Glasgow Celtic Fans, Political Culture and the Tiocfaidh Ar La Fanzine: Some Comments and a Content Analysis

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Abstract
The article evaluates the nature of football fandom, cultural identity and political consciousness in the specific context of Glasgow Celtic Football Club and the Tiocfaidh Ar La fanzine. The central hypothesis is that Celtic's extraordinary history, as the symbolic champion of the Irish diaspora, has facilitated the articulation of not only ethno-national aspirations but a self-consciously Republican and socialist sub-culture. Celtic has provided a relatively secure setting for the expression of a particular socio-political perspective for many followers of the club. Moreover, this tendency has been sustained in relatively onerous circumstances, as the club has adapted to and exploited the new commercial opportunities in football. The TAL fanzine has been the most vociferous manifestation of this section of Celtic support, and a considered content analysis of the publication reveals it to be more politically articulate and sophisticated than some accounts have suggested. In the contemporary era, with the emphasis in football on consumerism and capital accumulation, and as the connection between clubs and fans has become more tenuous as community solidarities have eroded, the continued existence of some clubs as a repository of collective identity and political consciousness, is of considerable social significance.

Introduction

As Rogan Taylor (1992: 188) has pointed out, the crowd is central to the football experience, and without the fans 'the golden core of the game has no currency'. Collective identities are mobilised and commemorated on match days, and 'in this sense clubs are "owned" by their fans within the realm of symbolism and ritual, regardless of the corporate shareholders who hold a legal claim to ownership within the structures of the contemporary professional game' (Back, Crabbe & Solomos, 2001: 9). Moreover, the fact that, to some considerable extent, community solidarities are manifested in support for certain football teams is of continuing sociological and cultural significance. As Graham Crow (2002) has pointed out, there is nothing automatic or 'natural' about people's ability to achieve and sustain solidarity in their social relationships. In an era of globalised capitalism, where the industrialised world is dominated by the ideology of neo-liberal individualism, and with the decline of occupational communities presaging seemingly endemic social fragmentation, social unity is often precarious and difficult to maintain. Hence, at the micro-level, the existence of football allegiance as a kind of social cement is important.

This facet of football, as a repository of social meaning and collective identity, is of particular resonance when analysing Glasgow Celtic, one of the most famous and well supported clubs in the world (Carr, Findlay, Hamil, Hill & Morrow, 2000: 87). The Celtic Football Club, as the product of the Irish diaspora in the west of Scotland, remains rooted in a specific ethnic and religious configuration, and the club acts as a pivotal source of cultural identity. To a considerable extent this identity denotes a horizontal companionship and affinity for the community, history, religion and symbolism of Ireland. As Bill Murray (2000: xii) notes, 'by the turn of the (nineteenth) century most of the Catholic community in Scotland were native born, but they maintained fierce loyalties to both their religion and the land of their fathers'. Ever since, Celtic F.C. has acted as a conduit for the confirmation of cultural identity.

As well as being indicative of certain ethno-cultural affinities, Celtic Football Club also reflected and reinforced certain political and ideological associations. For some Celtic fans, ethnicity, religion and football were tied, more specifically, to particular political preferences in the Irish context. As a consequence Celtic F.C. and its supporters are of some significance not only in sociological and cultural, but also political, terms.

The Historical Context: Irish Nationalism and the Shadow of 'Ulster'

Political aspirations, recognised and articulated through Glasgow Celtic, were constructed primarily around Irish nationalist sentiments and an initial commitment to Home Rule for Ireland, which dominated the political agenda for Catholics in Scotland. There was, as Tim Pat Coogan (2002: 234) says 'a Fenian tradition in Scotland'. The political objective of national independence was expressed in Glasgow during the 1870s with organisations such as the Home Government Association, which, after 1880, became the Irish National League (Bradley, 1995: 139), although in electoral terms party preference amongst Catholics was inclined toward the Liberal Party, which introduced Irish Home Rule Bills into parliament in 1886, 1892 and 1912.

The issue of Ireland was therefore at the forefront of political consciousness for the Irish community in Lanarkshire and especially Glasgow, and 'this was a cause that was embraced, however discreetly, by the Celtic Football Club' (Murray, 2000: 80). Although there might have been some disagreement over appropriate tactics, there was overwhelming support for the objective of political autonomy for Ireland (Murray, 2000: 54). Indeed one of the first patrons of the club was Fenian revolutionary and founder of the Irish Land League (1879) Michael Davitt, who was elected at the AGM of 1889. The dominant political faction in the Celtic club was the Home Government Branch, which, as Gerry Finn (1991a: 91) suggests:

> was not only strongly anti-sectarian but also the most radical and most labour-inclined branch of the Irish National League. Some

members of this branch, who were to become Celtic committee
men, were involved in founding both the Scottish Labour Party
and Celtic in 1888, and they actively supported the first Labour
candidate in Britain, Keir Hardie, at the mid-Lanark parliamentary
election.

Indeed, 'many of the players were not indifferent to the ideological
underpinning of the club: players and directors were intimately and very visibly
involved in the politics of the Motherland. . . . The Emerald Isle was the
common land, and the ills of the homeland were as real to those born in
Scotland as to those who had never left Ireland' (Murray, 2000: 52; 54). Early
donations to charity by Celtic F.C. included the Evicted Tenant's Fund, an
important indication of nationalist proclivities, and

> club officials, players and supporters alike, were often involved in
> politics; supporting Irish Home Rule, campaigning for the release
> of Irish political prisoners, opposing what they viewed as British
> imperialism in the Boar War in South Africa and supporting the
> contentious Catholic endeavour to have their schools brought
> within the state-funded system (Bradley, 1995: 35).

An important indicator of the extent of support for Irish nationalism in
Glasgow is the fact that Patrick Pearse visited to speak in 1903, and a branch of
Sinn Fein was set up in 1908, the year Arthur Griffith visited the city. In the
aftermath of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, many on Clydeside became
involved in the war of independence as Sinn Fein, the focus of a new
nationalist movement, displaced the old Home Rule bodies as the vehicle for
separatist impulses. In 1919, Sean O'Sheehan was sent from Dublin to build a
solidarity movement in Scotland and within a year the number of Sinn Fein
clubs rose from twenty to eighty (Gallagher, 1987: 90). Michael Collins,
through Glasgow organiser Joe Vise, attempted to construct a military wing in
Scotland, and by September 1919 a battalion of the IRA, comprising eight
companies and approximately 3,000 men, existed in the city (Gallagher, 1987:
90). According to Tom Gallagher (1987: 90), the Irish community in and
around Glasgow made a 'substantial contribution to the establishment of a self-
governing Irish Free State', and the Irish in Scotland provided more money,
guns and explosives than any other segment of the Irish diaspora (Coogan,
2002: 242). Murray (2000: 58) maintains that the granting of partial
independence in 1921 'took some sting out of the political issue in Scotland',
and the fratricidal civil war that ensued precipitated much confusion and
dissent. As a consequence Ireland faded somewhat from the political agenda.
   In fact, 'world war, the relegation of the Irish question, and the rise of the
Labour and Communist parties subtly altered the character and broadened the

horizons of the immigrant community' (Gallagher, 1987: 127). The intense social hardships of the 1920s and 1930s even stimulated a degree of co-operation between the ethnic communities in an attempt to overcome the injustices of an economic system that did not differentiate on the basis of religious denomination. The Labour Party, formed at the turn of the century, became the logical electoral repository of most Catholic discontent, since many were turned away from the Liberals by Lloyd-George's deployment of the 'Black and Tans' in Ireland (Coogan, 2002: 242). As Steve Bruce, Tony Glendinning, Iain Paterson and Michael Rosie (2004: 39) point out:

> the removal of Ireland from the agenda allowed Glasgow Catholics to focus on domestic politics and for the most part that meant working through the Labour Party. The decline of the Liberals reconfigured Glasgow politics. The extension of the franchise saw a gradual shift in power to Labour and the strong Catholic presence in that party allowed the descendants of the Irish in the western industrial Lowlands access to considerable power and influence.

The notion of 'considerable' in this context may be contestable, but certainly the immigrant community found a vehicle for the expression of political preferences. At the same time, the scepticism of the Church hierarchy was assuaged by the fact that the Labour party was not irredeemably tainted by a godless Marxism, and its actual commitment to socialism was relatively weak.

This affiliation with Labour continued after the Second World War, when Catholics still found it relatively difficult to break into the professional labour market (see Gallagher, 1987: 251). As Joseph Bradley (1995: 139) argues, 'The radical, anti-establishment content of Irish nationalist politics meant that the Irish were amongst the most important sections of the general population for the evolution of the Labour party. They were at the forefront of the mass of the working class ripe for class politicisation'. Most Catholics, struggling at the bottom end of the social scale, backed Labourist manifestos and benefited from social reforms, however meagre. Indeed, the more substantive post-war welfarist programme played an important part in facilitating greater integration of Catholics into Scottish society. As Gallagher (1998: 350) suggests, 'Labour's presence helped to break down the ghetto mentality and a growing number of Catholics saw their horizons widen to the extent that loyalty to their class or their city became more important than loyalty to their parish'. In general,

> the powerlessness of the Irish immigrants in Scottish society and their antipathy towards the traditional British parties, which they viewed as having been instrumental in the oppression of their

country, together with the fact that Labour were much less associated with the institutions and symbols of British (and thus Protestant) ascendancy and domination, all contributed to this attachment of Catholics to the Labour Party' (Bradley, 1995: 150).

Catholics were ceasing to derive their cultural identity from religion alone, although a sense of qualitative difference was sustained by separate educational provision *and* support for Glasgow Celtic.

Given the progress made in the context of post-war reconstruction, the economic optimism of the late 1950s and the social reforms of the 1960s, Scotland, like elsewhere, was taken by surprise by the explosion of the 'troubles' in Ireland during the late 1960s. Gallagher (1987: 292) argues that: 'While trying to get on with their own lives Glaswegians cast an anxious glance over their shoulders and worried about the amount of local political fallout from the Ulster explosion'. A number of factors, however, militated against the contagion of inter-communal violence being transposed across the Irish Sea. For instance in Scotland, residential areas were more integrated; there was a higher incidence of inter-marriage; trade unionism was not so vulnerable to naked 'sectarian' self-interest; and, crucially, political elites and police forces were not exclusively drawn from one religious denomination. Moreover, Scotland did not suffer from quite the same identity crisis as 'Ulster'. These critical differences acted as a kind of societal firewall preventing the spread of inter-ethnic violence. Nevertheless, many Catholics, especially Celtic fans were committed to Irish nationalism and republicanism, and adhered to a distinctive ideology and semiotic system that contrasted starkly with the Protestant Loyalism of many Rangers supporters.[1]

The conflict, with Ireland or 'Ulster' as the critical signifier, became clearly articulated in terms of the songs on the terraces and literature available for sale outside the ground on match days. As Bradley (1995: 41) points out, 'Celtic football fans, whether at a match or social occasion, will be heard to sing not only supportive chants for their own club, but also a collection of songs and anthems which reflect a desire for an independent and united Ireland (including support for militant nationalism)'. Songs are a particularly important part of the communicative process at football matches (Bradley, 1998: 203), signifying the strong vernacular politico-cultural connection between Celtic fans and Irish nationalism. Indeed, there were elements in the Irish community in Glasgow who were deeply affected by events in Ireland and became drawn into active political struggle. These activists organised solidarity demonstrations, provided 'safe houses' and logistical support for those engaged in armed resistance, as residual sympathies were revived by events after Burntollet Bridge and the 'battle of the Bogside' (Gallagher, 1987: 294).

In fact Murray (2000: 187) has argued that:

> the most obvious and understandable aspect of some Scots' dislike of Celtic supporters is their association of the colours of the IRA with Celtic, their tricolours often making this allusion specific: green and white are Celtic's colours, not the green, white and orange of the Irish Republic, especially when this is flaunted as a symbol of the Irish Republican Army and praise for their terror campaigns. Celtic have often denounced these political associations . . . it is likely that the Celtic management underestimates the power of symbols and what the tricolour flying over Celtic does stand for'.

Murray, like others, particularly Rangers fans, confuses expressions of Irish identity and aspirations for a united Ireland, with active support for the armed struggle. These do not follow sequentially, nor are they necessarily related.

Nevertheless, inter-fan antagonism in Glasgow was played around the political theme of 'Ulster'. As Richard Giulianotti suggests (2000: 19), 'the religious differences of Rangers and Celtic find their historic referent in the troubled history of Ireland, where football has again dramatised the deep-seated, ethno-religious conflict, principally in the north'. Indeed, Gallagher (1987: 1) suggests that, 'the view that the Northern Ireland conflict is a horrible aberration quite at variance with traditions and practices in the larger neighbouring island can be immediately dispelled on attending any football match between two Glasgow rivals - Rangers and Celtic'. Murray (2000: 264) confirms that the most vituperative bitterness between the supporters relates to Ireland, 'where the historical links of both clubs to the divided island are still the most poisonous source of hatred among the extreme fans on both sides. The Old Firm have grown together in Scotland as an echo of a divided Ireland, and their most fanatical supporters clubs are based there'.

A number of quantitative studies have confirmed that Celtic supporters are not only predominantly working class Labour voters (Boyle, 1994), but share an overwhelming commitment to a united Ireland (see Bradley, 1995: 56-7).[2] The political orientation and solidarity of such support prompted Murray (2000: 144) to remark: 'Catholic community leaders had every right to concern themselves with the behaviour of Celtic fans: only the most wilfully blind could convince themselves that Celtic were merely a sporting body'. It would, therefore, be correct to characterise Celtic support as, broadly speaking, pro-Irish Nationalist and pro-Labourist in political outlook, if not explicitly Republican and socialist. As Frank Devine notes (2004: 153), 'as might be expected from a people deriving its heritage from Irish history, the support is marked by an anti-establishment ethos that is often viewed with hostility in Scotland'. Indeed, as Bradley (1995: 183) argues:

for many people football provides an appropriate, or even safe, environment in which to make known otherwise repressed or unarticulated political attitudes, cultural affinities, national allegiances and prejudices . . . for Rangers and Celtic fans in particular games are often viewed as opportunities for para-political expression.

Consequently, the importance of Celtic as a 'safe' setting for the expression of certain socio-political aspirations should not be under-stated.

Ancient Allegiance, Capital Accumulation and the Political Tradition
Although the existence of a political tradition amongst Celtic supporters is clearly discernible, the Club itself became more uncomfortable about the existence of such allegiances. This unease became particularly acute in the contemporary era as the commercial environment offered greater opportunities for capital accumulation. As turnover and revenue increased exponentially, business imperatives began to dominate a club that was originally established as a result of charitable impulses, and committed itself to a code of social ethics. Indeed, Rex Nash (2001: 40) makes the general observation that 'modernisation in football has involved the adoption of market discourses of consumerism, entertainment and commercialism, visible primarily (but by no means exclusively) in stadium re-development, shifting crowd demography, massive rises in ticket prices, and re-definition of the match-day experience'. These forces, although most clearly reflected in the creation of the Premiership in England, nevertheless had a differential impact on the Scottish game. Rangers was the first of the two Glasgow leviathans to embrace enthusiastically the new wave of commercialisation, especially after tycoon David Murray took control in 1988. Celtic was slower to respond to the new realities, and whilst 'the football world developed around it, particularly at arch rivals Rangers, Celtic seemed paralysed' (Carr et al, 2000: 72). As the Kelly, White and Grant families jealously guarded their control of the club at Parkhead, Celtic flirted with financial catastrophe in 1994. The Celtic Board, whilst stressing the need to act as custodians of the cherished ideals of charity and social responsibility, seemed more intent upon preserving archaic privileges (Murray, 2003: 50).

This situation altered when wealthy entrepreneur Fergus McCann took control of the club in March 1994, after a bitter and protracted boardroom struggle. McCann focused on commercial priorities and, when challenged about betraying Celtic's ancient traditions, denounced his critics as 'Catholic bigots' (Murray, 2003: 127). The assumption of the new regime was not simply that 'sectarian' bigotry was morally wrong, but bad business practice in an integrated, increasingly globalised market place. The 'Bhoys against Bigotry' campaign was launched at beginning of January 1996, and there was a concerted effort to eradicate the singing of so-called 'sectarian songs' by the

fans. Indeed Aidan Donaldson (2004: 224) argues that the 'Bhoys Against Bigotry' campaign was 'the opening salvo in what many believe was an attempt to re-write Celtic's history and re-define in terms more attuned to the PLC ethic and a post-modern vision of football'. McCann, in a term encoded with significance, even referred to Celtic fans as 'customers' (Reilly, 2004: 206). In fact, in 2002 Chief Executive Ian McLoed wrote to every Celtic shareholder asking them not to participate in 'political' songs, and it was made clear that failure to comply with directives at the stadium would result in ejection by stewards.

Murray (2000: 58) correctly points out that 'these days the club would denounce in the severest terms any attempt to associate the club with Irish nationalism'. Celtic as a football club was determined to stress its assimilation into Scottish society and the complete irrelevance of politics. In essence, the Irish cultural and ethnic heritage of Celtic is emphasised only in so far as it makes good business sense to do so in terms of corporate branding, marketing and product differentiation. At the official level therefore Celtic F.C. conforms to the predominant consensus that 'politics' has no place in the football industry. A certain section of Celtic fans, however, still refused to relinquish their adherence to certain political aspirations and remained steadfastly committed to Irish nationalism, republicanism and socialism.

Despite the club's considerable efforts to marginalise the political element in Celtic's support, the explicitly political elements remained. Indeed some of the more committed and politically conscious supporters coalesced around the fanzine, 'Tiocfaidh Ar La' (TAL 'Our Day Will Come'). In many ways TAL became emblematic of the radical political persuasion and is, therefore, worthy of closer attention as a case study. The fanzine was established in December 1991, and lasted thirteen years in print form, although a website still exists. The last issue (Issue 40) was entitled 'The Final Farewell'. A considered content analysis of back-issues of this publication reveals it to have been the sharpest remaining fragment of a long-standing political tradition amongst Celtic support, and its demise may indeed be indicative of deeper trends in football culture.

The first issue of TAL, whilst acknowledging that 'other Celtic fanzines, such as "Not the View" and "Once a Tim", did a reasonable job in criticising the board and mocking Rangers, all of them, to a greater or lesser extent, ignored what makes this club what it is … Ireland! To be part of Celtic is to be part of Ireland. They may have taken our folks out of Ireland but they cannot take Ireland out of us' (TAL Issue 1). TAL stated explicitly, 'we are pro-Celtic, pro-Republican, anti-racist, anti-fascist, anti-sectarian, but most of all, anti-Rangers!' (TAL Issue 2).

Although the fanzine covered the usual terrain of match reports and football commentary, perhaps its most distinctive and controversial aspect was its explicit support for Irish Republicanism in general, and the Provisional IRA

in particular. TAL was, as Bert Moorhouse (1994: 184) says, 'overtly aligned with the IRA'. Assessments of TAL have almost inevitably been influenced by this fact, and have ranged from circumspection to outright hostility. TAL was, according to Murray (2000: 269), 'committed to the violent establishment of the Republic in Northern Ireland', and characterised by 'cheery chatter about the club and how it is performing on the field with equally cheery chatter about the latest IRA bomb outrages' (Murray, 2003: 182).

Even the most cursory reading of the fanzine, with articles on Irish history and politics, would clearly indicate an affinity for Republicanism, such as TAL Issue 7 on the birth of the Provisional IRA. Moreover, there is no doubt that TAL provided practical support for the Republican movement via various activities, including raising money for the Green Cross and Irish 'Prisoners of War' and their families. TAL also produced commemorative editions for events of historical importance in Republican terms, such as Bloody Sunday (TAL, Issue 32) and the Hunger Strikes (TAL Issue 29). Interviews were conducted with former PIRA volunteers and Sinn Fein activists. Articles by Danny Morrison, who as Sinn Fein press officer in the 1980s articulated the strategy of the 'armalite and ballot box', appeared regularly (TAL Issue 26) and links with groups like the James Connolly Association and the Republican Flute Band Alliance also indicate an identity of purpose. It is important to note, however, that TAL has been supportive of Sinn Fein (TAL Issue 29), and endorsed that party's participation in the peace process. Discussions on the move toward peace were conducted in the fanzine and one feature concluded that 'if Arafat and Mandela can address the nations of the world on the subject [of peace] then why shouldn't Gerry Adams, Martin McGuiness and the IRA?' (TAL Issue 8). Although the stance adopted has been largely uncritical of the Republican leadership, such a position hardly denotes an infatuation with Republican violence for its own sake.

The political approach by TAL was very much part of a broader commitment to what it perceived as progressive movements. For example articles in TAL supported ETA and the Basque separatists (TAL Issue 8, 25, 34), the Palestinians in the middle east (TAL Issue 34), the Zapatistas in Mexico (TAL Issue 27) and Turkish hunger strikers (TAL Issue 31). The fanzine was also very critical of the Labour Party, especially in its 'new' Labour 'Blairite' manifestation. Political debates have been conducted about tactical voting in light of the perceived inadequacy of the Labour Party, with arguments in favour of the Scottish Nationalist Party and the Scottish Socialist Party (TAL Issue 29). TAL adopted an implacably hostile opposition to Fascism as anti-democratic and anti-working class and helped co-ordinate 'Celtic Fans Against Fascism' (TAL Issue 12). In this context attention was frequently drawn to the connection between the extreme right and Rangers fans. Articles have noted the ideological connection between Fascism and Orangeism as creeds constructed upon notions of supremacy (TAL Issue 2).

The magazine was even critical of its own supporters for occasional lapses into racial abuse (TAL Issue 4). TAL also carried accounts of sectarian attacks or anti-Irish racism and was closely involved with the 'Campaign Against Sectarian Attacks' (TAL Issue 19), whilst being critical of the 'sectarianism industry' and groups such as 'Nil by Mouth'. TAL was, however, even more dismissive of campaigns initiated by the club such as 'Bhoys Against Bigotry', which they saw as a pretext to dilute the Republican preferences in the club's own support, and 'a cosmetic and commercially motivated exercise' (TAL Issue 19; see TAL Issue 15).

International links were fostered with other clubs with a similar left-wing agenda, such as St. Pauli of Hamburg, Shamrock Rovers in Dublin and Manchester United ('Red Attitude' fanzine), and a web site provided contact and input via the internet. Also, conditional support was offered to other groups that seemed to share an agenda, such as the Celtic Writers Group, Hillsborough Justice Campaign (TAL Issue 27) and Celtic Shareholders' Group, although TAL's preferred organisational option for the club was the so-called 'Barcelona model' (TAL Issue 3), although plans for increased democratisation via the share issue were viewed with some scepticism. There was also a sense in which TAL sets itself the task of developing a broader cultural agenda, with some contributions in the Gaelic language, and articles on poetry and poets, such as Seamus Heaney (TAL Issue 27), and a critical analysis of Rudyard Kipling (TAL Issue 31). Interviews with Irvine Welsh (TAL Issue 30), Shane McGowen (TAL Issue 30), along with extensive book, film and music reviews, indicated an extraordinary breadth of interest for a 'football' fanzine.

TAL evidently believed that it was sustaining a heritage under threat from within the club by excessive commercialisation, and from without by anti-Irish elements in Scottish society. Certainly TAL was more sophisticated and complex than conventional accounts might suggest, and the tendency to dismiss the fanzine as simply a fan club for the Provisionals or a mirror image of Protestant sectarians are well wide of the mark. TAL did represent that fraction of Celtic's support which was overtly Republican and which adopted an explicitly socialist perspective. In some ways TAL was a reactivation of 'The Shamrock' magazine, distributed in the early 1960s, which cost sixpence and was published by a supporters club in Edinburgh. 'The Shamrock' adopted a pro-IRA stance, criticised the way the club was run and flourished between 1961-63 (Moorhouse, 1994: 175; Murray, 2003: 35). Yet the fact that the fanzine has now ceased production in hard copy format may reflect rather more than changing patterns of consumption. References to 'repressive policing policies', and the 'new breed of Celtic fans that know nothing of the club's history' are indicative (Tiocfaidh Ar La Website, 2005).

Celtic Fans, Social Identity and De-Subordination

Celtic Football Club is a significant configuration on the cultural landscape in Scotland and Ireland and has helped to actualise and sustain a socio-political counter-culture, although this is not by any means monolithic. Celtic, because of its history, rooted in a particular cultural configuration, acts as an agent of socialisation and an inter-discursive space where meaning is negotiated. The club supplies a cultural script or tool kit of stories, songs, symbols and rituals that provide a structure of meaning for many fans, and Celtic as symbolic fragment of Irish identity is a dynamic entity. Even traditions are not fixed and immutable, but can be articulated in different ways for particular purposes. As Raymond Boyle (1994: 93) notes 'what comes to constitute a particular tradition is a matter of struggle and contestation over interpretation. In the case of Celtic it is a term that can be politically mobilised to serve and defend particular actions'. And further: 'Today much of what constitutes the identity of the Celtic supporter is passed on via a process of cultural osmosis. There exists within football fan culture a tribal library from which younger fans select and put together aspects of their footballing identity' (Boyle, 1994: 85). Thus, there is an ongoing reflexive engagement with notions about what it means to be a Celtic fan. To a significant extent, however, the culture and ethos that is reflected through the commitment of Celtic fans is a form of resistance against social assimilation and the hegemony of British, and even Scottish, cultural values. Celtic was the vehicle through which a commitment to Irish identity was manifested, and football matches were venues where Irish-Scots could pour out feelings of injustice (Finn, 1991b: 377).

As for TAL it is important not to exaggerate for the sake of an interesting narrative, indeed with a print run of around 3,000 TAL might be construed as a peripheral phenomenon, of esoteric interest only to those infatuated by football and political culture. Nevertheless TAL, and elements that coalesced around it, constituted a serious and sustained politico-cultural project, and provided a focus of resistance and de-subordination for some fans by emphasising a specific, and authentic, component of Celtic's heritage. The fact that TAL has not survived to be sold outside Parkhead is surely significant. Whatever other factors may have precipitated its closure it is clear that the forces of commercialisation and the overt hostility of the club, along with the colonisation of the match day experience by the aspiring middle classes, placed enormous pressure on the TAL fanzine. Many might rejoice at such a development, but the broader implications may be more unsettling as symptomatic of a much broader trend in football toward deracination.

Of course it could be argued persuasively, following on from the analysis of the Frankfurt school, that the culture industries engender passivity and

conformity, with football generally reinforcing the legitimacy of power relations, inequality and so on, whilst integrating sections of the lower classes into capitalist society. Hence the re-production of power by stealth, by inducing quasi-conscious compliance, can be said to make structures of dominance and subordination more viable and persistent. It might also be correct to suggest that the culture of football can act, in some cases, as a vehicle for expressions of ethnic intolerance and racism. Fandom can, however, also accommodate and articulate more positive features, such as community identity and collectivism, which are woven deep into the fabric of football culture (Giulianotti & Finn, 2000: 260). Football performs many complex functions, which make it difficult to discern precisely how these interact to preserve the social order (Giulianotti, 2000: 16), and there may be no 'master contradiction' in a mechanical or reductive sense because cultural phenomena are 'relatively autonomous'. Certainly most football clubs and governing bodies want to 'protect' the game as an uncontaminated form of consumption, but football is a critical site of social, cultural and political struggle, where notions of community can confront capital. Despite the ideological dominance of free market individualism in football, the grit of collectivism remains embedded in the oyster.

Notes

1. Rangers developed a political culture that stood steadfastly for Monarchy, Empire, and the Union. The club had close links with the Clyde shipyards, which employed skilled Protestants, many from Ulster, some of whom were players. The arrival of Harland and Wolff yard in 1912 sharpened Rangers' Protestant identity and the club's no-Catholic signing policy is thought to have 'become institutionalised' from 1920 onwards (Bruce et al., 2004: 129). Infamous Rangers' supporter and Fascist Billy Fullarton was leader of a violent gang between the wars that attacked Communist marches and engaged in strike breaking during the depression. Billy was the subject of the (in)famous Rangers song 'The Billy Boys', which refers to being 'Up to our knees in Fenian blood'. Songs such as 'God Save the Queen', 'Rule Brittania' and 'The Sash' are also standard fare at Rangers' games (Bradley, 1998: 206). In the modern era, the manager Souness, an admirer of Margaret Thatcher's brand of free market individualism, even had a portrait of the Queen placed in the Rangers dressing room. Murray (2000: 61) also notes that, 'the Rangers Football Club has close links with the Scottish business classes, and both of them operate in milieus in which masonic influences are strong' and connections with Freemasons and the Orange Order are 'unofficial but clearly established' (Murray, 2003: 170). Conservative, Royalist and Unionist connections were evident, and encouraged by players, managers and fans alike (Murray, 2003: 166; Giulianotti, 2000: 18). The ideological and cultural contrast with Celtic could not have been sharper.

2. Indeed both Boyle (1994: 86) and Bradley (1995: 48) note that 43 per cent and 52 per cent in their respective samples expressed a commitment to the Republic of Ireland national team, rather than Scotland.

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