highlighted by jersey shapes and cuts. Some examples include Gascione and Yalçın in the context of Turkey [photos and quotes here].

The jersey also "constitutes" fans in specific ways: As an affiliate of a certain team, as loyal, a sellout, a show off, a fake, a cheapskate, a protestor, a consumer, a billboard, a collector, a design connoisseur and debater, as nostalgic (retro shirts), as authentic (having older shirts / buying official merchandise), as an affiliate of a specific footballer or as a specific fan with a name/nickname. But jerseys also index different bodies and different socializations [photos]. Note this quote from journalist Josh Warwick (2014) – "Should you wear a super-skinny football shirt? The answer is, very clearly, no…avoid the compression shirt with built-in tape strategically placed to optimise performance... and retain a sense of dignity instead."

But what else is going on here? What other than undignified bellies swinging around? The jersey constitutes the (out-of-shape male) fan as a specific kind of man: One that is opposed to the spornosexual footballer who has authority over the way in which these shirts must be worn. Kendall and Osbaldistan (2010) use Benjamin to think about protest kits. They talk about corporization through "loss of aura." I want to urge the audience here to think about using Benjamin differently – not as due to proliferation but as due to the disentangling authority associated with "aura" itself, the disentangling of original cult associations – through reappropriation and resignification – as bellies wear tight jerseys. Bellied masculinities are the aesthetic other of spornosexuals. This may not be intentional. But it allows us to identify multiple masculinities (aesthetically) in the site of football through the dynamic between bodies, dress and gender. The proliferation of conspicuously (even if not discursively) non-spornosexual masculine aesthetics is transgressive and it cannot be stopped. It is overwhelming. It is confrontational. It is indeed the unintended consequence of valorizing, glorifying and commodifying the lives, bodies and images of spornosexuals.

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