The Artification of Football: A sociological reconsideration of the 'beautiful game'

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Abstract:	Football is widely referred to as the 'beautiful game'. This gives the impression that the sport of football can be aesthetically appreciated by its human observers. However, while many, if not most, people might be prepared to acknowledge that some of the physical movements made by top level football players exhibit grace, even beauty, this does not equate to football being accepted as a form of culture of a kind comparable to other areas of human activity more familiarly described collectively as 'the arts'. While this paper takes an interest in philosophical inquiry into the aesthetic possibilities of football, it is primarily concerned with a sociological explanation as to how football has become 'artified'. In doing so, the paper draws upon the concept 'artification' as developed by Roberta Shapiro and Nathalie Heinich. The approach is not primarily concerned with definitions of art according to aesthetic criteria or notions of appreciation, but with "how and under what circumstances art comes about". This requires examining football in relation to discernible 'constituent processes' of artification. For reasons explained in the paper, the contextual focus is on the artification of football in England. Artification is not a closed and finished matter. In that it can be said to have occurred, artification must be balanced against 'de-artification', in the form of potentially countervailing tendencies. Such consideration is taken up in the conclusion, via reflection upon the damaging impact to the culture of football by the excesses of commercial organisational control. Overall, artification is advocated as a sociological model that can help us to make sense of the cultural significance of football in contemporary life.

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Abstract

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Keywords

aesthetics, artification, artistry, artist, beautiful game, constituent processes, cultural ownership, culture, football, footballer, modernism, modern, sport

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Introduction

Association football (soccer) is 'the working man's ballet'. Such a claim is made in the title of former English professional football player Alan Hudson's autobiography. (1) It is a book title loaded with meaning. While declaring the male-gendered bias of football culture, the title also makes claim for football as an art form, albeit an art form marked by class. The allusion to class (via reference to the working man) highlights the provocativeness of the claim being made for football. Football is not normally considered an art; indeed, like most other forms of sport, football is conventionally regarded as a domain of human activity not connected with, or even antithetical to, the arts. Yet, Hudson's book title proposes that football is enjoyed and appreciated in the manner of at least one other conventionally recognised art form, ballet. It does so in a way to suggest that while ballet, is an elitist art

form, football (the gender divide notwithstanding) is egalitarian. More familiar than Hudson's book title is the well-known sobriquet of football as the 'beautiful game'. This term of disputed origins, perhaps most familiarly attributed to the great Brazilian player Pele, agrees that football can be appreciated by those with the capacity to recognise instances of beautiful human movement within football play. The 'beautiful game' came into the popular idiom at a time when old cultural snobberies were being reconsidered. When the football disliking critic and writer, Bernard Levin, reluctantly attended the 1966 FA Cup final at Wembley Stadium, he found himself, to his surprise, agreeing with sports writers who referred to football being like 'ballet and poetry-in-motion' (Levin, 1979). The aesthetics of football play has since become a matter of interest to academic philosophers (Connor, 2011; Mumford, 2012; Mumford, 2016), while the majority interest in academic cultural studies and related sociological research has focussed on the aesthetics of football fandom rather than on the aesthetics of the game itself.

Even accepting that football play can be beautiful, does not confirm that football is art. Many things in nature can be declared beautiful, but they are not works of art. Even items of human making regarded as beautiful need not be works of art. From a sociological perspective, the designation of a human activity as an art form results from identifiable processes. For football to be an art form, as the former player Alan Hudson suggests, means that it will have become so via such processes. Related to this claim, this essay asks if we might speak of football becoming *artified*. In doing so it engages with the enquiry developed by Shapiro and Heinich (2012) in their paper 'When is artification?' Their title follows the question raised by the philosopher Nelson Goodman (1977) is his famous chapter 'When is art?' Goodman was concerned with debating the formalist aesthetics of art theorists such as Clive Bell. He was disinclined to purist distinctions, favouring instead an everyday aesthetics by which art occurs when an item or practice begins to function as art. Shapiro and Heinich are, relatedly, interested in questions of 'how art comes about' and, in a decidedly sociological sense, in 'processes where certain things turn into art proper'. While sociological enquiry will be interested in claims for football as the 'beautiful game', this will be more in recognition of an aspect of artification at work, rather than in accepting widespread reference to the 'beautiful game' as proof that football should be regarded as an art form. Artification does not involve definitions of art, or how art might be considered, but examining the circumstances under which art can be said to have occurred (Shapiro and Heinich, 2012). Artification has been used to explain how areas of creative human activity, not conventionally associated with the

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arts, have gone through a range of processes, and interactions, connected to differing extents, to become art forms. Circus performance, graffiti artistry, breakdancing, and contemporary fashion designing are some of the fields which have been discussed in relation to artification. Although studies of these fields refer to artification having emerged or occurred, artification is not a concept to be used in a static way. Tendencies towards artification in turn face counter tendencies and thus artification occurs within an ongoing context of challenge. Examining artification thus also involves a simultaneous examination of de-artification.

For reasons already suggested, football presents a rather novel case of artification. The examples of creative practice referred to above, while potentially disruptive to more established art forms, nevertheless exist in observable relationship to domain fields. For example, graffiti can be observed in relationship to painting, and breakdance to other forms of dance. As a competitive sport, football does not bear a relationship of this kind to the arts. This is not to say that sport and the arts are essentially mutually exclusive forms of human endeavour. When Baron de Coubertin revived the ancient Olympic Games in a modern variant in the late 1800s, he included an 'arts competition' within the overall program as a way of giving recognition to the harmonious coexistence between human activities in ancient Greece that resemble both the arts and sport according to a modern understanding. However, that de Coubertin struggled to gain support for the Olympic 'arts competition' is an indicator of the failure of a modern mindset to accept a reconnection of what had come to be adjudged, over time, as disparate areas of human engagement (Hughson, 2015a). Football also became something of a law unto itself within the world of sport. Despite de Coubertin's enthusiasm for football to be included in the Olympic Games, the disinterest of early football administrators kept the sport out of the Olympic sphere until a competition featuring only six teams was included in the 4th Olympiad in London in 1908. Various historical and cultural factors thus come together to make football an unlikely candidate to be considered as an art form, despite popular reference to the 'beautiful game'. Nevertheless, in what follows, a case will be made for the sociological usefulness of discussing the artification of football. The discussion avoids focussing on football as a cultural monolith. While football is reasonably referred to as the 'global game' – as well as the 'beautiful game' – consideration of its artification benefits from a concentration on particular national contexts, because it is within such contexts that the processes relevant to artification have been and continue to be played out. Following a brief setting out of the ten 'constituent processes' of artification identified

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by Shapiro and Heinich, the paper will centre discussion on the artification of football in England.

Constituent processes of artification

Shapiro and Heinich contend that artification occurs via the following processes, through which the cultural status of a human activity is alteredfrom being not art to being art: 1) displacement (which occurs when changing circumstances result in a significant shift of context or location; For example, when breakdance performance shifted from the street into theatres); 2) renaming and 3) reclassification (for example, when in eighteenth century France, painters were re-designated from craftsman to *artistes*); 4) institutional and organisational change (for example when mechanical arts transformed into liberal arts and guilds became academies); 5) patronage (whereby an elevation in status can bring formal recognition from a monarch and the state, involving awards and financing); 6) legal consolidation (occurred historically as artists and writers attained legal recognition of their status and secured claim to artistic providence and related intellectual property rights); 7) redefinition of time (occurs post-artification when the prior life of a human activity, i.e. when it was regarded either as prosaic or non-art, is redefined as being poetic and/or as art); 8) individualisation of labour (occurs when the recognition of an activity as artistic tends to heighten the profile of individual artistry. This has occurred through history, from the solitary artist emerging from the workshop to the hip-hop performer being regarded as an *auteur* on the basis of distinct and individualised choreography); 9) dissemination (once an activity becomes recognised as art, news of the altered status spreads, helping to solidify the art status); 10) intellectualisation (as the purveyors of a human activity become recognised as artists greater interest is taken in their stories, resulting in such intellectual follow-up as critical reviews and biographies, and also autobiographies).

The processes of artification will vary in significance from one type of human activity to another. For example, the processes of artification relevant to graffiti artistry will compare unevenly to the processes as relevant to football. Shapiro and Heinich do not propose these processes as a checklist of artification that must be measured up to in each case, but more as a set of indicators against which we may take stock of artification having occurred in relation to breakdancing, graffiti artistry, football and other fields of activity. As indicated above, context is also very important in the study of artification. While, for example, graffiti artistry

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is an activity that occurs in many countries, the artification of graffiti will vary between different national contexts, given such factors as particular governmental responses to the public display of graffiti art. Given the institutional formation and organizational framing of football within national leagues and in representation of nations at tournaments such as the World Cup, it is particularly pertinent to examine the artification of football within national contexts. As the historical 'home' of modern football, where the rules of the sport were codified, the first national governing body established, and the first national football league commenced, England offers a certain pertinence for a national case study in the artification of football. Disconnected from this historical claim, the selection may seem counterintuitive. English football culture is not especially renowned for developing artistry. It is better-known for hard physicality and getting the job done, as necessary to win the game. Mention of the 'beautiful game' is more likely to conjure thoughts of Brazilian football players than the English (Goldblatt, 2014). However, the historical backdrop to the development of a national football culture is important to the sociologically based enquiry into artification. The extent to which football artistry, and the beauty thereof, arises in the discussion of football in England is an aspect of the enquiry into artification, rather than a defining point. The contextual focus on England is not meant to suggest that this is the most important context for studying the artification of football, but a recognition of the historical significance of England in the global spread of football and the development of other national football cultures. The ways in which those cultures have developed will bear interesting comparison to the socio-historical development of the football culture in England, and it would be hoped that studies of the artification of football in other national contexts, undertaken by scholars with the necessary knowledge, expertise and vernacular language skills, will critically reflect upon the English legacy. In turn, examination of the artification of football in England requires some reflection upon the way in which the English football culture has been impacted upon by contact with the football cultures of other countries, particularly through 'foreign' players coming to play in English league football. In this regard, the concept of 'cultural traffic', developed from the ideas of the anthropologist Bernard Smith, can be usefully applied to the global interconnections of sporting cultures such as football (Hughson, 2009: 77-80).

Before moving on to consider the relevance of Shapiro and Heinich's constituent processes to the artification of football in England, it is pertinent to clarify two matters. Firstly, the focus of the study is on professional men's football in England. This is so because it is men's football at the top professional level, as it has developed over time, which has been at the

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centre of activity relevant to the processes associated with artification. This is not to exclude women's professional football, and with its current growth, further contemporary studies into the artification of football in England will have to take account of the women's game. Also, while Alan Hudson's book title justifiably recognises male cultural dominance in football, this does not exclude women from the frame of reference regarding the artification of football. Research by Pope (2016) indicates that women have been more considerably involved as fans of professional men's football in England over the years than the familiar stereotype of male exclusivity implies. Secondly, given that the artification of football is studied against the historical trajectory of the sport in England, the paper draws upon second-hand data and materials. Further studies, less historically-based, may take a different approach, employing, for example, surveys and even ethnographic fieldwork to examine processes relevant to the artification of football.

Constituent processes of artification applied to football

Shapiro and Heinich's 'constituent processes' of artification are now considered in relation to football culture in England:

1) Displacement

The origins of football in England are disputed, but there is agreement that the game, which developed into the modern sport of association football (soccer) towards the end of the nineteenth century, had rather unruly beginnings. The roots of what Russell (1997: 5-8) refers to as 'folk football', may be traced back prior to the fourteenth century and are on record because the activity was considered a problem for public order. Large gatherings involving football type play occurred on Christian holidays such as Shrove Tuesday. These contests provided a carnivalesque function in which the normal rules of social conduct were suspended. The more well-known contests, such as those played between members of two parishes in Derby could amass participants totalling somewhere between 500 to 1,000 in number (Bale, 1994: 27). Folk football continued despite laws being passed by a number of monarchs over the years to have it ended. However, it was more practical reasons that came to bear on the old traditional games and which gave impetus to the creation of the modern variant of football played today. By the nineteenth century the enclosure of land inhibited the large scale recreational gatherings required for the playing of folk football. Casual football

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came to be played by smaller gatherings of men in urban streets and backblocks, while incipient versions of the clubs that gave rise to organised football competition were formed in the 1870s. Fundamental to the formation of clubs and the establishment of competition football was the formalising of rules of the game. This occurred under the imprimatur of the Football Association (FA) in 1863 (Clayton, 2013). While there is some debate amongst sport historians about the importance of rules formed in Sheffield a few years earlier (Collins, 2015; Swain, 2018), there seems little doubt that the rules codified in London by the FA were those that came to govern football once it took shape in the English Football League founded in 1888. The formulation of rules and founding of competition football were early milestones towards artification. Had football continued in a wild folk form or merely as an activity undertaken for manly exercise in public schools (as it was prior to the codification of rules) it would not have received the type of public recognition leading to spectator interest and the critical assessment of football play characteristic of artification. A major 'displacement' occurred in English football when stadiums were built to accommodate the matches played by teams in the emergent Football League. Stadiums such as Burnden Park (Bolton Wanderers) and Deepdale (Preston North End) (Inglis, 1996) became the theatres in which the drama of increasingly professionalised football was played out and upon which the artistry of star players could be seen by those able to attend matches (Kelly, 2004). Consideration of the player artiste leads into discussion of the next two 'constituent processes', of artification, 'renaming' and 'reclassification'.

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2) Renaming and 3) Reclassification

In describing the England national team's star player from the 1966 World Cup, Manchester United's Bobby Charlton, football writer and journalist Arthur Hopcraft waxed lyrical:

> The flowing line of Charlton's football has no disfiguring barbs in it, but there is a heavy razor-sharp arrowhead at its end. It is the combination of the graceful and the dramatic which makes him so special. There are few players who affect a crowd's responses as much as he does…A shot from Charlton…is one of the great events of sport…the power of it is massive and it erupts out of elegance; he is never clumsy or desperate in movement; he can rise very close to the athletic ideal (Hopcraft, 1968: 82).

This articulation exemplifies the poetic portrayal of the star football player as artist that developed with the popularity of professional football in the twentieth century. Hopcraft was one of the more talented writers to focus on football, but his elevation of an outstanding

player into a special category, standing apart from other players, continued a trend that commenced in the earlier days of newspaper reporting on football (Woolridge, 2002). In this example, Charlton is singled out for his graceful yet powerful physical movement. He rises above a purely combative form of football play in which the majority of players remain engaged. Like the Renaissance artist, he occupies the same workshop as craftsmen, but his labour is of a different kind (cf. Sennett, 2008: 66). Reference to the lack of 'disfiguring barbs' emphasises the rareness of his grace and balance, qualities that approach the Greek ideal in which there is no distinction between athlete and artist. The reaction of the crowd, as described by Hopcraft, suggests an appreciation by viewers of the player's artistry. While not explicitly 'renaming' or 'reclassifying' the player as artist and football as art, Hopcraft's portrayal suggests such a shift. Several other players over the years have been characterised in this way by journalists and authors such as Hopcraft, Brian Glanville and Percy. M Young. Perhaps the player most celebrated for football artistry was Bobby Charlton's Manchester United teammate, George Best. The story of Best as an accomplished player has been enmeshed with tales of his flamboyant lifestyle (Burn, 2006). He has been regarded as a prototype for 'maverick' football players of the late 1960s early 1970s in England (including Alan Hudson), who refused to allow their individual artistry to be stymied by team focussed playing strategies of supposedly rationally minded club managers (Steen, 1994). There are clear literary parallels to this type of virtuoso player and the rebellious-type individual artist associated with the Renaissance and the romantic tradition in western art thereafter. The heralding of such a player connects with other processes in the artification of football, particularly 'dissemination' and 'intellectualisation'.

4) Institutional and Organisational Change

Significant to the organisational history of football was the foundation of the Football Association (FA) and the aforementioned codification of rules of the game in 1863. The formalisation of rules was necessary to the modernisation of football but may not at first appear relevant in prospect to the artification of football. 1863 is recalled as a key year in the history of modernism. It was in May of that year, some five months prior to the codification of football, that Manet's *The Luncheon on the Grass*, was rejected by the official salon to then triumphantly reappear on display in the Salon des Refuses. Thus, around the same time that football was creating rules of sportive engagement, the artworld rewarded the breaking of

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conventions, if not rules, and, following Manet, more radical styles in painting occurred. Giulianotti (1999: 4) has noted that the modernization of football via the imposition of rules resembles, in sociological terms, a Weberian form of rationalising and regulation. Such control was matched to the formalisation of competition in football leagues, which required rules of player conduct and assurance of match results according to understood and agreed terms. However, it is from within such constraints that football artistry has arisen. As already indicated, artistic football play required a game structure allowing related performance. Formalised football competition has also nurtured a form of spectatorship based in a collective investment into the appreciation of footballers and their abilities. A passage from historian Richard Holt well captures the collective experience on the football terrace:

> Bound together with the sense of community there was the sheer excitement and beauty of the thing – the perfect pass that suddenly switches the play from end to end, the shuffle and swerve that turns a defence and sends a winger away with the time to cross to a centre-forward tearing past the marker (Holt, 1989: 175)

Despite current grassroots attempts to increase supporter ownership the preponderant economic ownership of British football clubs, as pointed out by Hill (2002: 62), has resided with business and related shareholding interests. However, reliance on the support of spectators and their emotional and aesthetic investments, as indicated by the quote above, makes it is reasonable to talk of a 'cultural ownership' of football existing distinctly from its economic ownership (Holt, 1989: 165). While care needs to be taken not to equate the artification of football with institutionalisation, the institutional and organisational arrangements of the sport, as developed since the late 1800s, have provided spatial and structural conditions through which both players and spectators have been able to find artistic expression in football.

5) Patronage

In 1934, in his first year as director, Kenneth Clark opened the doors of the National Gallery at 8 a.m. on FA Cup final day in the hope of attracting football supporters to view some of the western world's most famous paintings prior to heading to Wembley Stadium for the match (Secrest, 1986: 92). This could be viewed cynically, just as a means of boosting dwindling visitor numbers, or as a genuine ambition of making the fine arts more accessible to people not accustomed to attending galleries. Clark's record in public office, and as a

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broadcaster and educator, would suggest the latter. His attempt to broaden public access to the National Gallery stands in relation to a 'democratisation of culture' approach, championed by the former Secretary-General of the Arts Council, Roy Shaw, and by Richard Hoggart in his essays and committee work on broadcasting and the arts (Hughson and Inglis, 2001: 473-476). It is an elitist approach at core, recognizing the creation of excellence in the arts as the preserve of a gifted few, but democratic in the belief that this excellence can be appreciated by the population in general, given exposure to art and some instruction into its genres. There is no stated recognition here of football being regarded as art or art-like, merely, in Clark's initiative at the National Gallery, a view that fine arts should be available to all. Delivering art to football enthusiasts could be a means of carrying out this mission.

The 'democratisation of culture' position was extended in the 'left-culturalism' of Raymond Williams, as he advanced the case for what counted as culture not being restricted to areas conventionally regarded as the arts. Williams (1965: 364) referred to football as a 'wonderful game' the need for which (along with other sports) is 'as real as the need for art'. A more conservative, 'right-culturalist', version of Williams's position was offered by T.S. Eliot, when he listed a 'cup final' as a feature of an English common culture (Eliot, 1948: 31). Although Williams (1958: 234), amongst others (Johnson, 1979: 128), has questioned the sincerity of Eliot's reference to the cultural worthiness of an activity such as football, Eliot was a keen enough observer of public life in England, to be aware of the sport's popularity and register on the calendar of annual events. In the same year that Eliot came to live in England, 1914, George V became the first monarch to present the trophy after an FA Cup Final to the winning captain (Russell, 1997: 74). There is no indication that the King was an enthusiast of football, his attendance of the FA Cup final seemingly occurred because his advisers had become aware of the quickly growing popularity of the sport among the working class. Attending the match provided a key opportunity for the king to be seen in the presence of his subjects. The relationship between football and the monarch has strengthened during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, she has attended many FA Cup finals since first doing so in her coronation year, 1953, and presented the World Cup winner's trophy to England captain Bobby Moore at Wembley in 1966 (Hughson, 2016: 21). Writing at the time of her coronation, sociologists Shils and Young (1953) claimed the televising of the Queen's coronation provided a means by which the public were able to emotionally connect with the monarchy. Being televised in attendance at major football matches has possibly furthered this purpose.

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Royal patronage of football has been furthered by the awarding of knighthoods and royal honours to players and others associated with the sport. Sir Stanley Matthews became the first footballer to be knighted in February 1965. The Beatles received MBEs in October of the same year. The initiative came from Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson as a deliberate breakdown of the elitism of royal honouring (Wilson, 1971: 59). Within the sphere of culture, such honours were reserved for those in the conventional arts and related fields. Wilson's initiative involved the Crown, unwittingly or otherwise, in breaking down a long-standing cultural hierarchy. 1965 was also the year in which Wilson, at the encouragement of his minister for sport, Denis Howell, pledged half a million pounds for football stadia improvement ahead of England's hosting of the World Cup in 1966. Wilson had shown little knowledge of or interest in the World Cup prior to the tournament commencing, but with England's success in reaching the final, this changed. Wilson hurriedly left an official trip to North America to be back at Wembley in time to attend the final (Hughson, 2016: 49). He had, no doubt, become aware of the political kudos to possibly rub off from being seen in connection with a national football success. It is a political attitude that has prevailed since. However, while royal and political patronage of football may justifiably be regarded as largely driven by the self-interest of the monarchy and governments, it has helped to enact a cultural shift, not only of the type referred to above as the 'democratisation of culture', but towards the acknowledgement of a common culture in which football has a place. Football may not require the legitimacy of the Crown or the state to be art, but official patronage, to the extent that it has some influence on the circumstances under which players are adjudged to be artists, has played an artification role.

6) Legal consolidation 8) Individualisation of labour

These two processes can be considered together, as the individualisation of footballers' labour was consolidated via legal challenge. A watermark moment occurred in January 1961 when the Football League relented, under threat of strike action from the Professional Footballers' Association, to abolish a then existing 'maximum wage' for players (Russell, 1997: 156). The maximum wage, subject to incremental adjustments over the years, had been in place since 1901. By 1961 the maximum wage for a player was £20 per week. This amount was comparable to the wage of the average worker in Britain at the time. Within a few days of the maximum wage being abolished, England team captain and star Fulham FC player,

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Johnny Haynes, struck the first £100 per week payment deal for a professional footballer. Within a few years, player's wages had increased exponentially, although, not to the level of celebrities in other popular entertainment fields (Hughson, 2015b: 111). This change to material reward and status influenced artistry in professional football in that it gave more accomplished players a sense of independence, whereby they felt less shackled to a club and some, such as those described above as 'mavericks', would become personally inventive in their style of play.

The so-called Bosman ruling of 1995 provided the most recent landmark for the freedom of movement by football players from one club to another (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009: 22). The ruling, passed down by the European Court of Justice, was in favour of Belgian footballer Jean-Marc Bosman against his club RFC Liège. Bosman's playing contract expired in 1990, but the club refused him a free transfer, and this resulted in a subsequent loss of earning for the player. The ruling effectively created a precedent whereby clubs could not prevent players from moving on once their contract had ended or demand a transfer fee from the club to which they were moving. This gave players much more opportunity to move around and led to the rise of player agents as negotiators on behalf of players. Significantly, players from the European Union were able to move freely between clubs located in EU countries (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009: 64). The English Premier League has experienced a pronounced change due largely to the impact of the Bosman ruling. In 1992 the EPL had less than 3% of non-British players distributed across its teams, by 2012 the figure was close to 60% (Goldblatt, 2015: 26). How this might alter if Britain leaves the European Union remains to be seen. Whatever the case, it is reasonable to conclude that the influx of players from different countries and football backgrounds added to the stylistic diversity in professional English club football, in a manner that has impacted on the artification of the sport.

7) Redefinition of time

There is a tendency within football writing and public discourse to nostalgically redefine imagined highpoints of the past against which the contemporary state of the game has declined. An especially interesting example occurred following the 1966 World Cup final. The description of England's win as 'the fatal victory' (Downing, 2001: 118) tellingly captures the thrust of criticism. The style of play deployed by England manger Alf Ramsey

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has been widely adjudged as rationally ruthless and non-artistic, his players having been referred to as 'Ramsey's robots' (Hutchinson, 1995: 181). Having won the World Cup, this style of play is said to have been emulated by managers in the subsequent years of league competition, resulting in a decline from the artistry and flair that had come to characterise football by the early 1960s. The Austrian musicologist, turned football critic, Hans Keller, referred to this post-1966 trend in English football as 'The New Mediocrity' (Keller, 1986: 274-276). Such representations are disputable. The present author has argued that rather than being seen as a retreat from artistic football, Ramsey's team strategy can be likened to a modernist art project (Hughson, 2016: 98-103). However, of key significance here is the way in which perceptions or imaginings of artistry (and declines therefrom) have been attributed to historical moments of football.

9) Dissemination

Popular media has played a dissemination role in the projection of opinion relevant to football being regarded as or like an art form. This commenced from the early years of league football when newspapers reported on players such as Steve Bloomer and Billy Meredith in a manner acclaiming their artistry (Woolridge, 2002). The written word on footballers has expanded across the years as new media and technologies have come to the fore. The professional journalism of newspapers has been rivalled by fanzines since the 1980s and now digital media serves to diversify the discussion of the artistic merits of football. An important historical shift in the reception of football came with live broadcasts via the radio, which first occurred on the BBC in 1927 (Haynes, 1999). Listening to matches on the radio brought live football into the home, affording people first-hand experience of football action in a way previously unknown. Then a monumental shift occurred with football appearing on television. Televisual broadcasts of FA Cup finals commenced following WWII, as part of the 'public broadcasting' remit of the BBC (Haynes, 2016). While free-to-air televising of live league games was strongly resisted by football administrators, replay highlights programs of Saturday matches came to air on both the BBC (*Match of the Day*, 1964) and ITV (*The Big Match*, 1968) (Barwick, 2013: 60).

The uses of media have bearing on interpretations of football fandom. Going to the match is still regarded by many as a criterion for genuine supporter status of a football club. Contrarily, those who only or mostly watch matches on television may have their credentials

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challenged. Of course, attending matches and watching the football highlights on TV are not mutually exclusive activities. Nor are the two categories of football enthusiasts, 'partisan' and 'purist', as identified by the philosopher Stephen Mumford. Partisans are those fans who support their club to win in such a diehard way they have little concern about the style of football play adopted. Purists, on the other hand, maintain a primary interest in seeing a game played attractively (Mumford: 2012; 2016). Surely, though, some partisans are capable of being purists, especially at times when watching a match not featuring their favoured club. However, leaving complications of status aside, televised football would seem a particularly useful device for affording a purist experience in the close consideration of football play at remove from the roaring partisan crowd. It provides something of the distance usually ascribed to the appreciation of art. Overall, developments in media dissemination have had a bearing on ways in which football has been regarded and viewed by its enthusiasts. While not definitive, no consideration of the artification of football could reasonably overlook this significance.

10) Intellectualisation

Much of the extensive literature on football involves matter-of-factual accounts of games, seasons and club records. Yet there is also a considerable amount of literature relevant to the artification of football. This includes literature that addresses the aesthetic merits of football, the artistic abilities of players and the excellence of certain matches. A large proportion of the non-fictional writing about football involves player biographies or autobiographies. The latter, especially, have been critically derided. However, a balanced assessment would note that player accounts are mostly ghost-written by skilled journalists and often contain insights from players about the aesthetics of football play (Hughson 2016: 7). As flagged earlier, a quality journalistic literature involving often explicit consideration of artistry within English football has existed since the 1960s. Arthur Hopcraft's *The Football Man* (1968) has been influential upon more recent books such as Dave Winner's *Those Feet: A Sensuous History of English Football* (2005) and David Goldblatt's *The Game of Our Lives: Meaning and Making of English Football* (2015). Academic histories have tended to reflect more upon the collective appreciation of football play, for example, the aforementioned *Sport and the British* by Richard Holt (1989). The connection between football fandom and aesthetics, not so much in regard to the appreciation of player skill, but more the active engagement of fans

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in aesthetic practices connected to their fandom has been explored in cultural studies inspired books by Steve Redhead, notably *Sing When You're Winning: The Last Football Book* (1987) and *Football with Attitude* (1995). Relatedly, Paul Willis (1990) included the creative engagements of young people in football fandom as an example of what he refers to as the 'grounded aesthetics' of routine life practices. Willis (1990: 141) extends this concept to 'bodily grounded aesthetics' to explain the 'sensuous and communicative presence' that football supporters feel in the company of each other when watching their team play. Here, Willis lends a sociological interpretation to the type of collective aesthetic experience of football spectators described by Richard Holt, as quoted earlier.

The 'intellectualisation' of football has extended into other areas including film and visual arts. However, a distinction can be drawn between football as subject matter for story making and football artwork dealing with the aesthetics of football. For example, C.R.W. Nevinson's futurist style painting, *Any Wintry Afternoon in England* (1934), features football players in the forefront of a grim urban industrial background likely meant as a warning against young men being unwittingly marched off to another world war (Hughson, 2011). To speak of this painting being about the aesthetics of football would be akin to suggesting that Caravaggio's *The Beheading of John the Baptist* is about the aesthetics of murder. However, other works, such as Picasso's ceramic statuette, *Footballeur* (1965), depict football-like movement. This work became relevant to the artification of football in England when, in October 2012, it became a display item at the National Football Museum (NFM). Here it finds itself on display with other items more customarily associated with the arts, such as paintings and design posters for football World Cups, along with more expected items such as player shirts, trophies and other football-related paraphernalia (Hughson and Moore, 2012). In 2013 the NFM was designated by the Arts Council England to be in possession of a collection of 'outstanding importance and value that deepens our understanding of the world'. This occurred in the year following relocation of the NFM from Deepdale football stadium in Preston to the Urbis Building in Manchester, which had formerly been known as 'Museum of the City'. The relocation has significantly increased the NFM's profile within the museum sector. The NFM has played a direct role in the 'intellectualisation' of football via participation of its research staff in the co-supervision of PhD studentships, some funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

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Conclusion

The constituent processes of the artification of football are not as discrete as the categorised discussion above may indicate. Overlaps between the processes are readily detectable. For example, criticism of the playing style of the England 1966 World Cup team, discussed under 'redefinition of time' is indicative of 'intellectualisation' and 'intellectualisation' about football is carried by aspects of media discussed under the 'dissemination' process. Considered alone the processes do not amount to the artification of football, but merely indicate such outcomes as the institutionalisation and celebration of football. Furthermore, when Shapiro and Heinich (2012) pose the question 'when is artification?', they are not suggesting an ultimate arrival, but, rather, the possibility of recognising social circumstances which play a part in an area of human activity not conventionally regarded as art coming to be seen and discussed as art, and thus artified in this sense. This essay's examination of the constituent processes nominated by Shapiro and Heinich, applied to the context of England, suggests that it is sociologically meaningful to consider the artification of football under such terms.

While the focus of the essay is on 'artification', a concluding reflection upon 'de-artification' is appropriate. Football has come under much criticism in recent years for the way the sport has been administered at the highest level. The main target of criticism has been FIFA, the international governing body, particularly regarding corrupt practices in connection with host nation bidding for men's World Cup tournaments (Conn 2005; Hughson, 2017; Hughson and Hughson, 2019). The allegations have been so damning as to muddy the overall image of the sport at the professional level. The titling of a recent book as *The Ugly Game* (Blake and Calvert, 2016) suggests that football's reputation for being artistic is under threat. Concerns over financial profiteering are not exclusive to international competition and FIFA, but extend out to national leagues, including the English Premier League (Goldblatt, 2015). These concerns may impact upon the artification of football by promoting counter tendencies to the processes identified in this paper. For example: Although there can be little disagreement about the high skill level displayed by many football players, further 'reclassification' away from a master status of artist to something like mercenary becomes likely the more footballers are perceived to be acting 'individualistically' in the chase for money rather than love of the game; The notion of 'cultural ownership' is imperative to fans' continuing investment in emotional support for football. Should the 'institutional' and 'organisational' arrangements be pushed to the point where the 'economic ownership' of

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football totally overpowers a sense of cultural ownership, then reference to football as art would take on a different meaning; Relevant to the process of 'dissemination', is criticism of deals made with media conglomerates for the live televising of English Premier League matches, dictating when some matches are played and further threatening where and how many matches might be played in a season (Hughson, 2014). This presents a further counter to the sense of cultural ownership; Activities occurring under the process 'intellectualisation' have been especially pertinent to football being regarded as an art form. This representation could be challenged should the sport continue to attract the type of severe criticism it has received in journalism and related writing over the past fifteen years. Continuing references such as the 'ugly game' do not augur well for the likening of football to art. Nevertheless, this very consideration of counter tendencies somewhat validates claim to the existence of the artification of football. At the very least, *artification* provides an analytical framework for sociologists to examine art related claims for football as a modern cultural practice.

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Notes

1 The composer Dmitri Shostakovich reputedly stated in the 1930s, "football is the ballet of the masses". It is possible that Hudson's book title was inspired by this expression.

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