

## **Cinema, Golf and Romanticism**

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### **Introduction**

Our image of golf is one of a profoundly classist sport. We imagine it to have been highly aristocratic in its origins, and to have become increasingly more bourgeois through its economic, social and cultural ascension. It is a particularly expensive sport, especially in countries in which there are no public or open golf courses. Golf clubs are characterized as occupying significant amounts of land in terms of breadth and location, having sophisticated club houses and a considerably costly support and maintenance structure. The course itself is the result of original designs that imply remodeling the previously existing environment, whether forest, desert or land in harsh zones. High costs mean that entry into country clubs to play golf must require having monetary resources, in addition to the candidates' connections.

Country clubs are typically social-relationship centers in which business and relationships go hand-in-hand with the sport. Thus, we might understand a country club to be a bourgeois place *par excellence*, even though the number of courses and players worldwide has grown and now occupies a considerable place in the televised transmission of sporting events, which in Brazil is on cable television. Because a country club is a place of business, we might also assume that utilitarianism is a strong or constitutive variable in the participation of the players and their families.

We normally associate sports with emotion, pleasure, passion, thrills. Group sports with interactive confrontation, such as soccer, basketball or volleyball, hold a special place in Latin American and Brazilian culture, and we almost intuitively understand their attraction in terms of pleasure or passion. We undoubtedly think that most people like one or many group-confrontation sports. To a lesser extent, we also understand and value individual-confrontation sports, such as tennis, boxing and wrestling. These understandings form part of our daily relationship with sports. However, confrontational sports require us

to anticipate our adversaries' actions or gestures, and to feign actions in order to induce our adversaries into mistakes. This dynamic contributes toward our feeling the sport's emotion based on an understanding of its rules, its objectives, and the beauty of sporting displays. Confrontational sports are generally popular, that is to say, participants and spectators belong to various social classes, and as such, television networks transmit them, or at least the special decisive moments, such as the semi-finals of finals.

We often use romantic categories (belonging, authenticity, originality, creativity, geniality, passion, race, and emotion, among others) to talk about sport, and in the use of these categories, we invoke romantic language, we motivate our feelings and associations as players or fans of a sport. Confrontation would seem to have a natural affinity with romantic categories and with popular sports. Thus, we do not expect an athlete to perform well who does not demonstrate a sense of belonging to an organization or the national team. We distrust an athlete who does not demonstrate passion, feeling, in sport. We feel that there are athletes who are geniuses, creative, original, true artists of the sport. At times they become our idols, and their presence attracts spectators and autograph hunters. The most enthusiastic fans even wear their team's jersey with the number of their favorite player on it.

Golf can be full of surprises. The brief description used by us before highlights the bourgeois side of golf, which is hardly popular or not at all. There is no confrontation in golf; no anticipation or feigning, which begs two questions: a) what is this sport? and b) since romantic categories and language permeate the expressions of both pro and amateur golfers, are they part of its attraction and emotion? If we begin with a general hypothesis that the sport invented or built its emotions upon the romantic influence measured by sportscasters, literati and journalists, among others, then golf takes on a strategic position signaling surprise, apparently unfavorable to romantic influence due to the bourgeois and utilitarian aspects that seem to be emphasized in this sport. However, golf makes a powerful nucleus out of the confrontation with one's self, the integration with the course, the authentic movement of a swing, which appeal or can only be structured, as we shall see, by a romantic spirit and language.

In an attempt to answer these questions, we shall use three widely distributed commercial movies that have focused on golf. We believe that movies have yet to be

sufficiently explored in the fields of sport anthropology and sociology. Even though we feel that movies tend to point to ideology, imagination or idealized representations of golf, it is nonetheless important to observe how this idealization is built, and what its components are in terms of values and linguistic resources.

### **A search for meaning**

Paul Ricoeur says that interpretation means exposing oneself before the text; it is explaining the type of “*being-in-the-world*” manifested before oneself. In searching for the **essence** of a text – the idea that the author has sought to declare therein – we understand ourselves and make clear who we are. Thus, interpretation evinces the interpreter’s style; that is, it demonstrates this person’s original quality. The task of interpreting assumes the revelation of a sense that moves and is in the space between the text and the subject interpreting it. This is the distancing that is so necessary to interpretation.

A text is an organization of phrases that contain a discourse, that is, the text is a sequence of phrases that presents a unit of meaning when speaking about a single object. The text is not necessarily written or spoken word; it can be a sequence of images or even a symphony. Cinema, or more specifically, the cinematographic work called “film”, can be viewed as a type of discourse that occurs as an event, and, therefore, is understood as meaning, that is, as interpretation.

According to Christian Metz (1980), movies, “*as meaningful discourse (text)*” (p.12), are a multidimensional phenomena of interest to various fields of knowledge, such as Social Psychology and Sociology, in which the movies’ content expresses collective representations stereotypical of different levels and ideologies, among other aspects. Films express a “*cultural logic*” (p.19). Films are not just a sample of cinema, but also a sample of culture and social representations. In other words, the cinematographic product comprised of society or culture is also part of it. We are therefore faced with two-way circuits of degrees of influence.

Cinema and sport are extremely important manifestations in our contemporary world, and they comprise it as languages powerfully spread throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Much more than the issue of leisure, the relationship between cinema and sport is based on representations, feelings and meanings of current modernity. We can

say that both have appropriated the appeal to constant imagination in the other, suggesting a happy marriage that seeks to satisfy the romantic and typically current anxieties, such as the search for a controlled emotion, as Melo (2003 and 2005) confirms, upon studying sport memories in Brazilian cinema.

Romanticism always seeks a synthesis; it always seeks an articulation of opposites, contrasts. Art, for romantics, is the integrator capable of achieving synthesis where all plans of human manifestation are founded. According to Rosenfeld & Guinsburg (2002), cinema, in exploring its possibilities in the field of conjugation of the arts, in the end seeks an integral synthesis. Sport – a much more popular art form (Welsch 2001) – also dialectically integrates all nuances of human behavior, given that it develops through antagonisms and convergences. As an illustration, we note the work of Soares (1994), which sees the so-called “roguery” in Brazilian soccer as a form of art. The author compares transgression in a soccer match, that is, a break from the sport’s formal rules, as a “*poetic transgression*” (p.83), where the author (player) breaks the established codes by using extreme creativity, keeping himself in the formal game by using another game. Schiller (1995) has discussed the game between sense and sensibility that both constitutes our humanity and leads to a playful impulse, and he has said that one shall not err if one believes that in order to appreciate oneself and to make art, one must live the same way one plays. Thus, it is in the game that we achieve full human plenitude, since we achieve maximum pleasure from the joint experience of our sensory and rational aspects.

Buytendijk (1977), supported in Gadamer, approximates art and sport in the self-representation present in both. A player represents and “presents” something, and, therefore is transformed. A player, as Gadamer (2004) himself has said, has the courage to risk transformation, which is what is so attractive about the game. Buytendijk then points out that the youthful behavior of one who has the courage to take risks is a condition both of the game and for artistic creation. We might claim that an athlete’s performance is a work of art; it is its own end; and it does not fail to be a representation demanded by the game itself. Finally, Lovisolo (1997) also approximates sport and art in the language of pleasure, which is common to both manifestations. Lovisolo says that one who knows a sport undergoes states that are similar to those of an art aficionado, since the sport-lover also describes plays in the language of pleasure, beauty and emotion. We should make it clear

that we are not going to enter into a discussion of whether modern sport is a game, since it seems to us that were it not, we would have a hard time explaining the attractive capacity that it obviously has. Likewise, it is not our intention to discuss sport and art more in-depth, but rather to approximate the two forms of expression.

Cinema is ideally suited to the expression of romantic ideals by virtue of its appeal to imagination. The plasticity of sport, its beauty, is explored and at the same time demonstrated and exalted by cinema. The sports spectacle and the cinematic spectacle, through their powers of attraction, effectuate a relationship of affinity, where the benefits can be shared.

Löwy & Sayre (1995), however, recall that there is a paradox in the presence of romanticism in mass cultural production. Romanticism is a critical outlook on modernity, whereas the “*culture industry*” (p.249) – of which cinema is a part – is a phenomenon of contemporary modernity that can collaborate with the process of maintaining the inequalities of our society by disguising the processes of exploring it, by using the power of attraction of romantic works on behalf of its interests. In unison with Campbell (2001), Löwy & Sayre (1995) note the attractive power of romanticism through dreams and fantasy, highlighting that cultural production acknowledges that one cannot destroy human aspirations and needs, but rather supports itself on human desire and imagination, seeking to attract consumers to its works. In any event, this has reinforced that subjective things and their emotive charge are the major drivers of human conduct, with romanticism as their bedrock.

The culture industry has appropriated a few “*romantic clichés*” (Löwy & Sayre, 1995, p.250), which often are incorporated superficially in a set submitted to dominant values, where the critical component is neutralized. But one cannot say that there are no mass cultural productions with elaborate romantic components. Löwy & Sayre (1995) state that romanticism is a view of the world where different themes are integrated organically, and the joint meaning tends toward the refusal of modern reification, that is, tending to refuse the maintenance of inequalities where certain realities become absolute truths in society by manipulating their respective effects. This is a criterion that for the authors allows one to distinguish “*pseudo-romantic*” (p.250) from romantic. Therefore, Löwy & Sayre (1995) highlight cinema among mass cultural productions, recalling that the mark of

romanticism is that our imagination is illustrated in an impressive way in certain highly successful films that reach all classes and social groups, such as “*Star Wars*” and “*E.T.*”.

### **Romanticism**

Films transmit romantic categories or keys. We shall briefly summarize a few of these categories that appear in films prior to delving further into and locating scenes and lines.

One of the major keys of romanticism is a search for unity, in the demonstration of the organicity of all things in nature. There is no independence between human beings and nature. On the contrary, “we are nature”. Romanticism clamors for a return to nature, in the sense of admitting and respecting everything by seeking harmonic integration.

One should not seek to dominate nature, but rather to interact well with it. A golf course is a living being that can be understood as a miniature of nature, with grass, sand, woods, lakes, rivers, fairways, cliffs, etc. It is a small universe with its fairways (or short grass), roughs (tall grass) and bunkers (or sand banks). As in life, one has to make one’s way by avoiding and/or facing the things standing in the way of achieving the game’s objective. Nature, therefore, is the source of inspiration. Being on a golf course provides a restoration of unity lost at some time in the past.

Originality and individuality are values that strongly characterize romanticism. In romanticism, individuality is valued exactly by what distinguishes one human being from another, but always integrated in the larger whole. No two golf courses are the same. The originality of each course challenges the player to be original through the way that he acts, shares and faces the course. The more we integrate with the course; the more the ball, the club and the player are one, the more that nature speaks through us. Every golfer, like every romantic artist, must encounter his own means of expression, playing and being. He has to develop his authenticity in the game.

Finding one’s **swing** – one’s ability to hit the ball – means discovering an authentic, intimate and personal way of playing golf. This act is only possible if the artist is created by his art, if the player is played by the game, because work and artist, game and player, become **one**. By deciphering the course, creative, original play emerges that speaks of belonging and giving oneself over; and intuition flows.

### **Golf and Romanticism: Legends from life**

The synopsis of the film *The Legend of Bagger Vance* (2000) says: *“The story of Rannulph Junuh, a promising young golfer who loses his swing after he experiences the harrowing frontlines of war. Once considered Savannah’s greatest sportsman and favorite celebrity, Junuh had won the heart of the town’s prettiest heiress, Adele Invergordon. But when he returned from war, he was a defeated man, giving up both golf and Adele for the sake of alcohol. When Junuh is given a chance to redeem himself by competing in a celebrity golf tournament, he must first regain his swing and his self-respect. It will take a miracle, in the form of a mysterious caddy named Bagger Vance, for Junuh to get his game back, as well as his life.”*

This is a romantic synopsis with its various dramatic components. The story is told from the eyes of a boy who follows the unfolding of Junuh’s drama; however, the film’s main character, from the point-of-view of golf’s cultural construction (and as the original title indicates), is the person who shows up last: Bagger Vance, the mysterious caddy who turns into Junuh’s inspiration. The miracle mediator, Bagger Vance, appears out of thin air. He is an envoy from nowhere, or, if you will, from the “cosmic” forces that do not want the predestined Junuh to waste his natural talent muffled by the bitter experiences of World War I. But that is not all. Junuh doesn’t believe that he is capable of returning to his old form in the world of his youth. In reality, he no longer knows who he is. But as Vance says, *“The rhythm of the game just like the rhythm of life!”*. Everything happens in due time and no one can escape facing oneself. This confrontation is in the game of golf itself. Nothing depends on anyone else. Everything is a product of one’s self, of the relationship with the course, with the club, with the ball, which makes a unique swing emerge, that axial value of romanticism. In order to guide Junuh’s feelings, we have the presence, the stories and the aphorisms of Bagger Vance – the point of contact required for Junuh to achieve synthesis, generate unity, confront himself and win himself over, by becoming one with the course, seen as life in movement, like the game of golf itself, which is the integration with his life, with his Id and with the disposition to love in the pleasure of the dance.

There are three competitors in the golf tournament. Jones is the Apollo-like figure. He has perfect technique; he is calm and serene and has a solid family, disciplined and

moderate in his actions and words. An impeccable golfing career, this is just one more tournament that he intends to win, although it is the last one in which he plans to participate, in order to dedicate his time to “more serious affairs”, since it is time to take on greater responsibilities with his family and society. He doesn’t see “anything great” about the tournament; as Junuh says during it: *“It’s just a game”*.

Hagen is the Dionysus-like figure. He has unrefined techniques, a womanizer, a drunk, a smoker, overbearing, impulsive and emotionally unstable, however he loves and dedicates himself to the game with all its emotions. He feels pursued during the game by Junuh, when he threatens the victory that he desires so much for himself. Hagen sees the game as a spectacle, where the crowd seeks pleasure and pays for it. In counterpart to Jones and Hagen, Junuh has yet to find himself. He has to be! He has to find himself! His trajectory is that of a tragic hero in the war from which he returned alone, since his company perished in action. A hero to the town, but not to himself, who slowly takes refuge in alcohol in order to do away with the memories that he wishes to forget. The inhabitants of Savannah, and his ex-girlfriend, Adele, want him to win the tournament, to fulfill an unfulfilled promise.

We are confronted by the path of a hero who must overcome tribulations. The hero is one of the most emblematic figures of romanticism. Heroism shows the capacity to face and overcome danger and the unknown in the consequent pursuit of dreams and daydreams (Rubio 2001). Romantic heroism has a bohemian dimension to it. Bohemian life, according to Campbell (2001), is the most obvious and well-defined movement of the romantic ideal, since it tries to make life adjust to the principle of valuing pleasure over utility. The bohemian rebels against what he sees as a utilitarian, philistine society. Bohemian thought criticizes the lack of heroism in modern society and demonstrates anxiety at life and dissatisfaction with the state of things. A romantic hero rebels, is dissatisfied and pursues his dream. The hero is a character who rises from the human condition to a super-human condition. Junuh, as a beloved son of Savannah, incarnated all of the town’s expectations as a promise of citizenship and athlete, when he was younger. After returning from the war, he can no longer reach the desired ideal, the daydream that others have of him. However, he remains human, overly human. With the tournament’s arrival, Junuh starts to feel required to achieve his former ideal.

Nothing seemed as if it could be accomplished without Vance's sayings: *"The secret is finding your swing. It's somewhere out there. The golf course lives and breathes like us. There's an authentic swing that you were born with. Keep swinging that club until you feel that you're a part of everything!"* As we have said, there are no two golf courses that are the same. A golf course can be compared to a small universe with its fairways, roughs and bunkers. It is alive. Junuh must become part of nature and allow nature to become part of him. The secret is to allow himself to be taken over by this totality, admitting its organicity. Junuh's swing, his movement, will come back, seduced by the greater whole, confusing itself with him, integrating with him and deciphering.

When the game begins, Junuh is sick, really sick! He doesn't get into the game, he doesn't even understand Jones' statement that everything is nothing more than a game. Bagger Vance whispers in his ear, continues his inspirational work, which is the interpretation of the game in general, and golf in particular: *"It won't be just a game if you're worried about other things. It's time for you to see the course. Let the right club choose you. Use what was given to you when you came into this world – play the game"* Talent is a gift that even if lost can be found. But to do so, you have to be in the game. Jones is naturally in the game. This is why he can say that it's just a game. Vance makes it an example for Junuh. The secret is being so into the game that nothing else matters. The game can become just that: a game. At game time, Buytenkijk (1977) recalls, the players are only what they play. It is letting oneself penetrate, a belonging so deep, Buytenkijk (1977) says, that exposing oneself within a game is to go beyond oneself; it is to go beyond where one is. Junuh must then belong only to the game in order to transform himself. After all, it is through the game that man becomes a man, as Schiller (1995) has said. In the pursuit of transformation, which means regaining one's traditional swing, mediated by Vance, Junuh starts to "see" the course. He lets himself be drawn in by this small but complete universe. The spectators disappear. He is the course now. Then the right club chooses Junuh, receptive to the course's harmony. The crowd realizes the transformation in Junuh and starts to cheer, recognizing that their hero is returning.

The tournament ends in a tie, in a symbolic outcome in which there were no winners or losers. Jones stops playing golf after the tournament. Hagen only plays friendly rounds. And Junuh goes on to finish an unfinished dance with Adele. Bagger Vance gives his last

lesson before leaving the course and disappearing into the mist: *"It's a game that can't be won, only played."*

The boy, our narrator of the tale, is now an elderly man lying in the middle of a field recalling this past. He slowly gets up and starts walking around, concluding that: *"I play for moments that are yet to come (...) seeking my place on the course."*

### **Golf and Romanticism: Bobby Jones, a Stroke of Genius**

(Bobby Jones: Stroke of Genius - 2003) Synopsis: *"Robert "Bobby" Tyre Jones, Jr. was perhaps the most naturally gifted golfer in the history of the game. Battling a disabling illness and a volcanic temper, Jones struggled through a succession of early defeats to reach the pinnacle of his sport -- becoming, at age 28, the only man ever to win the coveted Grand Slam of golf. But it was his devotion to his wife Mary that led to the astounding announcement that shocked the world. In this inspiring true story about one of the greatest icons of sport (...). His ability made him a star, but his passion turned him into a legend"*

The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Scotland, 1936, is backdrop for the start of the biography of Bobby Jones, and a mark in his life. A transformation occurred there. Jones at that time felt complete, accepted and integrated into the community that had received him as an idol. After all, as Angus (his British caddy and one of the mediators between Jones and the transformation) says: *"your game is always good here!"*. Jones' calm feeling of belonging leads to his taking the first swing of the tournament, almost a rite of passage, before the movie returns to his childhood.

Georgia, the southern United States, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Bobby is a sickly child, overprotected by his mother, a major encouraging force of her son's skills, especially in the literary field. His father is an attorney who works for an American soft drink company and plays golf at the course next to his house with business associates, demonstrating utility could combine with the pleasures of social behavior of the time. Bobby is frequently taken on walks around the course during rounds, in order for him to get exercise to improve his health. His paternal grandfather, a puritan figure, laments this "passion" for the sport, which goes so far as to disrespect the day that ought to be dedicated to God. The grandfather's puritan morals even question the fact that his son is doing so well in business because of *"a game"*! The grandfather wants Bobby to have a brilliant legal

career. In the midst of these influences, Bobby Jones feels attracted by golf and demonstrates a determination to learn the sport. He forges his personality between the mysticism of his mother, his father's encouragement, and the notion of puritanical moral duty imposed by his grandfather. Bobby grows up, and as a teenager begins playing in adult tournaments where he meets Vardon, the winner of five British Opens, who later will make a contribution to Jones' path. O.B. Keeler, a sports journalist, sees the boy touch his lucky clover and hit the ball at the start of the game: "*What a divine swing!*" It should be noted that the swing is one of the most characteristic motions of golf. No two people have the same swing. Keeler sees it as divine due to the plasticity, lightness and efficiency of Bobby's motion. Only one who has been fully integrated with the game could have a swing like that. Someone who was out there naturally and let the golf course talk for him. But the temperamental boy, with his "*angel face and quick temper*", still had a lot to experience and to learn before truly understanding what it means to be on a golf course and in the course of life. For him, the public's admiration was not enough; he needed to win!

Bobby continues to grow and is now seen at college. We now refer to him as Bob Jones. Walter Hagen, a bankrupt English lord turned golf pro, suddenly appears. Hagen's character is set against Jones, who never turned professional, while Hagen needed to make outside bets just to survive. He is one of the mediators in Bob's maturation process. Hagen really personifies the bohemian personality, while Jones characterizes the more puritanical. Despite his need to make money, Hagen remains faithful to the principles of bohemian pleasure: women, wine, late nights and golf make up his life. The money he wins is not to be saved. Hagen wants to enjoy the best of life, and this can come from his beloved golf. What could be better? Brooks (2001) notes that – according to bohemians – the aristocracy, of whom Hagen was one, at least had to aspire to certain greatness. In short, they were not mediocre like the bourgeois. Ironic and eccentric, Hagen provokes when pressured about tee times: "*Genius deserves patience!*" One of the most typical weapons of romanticism is irony. By mocking, the romantic displays the lack of imagination of those who are overly accustomed to the norm. According to Paz (1984), irony is the major invention of romanticism, since it declares its love of the contradiction that we all are, and our awareness of this contradiction. Hagen knows that he is a contradiction. He knows that he has lived and seen a lot. He knows where he's from and where he is now. He is aware of

this, and in irony and anarchy he finds his escape valve. The notion of time for romantics diverges completely from utilitarian thought, where quantity is important. Romantics place greater value on “*dolce far niente*” in which everything has its own time. “*Break the clocks!*” (Rosenfeld & Guinsburg, 2002, p.283) is one of the fundamental metaphors of romanticism. A genius is different from a mere mortal. He is specially endowed and does not abide by norms. Therefore he merits patience.

The genius character is emblematic in romanticism, because it both symbolizes and completes its principles. Jones questions Hagen’s swing: “*..you look like a duck!*” Hagen, just like Bob Jones, is authentic and makes his game personal and non-transferable. He isn’t guided by any model, and to be original, one need not be perfect in the classic sense. He is a natural on the course. Thus, beauty, which geniuses are unwilling to forgo, is transparent in a swing that is not technically perfect, but is fully integrated with the entire game.

The game of golf contains 18 holes. It is normal to call the place where golfers meet after the game the “19<sup>th</sup> hole”, which is normally a bar., Hagen – impressed with the young man’s performance and talent – asks Jones why he plays. Jones answers: “*Because I love it and I want to win.*” Hagen counters: “*I play for money, because I need to win!*” Being aware of alienating part of one’s self (such as one who sells his soul to the devil and thinks that it is too late to get it back) is another theme of romanticism. Acknowledgement of the split is painful. Hagen seems to see in Bob his lost self. It is ironic for Hagen – because of the contradiction – that he has to play for money. This is why, then, his self-irony makes it possible to live. Bob, for his part, has yet to awaken to the contradictions of life, but his time is coming.

Bob has met Mary, his future wife. Mary’s father, initially unsure about the young man, who wasn’t Catholic, gets excited when he finds out that his son-in-law is the promising young golfer, Bob Jones. The “ice” was broken, not by the promise of a successful attorney, but by the performance of an amateur athlete. Let us not forget the charm and attraction that sports has on all of us. With Bob’s father-in-law, it was no different. The courage to take risks, which is part of the sport, is an attraction for anyone who has a young soul. Gadamer (2004) speculates that risk is one of the most attractive parts of a game. A risk is a dream, a daydream of reaching the top, being the best. Experiencing sport is a creative adventure given the unexpected. In having the courage to

risk taking a difficult shot, there is a risk of failure, but there is also the risk of a brilliant play that differentiates the “best” (creative athletic genius) from the average player, in addition to giving us the thrill of pliant beauty. It is daring to test limits.

Bob goes to Scotland for the first time (1921). He meets Vardon again who will be his adversary in the first game. Upon seeing the old course at St. Andrews, Bob complains about the strong winds to Angus, his caddie, asking him who made the course. *“This course was made by the glaciers 15,000 years ago!”* Golf was born in Scotland, and the landscape forged by climatic forces in the Scottish highlands gave origin to St. Andrews. This living being has its own peculiarities and exigencies. The player must respect and understand them and deal with the contingencies of the course. On this same course, one game is never the same as the last, since every day different conditions exist. Bob still hasn’t understood that the course cannot be dominated, but he does understand its challenge and conquering them. He struggles with St. Andrews. He doesn’t become attuned to it or participate in it. He insensibly tries to fight against a bunker that will not be defeated. Angus calmly alerts him: *“You keep doing the same thing and expecting different results.”* Bob doesn’t understand. He’s frustrated by the apparently hostile course, and then he gives up on the game: *“I hate this course!”* Angus once again tries to show the path of balance: *“It’s okay to lose, but not to give up. The day that Bob Jones gave up will never be forgotten, not by them (the crowd), but by you!”* The required transformation began there at St. Andrews. Bob needed to understand that true talent always works in harmony, in the harmony of the contrary, which is the energy that moves the whole universe and everyone of us. Vardon, his adversary, also seeks out Bob to put in his two cents: *“This old course gave you a beating! It had to. Golf was being played here when they still thought that the world was flat! I hope that one day you see what a great course this is.”* The golf course is the real challenger. The course is what tests us. Try to be its accomplice. Bob is working toward that goal.

The tournaments go on, as do Bob’s temperamental attitudes, which end up getting him suspended as a result. His illness, which some say is caused by nerves, is just one more pressure point on the golfer. In reality, Bob starts to understand the game better when he becomes more attuned to himself. At the same time, another conflict emerges. Bob feels divided between the pleasure of the game – where the need to win is also fundamental –

and what he thinks is his duty to his family and society. The influence of the puritan tradition, inherited from his grandfather, is very strong. Bob dreams of victory, but blames himself for spending so much time on a game based more on emotion than on reason. After all, he didn't earn any money for playing, which would be perfectly acceptable to puritans, given that the pleasure of the game would then be supported by utilitarian reason. His implacable grandfather says: "*Idleness is the father of all vices!*" In the meantime, O.B. Keeler, a journalist who accompanies Bob as his faithful friend, tries to mediate Bob's conflicts: "*You have to convince yourself that you're the best player in the world.*" To do so, Bob needs to be freed, which his grandfather can do. This puritan, with restrained emotions and a strong sense of duty, lowers his defenses out of love and sends his grandson a telegram at a critical time: "*Keep the ball on the fairway and in the hole*". Bob goes on to win his first big tournament.

Bob and Hagen continue to meet. In one of their confrontations, Bob loses by one stroke to Hagen in a memorable display of fair play. The rules of golf are more geared to advising than punishing or disciplining. Bob is studying how to take the next shot when he calls in a referee and announces that he had lightly touched the ball. It should be noted that in golfing rules, this little touch counts as a stroke. In a meeting about the shot, the officials and Hagen and even the assistants all say that they didn't see the ball move, but Bob insists on his statement. To the surprise of one and all, he concludes: "*It's the only way that I know how to play.*" O. B. Keeler adds the emblematic line: "*There are more important things than winning a championship.*" Bob wanted to win. It was his ambition; but not at any cost.

He returns to St. Andrews now more prepared for the game, knowing himself better, and being more receptive to the appeals of the course: "*This course is really pretty. I don't know why I didn't notice it before.*", he says to Angus, who answers: "*Yeah, a real test.*" It's now 1936, when the film's story began, and Bob undergoes a major transformation. He starts to feel that the course is a part of him, and he is a part of the course. Everything is easier. Bob admits the course's strengths and understands that they belong to it. He no longer needs to try to dominate it, since once he gets in tune, the course becomes a partner and allows Bob to win. Bob Jones' biggest prize was achieving serenity, as one who

realizes that he is part of a larger whole. Now Bob can begin the final accomplishments in golf and in other facets of his life.

But not all conflicts are resolved, because they are a part of life. It is through the ambiguities, contradictions and search for synthesis that we satisfy ourselves, that we live. Bob feels caught up in golf tournaments. He would like to abide by Mary's wishes for him to stop competing and to take better care of his health, and of course to pay more attention to her and the family. But Bob feels that he has a mission to accomplish in golf. His trajectory is, rather than as a hero, as a predestined man; a chosen one. He feels graced by God and that he ought to demonstrate this grace on the golf course. He wants to be the first athlete to win the four Grand Slam titles of international golf. This way his mission will be accomplished. Bob Jones, the chosen one, is a sports genius. The genius is a type of God-send who is here to show humanity how far it can go. The genius is misunderstood, and therefore solitary. Bob, in reality, is alone in his realization of what he must and needs to do. Not even his own wife fully understands him. He needs to work hard for others to understand his way of life. He exclaims: "*All I ever wanted was to be a normal person!*" This is exactly what will never happen to a genius. He came to make a difference, rather than to be just another person. He would like to be average. Perhaps he wouldn't feel so much anguish. But for a genius to accomplish his duties of demonstrating the organicity of the universe through his unique performance, he ironically sees himself divided and suffers. But genius is more than just suffering. When he lets his intuition flow, the synthesis occurs and redeems him with everything. It is when a chosen one can show that balance, in the sense of harmony among opposites, is possible. At this moment, a genius and all of us enjoy an immense pleasure that offsets all of the misfortunes and discordance. In another round against Hagen, Bob finds himself in a tough spot in the sand – one of the biggest challenges in golf. He studies the shot, thinks, concentrates and hits the ball. The ball brilliantly emerges from the bunker and goes straight into the hole. The stroke of genius is both a synthesis and redemption!

Rybczynski (2000) says that the word *professional* used to be used to mean a person who was paid to do a certain job, in contrast to an amateur. Today, *professional* is increasingly understood to mean someone with a high degree of efficiency. On the other hand, this author continues, an amateur – literally *one who loves* – has been reduced to a

mere beginner, or one with little practice. Generally there is no longer a sense of praise. Golf, though, is one of the few sports that currently have Amateur Bylaws in their rule books. These bylaws are designed to govern the status of an amateur, defining it generically as one who plays golf as an unpaid, non-lucrative sport. Without getting into the details of these bylaws, we recognize the importance of the question of amateurism versus professionalism in golf. At the time in which the film about Bob Jones takes place, tension in the amateur/professional conflict was more polarized than it is today. There was more prejudice against an athlete who became a professional. In one scene of the film, Hagen is prevented from using the facilities of a golf club in England because he is a professional player. Hagen, always the provocateur, argues that he will leave his two cars in front of the club, because one of them is his wardrobe and the other is his bedroom! Once again, the bohemian Hagen uses irony as a means of defense. At another time, Bob is sought out after a game by a man who makes him an offer to go pro, with the promise that he will earn a lot of money. Bob's reaction is very harsh: *"Being an amateur means loving the game! Amateur comes from Latin amar. If you play for money, you can no longer call it love!"* The man, dissatisfied with Bob's "lack of vision", provokes him once again in front of O. B. Keeler, who reacts: *"Bob is a true amateur and gentleman. There will never be another like him. Money is going to ruin this sport!"* Bob Jones truly had a romantic view of the sport, given that it was based on his enjoyment of playing it. Passion guided him. What kept him in golf tournaments was his passion for the game and his desire to win, to prove, at least to himself, that he could outdo the other players and himself. Despite the puritan – and therefore ascetic – tradition which influenced him so much, he was a romantic due to his passion for the game, and a romantic due to his play on the course, which increasingly denounced his innate link to golf as a whole. Campbell (2001) and Brooks (2001) say that a human being in modern life is a hybrid of puritans and romantics, bourgeoisie and bohemians. These personality traits are valued by each person in accordance with individual criteria.

Bob Jones, during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, appears to incarnate the tensions more clearly viewed at the outset of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In terms of O. B. Keeler's statement that money would ruin the sport, we can say that this arises from a romantic point-of-view due to judging that the sport, in order to be a sport, cannot allow itself to be corrupted by

money, as if there were a “pure” sport by nature to which we must all remain faithful or return. Of course, one can claim that golf for both Bob and O.B. Keeler had a sacred connotation that the interference of money would profane. We can always recall Huizinga (1971) and his *Homo Ludens* – a seminal work of the game – in which this author explains that the game would stop being a game when the subject became money. Lovisolo (1999) criticizes this line of thought – which is still very present – by proposing that there is a set of social relationships that underlies the game, and that therefore one cannot state so peremptorily that the professionalization thereof would change its playful aspects. Lovisolo concludes by saying that disgust is as much a part of modernity as its charms. As such, once again, romantic contradiction makes its presence known.

Bob continues on. We reach the moment of his last Grand Slam. Before taking his first swing, he reviews his childhood, touches his lucky clover and goes out and wins his fourth Grand Slam. He is the only golfer to date to have accomplished this feat. Grandfather, father and son reconcile in a single hug. Once again, O. B. Keeler concludes: *“There are more important things than winning a tournament!”* He ends his rite of passage in golf. O. B. Keeler tells Bob that of all the headlines about his last victory and his abandoning his athletic career, the story that he liked the most was written by a journalist who praised Bob’s trajectory: *“When the Great Scorer comes to mark against your name, He’ll not ask whether you won or lost, but how you played the game.”* Again it becomes clear that the love of the sport, at least for Bob Jones, was based first on the process and then on the result. Most likely the former resulted in the latter. Bob never hid his desire to win, but he did give proof throughout his athletic career of how important it was to uphold certain ethical principles denounced for their moral virtues. O.B. Keeler goes on: *“You won all the tournaments for your father, for me and for Atlanta. You stopped playing competitive golf for Mary. You earned two degrees for your mother. You studied law for your grandfather. What are you going to do for yourself?”* Bob smiles enigmatically, stops the car that he driving with a friend, and shows a beautiful course to a journalist: *“I’m going to build a golf course. It’ll be called Augusta National, in honor of St. Andrews!”* Bob Jones, the athlete who incarnated a hero to his city and his parents; son, grandson, husband and dedicated friend, was now calmly going to enjoy a golf course – the course that he would build.

### **Golf and Romanticism: The Tiger Woods Story**

(The Tiger Woods Story – 1998) Synopsis: *“By the end of April 1997, when he won the Masters Golf tournament, 21-year-old Tiger Woods was world famous for his accomplishments. He had broken two records: an unprecedented 12-stroke margin of victory and the youngest player ever to win. Equally important was the barrier he broke by becoming the first African-American Masters champion. From the time he was 3, Tiger Woods displayed a natural gift for the game. He had already earned a reputation and appeared on TV to show off his skill. With his father coaching him and his mother providing a strong spiritual influence, Tiger rose to fame and fortune. But his success came at a price, as he endured personal struggles with racism, self-doubt, cultural identity and the frustration of living in the media spotlight. This compelling film tells the story of how Tiger Woods overcame these adversities to become the world's best golfer.”*

The film, based on the book *“Tiger”*, by John Strege, begins at the legendary Augusta National course in 1997. Tiger, 21 years old, is making his debut as a professional at the 61<sup>st</sup> edition of the Masters Tournament. When he arrives, he is casually detained by a young man, Jason, who is thrilled at being so close to his idol. The meeting makes an impression on Jason, as we shall see later on.

Vietnam, 1967. Tiger’s father, Colonel Woods, is in a battle in which he is saved from a snake attack by Colonel Phong, a US ally whose codename is Tiger. Colonel Woods promises to name his next child Tiger in honor of his savior. Thus, before he is even born, the name by which he would become known worldwide is already given: Eldrik Tiger Woods.

The first day of the 1997 Masters. On the 9<sup>th</sup> hole, Tiger is not doing well. His caddie, Fluff, is chiding him for his play: *“You’re forgetting one thing (...) golf is supposed to be fun! Have fun. You’re too uptight! Play your game.”* When we let the game take over, and only the game, we achieve fulfillment. It’s a type of high that leads us, at the very least, to great pleasure. Our involvement can help us outdo ourselves, resulting in better performance. There is no way to perform well in sports – from a romantic point-of-view – without giving in. There are signs that even professionals do not stop seeing and feeling

their love of the game. Playfully giving in is a very serious thing. Gadamer (2004) develops the idea, from a romantic point-of-view, that a game's way does not allow the player to behave toward the game as if it were an object. Playing only accomplishes its goal when the player gets into the game. Playing is a constant give-and-take between reason and emotion; the push-and-pull between these two poles is present at the creation of a work of art, and we also say, at the time of playing sports, where the interaction between reason and emotion is flagrant. As Lovisolo (1997) recalls, a sport's fan compares a move to a work of art. Thus, we play when we talk, when we create art, and when we play sports. Tiger really needs to participate in the game, which therefore assumes fun in order to be able to achieve excellence. Playing your game means being authentic, where a player lets his singularity flow through his own performance, since, as the romantics say, every human being and every moment are unique. Playing your game also assumes giving yourself over to this universe that speaks of organicity and cohesion, and thus, of belonging. Belonging to the golf universe means belonging to the universe of the **game** of golf. The caddie wants Tiger to feel part of it all. Thus, golf can talk through Tiger, who, due to his originality, potential and limitations, plays and is played by golf.

When he was three years old, his father takes Tiger to play on a public course. The presence of such a small child is contested by the other players. Tiger's father, a man with an extremely strong personality, challenges the golf pro of the course to 9 holes. If his son wins, he can keep on playing on the course. The golf pro resists, but, in light of Mr. Woods' insistence, accepts. Surprisingly, at the end of 9 holes, Tiger wins by a difference of two strokes! The result is that he is taken to a professional golf instructor who is shocked by the boy's development and exclaims: "*He's a mini Jack Nicklaus! His posture is perfect. He's a genius!*" One of the romantic assumptions of genius states that the force of nature naturally and instinctively is expressed through genius. How is it possible for a child only three years old to demonstrate such natural ability for such a complex sport? For romantics, when we allow ourselves to be guided by sensitivity – which then guides our rationality – we achieve a true sense of things. Tiger, in his childhood innocence, was proof of the existence of brilliant talent ready to be developed and polished.

In 1985, he plays another tournament for children in his age group (10-year olds). In a moment of rage due to a poor shot, he throws his club in the air. Unsportsmanlike conduct

is strongly censured in golf. Some of Tiger's fellow competitors, in an equally dubious manner, denounce his poor behavior. The referee immediately goes to admonish him for his conduct. Tiger argues that he really did make a mistake, but that he doesn't think it is fair to be disqualified. The referee says: "*Rules are rules (...) or are you suggesting that good players don't have to follow rules?*" Tiger tries to argue with his mother about what he feels is unfair. His mother doesn't agree, since, for her, the fact that the boys acted out of bad faith does not eliminate the fact that he had thrown his club in the air. As Bornheim (2002) recalls, young geniuses, due to the passionate, vital force that they perceive in themselves, often turn into rebels against everything that tends to repress their strength. One cannot confuse the difficulty that geniuses have in sticking to the rules with the absence of limits. Geniuses need freedom to create, but being in the game means following its rules.

Still in 1985, Tiger and his mother visit Thailand, her homeland. She takes him to a Buddhist temple for them to receive spiritual council. The monk tells Tiger that his karma is to have a grand destiny, because he has something rare known as "*Palang Chang*", the power of the elephant!

His father pressures him to develop his talents. Tiger moves into a decisive period in which he questions whether he wants to continue playing golf. His father demands effort and concentration. Mr. Woods tells his wife: "*Tiger has a special gift.*" And to Tiger he says: "*The little talent you have is nothing without concentration. For soldiers, athletes and artists, this gift comes at a price: pain and sacrifice!*" His mother then adds: "*Your father wants to help you discover the power of the elephant that's inside you.*" The supernatural and mysticism are valued by romanticism. Tiger has been chosen by spirituality. He is predestined and must once again make clear the power of the force of nature that is inside him. Genius is endowed with spontaneity, which doesn't mean a lack of effort. For Tiger to be possessed by the force of nature, he has to let it flower through hard work. Geniuses have a gift, but they have to develop it!

Now a young man, he is at the Riviera Country Club for his first tournament among professionals, but he is still an amateur. The tournament's organizers receive a threat against Tiger, because he is black and participating in the tournament, which could elevate him further within golf. When he finds out about the threat, he gets sad and upset: "*Why*

*can't I be a normal player? Another face in the crowd?"* He who, from early on, has resented differences, once again complains, wanting to be normal, average. Tiger wants to be a great golfer, but, at the same time, the ambition of being different suffocates him. He never demonstrates irony, but his anguish at the division between two ways that he would like to be seen – as a genius and an average guy – is revealed as contradictory.

Tiger decides to go pro. He discusses the possibility with his parents, saying that they would have more money, which would facilitate his upkeep. We must recall that golfing rules do not allow an amateur player to play for money. His parents respond: *"Money was never a priority, Tiger!"* In reality, his mother always respected her son's decisions regarding golf, but his father to a certain extent projected himself in Tiger, wanting him to achieve brilliant results. Rather than having a utilitarian view of the sport, Mr. Woods wants Tiger to be recognized, for his son and for himself, as a black man, as the greatest golfer in the world! In any event, the three of them decide that after the 1996 US Amateur Open, Tiger would go pro. In 1996, he becomes the first player to win the tournament three times in a row.

Professionalization is accompanied by the anguish of fame and its obligations. Now he has to learn to interact with other aspects demanded by his position. Fans hound him and he feels imprisoned. He doesn't always give autographs nor have the best attitude about those who idolize him. His father tries to counter: *"Whether you like it not, from now on a piece of you belongs to them. It may be the thrill of lifetime to get three yards from the greatest golfer in the world!"* The sports idol is a type of hero. He is a superman capable of exploits desired by the common man, who, acknowledging his own limitations, places his dreams and admiration in his idol. The fact that Tiger needs to find himself in this contradiction depresses him. He needs to feel comfortable in the role of idol/hero, which our romantic desires still miss (Campbell 2001).

We move on to 1997. Tiger, after his caddie's advice, is recovering magnificently at the Masters! On the last day of the tournament, his mother councils him: *"Wear your red shirt. It's time to show your power. Palang Chang!"* Tiger ends the final round with the lowest number of strokes in the history of the Masters, winning by the biggest different of all tournaments in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He is the youngest winner, and of course, the first black person to win this tournament and to wear the exclusive green blazer as Masters champion!

A performance truly worthy of a genius. At the closing ceremony, when the winner puts on the green blazer, Tiger says: *“Winning this tournament was always my childhood dream, but I never dreamt about the ceremony. The dream always ended on the 18<sup>th</sup> hole!”* To show that it is worth dreaming, our story ends with the young black boy, Jason, who at the start of the film runs into Tiger, preparing to take his first swing at Augusta National, while imagining: *“I’m Tiger Woods!”* And he imagines hearing the applause in the background.

### **Conclusion**

These films were made over a recent five-year period: 1998, 2000 and 2003, which demonstrates a growing interest in the game. In the three movies, two biographies and one drama, there are the basic aspects of romanticism, such as the notion of genius; the anguish of a division; the value of pleasure; the pursuit of unity; authenticity; organicity; and the valuation of nature. Likewise we can say that each film works from a perspective of re-enchantment with the world through its message. Golf doesn’t seem to be an exception when viewed from the movies’ standpoint, the power of penetration of the categories and the romantic language of the sport. Any initial ethnographic surprise, in reality a methodological ruse, fades once we realize how the senses and emotions of golf are romantically presented. Even when the sport takes on a sense of utilitarianism, as in the case of Hagen, romantic irony appears to mitigate it.

From an organizational and value standpoint, modern sport, as Elias (1990) has said, appears to be linked to new configurations of standards in different spheres, with emphasis on the transformation of an enemy into an adversary, and the rotation in positions of power or prestige allied to the acceptance of rules and regulations that are increasingly more universal. From the viewpoint of a subjective and emotive relationship, of pleasure and passion, the romantic categories and language seem to have played, and still play, an important role. Elias and Dunning (1992) noted the cycle of heightened emotion and discharge during a sporting event. The psychological, and perhaps physiological, foundation of their observations seems highly evident, although not theorized. However, we have to go back to the instrumental romantic universe, a powerful participant in the construction of modern subjectivity, in order to explain how we emotional we feel before and after a game, and how we motivate ourselves to be athletes, whether we dedicate our

time to talking about, watching or being moved by sport. All indications are that, in the extreme case of golf, our relationship to sports is mediated by romantic contributions, which generate feelings and make it possible for modern sport to become the tremendous business that it has. Thus, whenever the business seems to decline, that is, whenever the game gets boring, tedious or routine, the romantic ways of viewing and debating it are put into action in order to recover the value of the game as a game.

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