

*Turcos e portugueses: An oral history of*  
**'national' identity and football in Galicia**

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# Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between ‘national’ identity and football in Galicia, north-west Spain. The research is based on an oral history of football supporters in Galicia and the Galician diaspora in the United Kingdom, with a focus on 1987 to 2005. This period saw unprecedented success for Galician football clubs Deportivo La Coruña, Celta Vigo, and Compostela, which coincided with significant electoral gains for Galician nationalist parties. Yet there is limited scholarship on the lived experience of Galician identity and its expression through football. I argue that football allowed Galicians to negotiate and (re)articulate multiple identities – civic, ‘national’, and state – which often overlapped or competed with one another. The use of football to imagine Galicia was sometimes oppositional in tone; football served to differentiate Galicia from perceived adversaries. On other occasions it was affective; football encouraged the performance of kinship with other communities. In both cases, participants shared the conviction that football can effect political and social change in Galicia. This research has two main implications. First, I contribute to scholarship on the interaction between football and sub-state identity, where multiple identities make sport an arena for competing notions of belonging. Second, in using oral history methodology, I contribute a bottom-up perspective of how and why civic and national mythologies capture the imagination (or fail to do so), based on personal, subjective narratives.

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# Contents

<b>List of tables .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Glossary of Galician terms.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Galicia: a brief overview .....	3
Football in Galicia .....	6
Contextualising this research .....	10
Research questions.....	13
Chapter overview .....	15
<b>Chapter One: Methodology.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Introduction .....	19
Intersubjectivity and reflexivity .....	21
Memory: remembering and forgetting.....	24
Subjectivity: between fact and memory.....	28
Research process .....	31
Recruitment of participants.....	31
The interview .....	34
Transcription .....	37
Data Analysis.....	38
Translation .....	42
Ethics.....	45
Additional methods .....	46
Conclusion.....	47
<b>Chapter Two: Theoretical concepts .....</b>	<b>49</b>
Introduction .....	49
Galicia and nationhood .....	50
Theories of nationalism.....	53
Benedict Anderson and the ‘imagined community’.....	55
Ernest Gellner .....	59
Eric Hobsbawm .....	62
Anthony D. Smith.....	68
Banal, ecstatic, and everyday nationalism .....	72
Nationalism and sport .....	76
Conclusion.....	79
<b>Chapter Three: Football and the construction of Galician identity.....</b>	<b>81</b>
Introduction .....	81
The changing articulations of Galician identity .....	82
From provincialism to regionalism .....	82

Pre-Civil War nationalism .....	85
Post-Civil War nationalism .....	88
<b>Football and Galician identity .....</b>	<b>92</b>
Close links between Galician culture and football .....	94
Football and virility .....	95
The absence of football until <i>Bravú</i> .....	98
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	100
<b>Chapter Four: Radical groups and the performance of <i>galeguismo</i> .....</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	102
<b>Performance of Galician identity</b> .....	109
Pride in <i>galeguismo</i> .....	110
Defence of Galician symbology.....	112
Rejection of Spanish symbology .....	118
Performance of masculinity.....	123
<b>Weaponisation of ideological incoherence</b> .....	127
Riazor Blues deemed incoherent.....	127
Celtarras deemed coherent.....	132
The formation of Siareiros Galegos .....	134
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	136
<b>Chapter Five: Football and identity within Galicia .....</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	139
<b>'Politicians' stifled expressions of Galician unity</b> .....	141
The <i>Prestige</i> .....	141
The reformation of the <i>Irmandiña</i> was stifled .....	146
Galician nationalism was slow to grasp the potential of football .....	151
<b>Football as a repository for local pride</b> .....	153
Deportivo boosted self-esteem in A Coruña .....	155
Support your local team, 'Against Modern Football' .....	158
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	166
<b>Chapter Six: Football and identity in Galician external relations.....</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	168
<b>Centre-periphery relations expressed through football</b> .....	170
Real Madrid as a symbol of centralism and Francoism .....	171
Footballing colonialism.....	175
<b>Sub-state kinship expressed through football</b> .....	179
Celtic kinship.....	180
Sense of connection with the Basque Country .....	182
Basques and Catalans express their national identity with more confidence than Galicians.....	187
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	196
<b>Chapter Seven: '<i>Señoritos versus traballadores</i>': Civic rivalries and shared Galicianness.....</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	198
<b>Localism fuelled civic rivalries</b> .....	200
A Coruña versus Vigo, ' <i>señoritos versus traballadores</i> ' .....	202

‘Capitalidade’ – A Coruña and Santiago .....	206
Press and politicians stirred localism.....	209
<b>Civic rivalries became ‘hot’ on matchday .....</b>	<b>214</b>
Perception that radical groups led violence .....	216
Animosity spread beyond radical groups .....	219
Respectful rivalry beyond matchday .....	221
<b>‘Temos unha cousa en común’ – a sense of commonality increased with maturity .....</b>	<b>225</b>
Rivalry is natural and desirable.....	225
Sense of shared identity increased with maturity.....	228
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Chapter Eight: The Galician language .....</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>Perception that Galician is looked down upon.....</b>	<b>237</b>
Galician and rurality.....	238
<i>Galego</i> as unsophisticated.....	240
<i>Galego</i> associated with the elderly .....	242
<b>Participants invested <i>galego</i> with symbolic value .....</b>	<b>246</b>
<b>Participants perceived that football clubs have done little for the language .....</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>257</b>
<b>Chapter Nine: Football provided roots in a universal experience of migration .....</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>External migration – the Galician diaspora in the United Kingdom .....</b>	<b>263</b>
Outsiders everywhere .....	266
Football allegiances and rivalries played out in the diaspora .....	271
<b>Internal migration.....</b>	<b>278</b>
‘ <i>Todo o mundo ten aldea</i> ’ .....	279
Football as an ‘ <i>elemento aglutinador</i> ’ .....	283
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>287</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>290</b>
<b>Silences.....</b>	<b>296</b>
<b>Further research .....</b>	<b>297</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>301</b>

# List of tables

Table 1 – List of Galician radical groups. ....	107
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# Glossary of Galician terms

<i>Aldea</i>	Village.
<i>Auto odio</i>	Self-hate.
<i>Balaídos</i>	Celta Vigo's home stadium.
<i>Bancada</i>	Terrace. The name given to the steps of a football stadium where fans sit or stand to watch the match.
<i>Bloque</i>	A colloquial term for the Galician nationalist party, the BNG.
<i>Coruñés</i>	A person from A Coruña.
<i>Estrelleira</i>	A Galician flag with a red star in the centre, carries nationalist connotations.
<i>Galeguismo</i>	Galicianism. A political and cultural affirmation of Galicia as a distinct entity.
<i>Galeguista</i>	Galicianist. A person or institution that supports Galicianism.
<i>Irmandiña</i>	The Galician national football team.
<i>Neofalante</i>	A person brought up in the Spanish language, who, at some point, decided to speak Galician.
<i>Ourensán</i>	A person from Ourense.
<i>Peña</i>	An officially registered supporters' club.
<i>Portugués</i>	Portuguese.
<i>Riazor</i>	Deportivo La Coruña's home stadium.
<i>Señorito</i>	A 'rich kid' or 'posh boy'.
<i>Siareiros</i>	A collective of radical supporters from across Galicia formed to campaign for the reformation of the Galician national team.
<i>Galegos</i>	



<i>Socio</i>	A club member or season-ticket holder.
<i>Traballador</i>	Worker.
<i>Turco</i>	Turk or Turkish.
<i>Vigués</i>	A person from Vigo.
<i>Xunta</i>	The Galician parliament in Santiago de Compostela.

# Introduction

There are 150 people in the bar and all of them fall silent, captivated by the spectacle on the stage. The performer wears a long red dress. Ruffles flowing as she struts, she brings her hands together in staccato claps to accompany her vocals. A sombre guitarist, seated beside her, adds another layer of rhythm. This is a flamenco bar in the city of Sevilla, in the southern Spanish region of Andalucía. There are 150 people in the bar and all of them are silent, apart from one table. A group dressed in blue and white hold a muffled conversation that rises in volume, drawing glares and tuts from other patrons.

It is December 2017 and I am in Andalucía to watch Deportivo La Coruña, a football club from the city of A Coruña, in Galicia, an autonomous community in north-west Spain.<sup>1</sup>

Deportivo are visiting Sevilla Fútbol Club for a match in *LaLiga*, the top division of Spanish football. My companions on the talking table are fellow members of Chamberí Branquiazul, a Madrid-based *peña* – or supporters' club – made up of Deportivo supporters exiled in the capital.<sup>2</sup> I had joined Chamberí Branquiazul about a year earlier, shortly after I moved from the United Kingdom to Madrid. The *peña* congregated to watch Deportivo matches in a bar around the corner from my shared apartment. It seemed like a good way to regularly

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<sup>1</sup> In this sentence I use two different forms of the toponym of the city. A Coruña is the Galician toponym, which I use throughout the thesis. The official name of the football club contains the Spanish toponym, La Coruña (despite some pressure from elements of the club's fanbase to 'drop the L').

<sup>2</sup> *Peñas* are officially registered fan clubs. Members typically gather to watch their team's matches in a bar, and may also travel to away matches. *Peñas* exist to encourage sociability around a common passion for a certain team, and to fulfil practical needs relating to ticketing and travel to away matches. As of 2019, there were 121 Celta Vigo *peñas*. As of 2022, there were the same number of Deportivo *peñas*. Spaaij and Viñas refer to the *peña* as 'a central feature in Spanish football culture' since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, R. Spaaij and C. Viñas, 'Passion, Politics and Violence: A Socio-historical Analysis of Spanish Ultras', *Soccer and Society*, 6/1 (2005), p.82.

socialise in Spanish – or so I thought – with like-minded football obsessives. The Deportivo supporters succumb to the pressure of the collective glare. They pause their conversation but leave the bar after the first song. ‘Why go to a bar in which you cannot chat?’, they reason.

Flamenco is an art form inexorably linked with Spanish, but not Galician, cultural identity. In the 1960s, the Spanish tourism industry promoted flamenco as a folkloric attraction to boost the economy, then cultivated its status as a symbol of the country’s culture.<sup>3</sup> As we walk away from the bar, it strikes me as significant that a majority group of Galicians would so flippantly dismiss this symbol of Spanishness. Over the next couple of years, I became curious about how my new friends negotiated multiple identities as Galicians, Spaniards, and *coruñeses*, from A Coruña. I noticed that they spoke the Galician language in certain situations and Spanish in others. I was engrossed in the *peña* WhatsApp group when the Spanish national team played. Some members were avid supporters, some were ambivalent, others used it as an excuse to insult Iago Aspas, the forward for Spain and Celta Vigo, Deportivo’s historic rival from the port city of Vigo, down the Galician coast. I saw how football both exaggerated enmity and facilitated kinship. I noticed how supporters drew on nostalgia and past glory to negotiate a challenging, changing present. These observations led to reflections, which, in turn, sparked an intellectual curiosity to pursue this research.

In this thesis I use oral history methodology to explore the relationship between national identity and football in Galicia, with a focus on the period from 1987 to 2005. Unless

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<sup>3</sup> For more information see: S. Holguín, *Flamenco Nation: The Construction of Spanish National Identity* (Madison, Wisconsin, 2019).

otherwise stated, by ‘football’ I refer to fandom of men’s football teams.<sup>4</sup> Football is not the sole focus of this thesis, rather it is the mediator. Football does not merely ‘reflect’ its social and cultural context, but represents a space in which identities are (re)constructed and performed. My main contention is that football supporters from Galicia viewed the sport as a legitimate and valuable means to imagine and articulate overlapping civic, national, and state identities. This was sometimes oppositional in tone; the use of football fandom to differentiate from, or ‘other’, the perceived adversary. On other occasions it was affective. Fandom allowed Galicians to express a sense of kinship with other communities. The common thread is a belief that fandom can effect social and political change, as well as help people to negotiate the (often conflicted) interaction between ‘home’, ‘here’, and ‘there’. The intention of the following section is to briefly introduce the core coordinates of this research, including language, Galician national identity, and football in Galicia, which I shall then discuss in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

## Galicia: a brief overview

Galicia is an autonomous community in the north-west corner of Spain, with a population of approximately 2.7 million.<sup>5</sup> It comprises four provinces: A Coruña and Pontevedra on the Atlantic coast, Lugo and Ourense to the east. Economic power and population is concentrated along the so-called AP-9 Axis – named after the main arterial motorway –

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<sup>4</sup> The aspects of football not comprehensively examined in this thesis – participation as a player or coach, fandom of women’s football teams – are avenues for future research. Indeed, since I started this research the literature on the history of women’s football in Galicia has flourished. See: H. Pena, *Historia do fútbol feminino en Galicia: De Irene a Vero Boquete* (Vigo, 2023); A. Centeno, *Las diez mil hijas de Irene: Cien años de fútbol femenino en Galicia* (Viveiro, 2023); R. Ventureira Novo and J.L. Rodríguez Cudeiro, *Irene y las puertas del fútbol: Historia de una pionera* (A Coruña, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Spain is made up of 17 autonomous communities (and two autonomous cities). Each autonomous community/city exercises a right to self-government, in line with the devolved powers established in the Statutes of Autonomy, and, primarily, in accordance with the Spanish constitution of 1978.

which links the industrial cities of Ferrol and Vigo in the north and south respectively, provincial capitals A Coruña and Pontevedra, and the political capital Santiago de Compostela.

Galicia enjoys devolved executive, legislative, and judicial power over certain important competencies, including education, public healthcare, and linguistic policy. Autonomy for Galicia was first posited in the 1936 Statute of Autonomy, which was soon thwarted by General Franco's *coup d'état* and the subsequent four decades of centralist dictatorship. Following Franco's death in 1975 and the transition to democracy, Galicia was eventually granted self-government in the 1981 Statute of Autonomy.

There are two co-official languages in Galicia: the native Galician – or *galego* – and Spanish. Galician is a romance language with lexical and grammatical similarities to Portuguese and Spanish. Approximately 90 percent of Galicians claim an ability to speak *galego* very or reasonably well.<sup>6</sup> While this data reveals certain resilience following decades of linguistic repression during the Francoist dictatorship, it does not tell the entire sociolinguistic story. The ability to speak *galego* does not always equate to the use of *galego*. What is more, there is an important qualitative element to language use. *Who* speaks a language is just as important – if not more – than *how many* speak it. *Galego* may (just) be the majority language in Galicia, but it is largely associated with lower socioeconomic status, rurality, and use by the elderly, as well as Galician nationalist sentiment.

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<sup>6</sup> Instituto Galego de Estatística [IGE], 'Enquisa estrutural a fogares. Coñecemento e uso do galego', 2018, [https://www.ige.gal/estatico/html/gl/OperacionsEstruturais/PDF/Resumo\\_resultados\\_EEF\\_Galego\\_2018.pdf](https://www.ige.gal/estatico/html/gl/OperacionsEstruturais/PDF/Resumo_resultados_EEF_Galego_2018.pdf).

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Galician intellectuals constructed the notion of Galicia as a distinct community with its own identity, initially as a province, then as a region, and latterly as a nation. In the two decades before the outbreak of civil war in 1936, the nascent Galician nationalist movement promoted a cultural articulation of a Galician national spirit, while still drawing upon the narrative that emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that Galicia is ethnically Celtic and thus different from the rest of Spain. The nationalist movement remained staunchly culturalist, with a focus on language, when it tentatively reemerged during the dictatorship. Yet from the 1960s it pursued sovereignty through left-wing political activism.

Following Franco's death and the transition to democracy in Spain, nationalist political ambition in Galicia centred around the Bloque Nacionalista Galego [BNG], a coalition of left-of-centre Galicianist parties.<sup>7</sup> According to Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, the BNG is:

A relevant case with which to examine the trajectory of a nationalist party from the political margins to government. The life-cycle of the BNG exemplifies the step from an anti-systemic marginal force in the eighties, to being a member of the governing coalition formed in Galicia in 2005.<sup>8</sup>

The BNG grew steadily through the 1980s and 1990s. It gained a seat in the Galician parliament in 1985 under the charismatic leadership of Xosé Manuel Beiras. By 1996 the BNG held a seat in the national congress in Madrid and, three years later, in the European

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<sup>7</sup> X-M. Núñez-Seixas, 'National reawakening within a changing society: The Galician movement in Spain (1960-97)', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 3/2 (1997), pp.29-56

<sup>8</sup> M Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, 'El nacionalismo minoritario, de la marginidad al gobierno: la trayectoria del Bloque Nacionalista Galego (1982—2007)', *Papers*, 92 (2009), p.120.

parliament.<sup>9</sup> The BNG reached government in Galicia in 2005, when it entered a coalition with the Socialists' Party (PSdeG-PSOE) and, in doing so, marked the end of two decades of government by the conservative Partido Popular. It is clear that, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Galician nationalism had become an effective political force.

## Football in Galicia

The electoral rise of the BNG coincided with a period of unprecedented success for Galician football teams. Deportivo La Coruña, Celta Vigo, and Compostela all experienced the most fruitful periods in their histories during the 1990s and early 2000s. Deportivo La Coruña were founded in 1906 by José María Abalo. Like many other pioneers of Spanish – and, indeed, global – football, Abalo had returned from a period of study in Britain with an enthusiasm for the sport and a desire to introduce it to the homeland.<sup>10</sup> Real Club Celta de Vigo appeared soon after, following the 1923 merger of Vigo Sporting and Real Fortuna.<sup>11</sup>

For the next 60 years both clubs bounced between the first and second division. Brief periods of success interrupted the turbulent mediocrity. Deportivo finished as runners-up to the Spanish title in 1950, one point behind Atlético de Madrid. During the 1950s Deportivo benefitted from the sagacity of Argentine coach Helenio Herrera – a key innovator in the tactical evolution of football – and the skill of Luis Suárez, who remains the only Spanish man to have won the Ballon d'Or.<sup>12</sup> Celta flourished in the same era, reaching the final of the Copa del Rey in 1948. The clubs have often peaked and troughed in tandem. In the words of

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<sup>9</sup> Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, 'El nacionalismo minotario', p.123.

<sup>10</sup> For a comprehensive account of Deportivo's foundation and early history, see: R. Ventureira, *De la Sala Calvet al título olvidado, Albores del R.C. Deportivo: 1901–1912* (A Coruña, 2022).

<sup>11</sup> For background to this merger, and the origins of football in Vigo, see: C. González Villar, *Albores del fútbol vigués, 1905–1923* (Vigo, 1959), G. González Martín, *Handicap creó el Celta* (Vigo, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> The Ballon d'Or is generally considered the most prestigious individual award in football.

Lucía Taboada, a journalist and Celta fan, ‘if they [Deportivo] shout, we shout more. If they say something crazy, we say something crazier. If they say the only cups we have are made of glass, we get them out to propose a toast when we beat them.’<sup>13</sup>

This leads into an explanation of the title of this thesis: *Turcos e portugueses*. When Deportivo host Celta at their Riazor home, a smattering of Turkish flags ripple in the crowd. At the reverse fixture in Vigo, Celta supporters display Portuguese flags. This tit-for-tat flag waving represents a curiosity of the rivalry. Deportivo supporters insult their rivals by calling them ‘Portuguese’. Celta supporters reciprocate with the pejorative use of ‘Turks’. It is an attempt by each fanbase to delegitimise the rival club (and rival city), to present it as ‘other’. The prominence of Turkish flags at Riazor and Portuguese flags at Celta’s Balaídos stadium – and, as performative fandom increasingly moves online, on social media fan accounts – shows how supporters appropriate and embrace the insults.

The proximity of Vigo to the Portuguese border explains the ‘Portuguese’ jibe. The origin of the ‘Turks’ insult is less clear. According to one theory it refers to the Turkish raid on the Ría de Vigo in 1617, and thus presents Deportivo, like the Turks, as an historic enemy.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps it refers to the ‘Tour Coruña’ buses that rumbled down the coast from A Coruña to Vigo. The *vigueses* abbreviated it to ‘TourCo’, and on to ‘Turco’.<sup>15</sup> Nobody really knows. Nobody really cares. Participants embrace the mystery.

At some stage in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Galician football emerged from obscurity. Football match reports often describe an atmosphere as ‘fiery’. Rarely has this been more

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<sup>13</sup> L. Taboada, *Como siempre, lo de siempre* (Madrid, 2019), p.IV.

<sup>14</sup> P. Ball, *Morbo: The Story of Spanish Football* (London, 2011), p.182.

<sup>15</sup> Taboada, *Como siempre, lo de siempre*, p.IV.



appropriate than on 9 June 1991. Deportivo hosted Real Murcia on the final day of the *segunda división* season in need of a victory to return to the elite. In a match that required no added tension, a wayward flare caused the stadium roof to catch fire. Fans sought refuge on the pitch as the match paused, remarkably, for just 48 minutes. In the context of Deportivo's rise in the following decade, supporters reflected on that fire as the moment that '*queimou o meigallo*', that burned the curse of rotten luck throughout the 1980s. It was the beginning of the 'Super Dépor' era. By 1994, only a missed penalty in the last minute of the season denied Deportivo a maiden league title. They soothed the pain a year later by winning the 1995 Copa del Rey.

Celta Vigo followed a similar trajectory. Uninspiring performances in the 1980s gave way to a Copa del Rey final in 1994. In circumstances as cruel as those that denied Deportivo a maiden league title, Celta lost in a penalty shoot-out. Deportivo finally won the league in 2000 and added another Copa del Rey in 2001, when they beat Real Madrid, in Real Madrid's stadium, in Real Madrid's centenary year. Celta remained in pursuit, reaching the final of the Copa del Rey in 2002. Galicia was still on the periphery, but its football clubs were at the centre of Spanish sport. They also made an impact on the European stage. The 'Euro Celta' team of the late 1990s and early 2000s beat Liverpool, Benfica, and Juventus, among others. Deportivo reached the semi-finals of the Champions League in 2004. Such success was unprecedented for two historically modest clubs.

Both teams were notable for fielding few Galician players. Fran, of Deportivo, was the most celebrated home-grown player, but the stars of Deportivo and Celta were international.

Mauro Silva, Bebeto, and Djalminha laced Deportivo with Brazilian flair. Aleksandr Mostovoi and Valeri Karpin – both Russia internationals – were the most recognisable names in Vigo.

In 1996 Deportivo became the first Spanish team to field 11 non-Spanish players in a league fixture, in a match against Atlético de Madrid. Nevertheless, the sporting press applied the label '*Galicía Calidade*' to the success of Deportivo and Celta.<sup>16</sup> '*Galicía Calidade*' is a denomination of origin certificate awarded to certain Galician products. In the 1990s football joined *polbo* (octopus) and Albariño wine on the list of products that came quality-assured from Galicia.

Deportivo and Celta were not the only Galician clubs to thrive during this period. SD Compostela started the 1990s in the fourth tier of Spanish football. By 1994, under the stewardship of charismatic president José María Caneda, Compostela reached the *primera división* for the first time. They stayed there for four seasons. Elsewhere, medium-sized clubs Racing Ferrol, Pontevedra, Lugo, and Ourense alternated between the second and third divisions. Beyond club football, the 1990s saw increased grassroots activism for the reformation of the Galician national team – the *Irmandiña* – which had not played since 1930. Fan-led initiatives such as Siareiros Galegos created a swell of momentum that culminated in a match between Galicia and Uruguay in December 2005, just three months after the BNG entered a coalition with the Socialists' Party to govern the Galician parliament. This was no coincidence. The reformation of the *Irmandiña* would not have been possible without political support to complement the fan activism.

This discussion of the coalescing of nationalist politics and football is an appropriate moment to explain my choice of 1987 to 2005 as the chronological parameters of my thesis.

As I have stated, during this period Galician nationalist politics experienced significant

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<sup>16</sup> M. González Ramallal, 'La cancha de las identidades. Periodismo deportivo y fútbol gallego' in V. Sampedro Blanco (ed.), *La pantalla de las identidades: Medios de comunicación, políticas y mercados de identidad* (Barcelona, 2003), p.277.

electoral growth while Galician football clubs flourished like never before. That is not to say one caused the other. Yet this confluence makes it an interesting period on which to use football as a lens to examine how national identities interact with sporting and civic allegiances. 1987 is a natural start point. It marked the intensification of the rivalry between Deportivo and Celta. The two clubs clashed in the *segunda división* play-offs, with the match in A Coruña marred by violence in and around the stadium. Radical, 'ultra'-style groups Riazor Blues (Deportivo) and Celtarras (Celta) formed the same year, as the nascent ultra subculture brought about a more active, performative, and sometimes violent form of support among the Spanish youth. 2005 is a natural end point. In the political arena, the BNG capped its rise by entering the Galician government, albeit as a coalition partner. On the football pitch, years of decadent spending caught up with Deportivo, Celta, and Compostela, all of which faded from the elite and encountered financial crises of varying severity. The golden era of Galician football had come to an end.

## Contextualising this research

In early 2023 Michael Reid, a former Madrid correspondent for the Economist, published a book on modern Spain.<sup>17</sup> Reid presents 'regional nationalism' – an unclear term that I challenge in Chapter Two – as one of the main challenges Spain faces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He pores over Catalonia and the Basque Country, yet Galicia barely features in this central argument. Galicia is not just on the geographic periphery, but often on the discursive periphery too. It is this absence from much of the public debate that makes Galicia such a compelling subject of investigation.

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<sup>17</sup> M. Reid, *Spain: The Trials and Triumphs of a Modern European Country* (New Haven, Connecticut, 2023).

My research makes two main contributions to current scholarship on Galicia, national identity, and sport. First, it addresses the relative lack of literature on football as a vehicle for the expression of shared – and competing – identities in Galicia. Second, it deepens understanding of the interaction between football and sub-state national identity in general, where multiple, overlapping identities make sport an arena for competing notions of belonging.

In respect of the first contribution, there is extensive literature on the (re)articulation of Galician identity through literature<sup>18</sup>, language<sup>19</sup>, music<sup>20</sup>, and landscape.<sup>21</sup> Yet, while football is a highly prominent cultural mode in Galicia, there is limited engagement with the sport as a vehicle for the construction and performance of identities. In the early 2000s, Katherine Warner approached the relationship between Galician football, language, and identity in an anthropological spirit. Warner concluded that football served to maintain local identities at the cost of the nation, an assertion I challenge in this thesis.<sup>22</sup> Domínguez Almansa examines the origins of sport – and its relationship to politics – in Galicia in a comprehensive social history, while Afonso Eiré unpicked the common themes between

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<sup>18</sup> D. Vilaverde, *História da literatura galega* (Vigo, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> J. Beswick, *Regional nationalism in Spain: language use and ethnic identity in Galicia* (Clevedon, 2007)

<sup>20</sup> J. Colmeiro, 'Bagpipes, Bouzoukis and Bodhráns: The Rein vindication of Galician Folk Music', in H. Miguélez-Carballeira, *A Companion to Galician Culture* (Woodbridge, 2014), pp.93–114; X. de Toro, 'Bagpipes and Digital Music: The Remixing of Galician Identity', in J. Labanyi (ed.), *Constructing Identity in Contemporary Spain: Theoretical Debates and Cultural Practice* (Oxford, 2002), pp.237–254; J. Colmeiro, *Peripheral Visions/Global Sounds: From Galicia to the World* (Liverpool, 2017).

<sup>21</sup> M. López Sández, *Paisaxe e nación. A creación discursiva do territorio* (Vigo, 2008); J. García Álvarez, *Territorio y nacionalismo. La construcción geográfica de la identidad gallega (1860-1936)* (Santiago de Compostela, 2003); F.J. Sanjiao Otero, A.J. Ferreira Fernández, and A. Pérez Alberti (eds.), *Galicia fai dous mil anos, o feito diferencial galego: Vol.4. As Paisaxes de Galicia* (Santiago de Compostela, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> K. Warner, 'Soccer fans, language politics, and the ambivalence of nationalism in Galicia, Spain', PhD thesis submitted to Yale University, 2006.

Galician culture and football in the late 1990s.<sup>23</sup> Beyond these contributions, scholars have paid little attention to the ways in which Galicians use football to negotiate competing loyalties and notions of belonging. This is curious. As Manuel Rivas, the celebrated Galician writer, observes ‘there are people who, to create an identity, have to write a 50-volume encyclopedia over the course of 50 years. Football, on the other hand, creates an identity for you in one afternoon of glory, from one virtuous kick of the ball.’<sup>24</sup>

The football match provides a regular stage for the ritual negotiation and performance of multiple, contested identities that arise when a state comprises various nations.<sup>25</sup> One weekend it pits Galician adversaries against one another. The next weekend, it facilitates competitive encounters between Galician teams and teams from other territories across Spain. These matches both reflect and affect social, political, and cultural currents. For some fans, for instance, matches against Basque teams nurture a sense of sub-state kinship. For others, matches against Real Madrid represent politically charged contests against a symbol

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<sup>23</sup> A. Domínguez Almansa, *Historia social do deporte en Galicia: cultura, deportiva e modernidade, 1850–1920* (Vigo, 2009), A. Eiré, *O fútbol na sociedade galega* (Vigo, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> M. Rivas, ‘Galicia contada a un extraterrestre’, *El País Semanal*, 14 October 2001, p.41.

<sup>25</sup> For further reading on football and the sub-state nation within Spain see the following: A. Quiroga, *Football and National Identities in Spain: The strange death of Don Quixote* (Basingstoke, 2013); J. Barcelo, P. Clinton, and C. Samper Sero, ‘National identity, social institutions and political values. The case of FC Barcelona and Catalonia from an intergenerational comparison’, *Soccer & Society*, 16/4 (2015), pp.469–481; H. Shobe, ‘Place, identity and football: Catalonia, Catalanisme and Football Club Barcelona, 1899–1975’, *National Identities*, 10/3 (2008), pp.329–343; J. Tunon and E. Brey, ‘Sport and politics in Spain—Football and nationalist attitudes within the Basque Country and Catalonia’, *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 9/1–2 (2012), pp.7–32; E. Rojo-Labaien, ‘Football and the representation of Basque identity in the contemporary age’, *Soccer & Society*, 18/1 (2017), pp.63–80; R. Gyóri Szabó, ‘Basque identity and soccer’, *Soccer & Society*, 14/4 (2013), pp.525–547.

For an introduction to football and sub-state nationalism elsewhere, see: A. Geeraert, ‘A draw for Flemish nationalism: Institutional change and stability in the Belgian sport system’, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2023, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/nana.12931>; G. Jarvie and G. Walker (eds.), *Scottish sport in the making of the nation: Ninety minute patriots?* (Leicester, 1994); M. Cronin, *Sport and nationalism in Ireland: Gaelic Games, soccer and Irish identity since 1884* (Dublin, 1999).

of Francoism. In the case of Deportivo and Celta, participation in European competitions brought the teams closer to the Galician diaspora, something that had not happened in a meaningful way since tours of South America in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>26</sup> Beyond the matchday, football embeds local, civic, and national identities into everyday rhythms and habits. For these reasons, football is a uniquely worthy lens through which to analyse sporting and civic rivalries and wider allegiances to nation.

Oral history, the main methodology for this research, gives participants a platform to share their own narrative of football and nation, and to engage in detail with multiple, shifting identities. Crucially, oral history differs from traditional historical scholarship in that it creates a bottom-up perspective of the lived experience of national identity. It prioritises the voices of those who do not often have the opportunity to tell their story. Therefore, this research makes a methodological contribution to the field by providing a rich perspective of Galicianness – and football and nation – that embraces the subjectivity, nuance, and contradiction inherent in the recollection of lived experience.<sup>27</sup>

## Research questions

My research addresses the following questions:

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<sup>26</sup> Celta Vigo toured South America in the summer of 1952, see E. Fernández Montero, *Mi diario, viaje del Real Club Celta por América* (Vigo, 1952). Deportivo toured the Americas in 1954, and, in the 2023-24 season, will wear a commemorative shirt to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

<sup>27</sup> This research complements the most comprehensive oral history investigation conducted in Galicia, '*Terra e memoria*', which comprises 2,000 interviews focused around three main themes: the social history of everyday life in rural areas, migration to Europe and the Americas, and victims of Francoist repression. For more information, see: <https://www.terraememoria.usc.gal/o-proxecto>. It also builds on Marcos Gendre's oral history of the 'golden era' of Deportivo, M. Gendre, *Branquiazul: Historia oral de los años dorados del Dépor* (Barcelona, 2019).

- 1. Did rivalry between Celta Vigo and Deportivo La Coruña impede a sense of united Galician identity, and how far did such rivalry transcend sport to reflect older civic tensions?** As I stated in the previous section, existing research holds that rivalry between the two clubs – and cities – was detrimental to Galicia. In this research I explore the lived experience of this conviction, with particular attention to its interaction with the concept of ‘localism’. The second part of the question enables an analysis of the ways in which football both reflects and shapes civic rivalries in Galicia. While the dynamic between Vigo and A Coruña is of primary interest, I also consider the role of Santiago de Compostela.
- 2. How do footballing allegiances interact with Galician-Spanish dual identities, and how far do they also exaggerate resentment and unease with other communities?** The nuanced and shifting nature of multiple identities is at the core of this research. I am concerned with how Galicians use football to negotiate and (re)articulate multiple identities that often overlap or compete. This includes the interaction between Galicia and Spain as a political and cultural entity, but also between Galicia and other communities on the Iberian peninsula and beyond. Given the importance of migration to the history and self-perception of Galicia, diaspora and internal migration form part of this conversation.
- 3. To what extent is oral history a useful method in researching the above?** I include this final question to make a methodological contribution to the field. As I explained in the previous section, oral history is valuable to the study of national identity because it provides a bottom-up perspective of nation. Yet oral history has been used seldom to explore the relationship between national identity and football. I shall reflect on its

suitability for this purpose, and the opportunities and challenges it presents, throughout this thesis.

## Chapter overview

The structure of this thesis in the forthcoming chapters is as follows. Chapter One establishes oral history as the appropriate methodology for my research. Oral history reveals the personal, subjective memories that often slip through the cracks of traditional historical scholarship. It is thus valuable to our understanding of how and why civic, regional, and national mythologies capture the imagination of citizens (or fail to do so). The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, to engage with the practice of oral history and the peculiarities and opportunities it offers. Second, to establish a rigorous yet reflective methodology for all stages of this research: participant recruitment, the interview encounter, transcription, data analysis, and translation.

In Chapter Two I develop a theoretically informed approach to the analysis of nation and sport in Galicia. I consider how Galicianist intellectuals have presented – and theorised – Galicia as a nation, and explore how this interacts with broader conversations around sub-state identity. The bulk of the chapter comprises a discussion of how prominent theorists of the nation (Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, and Anthony Smith) contribute to – or obfuscate – the study of sub-state nationalism and sport. While I critically engage with football throughout the chapter, there follows a specific analysis of the interaction between sport and nation. I conclude that it is necessary to draw different elements from different theories to build a functional framework to engage with sub-state nationalism and sport in Galicia.



Chapter Three situates these theories of nation and sport in the Galician context. It has two objectives. First, to examine – in roughly chronological order – how Galician society has constructed its own identity in relation to Spain, initially as a province, then as a region, and latterly as a nation. Second, to consider the ways in which football has contributed to these constructions of Galicia. I am not primarily concerned with the rationality or veracity of these imaginations of the collective self. Rather, I am interested in how and why Galicianist intellectuals imagined a shared identity in certain ways at certain moments.

In Chapter Four, the first empirical chapter of the thesis, I introduce the ‘radical’ fan groups – or ultras – that emerged in Galicia in the late 1980s (the most prominent of which were Celtarras from Vigo, Riazor Blues from A Coruña, and Fende Testas from Santiago). I argue that these groups competed to perform the purest version of *galeguismo*, underpinned by a belief in the importance of symbols, both Galician and Spanish. In doing so, they sought to undermine the Galicianness of rival groups and cities, while emphasising their own ideological coherence. In this chapter I introduce vital context and concepts around Galician fandom that are prominent throughout the thesis.

Chapters Five and Six reflect the participants’ belief that football was a symbolic vehicle for the articulation of Galician identities, and acquired political value as a means to express Galician unity in the face of perceived external threats. In Chapter Five I examine the two salient ways that participants viewed football in these terms *within* Galicia. First, participants perceived that politicians at both ends of the spectrum frustrated a collective desire to perform Galicianness through football. Second, participants presented football as a repository for ‘local’ pride. They used the language of resistance to frame the supporting of a Galician club as an act of rebellion; a defence of the autochthonous, under threat from the

spread of 'modern' football. In Chapter Six I shift the focus to the role of football in the shaping of Galician attitudes to external territories and communities. I develop the idea that footballing allegiances exaggerated resentment between 'centre' (Madrid) and 'periphery' (Galicia). Participants used football to express ideological grievances toward Francoism and internal colonialism. On the other hand, participants expressed a strong sense of kinship with their perceived 'Celtic cousins' in Scotland and Ireland, as well as the Basque Country, their sub-state neighbour within Spain.

In Chapter Seven I argue that deep-rooted civic rivalries between Galician cities became 'hot' on matchdays when their representative teams competed. Yet a sense of shared Galicianness coexisted with these rivalries, and the majority of supporters experienced them in a respectful manner. Throughout this chapter I reflect on the interaction between Michael Billig's theory of 'banal' nationalism and Michael Skey's associated concept of 'ecstatic' nationalism. These related ideas provide a framework to engage with how matchday and non-matchday behaviour interact and inform one another, despite the stark difference in tone and emotional intensity.

In Chapter Eight I argue that participants invested the Galician language with symbolic value as the most powerful, quotidian marker of Galician identity. They did not, however, associate football – or football clubs – with the use or promotion of the language. Members of radical groups were passionate about the use of *galego* in the stadium, but for most participants language was peripheral to their sense of belonging and shared identity as a football supporter.

Chapter Nine, the final empirical chapter, takes as its starting point the contention that football allowed Galician migrants to negotiate the fluid connections between 'home', 'here',

and 'there'. I engage with two groups of migrants: diasporans who left Galicia – or whose forebears left Galicia – for the United Kingdom, and those who migrated within Galicia from rural to urban areas. In respect of the first group, I argue that support of a Galician football club allowed diasporan participants to imagine themselves as members of imagined communities rooted in the homeland. This alleviated a sense that they were outsiders everywhere, neither Galician nor British. As for the second group, football clubs in large Galician cities – but particularly Deportivo in A Coruña – had an adhesive effect for 'internal' migrants, who may only have moved 20 miles from the *aldea*, the village, to the city, but still felt a powerful sense of dislocation.

# Chapter One: Methodology

## Introduction

Sports are two separate experiences. One is the live drama of the contest as it happens; the other is all the talk that goes on forever after. We live in the moment, but we do more of our living in recollection of the moment.<sup>28</sup>

This is a passage from an article by Malcolm Knox, the Australian journalist, published in May 2020 in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. As the coronavirus pandemic put an abrupt end to live sport, Knox reflected on how we remember sport, how we tell new stories and find new meaning long after the event. Oral history is the most suitable methodology for this research because, to borrow a phrase from Knox, it allows us to examine how we ‘live in recollection’. Oral history is a qualitative method of research in which the interviewer records the speech of a person and analyses their memories of the past. It is a curious practice because, as Lynn Abrams explains, oral history is a catch-all term that applies to both the process of conducting an interview and the product of that interview (or, in reality, the two distinct products of the interview: the oral testimony and the transcript that emerges from it). It is both ‘the act of recording and the record that is produced’.<sup>29</sup> The task of the researcher is to analyse the interview as a communicative event to understand what was said, why and how it was said, and what the answers to these questions mean.

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<sup>28</sup> M. Knox, ‘May we have the next dance? Open wide for a taste of sport’s future’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 May 2020, <https://www.smh.com.au/sport/may-we-have-the-next-dance-open-wide-for-a-taste-of-sport-s-future-20200522-p54vh1.html>, accessed 8 August 2023.

<sup>29</sup> L. Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Abingdon, 2010), p.2.

Oral history reveals the personal, subjective memories that often slip between the cracks of conventional historical scholarship. It is thus valuable to our understanding of how and why civic, regional, and national mythologies capture the imagination (or fail to do so) and how individual and shared memory interact within this. By extension, oral history can contribute to our understanding of national identity, which Eric Hobsbawm acknowledged ‘cannot be understood [...] unless analysed from below [...] in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of normal people.’<sup>30</sup> The lived experience of the participants is at the heart of this thesis. How did they experience civic rivalry within Galicia? What does this reveal about their sense of a united Galician identity? How did their footballing allegiances interact with Galician-Spanish dual identities? Oral history gives participants a platform to reflect on these questions.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, to engage with the practice of oral history and the peculiarities and opportunities that it offers. While this chapter does not attempt an exhaustive review of the literature on oral history and memory, it establishes the principles and reflections that inform my approach. Second, to establish a rigorous yet reflective methodology for this research.

Across three sub-sections, I engage with the concepts that underpin oral history. First, intersubjectivity and the need to reflect, to have an objective relationship with one’s own subjectivities. Second, I introduce the key theories around memory (and forgetting). Third, I discuss subjectivity and argue that discrepancies between fact and memory present the oral

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<sup>30</sup> E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1992), p.10; In the mid-1960s Eric Hobsbawm approached Paul Thompson, then a young pioneer of oral history, to contribute a volume to a series of books called *Epochs of England* covering the social history of the English people. For more information see R.J. Evans, *Eric Hobsbawm, A Life in History* (London, 2019), p.467.

historian with an opportunity rather than a problem. With the conceptual background established, I proceed to a practical overview of the research process; from participant recruitment, to the interview itself, to data analysis, and translation. Finally, I briefly introduce additional methodologies (that is, other than oral history) that I drew upon in my research.

## Intersubjectivity and reflexivity

The researcher is not a passive observer of the interview, but an active co-author of the oral record. As such, it is appropriate to begin with a reflection on my own subjectivities and the influence I exert on the participant. Intersubjectivity refers to the ‘interpersonal dynamics of the interview process’ by which the interviewer and interviewee ‘cooperate to create a shared narrative.’ It is the interaction between the subjectivities of both individuals, and the ways in which the ‘subjectivity of each is shaped by the encounter with the other.’

Subjectivity – which I introduce later in this chapter – and intersubjectivity are present in every interview. We cannot mask our own subjectivities. But we can be as objective as possible when considering our subjectivities. The relationship I established with each participant before and during the interview affected their remembering. The perception each of us had of the other shaped the unique dynamic of the interview.

At this stage, in the interests of reflexivity, it is useful to revisit my own background and how I came to write this thesis. I moved to Madrid after I graduated from university in 2016. In order to meet people and establish a Spanish-speaking social circle, I decided to join a Madrid-based Deportivo de la Coruña *peña*. This was a somewhat arbitrary decision. The Deportivo *peña* – Chamberí Branquiazul – congregated to watch matches at a bar five

minutes from my apartment, and I had fond memories of a brief visit to A Coruña several years earlier. I spent two years in Madrid, during which it became a personal ritual to watch Deportivo matches at the *peña's* bar, which, naturally, stocked the *coruñés* lager, Estrella Galicia. To this day I regularly attend home and away matches with the same people. Indeed, it was through the spending of time with the *peña* that I came to appreciate the nuances of Galician-Spanish dual identity. For instance, on the trip to Sevilla that I describe in the Introduction.

I returned to the United Kingdom to begin post-graduate study. Then, between 2020 and 2022 I lived in Vigo, Galicia. I became deeply fond of the city, its incongruous architecture, and state of constant industrial bustle. Despite my aforementioned allegiances, I developed a soft spot for its football club. This extended period in Vigo was crucial to my developing a deeper understanding of Galician identity. Not just in broad linguistic, cultural and political terms, but also the banal ways in which Galicia is reproduced in the everyday patterns and rhythms of life; from the flags on supermarket shelves to denote a Galician product, to the small screen mounted in the corner of a bar set constantly to Televisión de Galicia, the Galician-language television channel.

I do not include this autobiographical section out of self-indulgence, but to contextualise my insider-outside status as a researcher. These categorisations are malleable and dependent on context. I exert a different social presence on different people, at different times. It is not inherently favourable to be an insider or an outsider. As Paul Thompson explains, the insider 'knows the way round, can be less easily fooled, understands the nuances, and starts with far more useful contacts and, hopefully, as an established person of good faith.' And yet, the outsider 'can ask for the obvious to be explained' and benefits from being 'outside the social

network, more easily maintaining a position of neutrality, and so may be spoken to in true confidentiality, with less subsequent anxiety.<sup>31</sup> Oral historians who have consciously negotiated research as ‘insiders’ or ‘outsiders’ affirm Thompson’s observations. Their experiences chime with my own. I positioned myself as one or the other – often within the same interview – depending on the relationship I had established with the participant and how I felt I could allow them to open up.

That said, it is reductive to present someone as either an insider or an outsider. The dynamic is like a Venn diagram with multiple circles and intersections, which shift before, during and after the interview. While a participant may consider me an outsider in one sense (for example, nationality), they may see me as an insider in another (as a fellow resident of Vigo or supporter of Deportivo). In one interview, conducted in the participant’s office in Pontevedra, I struggled to hold his attention as he glanced at his computer screen. I felt that he was not fully engaged. Yet when he realised that I spoke Galician despite having no familial link to Galicia, his demeanour changed. Later in the interview we realised that we had both been at the same Deportivo match, away in Salamanca, a few weeks prior. Again, he became warmer and more forthcoming as he perceived me, increasingly, as an insider.

My ability to speak Galician had a clear and consistent effect. Participants expressed joy and surprise that a foreigner had made the effort to learn their language. On a few occasions, participants told me that I spoke better Galician than most Galicians. While this was a generous compliment rather than a sound linguistic judgement, it revealed their sense of exasperation that fellow Galicians do not value the language as much as they do (discussed in detail in Chapter Eight). I would not have gleaned these insights if I had conducted the

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<sup>31</sup> P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History, Third Edition* (Oxford, 2000), pp.140–141.



interview in Spanish, because the participant would not have viewed me as an insider in that specific, limited way. As I conducted the fieldwork and analysed the data, I made a conscious effort to reflect on the intersubjectivities at play in each interview, and the broader fluidity of insider-outsider status.

## Memory: remembering and forgetting

Memory and the process of remembering – which Malcolm Knox articulated so eloquently in relation to sport – are fundamental to oral history. *Hard Times* by Studs Terkel, published in 1970, is an oral history of the Great Depression comprising over 150 self-portraits of American life. In the first sentence, Terkel states: ‘This is a memory book, rather than one of hard fact and precise statistic.’<sup>32</sup> As Michael Frisch notes in his review essay of *Hard Times*, ‘the question of memory [...] moves to center stage as the object, not merely the method of oral history.’<sup>33</sup> In this section I introduce key concepts in the field of memory studies and consider their application to oral history.

Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs moved memory away from the realm of psychology and towards the study of social relationships. He argued that individual memory is always situated within a collective, because individual memory creation takes place through a process of dialogue with others in a social group. Halbwachs did not deny the existence of individual memory – or the potential for members of the same social group to remember

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<sup>32</sup> S. Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (New York, 1970), p.1.

<sup>33</sup> M. Frisch, ‘Oral History and *Hard Times*: A Review Essay’ in R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London, 1998), p.33.

different things – but he held that individuals tend to create memories that harmonise with the memories of others.<sup>34</sup>

Halbwachs's influence is such that the cultural theorisation of memory increasingly rejects the value of individual memory. This manifests itself in two approaches to the study of memory. First, that memory is shaped by social and cultural context to the extent that its individual aspect is deemed insignificant. Second, that individual memory operates within the subconscious and is thus relevant to psychologists rather than historians.<sup>35</sup> These approaches overlook the capacity of the individual to remember beyond the collective and to question dominant social discourses. According to Anna Green, oral historians are uniquely placed to 'reassert the value of individual remembering'.<sup>36</sup> Rather than accept the truism that memory is shaped by social and cultural context, oral historians can reveal which social and cultural discourses individuals select to make sense of their lives, and why.

Alessandro Portelli argues, in parallel, that while memories are social and may resemble one another or overlap, the oral historian must not lose sight of the fact that no two persons' memories are identical.<sup>37</sup> For this reason, he no longer refers to collective memory and instead uses the term 'shared memory', which gives the individual agency over their memories but accepts that people share recollections in a social environment.<sup>38</sup> Throughout this thesis I acknowledge the influence of social context on memory but remain careful not

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<sup>34</sup> M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (London, 1992).

<sup>35</sup> A. Green, 'Individual Remembering and "Collective Memory": Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates', *Oral History*, 32/2 (2004), p.37.

<sup>36</sup> Green, 'Individual Remembering and "Collective Memory"', p.42.

<sup>37</sup> A. Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (London, 1997), p.57.

<sup>38</sup> Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia*, p.57.

to locate memory outside the individual. To do so would carry the ethically problematic implication that the participants are homogenous or interchangeable.

The work of Alistair Thomson provides a template for how the oral historian can engage with the relationship between individual and shared memory without losing sight of the former.

Guided by the ideas of the Popular Memory Group, Thomson used the concept of 'composure' to explore how the individual memories of working-class Australian soldiers interacted – and clashed – with the lionised public memory of the Anzac legend.<sup>39</sup>

Composure describes the two-pronged process of memory making. On the one hand, we compose or construct memories using the languages and meanings of our culture. On the other hand, we compose memories that allow us to feel comfortable with ourselves.

Thomson argues that these two processes are inseparable, insofar as:

the apparently private process of composing safe memories is in fact very public; our memories are risky and painful if they do not conform with the public norms or versions of the past, so we compose our memories so that they will fit with what is publicly acceptable.<sup>40</sup>

Composure has a temporal dimension. Memories refract through social, economic, or cultural changes that took place between the interview and the events described in the interview. I was mindful that a narrator may not distinguish between their current views and those they held in the past. 'Our identities shape remembering,' Thomson says. 'Who we

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<sup>39</sup> A. Thomson, 'Anzac memories: Putting popular memory theory into practice in Australia', in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, pp.300–310.

<sup>40</sup> A. Thomson, 'The Great War and Australian memory: a study of myth, remembering and oral history', PhD thesis submitted to the University of Sussex, 1990, p.34.

think we are now and what we want to become affects what we think we have been.<sup>41</sup>

These discrepancies present an opportunity to explore how the narrator orders and makes sense of their life. Galen Strawson's reflections on episodic and narrative memory are useful here. Someone who lives their life in a narrative (or diachronic) fashion feels that they are the same self across long periods of time. Others live in an 'episodic' way, with no strong sense that they are the same self across long periods of time. Strawson argues that an 'episodic' person can live a morally and ethically positive life and is capable of qualities such as remorse, friendship, or loyalty.<sup>42</sup> Some participants may consider themselves, in this sense, to be a different self to the one whose past actions and feelings they recall.

Ernest Renan, in his 1882 essay '*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*' ['What is a nation?'], identified collective forgetting as a necessary element of nationhood. 'Forgetting, I would even say historical error, is an essential element in the creation of a nation,' he said. '[...] The essence of a nation is that all of its individual members have a great deal in common and also that they have forgotten many things.'<sup>43</sup> It is important to pay attention to what goes unsaid. As Paul Ricoeur states, the relationship between remembering and forgetting is reciprocal. Indeed, he presents forgetting as a necessary condition for the possibility of remembering.<sup>44</sup> Luisa Passerini applies a similar perspective to oral history, noting that there is no 'work of memory' without a corresponding 'work of forgetting'.<sup>45</sup> The things the narrator does not remember, the gaps in the narrative, the scraps they deem unworthy of committing to

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<sup>41</sup> Thomson, 'The Great War and Australian Memory', p.38.

<sup>42</sup> See G. Strawson, *Real Materialism and Other Essays* (Oxford, 2008), particularly Chapter 7: 'Against Narrativity' and Chapter 8: 'Episodic Ethics'.

<sup>43</sup> E. Renan, '*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*', text of a conference delivered at the Sorbonne on 11 March 1882, translated by Ethan Rundell, [http://ucparis.fr/files/9313/6549/9943/What\\_is\\_a\\_Nation.pdf](http://ucparis.fr/files/9313/6549/9943/What_is_a_Nation.pdf), accessed 3 April 2022.

<sup>44</sup> P. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago, 2004).

<sup>45</sup> L. Passerini, 'Memory', *History Workshop*, 15 (1983), p.196.

memory, all reveal as much about their identity as what they do remember. And, as with the interplay between individual and shared memory, amnesia has a social dimension. Dominant discourses often determine what should and should not be remembered.<sup>46</sup>

In a study of memory that has football – and thus football stadiums – at its core, it is important to consider Pierre Nora's notion of the *lieux de mémoire* ['site of memory']. It refers to any place, object or concept that has symbolic significance as a repository for shared memories.<sup>47</sup> The football stadium clearly represents a site of memory, as a symbolic space in which regular ritualistic events, some ecstatic, some miserable, create layers of shared memories within a community over the course of decades. The salient question throughout this thesis concerns *how* Galician football supporters invested these sites with shared memories, and which memories did they select? This permits a broader examination of the ownership of discourses of memory. For instance, is Riazor, the Deportivo stadium, a site of *coruñés*, Galician, or Spanish memory? The contours and subtleties of memory – and forgetting – discussed in this section underpin my analysis of participant narratives. The sole focus of the oral historian is not just *what* the participant recalls, but *why* they select that memory, *how* they compose and perform it, and the interaction between the shared and the individual.

## Subjectivity: between fact and memory

It is not possible to engage with memory without a discussion of its twin concept, subjectivity, which Abrams defines as 'the constituents of an individual's sense of self, his or

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<sup>46</sup> N. Norquay, 'Identity and Forgetting', *The Oral History Review*, 26/1 (1999), pp.1–4.

<sup>47</sup> P. Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, 26 (1989), pp.7–24.

her identity informed and shaped by experience, perception, language and culture.<sup>48</sup> The 1970s was a transformative decade for oral history, critics of which protested that memory was distorted by physiological deterioration, interviewer and interviewee bias, and the weight of collective memory. Pioneering oral historians appropriated these criticisms and argued that the subjectivity of memory is, in fact, a strength.<sup>49</sup> This shift to a post-positivist position is visible in the different editions of *The Voice of the Past* by Paul Thompson. What began in 1978 as a positivist work of scholarship acknowledged, by the third edition published in 2000, the special value of subjective testimony.<sup>50</sup> A consensus has emerged that the objective or neutral 'facts' of a narrative are not of primary importance to the oral historian. Rather, the oral historian searches for the personal, subjective experience as defined or interpreted through the mind of the narrator.

Alessandro Portelli discussed the subjectivity of memory with particular elegance in respect of a tragic event in 1940s Italy. On 17 March 1949 workers walked out of their factory in Terni, an industrial town in central Italy. They were attending a rally to protest against the Italian government's signing of the North Atlantic Treaty. Tensions rose and the police clashed with workers. Luigi Trastulli, a 21 year old from the factory, was killed. Years later, when Portelli conducted an oral history of Trastulli's death, he found discrepancies between fact and memory. Some narrators evoked the crucifixion by saying that the police killed Trastulli up against a wall, when it actually occurred in the middle of the street. Others placed his death not in 1949, but in October 1952, following the dismissal of 2,000 steel

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<sup>48</sup> Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p.54.

<sup>49</sup> A. Thomson, 'Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History', *The Oral History Review*, 34/1 (2007), pp.53–54.

<sup>50</sup> P. Thompson, 'Pioneering the Life Story Method', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 7/1 (2004), p.81.

workers from the factory.<sup>51</sup> Portelli embraced these discrepancies as strengths rather than weaknesses of the accounts. They were ‘not caused by faulty recollections’, he argued, ‘[...] but actively and creatively generated by memory’.<sup>52</sup> Portelli ventured that we would know less about the death of Trastulli if the narrators had given factually accurate accounts, because the discrepancies reveal much about the process of symbolisation, myth-making and desire. In short, imperfections permit a richer, more textured analysis than an official version of events regurgitated with precision.

Though Thompson shares Portelli’s appreciation of the value of subjective testimony, he reminds that memories should retain ‘a great deal of reality’. Without an idea of the historical ‘truth’, the historian cannot analyse how the testimony diverges from it, and why.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, Portelli also acknowledged the need for ‘verification’.<sup>54</sup> With this in mind, and to avoid the conducting of research from behind a blindfold, I verified where possible the participants’ versions of events when they appeared erroneous. Clearly, this was not possible for private anecdotes. But for memories of public, documented events such as football matches, I consulted contemporary newspaper reports and accounts in fanzines produced by the supporters themselves.

As memory and subjectivity move to the foreground, questions arise with which I engaged throughout the research process: If memory is more than a passive repository of facts, what influences the active process of memory creation among Galician football supporters? Are oral records products of the time of their creation or of the period under discussion? How

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<sup>51</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, pp.1–15.

<sup>52</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, p.26.

<sup>53</sup> Thompson, ‘Pioneering the Life Story Method’, p.82.

<sup>54</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, p.50.

do individual and shared memories interact, and what does this reveal about public memorialisation at civic, sub-state nation, and state level?

## Research process

### Recruitment of participants

I conducted 46 interviews with 51 participants between February 2021 and January 2022. The interviews typically lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. I settled on this number of interviews for practical reasons; it was the maximum I could do within the time constraints of this doctorate. If I had done more, I would not have had time to transcribe and analyse the data. I rejected 'saturation' – the gathering of data up to the point at which the researcher no longer observes new insights – as a criterion for the collection of sufficient data. This concept contradicts the primacy of individual memory to oral history. It implies a homogeneity of experience that I did not encounter in my research. Each interview had its own distinctive content, tone, and researcher-participant relationship. I could interview for decades and glean countless new insights.

I used purposeful sampling to recruit participants. This refers to a non-probability sampling method by which the researcher sets subjective criteria to determine suitable participants. Given the practical difficulties of recruiting participants in a different country, in which I had limited existing contacts, I opted for a broad criterion: will this person provide information that will help to answer my research questions? I did not seek an empirically representative sample. To do so would be inappropriate for a qualitative and inherently subjective study. That said, I recruited participants from different areas of Galicia (both urban and rural) who ranged in age from 26 to 70, as well as members of the Galician diaspora in the United



Kingdom. I also made a concerted effort to recruit women, though, for reasons I shall go on to explain, this proved challenging.

I recruited participants in various ways:

- Direct contact via social media, email, or an existing relationship (22 participants);
- Contact through a *peña*, which forwarded my details to its members so interested parties could participate (nine participants);
- Contact through a football club, which directed me to a supporter or employee (three participants);
- A recommendation from a previous participant (13 participants); and
- A participant's friend who came along to the interview (four participants).

It was difficult to convince certain demographic groups to participate. I approached several people older than 70 who were reluctant to participate because they thought they would have little to contribute. In one case, the grandmother of a friend thought she would have little to say, even though her husband had played for both Deportivo and Celta.

It also proved difficult to recruit women. In essence this seems to be because football is still a male preserve. According to Ramón Llopis Goig, Spanish football stadiums remain spaces in which 'the demands of hegemonic masculinity are formulated'.<sup>55</sup> This is particularly true for radical *peñas*, within which women occupy an ancillary position, 'hindered by a series of prejudices that portray their support as "less authentic" than that of men'.<sup>56</sup> Of the 51

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<sup>55</sup> R. Llopis Goig, 'Learning and representation: the construction of masculinity in football. An analysis of the situation in Spain', *Sport in Society*, 11/6 (2008), p.692.

<sup>56</sup> I. Pitti, 'Being women in a male preserve: an ethnography of female football *ultras*', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 28/3 (2019), p.326.

participants in this study, 12 are women. This represents 24 per cent, which is slightly higher than the number of women as a percentage of *socios* at Deportivo, 19 per cent as of 2021.<sup>57</sup>

As a combination of the two aforementioned groups, older women were particularly difficult to recruit. I asked one female participant, who is well connected within the Deportivo fanbase, if she could put me in touch with anyone of this profile. She said that while she knew of older women who were members of *peñas*, most went to accompany their husbands and would be unlikely to offer much insight. This exchange reflects another aspect of the recruitment process. To complete enough interviews, I relied on participants to put me in touch with their friends or acquaintances. They tended to suggest people whom they perceived to be notably passionate about football and/or Galician identity. It was difficult to access the quiet majority of supporters; the Galician with a passing interest in football, who peruses the sporting dailies over a morning coffee and pops down to the bar to watch Real Madrid in the Champions League.

Once I had identified a participant, I got in touch through an introductory email or WhatsApp message. I explained that I was a PhD researcher from the University of Nottingham and that my thesis concerned the relationship between football and Galician identity. I attached a Participant Information Sheet and welcomed any questions. If the individual was willing to participate, we proceeded to arrange a time and place for the interview.

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<sup>57</sup> <https://www.rcdeportivo.es/noticia/datos-sociales-del-real-club-deportivo-al-cierre-de-la-temporada-2020-2021#:~:text=En%20la%20distribuci%C3%B3n%20por%20g%C3%A9nero,786%20empresas%20y%20226%20pe%C3%B1as>, accessed 9/8/2022.

## The interview

I allowed the participant to decide a convenient venue and time for the interview. I conducted 40 of the 46 interviews in person. I conducted five one-on-two interviews. One of these was planned, while on the other occasions I arrived at the interview to find that the original participant had brought a friend whom they thought could contribute. While this demanded improvisation on my part, I found the rapport between participants to enrich the interview as they reminisced and elicited dormant memories from each other. All interviews took place in 'neutral' venues such as bars, cafes, football grounds or places of work, apart from one interview in the participant's house.

The orthodox view in oral history is that the participant prefers to do the interview in their own house. That only one participant indicated this preference suggests that people consider it uncomfortable – threatening, even – to welcome a stranger into their house for a long, reflective conversation. As I started fieldwork in early 2021 during the depths of the coronavirus pandemic, six interviews took place online via videoconferencing software such as Skype, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams. I was pleasantly surprised by the rapport I managed to establish with participants through a screen. I did not feel that it negatively affected the richness of the data. Perhaps, at that stage of the pandemic, countless Zoom quizzes and online meetings had numbed me and the participants to the strangeness of the medium.

The choice of venue affected – albeit subtly – the relationship I formed with the participant, and their remembering. To document this, I recorded detailed notes within 24 hours of each interview. I wrote down the surroundings, how I felt throughout the interview, and my perception of the participant's emotions and our interactions. I returned to these notes throughout the data analysis process.

I encouraged the participant to choose the language of the interview (Galician, Spanish, or English, in the case of those members of the Galician diaspora in the United Kingdom for whom it is their native language). Participants often assumed that I would be more comfortable in Spanish and I had to reassure them that it was entirely their choice. For practical and ethical reasons, it was important to give the participant the choice of Spanish or Galician. On a practical level, even those who are proficient in both languages tend to feel more comfortable expressing themselves in one or the other. On an ethical level, it would be inappropriate to enforce Spanish on a participant who considers the Galician language to be a fundamental part of their individual and collective identity. Counterintuitively, I found it beneficial to conduct interviews in a non-native language. While I have an advanced level of Spanish and Galician, there were still split-second moments in which I stretched for specific vocabulary or pondered whether to use the subjunctive. These brief moments allowed me to consider if I needed to interject, or if I should allow the participant to continue. It was almost always the latter option. This self-censorship is more difficult in a native language, which is fractionally more instinctive.

Though I prepared bespoke questions before each interview, in the structure of a life story interview, I used them to prompt the narrator into a conversation that I would then follow. I am concerned by the way in which the narrator constructs their narrative and tells the story of their life. The creative element within this reveals much about how the narrator views themselves and how they wish to be viewed by other people. A highly structured interview would stifle these insights. Though it is less rigid than other forms, the life story interview generally adhered to a loose structure of temporal continuity as the narrator sought to achieve coherence. I was drawn to the life story approach because it allows the narrator to

compose a more complete sense of self which connects the different spheres of their life.

Yet, as I use football as a lens through which to consider identity, it is logical that football emerged as a prominent theme in individual life stories. Narrators expected that I wanted to hear about football and ordered their narrative accordingly. While I encouraged participants to construct a narrative that spanned their entire life, they weighted the narrative heavily toward a certain phenomenon: their support of a Galician football team between 1987 and 2005.

I loosely adhered to four principles in each interview. First, I asked concise, open-ended questions. Second, I avoided leading questions that could encourage narrators to affirm my beliefs rather than express their own. Third, I elicited further details when a narrator made an intimation but did not elaborate. Fourth, and most importantly, I listened. I let the narrator talk and avoided interjection. Yet I deviated from these principles sooner than make the interview an uncomfortable experience for the participant. I was acutely aware that, for most participants, the interview was profoundly strange. In what other context does a foreign stranger ask you to retrieve dormant memories and reflect on opinions you always took for granted? I found that the more conversational and informal the interview, the more relaxed and engaged the participant became. So, if they appeared apprehensive, I tried to coax them out of their shell by treating the encounter more like a chat than an interview. While this may have increased the influence I exerted on the participant's remembering, it was justified on ethical grounds in cases where they were nervous or uncomfortable with a formal interview.

## Transcription

Transcription has stirred debate among oral historians. Transcripts are easy to access, analyse and disseminate. They are convenient.<sup>58</sup> Yet transcription is a process of using an aural record to create a written, visual record. This implies a distortion of the spoken word in the pursuit of readability.

Oral historians now view the recording and the transcript as distinct sources with a shared origin. 'Even the most slavishly verbatim transcript,' Donald Ritchie argues, 'is just an interpretation of the tape.'<sup>59</sup> Though I agree with Ritchie's assessment, I have followed the principles established by Raphael Samuel to ensure the transcripts are as loyal to the tape as possible. I wanted to capture not only what was said but how it was delivered; the character as well as the content. Samuel says the historian should 'preserve the texture of the speech' and ought not 'to impose his own order on the speech of his informants.'<sup>60</sup>

With this in mind, I tried to include every element of vocal speech and non-verbal communication in the transcript. False starts, hesitations, pauses, repetitions and verbal tics like 'um' – or 'ehh' in Spanish – are some of the elements that convey the texture of the speech. I avoided the needless imposition of grammatical forms that apply to written prose. As Samuel adds, people do not speak in neat paragraphs or punctuate their speech with commas, semi-colons or full stops.<sup>61</sup> I did, however, include punctuation where it aided the understanding and correct reading of the narrative. For instance, it is common in Spanish

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<sup>58</sup> A. Freund, 'From .wav to .txt: why we still need transcripts in the digital age', *Oral History* 45/1 (2017), pp.33–42.

<sup>59</sup> D.A. Ritchie (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History* (Oxford, 2011), p.66.

<sup>60</sup> R. Samuel, 'Perils of the Transcript', in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, p.391.

<sup>61</sup> Samuel, 'Perils of the Transcript', p.389.

and Galician to add the negative 'no?' to the end of a statement to create a rhetorical question. To keep the narrator's intended meaning, I punctuated this with a comma before the 'no' and a question mark after. To leave it unpunctuated would obfuscate rather than clarify. This approach allows the transcript to reflect the intended meaning and tone of the speaker as closely as possible.

## Data Analysis

While qualitative research cannot be held up to the same criteria as quantitative methods, it is still important to establish a critical method of analysis and rigorously apply it to the data.

To analyse the interview data I used Thematic Analysis [TA], which Braun and Clarke define as 'a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data.'<sup>62</sup>

Though associated with psychology, TA is a flexible methodology which is suited to the analysis of oral history; with its subjectivities, memories, nuances and silences.

I use a 'contextualist' method of TA, which sits between the two poles of constructionism and essentialism. It acknowledges the ways in which an individual creates meaning from their own experiences and the social context that affects those meanings. This an appropriate balance for oral history. Crucially, it retains the primacy of the individual experience. Yet, drawing from constructionism, it allows me to unpick the social production and reproduction of memory, as well as to engage with the relationship between the individual and the collective.

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<sup>62</sup> V. Braun and V. Clarke, 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3/2 (2006), p.79.

I followed a five-stage process of TA, loosely based on that established by Braun and Clarke.<sup>63</sup> I used Delve, a qualitative analysis software, to assist.

1. I immersed myself in the data. The process of transcription was a fundamental part of this immersion.
2. I coded the data.
3. I re-read each transcript to identify 'uncodable' patterns, such as silences and other intangible elements.
4. I sorted the codes to create a list of potential sub-themes and themes.
5. I reviewed and refined the themes on two levels. First, at the level of the coded data extracts to ensure they cohered meaningfully within the theme. Second, at the level of the themes to consider whether they accurately reflect the patterns of meaning within the data set as a whole.

This was not a linear process. I moved back and forth between the stages. That does not necessarily mean the creation of codes or sub-themes was sloppy. It is a natural part of assimilating the data and finding the meaning within it. The second stage of the process, coding, is the building block of TA and requires further comment. Skjøtt Linneberg and Korsgaard define coding as the process of 'examining a coherent portion of your empirical material – a word, a paragraph, a page – and labelling it with a word or short phrase that summarises its content.'<sup>64</sup> I tried not to interpret the data at this stage, but rather listen to what the data said and get into the mindset of the participant.

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<sup>63</sup> Braun and Clarke, 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', pp.86–95.

<sup>64</sup> M. Skjøtt Linneberg and S. Korsgaard, 'Coding qualitative data: a synthesis guiding the novice', *Qualitative Research Journal*, 19/3 (2019), p.259.



I used inductive coding insofar as I developed codes from the data – in the participant’s own words where possible – rather than from pre-existing theoretical assumptions.<sup>65</sup> That said, there were limitations to this. I recognise that I did not engage with the data in a theoretical vacuum. And, on a practical level, to code the data in a truly inductive way – to code every line of every transcript – was not possible due to time constraints. I had to be selective and only code portions that I judged to be relevant to the research questions.

I was conscious that I risked becoming less inductive as I moved through the coding process. To assign portions of data to existing codes, rather than create a new code based on what the data actually said, would prioritise the voice of those participants whose transcripts I happened to code first. To avoid this scenario, I created hundreds of codes that carried clear meaning. Rather than create one generic code called, for instance, ‘the Galician language’, I created precise codes such as ‘Falar galego no colexio – “unha estigma”’ [‘speaking Galician at school – “a stigma”’] or ‘Galician associated with a lack of education’. Though this made the task of sorting the codes onerous, it ensured that I knew the exact meaning of each code and, by extension, that the themes reflected the data as accurately as possible.

I went through each transcript twice, to analyse the data on a semantic and latent level. On the first reading, I coded sections of the data to order and categorise the content, as discussed above. On the second reading, I analysed the underlying assumptions and influences within the interview, as well as what each participant left unsaid. The notes I took during the second reading formed the basis of a data analysis logbook, which I maintained to document my reflections and subjective decisions throughout the process. For instance, I define a theme as ‘something important about the data in relation to the research question,’

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<sup>65</sup> Skjøtt Linneberg and Korsgaard, ‘Coding qualitative data’, p.263.

which represents 'some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set'.<sup>66</sup> This definition requires value judgements by the researcher. What, for example, constitutes 'something important'? I exercised discretion and used the definition as a guide rather than a rule. To apply a rigid definition would risk losing the nuance of some of the patterns of meaning in the data.

I avoided the passive and problematic language of 'themes emerging' from the data. The paradox of qualitative research is that good data always has something interesting to say. Yet these morsels do not just emerge. The researcher must find them. As the researcher I played an active role in the identification, selection, and presentation of themes. In the process of TA I made a series of decisions at the intersection of my theoretical assumptions, analytic resources and skill, and the data.<sup>67</sup> I do not want to deny my active role in the process, not least because this would represent a denial of the intersubjectivity of oral history.

I did not digitally index the transcripts to create a corpus for analysis. The benefits of recording the frequency of certain words and phrases are minimal; it would do little more than apply a veneer of quantitative objectivity to a fundamentally, and openly, qualitative and subjective project. I am concerned with abstract themes which require nuanced consideration. A participant may discuss concepts such as identity, sociolinguistics, or class without using clean terms that can be identified and counted. Also, an approach based so heavily on identification of what is in the transcript would downplay the significance of what goes unsaid; the silences that reveal so much.

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<sup>66</sup> Braun and Clarke, 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', p.82.

<sup>67</sup> V. Braun and V. Clarke, 'Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis', *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise, and Health*, 11/4 (2019), p.594.

## Translation

I approached the translation of the data from Galician or Spanish into English in a reflexive way – that is, I remained aware of the text’s status as a translation, an interpretation of the original source rather than the original source itself.<sup>68</sup> ‘Since no two languages are identical,’ Nida says, ‘[...] there can be no fully exact translations. The total impact of a translation may be reasonably close to the original, but there can be no identity in detail.’<sup>69</sup>

Of the 46 interviews, 29 were in Galician, 12 were in Spanish and five were in English. I delayed translation into English for as long as possible. I analysed the transcripts in the source language and only translated the excerpts of the narrative that appear in this thesis. This allowed the participants’ words to remain in their dominant language. It also acknowledged the linguistic power relations inherent in translation and ‘the ontological importance for people of their first language.’<sup>70</sup>

I aimed to translate texts that are faithful to the interview tape and convey the intention of the speech of the narrator. To this end, I used an approach based on lexical equivalence – a word-for-word translation where the focus is on obtaining exact word equivalences – unless this did not effectively convey the unique voice of the narrator, at which point I sought conceptual equivalence on a sentence level. This flexible approach reflects the need in oral history to respect and represent the narrator’s voice, while acknowledging that each language has distinct lexical and grammatical forms, which, if translated word-for-word, can

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<sup>68</sup> S. Kadiu, *Reflexive Translation Studies: Translation as Critical Reflection* (London, 2019), p.32.

<sup>69</sup> E. Nida, ‘Principles of Correspondence’, in L. Venuti (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader, Third Edition* (Abingdon, 2012), p.141.

<sup>70</sup> B. Temple and A. Young, ‘Qualitative research and translation dilemmas’, *Qualitative Research*, 4/2 (2004), p.174.

obscure the meaning. Meaning must have priority over form when the two are in contradiction.<sup>71</sup>

Informed by Lawrence Venuti's concept of foreignization, the translated passages are a version of the narrative, not to be confused with the original oral record or the untranslated transcript.<sup>72</sup> Foreignization is an approach that emphasises the foreignness of the source text in order to resist ethnocentrism and cultural narcissism.<sup>73</sup> 'Discontinuities at the level of syntax, diction, or discourse', Venuti says, 'allow the translation to read as a translation [...] showing where it departs from the target language cultural values, by showing where it depends on them.'<sup>74</sup> This stands against domestication, which prioritises fluency to create an illusory translation that reads as if it were the original.<sup>75</sup> This creates an effect that Spivak calls 'translatese' in which, for example, 'literature by a woman in Palestine begins to resemble, in the feel of its prose, something by a man in Taiwan.'<sup>76</sup>

Venuti also advocates a foreignizing approach to preserve the translator's inscription on the text. At the beginning of *The Translator's Invisibility*, Venuti criticises Norman Shapiro's implication that a good translation should not draw attention to itself but be transparent 'like a pane of glass'. This approach is anything but transparent because it conceals the subjectivities of the translator. Venuti argues that an ethical translator should make

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<sup>71</sup> M.L. Larson, *Meaning-Based Translation: A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence, Second Edition* (New York, 1998), p.10.

<sup>72</sup> I use the American spelling of foreignization rather than the British *foreignisation*. In doing so I practice intralinguistic foreignization by making it clear that the text was written by an American author.

<sup>73</sup> L. Venuti, 'Translation as Cultural Politics: Regimes of Domestication in English', in M. Baker (ed.), *Critical Readings in Translation Studies* (London, 2010), p.78.

<sup>74</sup> Venuti, 'Translation as Cultural Politics', p.75.

<sup>75</sup> K. Myskja, 'Foreignization and Resistance: Lawrence Venuti and his critics', *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 12/2 (2013), p.3.

<sup>76</sup> G. Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation', in M. Barrett and A. Phillips (eds.), *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates* (Cambridge, 1992), p.180.

themselves visible within the translation. It is particularly problematic for a translator to be 'invisible' in oral history. To be invisible is to ignore the effect of the translator's socio-cultural background on the translation and the decisions they make as 'cultural decoders'<sup>77</sup>. Moreover, an 'invisible' researcher/translator cannot engage with the intersubjectivity of the interview if they do not acknowledge – at the very least – their presence in the process. I have an ethical and methodological responsibility to render myself visible in the translation and acknowledge that translators provide 'one possible view of what happened in the interview' but cannot provide 'the final word.'<sup>78</sup>

Scholars have criticised Venuti for failing to define the criteria for adequate foreignization. In the absence of strict guidelines on, for instance, how many foreignizing elements are needed to make a foreignizing text, I adopted two measures to follow the spirit of foreignization.

First, I included some words from the source language to disturb the Anglophone reader and preserve the cultural specificity of the narrators' words. I also indicate the source language at the start of each extract. Extracts marked [Gal] are translated from Galician, those marked [Esp] are translated from Spanish, and those marked [Eng] did not require translation.

Second, I did not necessarily use the grammatical structure of English and retained in translated passages the idiosyncrasies of speech – such as hesitations, pauses, and false starts – which appear in the transcripts. Umberto Eco reminds that 'the choice between

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<sup>77</sup> G. Cormier, 'The language variable in educational research: an exploration of researcher positionality, translation, and interpretation', *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 41/3 (2018), p.333.

<sup>78</sup> B. Temple, 'Casting a wider net: Reflecting on translation in oral history', *Oral History*, 41/2 (2013), p.105.

foreignizing and domesticating is ‘a matter of careful negotiation’.<sup>79</sup> I believe my translations are readable yet preserve the idiosyncratic and, crucially, foreign voice of the participant.

## Ethics

I received ethics clearance from the University of Nottingham in December 2020. Though I have referred to ethics sporadically throughout this chapter, it is necessary to outline the specific procedures that I established and followed.

Before, each interview I sent the participant a Participant Information Sheet in Spanish and Galician or English. This included information about the project and me. It informed the participant that they had a right to anonymity and could withdraw at any point without having to give a reason. I reiterated this information before each interview. I also sent the participants a Full Privacy Notice that detailed how the University of Nottingham processes personal data. The participants signed an Informed Consent Form to confirm they understood this information and were willing to participate.

I adhered not only to the procedural ethics, but also situational research ethics throughout the process. Research ethics refers to the primacy of the participant’s wellbeing and the acknowledgement that unforeseen, complicated, and context-specific issues arise during research. While this project does not investigate explicitly sensitive issues, a few participants discussed experiences of grief or trauma. Though no participant was visibly upset or reduced to tears in these situations, I tried to be as empathetic as possible and asked if the participant wanted to take a break or change the subject.

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<sup>79</sup> U. Eco, *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* (London, 2003), p.94.

## Additional methods

While oral history provides the primary data source, I also incorporated elements of ethnography, the study of groups and people as they go about their everyday lives. Shared principles with oral history make ethnography a natural ancillary methodology. Both disciplines emphasise subjectivity. In discussion of ethnography as a way to understand social worlds, Altheide and Johnson wrote: 'Social reality is an interpreted world, not a literal world, always under symbolic constructions.'<sup>80</sup> Such a statement would not be out of place in a book on oral history. Ethnography also acknowledges the presence of intersubjectivity; no fieldworker is a neutral, detached observer. Indeed, two fieldworkers could enter the same social setting and emerge with completely different observations, depending on what they were looking for.

It is important to clarify from the outset that I did not conduct a full, systematic ethnography, insofar as I did not 'observe' in a detailed fashion with a view to making extensive fieldnotes. Nor did I consider myself to be 'in the field'. Yet, in two interrelated ways, I related naturally to the participants in this study. First, through living in Galicia for two years, I entered an unfamiliar social setting and participated in the daily routines. I developed ongoing relationships with the people in it, and came to grasp what they deemed as important and meaningful. Second, I immersed myself in Galician football and more explicit expressions of Galician identity. Before I had conceived of this thesis, I attended Deportivo matches and watched many more in the *peña* Chamberí Branquiazul's Madrid bar. When I lived in Vigo during the research process, I attended dozens of football matches

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<sup>80</sup> D.L. Altheide and J.M. Johnson, 'Criteria for Assessing Interpretive Validity in Qualitative Research', in N.K. Denzin and Y.C. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA, 1994), p.489.

across Galicia, both professional and amateur. I observed political demonstrations and cultural events, each of which added meat to my skeletal understanding of the questions that form the basis of this thesis. In a sense, therefore, I did a form of ethnographic research by becoming and doing; I experienced events and meanings in ways that approximated the experience of members of that world.

While I did not take regular, systematic fieldnotes, I did write down my observations of specific events (mainly football matches) and everyday mundane activities. I followed the principles established by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*.<sup>81</sup> I draw upon these fieldnotes throughout the thesis to add context and colour to my arguments.

## Conclusion

Oral history is an appropriate – and valuable – methodology for my research into the relationship between national identity and football in Galicia. By allowing participants to construct and perform their own personal narratives, oral history reveals the lived experience of Galician identity and how it interacts with sporting allegiance. In doing so, it responds to Eric Hobsbawm's call to approach the study of nationalism from below, in terms of the concerns and aspirations of 'normal' people. An additional thread runs through the practice of oral history and the study of nationalism: the interaction between remembering and forgetting. Interviews do not just reveal what the participant committed to memory or

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<sup>81</sup> R.M. Emerson, R.I. Fretz, and L.L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, Second Edition* (Chicago, Illinois, 2011).



deemed worthy of recollection, but what they have omitted or forgotten, and how this relates to concepts of individual, shared, and episodic memory.

Above all, my application of oral history strikes a balance between rigour and flexibility. I conducted all stages of the research – from fieldwork, to transcription, to data analysis, to translation – within a clear, reflective methodological framework. Yet that framework allowed space for the subjectivities and imperfections in participant narratives to emerge, not as problematic obstacles, but as the basis for a nuanced analysis of rich, textured data.

# Chapter Two: Theoretical concepts

## Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to develop a theoretically informed approach to the analysis of sport, nationalism and national identity in Galicia. I begin by considering how Galicianist intellectuals have presented Galicia as a nation – or potential nation – and how this interacts with broader conversations about sub-state identity. Next, I introduce the three broad categories of nationalist theory: primordialism, ethnosymbolism, and modernism, while acknowledging that these are crude categorisations which imply a greater homogeneity than actually binds the individual theorists. There follows a discussion of three prominent modernist theorists: Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, and Eric Hobsbawm. I analyse how these individuals have contributed to – or obfuscated – the study of the sub-state nation and sport, and then introduce Anthony Smith and his ethnosymbolist theory to scrutinise modernism. I have chosen these three ‘modernist’ theorists because they have distinct approaches to the sub-state nation. This makes it possible to explore the nuanced and contradictory ways in which the theoretical study of nationalism and sport accounts for nations that exist within another state. And, while Anthony Smith is not the only critic of the modernist perspective, it is appropriate to reflect on his position rather than others because he pays particular attention to perceived deficiencies in the modernists’ treatment of the sub-state nation. I introduce Michael Billig’s concept of ‘banal nationalism’, and then the field of ‘everyday nationalism’, to consider how national identity is maintained and reproduced in the rhythms of daily life. While I refer to football throughout this chapter, I

conclude with a section that engages in more detail with the literature on how the sport interacts with nationalism.

## Galicia and nationhood

In April 2021, I attended a demonstration in Santiago de Compostela under the title '*Galiza Nación: un pobo con dereitos*' ['Galiza nation: a people with rights']. Organised by Vía Galega, a social platform established in 2018, the event defended – and made the case for – the status of Galicia as a nation. That Vía Galega deemed this demonstration necessary – over a century after the *Irmandades da Fala* established that Galicia possessed the essential characteristics of nationhood – shows how contested the word 'nation' remains.<sup>82</sup>

In Book One of *Sempre en Galiza*, the foundational text of Galician nationalism, Castelao used Stalin's definition of the nation, which rests on the presence of five distinctive characteristics: a language, a territory, an economic system, psychological traits, and an autochthonous culture.<sup>83</sup> Castelao argued that Galicia possessed all five and thus had all the attributes of an authentic nationality.<sup>84</sup> The enduring influence of Castelao's definition is striking. At the 'Galiza Nación' demonstration in Santiago, a Vía Galega volunteer handed me the official event leaflet as I mingled with the crowds in the Parque da Alameda. The leaflet directly cites *Sempre en Galiza* and Castelao's characteristics of nationhood. It even refers to the recognition of Galicia as a nation at the 1935 Congress of European Minorities in Berne,

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<sup>82</sup> The *Irmandades da Fala* was a Galician nationalist organisation active from 1916 to 1930.

<sup>83</sup> Castelao, *Sempre en Galiza*: pp.48–59. Stalin, Castelao claims in a judgement that aged badly, was an author 'free of philosophical obfuscations' (p.47).

<sup>84</sup> In Book Three of *Sempre en Galiza*, written in 1945, six years after Castelao established his five characteristics in Book One, he adds ethnic distinction to his definition of the nation. In Book Four, written in 1947, he confirms that this distinct ethnic character comes from the Celtic settlers, Castelao, *Sempre en Galiza*, pp. 306, 463.

Switzerland, just as Castelao does. Despite the ongoing prominence of Castelao's definition, it attracted criticism from later iterations of Galician nationalism. Xosé Manuel Beiras, the charismatic leader of the BNG throughout the 1990s, challenged its ahistorical and descriptive nature. Beiras identifies 'national consciousness' as the indispensable element of nationhood that Castelao overlooks.<sup>85</sup>

This question of consciousness brings us to the definition of the sub-state nation offered by Montserrat Guibernau, one of the foremost scholars of Iberian nationalisms. She defines the sub-state nation as a 'human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself'.<sup>86</sup> 'Conscious' is a nebulous term. It invites further questions. How does one measure consciousness? Who decides when it is reached? Such ambiguities could permit the definition of Galicia as, for instance, a potential nation that has the raw materials, but will not attain nationhood until it reaches an undefined level of consciousness. Oral history can help to answer some of the questions that arise from Guibernau's definition. It is a 'bottom-up' methodology that prioritises individual testimony and lived experience over official narratives. I use oral history to explore how Galicians experience this consciousness, how they articulate – if at all – a common project for the future, or how they wish to claim self-rule.

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<sup>85</sup> F. Pillador Maior and M.A. Fernán-Vello, *A Nación Incesante: Conversas con Xosé Manuel Beiras* (A Coruña, 2000), p.84.

<sup>86</sup> M. Guibernau, *Nationalisms: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1996), p.14.

The final component of Guibernau's definition requires further comment. She acknowledges that 'claiming the right to rule itself' often falls short of a claim to full independence.<sup>87</sup> Keating also argues that self-determination does not necessarily mean the creation of a state, but rather 'the right to negotiate one's status within the state and constitutional order.'<sup>88</sup> Sub-state nationalism does not require the teleological desire to become a full state; it could exist in the form of, for example, the assertion of greater linguistic or cultural rights within the political framework of the existing state. Indeed, Castelao did not call for Galicia to become an independent nation-state separate to Spain. Rather, he imagined a federal Spanish state constituted by four nations: Castile, Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia.<sup>89</sup> His contemporary in the nascent nationalist movement, Vicente Risco, affirmed that 'we want to form part of Spain and contribute to Spanish life with our Galician national genius.'<sup>90</sup> Risco invoked the vague yet useful notion of a 'sovereign' Galicia. Nationalist groups still refer to sovereignty. The BNG has sought to form a valid instrument to compete electorally in autonomous Galician elections, while increasing institutional recognition of Galicia as a nation within the Spanish state.<sup>91</sup> In the BNG's 2016 general election manifesto, 'sovereign' or 'sovereignty' appear seven times in a 17-page document.<sup>92</sup> It is a useful concept because members and voters from diverse ideological positions can invest it with their own meaning. To some of the participants in this study, 'sovereignty' means full

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<sup>87</sup> M. Guibernau, 'Nationalism and Intellectuals in Nations without States: the Catalan Case', *Political Studies*, 48 (2000), p.990.

<sup>88</sup> M. Keating, *Plurinational Democracy: Stateless Nations in a Post-Sovereignty Era* (Oxford, 2001), p.1.

<sup>89</sup> Castelao, *Sempre en Galiza*, p.71.

<sup>90</sup> V. Risco, *Teoría do nacionalismo galego* (Ourense, 1920), p.70.

<sup>91</sup> F. Schrijver, 'Regionalism in Galicia after Regionalisation', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 96/3 (2005), pp.280–283.

<sup>92</sup> [https://www.bng.gal/media//bnggaliza/files/2016/06/06//XERAIS2016\\_linhas-programaticas.pdf](https://www.bng.gal/media//bnggaliza/files/2016/06/06//XERAIS2016_linhas-programaticas.pdf), accessed 31/10/2022.

independence from the Spanish state. To others, it means greater autonomy to manage natural resources such as wind power, while remaining within the same political framework. It allows Galician nationalism to walk an ideological tightrope. It can claim Galicia is a nation as defined by Castelao – or, at the very least, a potential nation – without the need to provide specific political and institutional consequences of its nationhood.

The ambiguous definition of Galicia as an ‘historical nationality’ in the 1981 Statute of Autonomy served a similar purpose. It allowed different parties to invest ‘nationality’ with their desired meaning. The term ‘nationality’ was acceptable to Spanish centralists because autonomous ‘historical nationalities’ could coexist with the idea of the unified Spanish nation. Galician, Catalan, and Basque nationalists also accepted the term due to the meaning it acquired throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. ‘Nationality’ came to denote a nation that had lost, or not yet acquired, its political unity, but that aspired to form a coherent nation-state in future.<sup>93</sup> For clarity and consistency I refer to Galicia as a nation throughout this thesis, while remaining mindful of its contested status, both for participants and in wider Galicianist discourse.

## Theories of nationalism

It is useful to contextualise my own theoretical framework by establishing the main strands of scholarship on nationalism: primordialism, modernism, and ethnosymbolism. The primordialist concept of the nation, which can be traced back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, holds that nations have existed from time immemorial. Nationality is as natural an element of the human condition as eyes or ears, and this creates powerful feelings of solidarity and group

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<sup>93</sup> Vilhar Trilho, *A remodelação*, pp.232–241.

identity.<sup>94</sup> Primordialism is a prominent paradigm among political nationalists and national movements, which tend to believe that humanity is divided into distinct nations and only within these national communities can individuals flourish. Primordialism incorporates different variations. Perennialism, for example, refers to the belief that the nation is a constant and fundamental part of human life throughout recorded history, though not necessarily a fact of nature.<sup>95</sup>

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, modernist theories emerged as a loose constellation of accounts linked by a shared belief in the essential modernity of nations and nationalism. They rejected the primordial concept of the nation as a 'given' and situated the development of the nation within the last two centuries, as a product of specifically modern processes like industrialisation, capitalism, printed media, or secularisation. Modernist arguments that nations became sociologically necessary in the modern world, and that they could not have existed in the pre-modern era.

The ethnosymbolist school of thought, developed by Anthony Smith in the 1980s and 1990s, emphasises the importance of myths, symbols, memories, and traditions in the foundation and perpetuation of national identity.<sup>96</sup> It emerged from a critique of modernism, which held that instrumentalist theories of the nation overlooked how pre-existing ethnic communities, or ethnies, shaped the formation of modern nations.<sup>97</sup> While modernism and ethnosymbolism are current movements in scholarship, primordialism faded under modernist scrutiny during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>94</sup> U. Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction, Third Edition* (London, 2017), p.51.

<sup>95</sup> A.D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (London, 1998), p.159.

<sup>96</sup> Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism*, p.154.

<sup>97</sup> A.D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986), p.22.

In the following sections, attention will turn to prominent modernist theorists: Anderson, Gellner, and Hobsbawm, followed by the ethnosymbolist concept developed by Smith, their contemporary. I shall consider how each of these theorists has informed – directly or indirectly – scholarship on Galicia, and football as an expression of national identity.

### **Benedict Anderson and the ‘imagined community’**

Benedict Anderson’s concept of the ‘imagined community’ underpins the argument that sub-state communities, like Galicia, can be considered nations. While Anderson did not discuss sport, other scholars – most notably Eric Hobsbawm – have applied his ideas to the nation-building potential of football. Anderson was a leading expert on the history and politics of South-East Asia and spent the majority of his career at Cornell University. In his memoir, *A Life Beyond Boundaries*, Anderson reflected on a cosmopolitan start to life in which he lived in China, California, Colorado, Ireland, and England by the time he was an adolescent. Anderson’s paternal family had a long history of activism against English colonialism in Ireland. His great-great-grandfather participated in the United Irishmen rebellion of 1798 and became a key member of Daniel O’Connell’s Catholic Association in the 1820s.<sup>98</sup> Anderson came from a rich lineage of sub-state nationalists.

Anderson is best known for *Imagined Communities*, his 1983 book that reflects on the nation as a socially constructed, imagined political community. He approached the project in an anthropological spirit and sought to challenge three assumptions held by a circle of British scholars comprising Elie Kedourie, Anthony Smith, and Ernest Gellner. First, Anderson targets

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<sup>98</sup> B. Anderson, *A Life Beyond Boundaries* (London, 2018), p.3.



the Eurocentric assumption that nationalism emerged in Europe and spread elsewhere.<sup>99</sup> It emerged, he argues, among the creole communities of Latin America. Anderson's second target is traditional Marxism and liberalism, neither of which he deems capable of explaining nationalism. Finally, Anderson challenged the treatment of nationalism as just another 'ism' alongside liberalism or socialism, because this way of looking at nationalism does not explain its emotional allure.

Anderson's point of departure is that nationality and nationalism are 'cultural artefacts of a particular kind' that emerged toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a product of the 'crossing' of discrete historical forces.<sup>100</sup> Anderson defines the nation as a political community that is imagined as inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined, he continues, 'because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.' The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest nations are bound by finite borders. It is imagined as sovereign because the concept emerged at a time when republics and liberal democracies were replacing the divinely ordained dynastic realm. Finally, Anderson says the nation is imagined as a community because its inhabitants conceive of it as a deep, horizontal comradeship regardless of the inequalities or injustices within.<sup>101</sup>

Anderson emphasises that the imagination of nations must not be conflated with fabrication or falsity. We can distinguish communities by *how* they are imagined, rather than their

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<sup>99</sup> Anderson, *A Life Beyond Boundaries*, p.126.

<sup>100</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983), p.4.

<sup>101</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 5–7.

perceived falsity or genuineness. As Craig Calhoun points out, Anderson is concerned with ‘the different styles and forms in which nationhood is rendered’ and the material and practical conditions that shape this.<sup>102</sup> Anderson locates the origins of nationalism in the void created by the decline of two cultural systems: the religious community and the dynastic realm. Yet he acknowledges the importance of print capitalism as a cultural change that made it possible to ‘think’ the nation.<sup>103</sup> Anderson pays particular attention to the newspaper as a cultural product which allows the members of an imagined community to acquire consciousness of simultaneity; of other people like them performing the same silent rituals. It roots the imagined community in everyday lived experience as the newspaper and its reader are visible in the barbershop, the restaurant, or the train carriage.<sup>104</sup>

Anderson’s ‘imagined community’ can easily be applied to the sub-state unit. Indeed, Anderson says ‘all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even those) are imagined.’<sup>105</sup> This definition seems excessively broad. One could argue that a town, or even a small city, is sufficiently networked to constitute a tangible, personal community rather than an imagined one. Indeed, ties of kinship, social networking, and patronage mean that even some small nations could be considered tangible, rather than imagined, communities. When Iceland, with a population of some 350,000, produced a football team that qualified for the 2018 World Cup, it is reasonable to suggest that a sizeable portion of the population knew one of the team personally or had, for instance, been to school with the goalkeeper, or worked with a midfielder’s sibling. In the case of a

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<sup>102</sup> C. Calhoun, ‘The Importance of Imagined Communities – and Benedict Anderson’, *DEBATS. Journal on Culture, Power and Society*, 1 (2016), p.12.

<sup>103</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.22.

<sup>104</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.35.

<sup>105</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.6.

sub-state nation, therefore, the imagined community is certainly applicable, but may coexist with tangible community bonds.

According to Brentin and Cooley, there is agreement in nationalism and identity scholarship that 'sport constitutes a major ritual of popular culture contributing to the theoretical concept of the nation as an "imagined community"'.<sup>106</sup> Though sport does not feature in *Imagined Communities*, many others have applied Anderson's framework to the production and reproduction of national identities through sport.<sup>107</sup> Sports teams or individual athletes can act as powerful symbols of the imagined community on a national, regional, or civic scale. When a Korean publisher released a translated version of *Imagined Communities* in 2002, it chose as the cover image a throng of flag-waving young people, whom Anderson assumed to be supporters of the successful South Korea football team at the 2002 World Cup.<sup>108</sup>

We must not universalise. Teams or athletes may only act as symbols of the imagined community in the minds of those who like sport. Different people imagine the nation in different ways, and swathes of the population have little or no interest in sport. They may feel that the construction of, for instance, a football team as a symbol of the imagined community creates an exclusionary dynamic. A pub full of men cheering on England in an important match may seem, to those involved, to be an inclusive act of communion; the

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<sup>106</sup> D. Brentin and L. Cooley, 'Nationalism and Sport: A Review of the Literature', *Studies on National Movements*, 3 (2015), p.1.

<sup>107</sup> See J. Harris, 'Cool Cymru, rugby union and an imagined community', *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 27/3/4 (2007), pp.151–162; J. Sugden and A. Tomlinson (eds.), *Hosts and Champions: Soccer Cultures, National Identities and the USA World Cup* (Aldershot, 1994); R. Giulianotti, *Football: A Sociology of the Global Game* (Cambridge, 1999); J.A. Maguire, *Global Sport: Identities, Societies, Civilizations* (Cambridge, 1999).

<sup>108</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Revised Edition* (2016), p.213.

imagined community in action. Yet to others it would represent a hostile, exclusive environment.

Anderson's notion of imagined community is a valuable tool for the study of sub-state nationalism because he does not distinguish between the emotional ties that bind large nation-states and smaller sub-national units. Though Anderson does not directly address the significant of sport, his work facilitates an analysis of the nation-building role of sport in Galicia.

### Ernest Gellner

Ernest Gellner does not allow for the presence of multiple cultural identities within one state. Yet Gellner makes an indirect contribution to the study of sub-state nationalism and sport because he appreciates the value of studying unsuccessful nationalist projects. Like Anderson, Gellner lived a nomadic early life which introduced him to diffuse and changing identities. Born in Paris to Austrian Jewish parents, he spent his early childhood in Prague before the rise of Nazism forced the family to flee to England.

*Nations and Nationalism* was published in 1983, the same year as *Imagined Communities*, and expanded on the theories Gellner had established two decades earlier in *Thought and Change*.<sup>109</sup> Gellner argues that nations and nationalism are essential parts of modernisation. They are distinctive to modernity and could not have prevailed in any other epoch.<sup>110</sup> More specifically, Gellner situates nationalism as a product of the transition from agrarian to industrial society, which needed a state to produce and maintain cultural homogeneity.

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<sup>109</sup> E. Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London, 1965).

<sup>110</sup> E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983), p.138.

Industrialisation required a level of technical and literary competence which, Gellner argues, only a national education system could deliver, through the organisation of human groups into 'large, centrally educated, culturally homogeneous units.'<sup>111</sup>

Gellner establishes his definition of nationalism in the first line of the book. 'Nationalism', he writes, 'is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.'<sup>112</sup> It follows, according to Gellner, that 'the problem of nationalism does not arise for stateless societies. If there is no state, one obviously cannot ask whether or not its boundaries are congruent with the limits of nations.'<sup>113</sup> Gellner's definition is descriptive rather than prescriptive; he writes that the political and national unit *should* be congruent, not that they *must* be congruent. That said, his definition does not clarify those cases where a nation exists within, but has borders incongruent with, a state. Are we to conclude that the problem of nationalism does not arise in Galicia or Scotland because they are not nation-states? Or do they have states – Spain and the United Kingdom respectively – but perceive these to be the wrong states? Gellner creates further opacity by failing to define the 'political unit'. Many regions or sub-state nations have autonomous governments which may or may not constitute a political unit per Gellner's definition.

Later in the book, Gellner comments that there are currently around 200 states in the world, and 'to this figure one might add all the irredentist nationalisms, which have not yet attained their state (and perhaps never will), but which are struggling in that direction and thus have a legitimate claim to be and not merely potential, nationalisms.'<sup>114</sup> These irredentist

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<sup>111</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.35.

<sup>112</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.1.

<sup>113</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.4.

<sup>114</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.44.

nationalisms have not yet attained statehood, yet Gellner deems them to be legitimate. It follows that nationalism does not require the political and the national units to be congruent, but rather an aspiration for congruency in the future.

Gellner appreciates the value of studying potential but unsuccessful nationalisms; those cases in which the national unit and the political unit did not become congruent. He calls these cases 'the dogs that did not bark', because it was the dog that did not bark that gave Sherlock Holmes the vital clue. Gellner reminds us that 'the number of dogs that failed to bark is far, far larger than those which did, though they have captured all the attention.'<sup>115</sup> He asks why the political and national units are congruent in some cases but not others. In particular, he suggests that potential nationalisms did not materialise because, among other reasons, a shared culture inherited from the agrarian world did not develop into a homogenous industrial community.<sup>116</sup> This focus on political projects that did not achieve the congruency of nation and state is useful in the case of Galicia, where there is historiographical consensus on the reasons for this failure. Máiz and Villares agree that the ethnic and cultural preconditions for Galician nationalism were favourable. But unfavourable social conditions made it difficult to articulate politically a cultural and ethnic identity.<sup>117</sup> Máiz identifies three social impediments to Galician nationalism. First, the absence of networks beyond the local context, which fomented localism and made it difficult to establish collective myths and meanings shared by all Galicians. Second, slow

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<sup>115</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.43.

<sup>116</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.45.

<sup>117</sup> R. Máiz, 'The open-ended construction of a nation: the Galician case in Spain', in J.G. Beramendi, R. Máiz and X.M. Núñez-Seixas, *Nationalism in Europe Past and Present* (Santiago de Compostela, 1994), p.176; R. Villares, *Galicia: una nación entre dos mundos* (Barcelona, 2009), p.92.

industrialization.<sup>118</sup> Third, a result of the previous point, high levels of emigration.<sup>119</sup> Núñez-Seixas also emphasis emigration – first to South America and later to Europe – as a release valve on social issues in Galicia.<sup>120</sup>

Gellner does not engage with sport, yet his work provides a framework to study the role – or absence – of sport in ‘unsuccessful’ nationalist projects. And while Gellner’s treatment of sub-state nationalism is unclear, his insistence on the importance of studying less successful nationalist projects is welcome. Only by studying unsuccessful projects can we understand the successful ones. By extension, only by considering cases in which sport has not become a powerful symbol of the nation can we understand those in which it has. Gellner’s main contribution to the study of sub-state nationalism and sport is not so much what we should look at, but where we should look.

## Eric Hobsbawm

Eric Hobsbawm’s contribution is the most relevant of the modernist theorists to the study of sport and sub-state nationalism in Galicia. Not only does he directly discuss football, but it is central to his arguments in a way that it is not for the others. Having spent a portion of his childhood in Nazi Germany, Hobsbawm grew up amid the winds of rapid nationalist change. Yet he did not explicitly turn his attention to the study of nationalism until relatively late in his academic career. In *The Age of Capital*, Hobsbawm revealed his hostility to nationalism

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<sup>118</sup> Miguel-Anxo Murado questions the assumption that Galicia was slow to industrialise. He argues that Galicia was on course for rapid industrialisation by the late-18<sup>th</sup> century due to the production of linen. Yet the mechanisation of cotton production in Manchester and the surrounding mill towns stifled the nascent industry. Ironically, sardine oil from Galicia lubricated the cotton-spinning machines in north-west England. M-A. Murado, *Otra idea de Galicia* (Barcelona, 2008), pp.136–140.

<sup>119</sup> Máiz, ‘The open-ended construction of a nation’, pp.175–6.

<sup>120</sup> X.M. Núñez-Seixas, ‘Autonomist regionalism within the Spanish state of autonomous communities: An interpretation’, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 5/3–4 (1999), pp. 129–130.

without dealing with it in detail. Jacob Talmon, whom the publisher originally nominated to write *The Age of Revolution*, argued that Hobsbawm massively underplayed nationalism as a cause of the 1848 revolutions.<sup>121</sup>

Hobsbawm's first major contribution to the study of nationalism was *The Invention of Tradition*, a series of essays he co-edited with Terence Ranger. Hobsbawm and Ranger define invented traditions as:

a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.<sup>122</sup>

Hobsbawm identifies the 30 or 40 years leading up to the First World War as the period in which invented traditions appeared with assiduity.<sup>123</sup> This was partly due to the industrial revolution which, as an episode of rapid social transformation, weakened the social patterns for which 'old' traditions were designed. Hobsbawm organises invented traditions into three overlapping categories: first, those establishing or symbolising social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities; second, those establishing or legitimising institutions, status or relations of authority; third, those whose main purpose is socialisation, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour.<sup>124</sup>

The first of these categories clearly establishes the invention of tradition as a mechanism for sub-state nationalists to create legitimising narratives based on a notion of continuity with

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<sup>121</sup> R.J. Evans, *Eric Hobsbawm: A Life in History* (London, 2019), p.402.

<sup>122</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions' in E.J. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), p.1.

<sup>123</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, 'Mass-producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914', in Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, p.263.

<sup>124</sup> Hobsbawm, 'Introduction', p.9.



the past. Indeed, the first essay in the volume is an excellent contribution from Hugh Trevor-Roper. He convincingly argues that a distinct Scottish Highland culture and tradition – as well as the associated apparatus like the tartan kilt – is a retrospective invention by an English industrialist intended to coax the Highlanders ‘out of the heather and into the factory’.<sup>125</sup> This analysis is pertinent to Galicia, where Xelís de Toro argues that the *gaita* (an instrument similar to the bagpipe) and the *gaiteiro* came to represent the realm of nature and the rural, where Galician identity could be found.<sup>126</sup>

Football as a social phenomenon is prominent in Hobsbawm’s contributions to *The Invention of Tradition*. The pomp surrounding the FA Cup final is at the forefront of his conception of the invented tradition. More broadly, Hobsbawm refers to sport as ‘one of the most significant of the new social practices of our period’ and recognises that sport combines the invention of political and social traditions by providing a medium for national identification.<sup>127</sup> He argues that Welsh rugby, for instance, serves as a nationally specific alternative to English football. Hobsbawm also acknowledges the construction of sports stadia, such as Wembley, as an important development which provided a space for the consecration of new mass rituals.<sup>128</sup>

A glance around a contemporary football stadium on matchday reveals several layers of invented traditions. Before matches between Deportivo La Coruña and Celta Vigo, both sets of supporters unite to sing the Galician anthem. This appears to be a deep-rooted tradition.

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<sup>125</sup> H. Trevor-Roper, ‘The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland’, in Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, pp.15–41.

<sup>126</sup> X. De Toro, ‘Bagpipes and Digital Music: The Remixing of Galician Identity’, in J. Labanyi (ed.), *Constructing Identity in Contemporary Spain: Theoretical Debates and Cultural Practice* (Oxford, 2002), pp.237–254.

<sup>127</sup> Hobsbawm, ‘Mass-producing traditions’, pp. 298–300.

<sup>128</sup> Hobsbawm, ‘Mass-producing traditions’, p.304.

Yet it was introduced in the early 2010s. As with many of the invented traditions associated with the football match, this ritual straddles two of Hobsbawm's categories of invented tradition. First, it serves to (re)produce the membership of real or imagined communities by reminding the supporter that they are taking part in a communal event with civic and national implications. Second, it serves to inculcate conventions of behaviour by creating a space for the consecration of specifically Galician rituals.

While football did not ostensibly form a significant part of Hobsbawm's personal life – to the extent of, say, jazz music – his father Percy Hobsbawm was a keen sportsman and took the young Eric to football matches. Hobsbawm carried this interest into later life. His friend Elise Marienstras recalls how he watched football on a small television in the kitchen before hosting dinner parties at his London home. 'It was always funny,' Marienstras said, 'to see him watching football with interest, and he knew it, he understood what was going on.'<sup>129</sup>

Soon after the publication of *The Invention of Tradition*, Hobsbawm began to distil his views on nationalism into another book, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, based on a series of lectures delivered at Queen's University, Belfast, in 1985. Hobsbawm's point of departure is that 'the basic characteristic of the modern nation and everything connected with it is its modernity.'<sup>130</sup> He views the idea that nations emerge from an ethnicity rooted in a common past as an invented tradition. Instead, he situates the question of nationalism at the intersection of politics, technology, and social transformation. Hobsbawm identifies three stages to the evolution of nationalism. First, the period from the French Revolution in 1789 until 1918, when nationalism emerged and rapidly spread. Second, the period from 1918 to

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<sup>129</sup> Quoted in Evans, *Eric Hobsbawm*, p.489.

<sup>130</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1992), p.14.

1950, which Hobsbawm calls 'the apogee of nationalism'. Third, the late-20<sup>th</sup> century, by which time nationalism had entered its final stage before being absorbed into supranational units and was 'no longer the historical force it was.'<sup>131</sup> Like Gellner, Hobsbawm defines nationalism as a principle which holds that the political and national units should be congruent, to distinguish modern nationalism from 'less demanding' forms of group identification.<sup>132</sup>

The final stage of Hobsbawm's historical evolution of nationalism – the late-20<sup>th</sup> century – implicitly refers to the explosion of separatism in the post-Soviet space. His dismissal of nationalism as 'historically less important' during this period suggests a suspicion of sub-state nationalism, insofar as the nationalist movements of the period generally sought territorial autonomy from existing states. Hobsbawm muses that 'all movements for regional, local or even sectional interests against central power and state bureaucracy will, if they possibly can, put on the national costume, preferably in its ethnic-linguistic styles.' He elaborates by pointing out that the Cornish are fortunate to be able to 'paint their regional discontent in the attractive colours of Celtic tradition'.<sup>133</sup> Perhaps he would have said the same about Galicia. Given Hobsbawm's lifelong commitment to Marxism, it must have been deeply troubling for him to witness the collapse of the Soviet Union (not to mention Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia). This may have bled into his appraisal of the state of nationalism.

Simultaneously, Hobsbawm acknowledges that 'small states are today economically no less viable than larger states, given the decline of the "national economy" before the

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<sup>131</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.169.

<sup>132</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.9.

<sup>133</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp.127–8.

transnational one.<sup>134</sup> He ventures that regions may constitute 'more rational sub-units of large economic entities like the European Community than the historic states which are its official members,' but qualifies this by suggesting that separatist small-nation movements seeking to become sub-units of a supranational entity contradicted their own aims – to establish sovereign nation-states. Hobsbawm even confessed that he felt a certain warmth toward some small nations in a letter to James D. Young, the left-wing Scottish nationalist. 'I also happen to like some peoples and sympathise with their national feelings,' Hobsbawm wrote. '[...] there is something I find pleasant about small nations and their attempt to build or maintain a separate culture, for example, the Estonians or Finns.'<sup>135</sup>

Yet any such fondness was outweighed by Hobsbawm's steadfast conviction that as a Marxist, and a historian, he could never be a nationalist. This did not prevent his making perceptive comments about dual identity, an inevitable product of the sub-state nation. Across five surveys between 1984 and 2002, an average of 55.8 per cent of Galicians identified as 'equally Galician and Spanish'. An average of 24.4 per cent identified as 'more Galician than Spanish', and the number of people who identified as exclusively Galician peaked in 1998 at ten per cent. Only seven per cent identified as 'more Spanish than Galician' in 1984, a figure that dropped to four per cent in 2002.<sup>136</sup> 'Men and women did not choose collective identification as they chose shoes,' Hobsbawm writes, 'knowing that one could only put on one pair at a time. They had, and still have, several attachments and loyalties simultaneously, including nationality.' Hobsbawm says that a man could

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<sup>134</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.185.

<sup>135</sup> Quoted in Evans, *Eric Hobsbawm*, p.551.

<sup>136</sup> Schrijver, 'Regionalism in Galicia', p.278.

simultaneously feel himself to be, among other things, the son of an Irishman, a patriotic Englishman, the husband of a German woman, and a supporter of Barnsley Football Club.<sup>137</sup>

Hobsbawm's choice of support of a football team as a marker of identity reflects his appreciation of the sport as a mass spectacle in which persons and teams have symbolic clout. He describes sport as a 'uniquely effective' medium to inculcate attachment to the nation and explains why in Andersonian terms. Through the prism of sporting competition, Hobsbawm writes, 'even the least political or public individuals can identify with the nation. [...] The imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people.'<sup>138</sup> 'Region' or even 'city' could replace 'nation' in this construct. Any imagined community becomes tangible when represented on the pitch, court, or track; particularly when paired with the presence of invented traditions in the form of symbols or rituals. When used together, therefore, the theories of Anderson and Hobsbawm create a useful toolkit to engage with sub-state nationalism and sport in Galicia.

### Anthony D. Smith

It is useful to use Anthony Smith's ethnosymbolist school of thought to critique the modernist approaches because the treatment of sub-state nationalism forms a significant part of his attempted deconstruction of, in particular, Gellner and Hobsbawm.<sup>139</sup> In the case

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<sup>137</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.123.

<sup>138</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.143.

<sup>139</sup> That said, there are other sophisticated critiques of the modernist position that deserve mention. Adrian Hastings contributed to the theoretical debate on nationalism with *The Construction of Nationhood*, based on lectures he delivered at Queen's University, Belfast in 1996. He wrote these lectures in response to ones Hobsbawm had presented at the same institution. Hastings locates the origins of nations in the formation of medieval society, and argues that ethnicities become nations when their vernacular evolves from an oral to written form. It follows that modern nations develop from certain ethnicities according to vernacular developments (see A. Hastings, *The Construction of*

of Galicia, Smith's approach facilitates the discussion of ethnicity – or perceived ethnicity – in the reproduction of sub-state nationalism through sport.

Smith – a PhD supervisee of Gellner – accepts that the nation is a product of specifically modern conditions such as industrialisation, social mobility, or mass literacy. But he suggests that this account only tells half of the story; nations are products of preexisting traditions and heritages which have coalesced over generations. Smith argues, in a paper directed to Gellner at the 1996 Warwick Debate, that 'modern political nationalisms cannot be understood without reference to these earlier ties and memories, and, in some cases, to premodern ethnic identities and communities.'<sup>140</sup> In adopting this argument, Smith carves a path between primordialism and modernism; between the nation as a natural and ever-present feature of human society, and the nation as an inevitable product of global modernisation.<sup>141</sup> There is an element of the straw man in this argument. Anderson and Gellner accept that some modern nations have roots in premodern ethnic communities, but believe that those communities did not resemble a 'nation' until shaped by the forces of modernity.

In the first chapter of *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, Smith challenges Hobsbawm's contention that nationalism was less historically important by the late-20th century. He writes: 'Hobsbawm's concluding admission that ethno-linguistic nationalisms

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*Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1997), pp.11–12). Liah Greenfeld, meanwhile, traces nationalism to 16<sup>th</sup>-century England. Her controversial thesis holds that 'the emergence of nationalism predated the development of every significant component of modernization'. Nationalism was a prerequisite for, not a result of, modernisation (see L. Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA, 1992)).

<sup>140</sup> A.D. Smith, 'Opening Statement to the Warwick Debate' (1996), <http://www.lse.ac.uk/researchAndExpertise/units/gellner/Warwick.html>.

<sup>141</sup> A.D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Oxford, 1995), p.5.

have once again reappeared and are flourishing everywhere undermines his earlier argument that nations and nationalism are being superseded by transnational forces of late modernity.<sup>142</sup> Smith also rejects the definition of nationalism used by Gellner and Hobsbawm, which establishes the uniform principle that the political unit should be congruent with the national unit. 'Not only does this omit a number of vital nationalist tenets,' Smith argues, 'it fails to grasp the fact that the development of nationalism depends on bringing the cultural and moral regeneration of the community into a close relationship, if not harmony, with the political mobilization and self-determination of its members.'<sup>143</sup> The definition, for Smith, is too narrow, though this may be because he sees Gellner's definition as prescriptive rather than descriptive. He also questions the assumption that nationalism inherently seeks to equate the nation with the state. He views congruence between national and political units as a frequent component of nationalism, but not a necessary one for nationalism to achieve its goals.<sup>144</sup>

While Smith's scrutiny of instrumentalist theories of the nation is valuable, he is guilty of many of the charges he makes of Anderson, Gellner, and Hobsbawm. In the first instance, Smith argues that his approach is more helpful than the alternatives because it explains how and why nationalism generates such widespread popular and emotional support.<sup>145</sup> This criticism, that modernist theorists fail to explain the emotional pull of nationalism, implies an element of oversight on their part. This is unfair. One of the questions that led Anderson to write *Imagined Communities* was: why does nationalism have such emotional power?<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, p.14.

<sup>143</sup> Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, p.13.

<sup>144</sup> Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, pp. 112–14.

<sup>145</sup> Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, p.39.

<sup>146</sup> Anderson, *A Life Beyond Boundaries*, p.154.

Hobsbawm, meanwhile, was musing about the emotional allure of nationalism as early as 1937, during a summer trip to France.<sup>147</sup>

Moreover, it is doubtful that ethnosymbolism adequately explains the emotional power of nationalism. Instead, Smith makes a series of assumptions that appear to have a limited basis in empirical evidence. 'The instrumentalist approach to ethnicity,' he writes, 'fails to explain why people should choose ethnicity or nationalism as their vehicle of advancement rather than class or region.' To which 'people' does Smith refer? How does he know that they prioritise ethnicity over class or region or even allegiance to a football team? Not only does such a statement lack evidence, it fails to acknowledge the nuance of multiple identities. An individual can identify in different ways at different times, according to the situation. One could simultaneously choose ethnicity and class as vehicles of advancement, or choose one or the other in certain situations.

Notwithstanding these problems, Smith's focus on premodern ethnic identities and communities helps us to articulate the Galician situation, where Galicianists in the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries insisted that the ethnic base of Galicia was Celtic. This allowed them to assert distinctiveness to – and superiority over – the central Spanish state, to Europeanise Galician culture, and to establish ties with the Celtic nations of the British Isles and France. Villares argues that this Celt-mania waned throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and suggests that this long twilight of Celtism occurred in two phases. In the first phase, roughly from 1916 to 1936, Celtism remained prominent but was no longer the only lens through which to understand Galician history. The second phase, from the 1960s onwards, saw an accelerated decline of Celtism as Galician nationalism pursued a moderate cultural

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<sup>147</sup> Evans, *Eric Hobsbawm*, pp.155–6.



*galeguismo* on the one hand, and a radical Marxist political project on the other.<sup>148</sup> Celtism in Galicia is now weak. It is reproduced in daily life through brand names, small companies, and, of course, Celta Vigo, but it no longer constitutes a significant strand of Galician nationalism. It has become largely banal; present but unnoticed.

While Smith's scrutiny of Gellner and Hobsbawm's definition of nationalism is astute, his ethnosymbolist school of thought is problematic. It does provide a framework to engage with national identity in Galicia, where a banal Celtism persists as a last vestige of the 'Celtic connection' that dominated *galeguista* discourse around the turn of the 20th century. Beyond this, however, ethnosymbolism has limited potential to clarify sub-state nationalism and sport in a way that more complete modernist theories – particularly those of Anderson and Hobsbawm – do not already do. We return to the straw man argument at the core of ethnosymbolism. Most modernist theorists of the nation – and certainly Anderson and Gellner – accept that some nations are influenced by ethnies, traditions, and heritages which predate their becoming a nation-state.

### Banal, ecstatic, and everyday nationalism

The theories of nationalism developed by Anderson, Hobsbawm, Gellner and Smith concentrate on the emergence of nationalism as linked to specific historical processes. Michael Billig's concept of 'banal nationalism', on the other hand, considers how national identity is maintained and reproduced through the daily, unconscious flagging of the nation. Billig trained as a social psychologist under the supervision of Henri Tajfel. Indeed, Billig was involved in the designing of the minimal group experiments that formed the basis of Tajfel's

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<sup>148</sup> Villares, *Galicia: una nación entre dos mundos*, p.142.

well-known Social Identity Theory, which holds that people establish a sense of who they are based on their group memberships(s) (social class, family, or football team, for example).<sup>149</sup>

Billig's grounding in social psychology influenced his approach to nationalism.

Billig responds to what he deems a 'double neglect' in the theorisation of nationalism.<sup>150</sup>

First, he notes that nationalism is chiefly associated with those who 'struggle to create new states' and 'extreme far-right politics.'<sup>151</sup> As a result, there emerges a misleading use of the word 'nationalism', which locates the concept on the periphery and overlooks the nationalism of settled, western nation-states. Second, with so much focus on the 'hot' nationalism of the 'other', Billig ponders why people in 'settled' nation-states do not forget their national identity at times when the nation is not actively celebrating and being celebrated, such as state events or sporting competitions.<sup>152</sup> He argues that the enduring image of banal nationalism is 'not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion, it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building.'<sup>153</sup> This low-key symbolism combines with political and media discourses to reproduce the notion of a world of nations, which, crucially, most people take for granted.

Though Billig seeks to conceptualise national identity, his thesis is applicable to regional or civic identities. To take 'banal' identity in A Coruña as an example, the city's crest – a depiction of the Tower of Hercules – flutters from public buildings. Local politicians and media outlets reproduce a *coruñés* discourse which establishes A Coruña as distinct, but one of many cities. It would be remiss to overlook the role of football, as the representative team

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<sup>149</sup> Özkırıklı, *Theories of Nationalism*, p.183.

<sup>150</sup> M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London, 1995), p.49.

<sup>151</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p.5.

<sup>152</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p.47.

<sup>153</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p.8.

of the city competes against those of other cities across Spain. Deportivo flags hang from windows across A Coruña, supporters wear club merchandise throughout the week, and radicals daub walls with graffiti to mark the territory. The football club, as a civic institution, assumes a prominent role in the daily flagging of the city.

Billig appreciates the relevance of sport to banal nationalism. He identifies the sports section of the newspaper as a (masculine) space in which 'the flag is waved with regular enthusiasm' in a way that invokes the 'we' and 'us' deixis of the homeland.<sup>154</sup> Most notable, however, is Billig's confession that he himself turns to the back page of a newspaper quicker than he perhaps should. He admits to feeling pleasure when a compatriot beats a foreign competitor or the national team experiences success. 'I do not ask myself why I do it,' he says, 'I just do it, habitually'.<sup>155</sup> This passage reveals not only the role of sport in the banal reproduction of the nation, but also Billig's admirable reflexivity. His open consideration of the ways in which he takes his own national identity for granted adds texture to his argument.

Billig distinguishes banal nationalism from 'hot' nationalism, which arises 'in times of social disruption'.<sup>156</sup> Yet he does not examine how nationalist fervour heats and cools over time. And what one person may consider to be hot, another may consider to be banal, and vice-versa. These are pertinent questions. Bowes and Bairner show that although major sporting events are often identified as moments of 'hot' nationalism, the national anthem and the playing kit become banal symbols of national identity for sportswomen who represented

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<sup>154</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p.119.

<sup>155</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p.125.

<sup>156</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p.44.

England.<sup>157</sup> The same symbols represented 'hot' nationalism to consumers but were banal to the performers.

Skey coins the term 'ecstatic nationalism' to build on Billig's work and engage with public events that celebrate the nation. He offers a tentative definition of ecstatic nationalism as:

events designed to celebrate or explicate a particular national community on a mass public scale with reference to symbols and assumptions that inform an understanding of everyday life in a world of nations.<sup>158</sup>

Ecstatic and banal nationalism interact. Skey acknowledges that banal forms of nationalism 'make ecstatic events meaningful', yet, at the same time, 'ecstatic events illuminate the banal.'<sup>159</sup> These events unite disparate people in a moment of communal release and realise the nation as a tangible community that can be seen, heard, and felt. It is a highly appropriate definition of an international sporting fixture.

The related idea of 'everyday nationalism' fits the methodological thrust of this thesis because it respects the primacy of individual experience. It seeks to 'understand the meaning and experiences of nationhood from the perspective of those on the ground'.<sup>160</sup>

Fox and Miller-Idriss note that the masses were 'curiously missing' from much of the scholarship on nationalism. So, in response to Hobsbawm's call to analyse the phenomenon from below, they developed a research agenda to examine 'the actual practices through

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<sup>157</sup> A. Bowes and A. Bairner, 'Three Lions on Her Shirt: Hot and Banal Nationalism for England's Sportswomen', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 43/6 (2019), p.546.

<sup>158</sup> M. Skey, "'Carnivals of Surplus Emotion?'" Towards an Understanding of the Significance of Ecstatic Nationalism in a Globalising World', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 6/2 (2006), p.151.

<sup>159</sup> Skey, 'Carnivals of Surplus Emotion?', p.148.

<sup>160</sup> E. Knott, 'Everyday Nationalism: A Review of the Literature', *Studies on National Movements*, 3 (2015), p.1.

which ordinary people engage and enact (and ignore and deflect) nationhood and nationalism in the varied contexts of their everyday lives.’<sup>161</sup> While I agree with Anthony Smith that the assumption of an undifferentiated ‘ordinary’ people is problematic, a deeper understanding of how the masses engage with nationhood – and interact with official or elite representations of the nation – is much needed. Oral history – which is the primary methodology of this study – can facilitate this strand of research because it allows people who have not previously been recorded or interviewed to articulate their experience of nationhood.

Billig’s concept of ‘banal nationalism’ shifts the focus from the pomp and fervour of ‘hot’ nationalism to the ways in which the nation – congruent with the state or not – is reproduced on a daily basis. Billig concentrates on the maintenance rather than the formation of national identity, which makes it useful for a thesis that focusses on the late-20<sup>th</sup> and early-21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

## Nationalism and sport

As is clear throughout this chapter, sport, fandom, and nationalism interact. Hobsbawm unpicks the significance of sport – and, in particular, football – as an expression of the nation and a petri dish for the (re)production of invented traditions. Indeed, Hobsbawm sees the relevance of sport to Anderson’s work in a way that Anderson himself did not. For this reason, the theoretical approaches of Anderson and Hobsbawm are most useful when used in combination. Anderson explains how the inhabitants of sub-state nations identify as members of the same imagined community. Hobsbawm explains how competitive

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<sup>161</sup> J.E. Fox and C. Miller-Idriss, ‘Everyday nationhood’, *Ethnicities*, 8/4 (2008), p.537.

sportspeople on a pitch, court, or track harness the symbolic heft of those imagined communities.

But it is important to appreciate the malleability of sport as a vehicle for nationalist aspirations. On the one hand, states have used sport to construct and reinforce the virility of the nation.<sup>162</sup> On the other hand, sub-state nationalist projects have used sport to assert difference. As Bairner states, sport 'has the capacity to help undermine official nationalism by linking it to sub-nation-state national identities and providing a vehicle for the expression of alternative visions of the nation.'<sup>163</sup> Many scholars have engaged with this idea to create a thriving field of research.<sup>164</sup> Jarvie and Walker edited a collection of essays bound by the common belief that Scotland can be better understood through the study of its sport and culture.<sup>165</sup> Cronin explores the role of football and Gaelic games as 'low culture' vehicles of nationalism in Ireland, while Kidd argues that in the case of the 1976 Montreal Olympics, which brought together contested Quebecoise and Canadian nationalisms, the event did not necessarily contribute to intercultural exchange.<sup>166</sup> This is a small sample of a broad range of contributions.

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<sup>162</sup> For Italy see S. Martin, *Football and Fascism: The National Game Under Mussolini* (Oxford, 2004); for the United Kingdom see D.E. Hall, (ed.), *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, 1981) and J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (Cambridge, 1981).

<sup>163</sup> A. Bairner, *Sport, Nationalism, and Globalization: European and North American Perspectives* (Albany, NY, 2001), p.18.

<sup>164</sup> Brentin and Cooley, 'Nationalism and Sport: A Review of the Literature', pp.1–33.

<sup>165</sup> G. Jarvie, and G. Walker, 'Ninety Minute Patriots? Scottish Sport in the Making of the Nation' in G. Jarvie and G. Walker (eds.), *Scottish Sport and the Making of the Nation: Ninety Minute Patriots?* (Leicester, 1994), pp.1–8.

<sup>166</sup> M. Cronin, *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland: Gaelic Games, Soccer and Irish Identity since 1884* (Dublin, 1999); B. Kidd, 'The culture wars of the Montreal Olympics', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 27/2 (1992), pp.151–162.

Spain has provided fertile ground for scholars interested in sport and sub-state nationalism, though Galicia has received little attention compared to Catalonia and the Basque Country. Quiroga examines how media discourse has shaped contested Spanish, Catalan, and Basque identities. He argues that in this context of 'long-lasting conflicts, football has remained a key conduit for elaborating, transmitting and recreating both Spanish and stateless national identities.'<sup>167</sup> Győri Szabó and Váczi have conducted research into the role of football in the formation and re-affirmation of Basque identity as distinct to that of the Spanish state.<sup>168</sup> Hargreaves undertook a sociological exploration of the interaction between regional, local, and national identities around the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. He argues that stable pluralist democracies could sustain multiple national identities without threatening the integrity of the state, and concluded that globalisation can stimulate national and local identities.<sup>169</sup>

The literature on Galicia is sparse. In a PhD thesis submitted to Yale University, Warner argues that unlike in the Basque and Catalan contexts, football in Galicia serves to entrench deep-rooted civic rivalry between A Coruña and Vigo at the cost of the nation.<sup>170</sup> González Ramallal concludes from a study of sports journalism in local and national newspapers that throughout the 1990s supporters of Galician football teams underwent a process of 'Galicianisation' in which Galician symbols such as flags became prominent in stadiums.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> A. Quiroga, *Football and National Identities in Spain: The Strange Death of Don Quixote* (Basingstoke, 2013), p.189.

<sup>168</sup> R. Győri Szabó, 'Basque Identity and Soccer', *Soccer & Society*, 14/4 (2013), pp.525—547; M. Váczi, *Soccer, Culture and Society in Spain: An Ethnography of Basque Fandom* (London, 2015).

<sup>169</sup> J. Hargreaves, *Freedom for Catalonia: Catalan Nationalism, Spanish Identity and the Barcelona Olympic Games* (Cambridge, 2000).

<sup>170</sup> K. Warner, 'Soccer Fans, Language Politics, and the Ambivalence of Nationalism in Galicia, Spain'. PhD thesis submitted to Yale University, 2006.

<sup>171</sup> M. González Ramallal, 'La cancha de las identidades. Periodismo deportivo y fútbol gallego' in V. Sampedro Blanco (ed.), *La pantalla de las identidades: Medios de comunicación, políticas y mercados de identidad* (Barcelona, 2003), pp.259—284.

This lack of consensus on the role of football in the expression of Galician identity demonstrates the need for further research.

The sub-state nation may not, though, be the most powerful sporting allegiance. Bairner reminds that 'attachment to a particular region, city, town or village may take precedence over any affinity with the nation.'<sup>172</sup> Indeed, for many people sport plays little or no part in the construction of their identities. It is necessary to bear in mind these complexities.

## Conclusion

We should not expect a particular theory to account for the nuance, fluidity, and ambiguity of a given identity. It is necessary to draw different elements from different theories to build a functional framework to engage with sport and sub-state nationalism in Galicia. The scholars with whom I engage throughout this chapter provide a collective framework to consider the questions that run throughout this research.

The first set of research questions considers the extent to which civic rivalries impeded a sense of united Galician identity, and whether these rivalries transcended sport to reflect broader tensions. Anderson's concept of the 'imagined community' is applicable to sub-state nations such as Galicia and, in Anderson's own view, to smaller communities; cities like Vigo or A Coruña. These nuances permit an analysis of how participants belong to multiple imagined communities at different times and in response to different situations. Moreover, Michael Billig's development of 'banal nationalism' encourages consideration of the same

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<sup>172</sup> Bairner, 2001, p.164.



questions from a bottom-up perspective, in terms of how the nation (or city or football club fanbase) is reproduced on a daily basis.

Eric Hobsbawm's sensitivity to the nuance of multiple identities elucidates the second set of research questions, which concern Galician-Spanish dual identities and the extent to which they cause unease with other parts of Spain. Hobsbawm is also the theorist who reflected in most detail about sport as a means to (re)produce the nation. Anthony Smith's focus on premodern ethnic identities is valuable in respect of Galicia's perceptions of other sub-state nations outside Spain, often underpinned by a sense of shared Celtic identity.

Though Gellner is more muddled in his treatment of sub-state nationalism, he raises a valuable ancillary point with respect to Galicia. Gellner emphasises the importance of studying less successful nationalist projects – the dogs that did not bark – to gain a more rounded understanding of the phenomenon. This applies to the study of sport and nationalism. We cannot evaluate the influence of sport on nationalist projects without a knowledge and understanding of the cases in which sport did not play a role. This combination of theories – used in conjunction in the case of Anderson and Hobsbawm, or to challenge one another in the case of Smith and the modernist scholars – creates a solid foundation to engage with Galician national identity and its expression through sport.

# Chapter Three: Football and the construction of Galician identity

## Introduction

The use of football as an instrument of Galician identity changed throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century according to the needs of the *galeguista* movement and the discursive trends of the day. In this chapter I pursue two objectives. In the first section I summarise – in roughly chronological order – how Galician society has constructed its own identity, initially as a province, then as a region, and latterly as a nation. This was not a unanimous construction of identity in which every member of society conceived of Galicia in the same way. The production and reproduction of identities took the form of a dance between Galicianist intellectuals and the public they sought to convince of their vision. I structure the first section of this chapter in line with Justo Beramendi's three canonical phases of *galeguismo*.<sup>173</sup> First, the provincialism of the 1840s and the literary *rexurdimento* that followed. Second, the regionalist phase, from the 1880s to 1916, in which the Celtic 'origins' of Galicia formed the dominant strand of thought. Third, the nationalism that persists to the present day. I split the 'nationalism' phase into pre-Civil War and post-Civil War sections. Before the Civil War, the nascent nationalist movement promoted a cultural articulation of Galicia and the idea of a national spirit, while still using Celtism when expedient. The movement retained a culturalist focus as it tentatively reemerged during the dictatorship. Yet from the 1960s it pursued sovereignty – that deliberately ambiguous term – through left-

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<sup>173</sup> J. Beramendi, *De provincia a nación: historia do galeguismo político* (Vigo, 2008).

wing political activism. This evolution of the narrative of *galeguismo* was teleological insofar as provincialism and regionalism only make sense as necessary precursors to nationalism.

The second objective of this chapter is to examine the ways in which football contributed – or not – to these constructions of Galicia. Until 1936, the *galeguista* movement had close ties to football and valued the sport as a means of physical and moral regeneration. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by contrast, football and Galician nationalism drifted apart, until a cultural reunion in the 1990s through the *Rock Bravú* movement.

I do not provide an exhaustive history of Galician nationalism. To do so would create a bloated and acronym-strewn chapter, and excellent monographs already exist.<sup>174</sup> I am not concerned with the rationality or veracity of imaginations of the collective self. This is not the place for a discussion of, say, whether Galicia can legitimately claim to be Celtic. Rather, I am interested in *how* and *why* Galicianists imagined a shared identity in certain ways in certain moments. In engaging with these questions, I situate the theories of nationalism from the previous chapter in a Galician context.

## The changing articulations of Galician identity

### From provincialism to regionalism

The first buds of *galeguismo* emerged in the 1840s among progressive and liberal students at the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela. These early provincialists denounced the wasteful allocation of Galician resources, and the lack of industrial and agricultural reform.

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<sup>174</sup> See Beramendi, *De provincia a nación*; J. Beramendi and X.M. Núñez-Seixas, *O nacionalismo galego* (Vigo, 1995), R. Villares, *Historia de Galicia* (Vigo, 2016).

The solution to these woes, they thought, was the recognition of Galicia as a single province. In other words, they began to conceive of Galicia as a discrete entity, a strand of thought that would develop into the idea of *patria* or a homeland.<sup>175</sup>

The progressive nature of provincialism spawned a linguistic movement. The romantic *rexurdimento* – or renaissance – began with the publication in 1863 of *Os cantares gallegos* by Rosalía de Castro and popularised the literary use of Galician. According to Ramón Máiz, the *rexurdimento* established favourable conditions for ‘native/foreign distinction, common identity and basic community solidarity’.<sup>176</sup> To this literary and cultural foundation of *galeguismo*, Manuel Murguía – the husband of Rosalía de Castro – added a sense of ethnic distinctiveness and superiority as provincialism evolved into regionalism.

If provincialism and the *rexurdimento* formed a cultural basis for *galeguismo*, the regionalist movement added an ethnic and political dimension. In 1891 the movement founded its own political party, the Asociación Rexionalista Galega, which drew its ideology from two similarly titled books published in 1889: *El regionalismo* by Alfredo Brañas and *El regionalismo gallego* by Manuel Murguía.<sup>177</sup> The latter author had already contributed the first nationalist historiography of Galicia, *Historia de Galicia*, published in 1865.<sup>178</sup> In *El regionalismo gallego*, Murguía sought to demonstrate more than the existence of a unique Galician history. Murguía held language, geography and, in particular, race, as central to his concept of Galicia.

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<sup>175</sup> R. Villares, *A historia* (Vigo, 1994), p.198.

<sup>176</sup> R. Máiz, ‘The open-ended construction of a nation’, p.180.

<sup>177</sup> A. Brañas, *El regionalismo: estudio sociológico, histórico y literario* (Barcelona, 1889); M. Murguía, *El regionalismo gallego* (Habana, 1889). For further Reading on Brañas, see: J. Beramendi, *Alfredo Brañas no rexionalismo galego* (Santiago de Compostela, 1998).

<sup>178</sup> M. Murguía, *Historia de Galicia* (Lugo, 1865).

The ideological focus of regionalism was the presentation of Galicia as Celtic and, therefore, ethnically distinct from and superior to the rest of Spain. Though Murguía was not the first to present Galicia as ethnically Celtic, he invested the Celtic connection with political meaning. Ramón Villares argues that the promotion of Celtism was ‘one of the most powerful intellectual trends’ of contemporary Galicia.<sup>179</sup> The idea that Galicia is ethnically Celtic was useful to the regionalist movement for three reasons. First, it granted *galeguistas* access to a pantheon of heroic deities and ancestors, around which they could create rich origin stories and historical myths. Second, it established an ethnic distinction from the rest of Spain. Third, ethnically and sentimentally it moved Galicia closer to Europe as part of the pan-Celtic movement.<sup>180</sup> Belén Fortes adds a fourth reason that reflects the teleology of the evolution of *galeguismo*. Murguía conceived of the foundational myth of a Celtic Galicia, she argues, to establish the existence of a Galician nation. By extension, it strengthened the claim to political autonomy and paved the route to nationalism.<sup>181</sup>

Celtism quickly became part of the Galician national mythology. *Os Pinos*, the poem written in 1886 by Eduardo Pondal that became the lyrics of the Galician anthem, closes with the line ‘*nazón de Breogán*’ [‘nation of Breogán’] in reference to the legendary Celtic leader. Indeed, the Celtic connection constitutes an invented tradition as defined by Hobsbawm. That is not to say the Galicianists concocted Celtism from thin air. Through the blunt tool of repetition they inculcated the belief that Galicia was ethnically Celtic – with implied continuity with the past – to establish social cohesion and distinctiveness.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Villares, *Galicia: Una nación entre dos mundos*, p.125.

<sup>180</sup> Villares, *Galicia: una nación entre dos mundos*, p.94.

<sup>181</sup> B. Fortes, *Manuel Murguía e a cultura galega* (Santiago de Compostela, 2000), p.69.

<sup>182</sup> Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’, p.1.

Regionalism differed from provincialism in its ideological breadth, as fissures began to appear within the *galeguista* movement. While Murguía espoused a more liberal regionalism based on ethnicity and national consciousness, Alfredo Brañas welded Catholic traditionalism to a belief in the unity of Galicia and the need for political autonomy. Indeed, Beramendi suggests that Murguía and Brañas had little in common beyond this shared concept of Galicia as a coherent unit.<sup>183</sup> Nevertheless, speaking in 2000 as the leader of the BNG – which I shall discuss later in this chapter – Xosé Manuel Beiras referred to Brañas as a ‘crypto-nationalist’. According to Beiras, Brañas knew that Galicia was a nation, and that national emancipation was the only way it could flourish. Yet Brañas wore the ‘mask’ of regionalism to avoid ostracisation.<sup>184</sup> Regardless of the merits of Beiras’ argument, it again reveals the teleology inherent in the *galeguista* movement. Provincialism would necessarily lead to regionalism, which, in turn, would necessarily lead to (or become) nationalism.

### Pre-Civil War nationalism

Region and nation are charged terms in Galicia, hence my discussion of Galician ‘nationhood’ at the start of the previous chapter.<sup>185</sup> For Carlos Mella, an economist and Galicianist politician in the 1980s and 1990s, nation and region suppose totally distinct realities. A regionalist, he argues, has no problem with the absence of a Galician history. The region does not have its own history. It participates in the history of others; of the nation.

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<sup>183</sup> J. Beramendi, ‘Achegamento ás ideoloxías do galeguismo (1846–1936)’, in J. De Juana and X. Castro (eds.), *Xornadas de historia de Galicia* (Ourense, 1986), p.177.

<sup>184</sup> Pillado Maior and Fernán-Vello, *A Nación Incesante*, pp.124–5.

<sup>185</sup> It is because of the distinction between ‘region’ and ‘nation’ that I question that utility of the term ‘regional nationalism’, as I alluded to in the Introduction. It conflates two contradictory concepts. People can either imagine Galicia as a nation or see it as a region (and perhaps hold both ideas more or less simultaneously). But they do not think of themselves as belonging to a regional nation.

For a nationalist, on the other hand, a ‘dependent’ history reflects a ‘dependent’ people that must seek emancipation.<sup>186</sup> The foundation in 1916 of the *Irmandades da Fala* [‘Language Brotherhoods’] – a group of associations primarily interested in the promotion of cultural and linguistic *galeguismo* – marked the start of Galician nationalism. At the inaugural assembly of the *Irmandades*, held in Lugo in 1918, its members affirmed that Galicia possessed ‘all the essential characteristics of nationhood’. They decided to identify as Galician nationalists because the word ‘regionalist’ did not reflect their ‘aspirations’ nor the ‘intensity’ of Galicia’s problems.<sup>187</sup>

The nationalist movement built on the foundations of regionalism. Yet while nationalists, to varying degrees, continued to draw on the notion of ethnic superiority, it ceased to be the main thread of *galeguista* discourse. Conservative nationalists such as Vicente Risco constructed a national identity around the pillars of *terra* [land] and *raza* [race]. For Risco, then, the Celtic connection remained a useful discursive tool. More liberal nationalists, meanwhile, attached greater importance to the idea of *volksgeist* [national spirit] as a device to turn a vague sense of uniqueness into a coherent national consciousness. In this sense, they sought to present Galicia in Andersonian terms as an imagined community, in which inhabitants conceive of a horizontal comradeship with their fellow Galicians, even if they have never met.

These conceptual differences reflect the diversity of thought within the *Xeración Nós*, a constellation of intellectuals that had little in common beyond a shared conviction in Galician nationhood. Villares views the contribution of the *Xeración Nós* to the development

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<sup>186</sup> C. Mella, *A Galicia posible* (Vigo, 1992), p.34.

<sup>187</sup> Villares, *A historia*, p.209.

of Galician identity as twofold. First, they forged an idea of Galicia that was less racial and more cultural. Second, they Europeanised Galicia through an emphasis on the essentially European condition of Galician culture.<sup>188</sup> This shift did not eliminate Celtism. Alongside Risco's ongoing belief in the importance of ethnicity, Ramón Otero Pedrayo invested the Celtic connection with explicit symbolic and geographic meaning. 'The very first idea of Galicia', he wrote in 1933, 'appeared in history when from a remote, original and ignored land the first Celtic migrants departed.'<sup>189</sup> Even Castelao, one of the more liberal members of the *Xeración Nós*, sustained as late as 1943 that 'we [Galicians] are predominantly Celtic.'<sup>190</sup> The Celtic connection endured in nationalist discourse because it was useful to their project of Europeanisation. It established a cultural – and ethnic – link to the Celtic nations of the British Isles and France.

The politicisation of the *galeguista* movement in the early-20th century led to the foundation of the Partido Galeguista [PG] in 1931. The trajectory of the PG during the Second Republic (1931–1939) represented the movement's first definitive shift to the left. In January 1936, the PG integrated in the Frente Popular, an electoral alliance formed of left-wing organisations across Spain. In June 1936, Galicians voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Statute of Autonomy of Galicia, following years of elaboration and drafting by members of the PG. Yet the formation of the PG was not a unifying event. Helena Miguélez-Carballeira identifies an ongoing rhetorical clash between new 'political' nationalism and old 'cultural'

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<sup>188</sup> Villares, *Galicia: una nación entre dos mundos*, pp.84–85.

<sup>189</sup> R. Otero Pedrayo, *Ensayo histórico sobre la culture gallega* (Santiago de Compostela, 1933), pp.34–5.

<sup>190</sup> Castelao, *Sempre en Galiza*, p.335.



regionalism, based on competing ideas of masculinity, nationalism, and political identity.<sup>191</sup>

A disagreement emerged within the movement over whether it should pursue political or cultural objectives. Ramón Villar Ponte and other writers in *A Nosa Terra* – the official Galician-language newspaper affiliated to the *Irmandades da Fala* – cast Galician identity as masculine and nationalism's capacity for political activism as 'a question of virility'.<sup>192</sup> In doing so, this group equated political activity to an idealised masculinity. They dismissed those interested in the cultural expression of Galicianness as an effeminate other.

Despite the heterogeneity of the nationalist movement, it developed Murguía's ethnic preconditions of Galician identity into a coherent national consciousness. Nationalist intellectuals continued to lean on the Celtic connection, but did so increasingly to emphasise the European nature of Galician culture rather than to assert ethnic superiority. By 1936, Núñez-Seixas argues, Galician nationalism 'was on the way to becoming a mass movement'.<sup>193</sup> But the Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship halted its progress.

### Post-Civil War nationalism

Galician nationalism emerged from imposed hibernation as a cultural and linguistic movement centred around the figure of Ramón Piñeiro, one of the founding directors of Editorial Galaxia – a Galician-language publisher – in 1950. The focus on culture was largely a consequence of Francoist repression. Limited cultural expressions of Galician identity were permissible. Political activism was not. More broadly, Piñeiro was opposed to the foundation

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<sup>191</sup> H. Miguélez-Carballeira, *Galicia, A Sentimental Nation: Gender, Culture and Politics* (Cardiff, 2013), p.106.

<sup>192</sup> Miguélez-Carballeira, *Galicia, A Sentimental Nation*, p.105.

<sup>193</sup> X.M. Núñez-Seixas, 'National reawakening within a changing society: The Galician movement in Spain (1960–1997)', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 3/2 (1997), p.31.

of Galician nationalist parties. Instead, he sought to ‘Galicianise’ existing parties. Yet, as Beramendi explains, ‘at the end of the 1950s something begins to change with the appearance of a new generation of young nationalists who do not conform with purely cultural and ideological action.’<sup>194</sup> In splitting from the cultural focus of Piñeiro, these young nationalists produced the main rhetorical shift of post-Civil War *galeguismo*: the coalescing of Galician nationalism around Marxist-Leninist political parties. The formation of the Partido Socialista Galego [PSG] in 1963 and the Unión do Pobo Galego [UPG] in 1964 built on the tradition of the pre-Civil War Partido Galeguista to consolidate left-wing politics as the main vehicle of Galician nationalism.<sup>195</sup>

The Spanish transition to (and consolidation of) democracy – spanning from Franco’s death in 1975 to the early 1980s – was a particularly important period. ‘The establishment of a decentralized territorial structure of the state,’ Núñez-Seixas argues, ‘heavily influenced the development of Galician nationalism.’<sup>196</sup> The creation in 1978 of the Spanish Constitution facilitated the ratification in 1981 of the Statute of Autonomy of Galicia, which derived from the Statute of 1936 that was thwarted by the Civil War. From 1982, Galician nationalism coalesced around the BNG, a more inter-class and populist coalition than the UPG. The BNG made steady progress in autonomous, state, and European elections up to the turn of the

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<sup>194</sup> J.G. Beramendi, *El nacionalismo gallego* (Madrid, 1997), p.65.

<sup>195</sup> Attempts to create viable conservative or centrist Galicianist political parties were unsuccessful. Coalición Galega, formed in 1984 to appeal to the political centre, failed to make an electoral breakthrough before dissolving in 2012. Núñez-Seixas attributes the failure of Galicianist centrist parties to two causes: the lack of a bourgeoisie that identified as Galician, and the regionalist rhetoric of Spanish right-wing parties in Galicia since 1980. In particular, the Partido Popular under Manuel Fraga (the President of Galicia 1990–2005) adopted a theoretically vague model of regionalism that accepted the Spanish condition of a single nation, but reinforced a folkloric regional identity. The party adopted the name Partido Popular de Galicia as part of its process of Galicianisation, Núñez-Seixas, ‘National reawakening within a changing society’, p.44.

<sup>196</sup> Núñez-Seixas, ‘National reawakening within a changing society’, p.35.

century. It peaked electorally in 1997, with 24.78 per cent of the vote in the election to the Galician Parliament. Despite a slight decline, it entered government in Galicia for the first time in 2005, in coalition with the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party.<sup>197</sup>

In the context of this shift to the left, rooted in the liberal traditions of pre-Civil War intellectuals, '*atraso económico*' ['economic backwardness'] and internal colonialism became popular terms among nationalists. Internal colonialism refers to the idea that 'colonialism' applies beyond overseas imperialism. It can also explain uneven development found within states, which often manifests in the exclusion of peripheral regions from the benefits of industrialisation.<sup>198</sup> Pablo González Casanova popularised the concept in 1965 with the publication of a paper on uneven economic development in Mexico.<sup>199</sup> A decade later, Michael Hechter made a significant contribution to the literature with his study of the Celtic fringe in Britain, in which he notes – and perhaps exaggerates – the link between capitalist industrialisation and the rise of ethnic separatist movements.<sup>200</sup>

The categorisation of Galicia as an internal colony was not a new idea. In Book One of *Sempre en Galiza*, Castelao states that Galicia is tired of being a colony.<sup>201</sup> Yet Xosé Manuel Beiras – and latterly Ramon López Suevos – articulate the idea in explicit economic terms as

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<sup>197</sup> For a complete review of the trajectory of the BNG from 1982 to 2007, see M. Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, 'El nacionalismo minoritario, de la marginalidad al gobierno: la trayectoria del Bloque Nacionalista Galego (1982–2007)', *Papers*, 92 (2009), pp.119–142.

<sup>198</sup> J. Stone and S. Trencher, 'Internal colonialism' in A.S. Leoussi (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Nationalism* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 2001), pp.157–160.

<sup>199</sup> P. González Casanova, 'Internal colonialism and national development', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 1/4 (1965), pp.27–37.

<sup>200</sup> M. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (London, 1975).

<sup>201</sup> Castelao, *Sempre en Galiza*, p.101.

a cause of unequal development in Spain.<sup>202</sup> In the 1960s, Beiras read *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Albert Memmi's analysis of the French colonisation of North Africa. He saw parallels between Algeria and Galicia.<sup>203</sup> The work of Robert Lafont also influenced Beiras, who emphasises the exploitation of Galician natural resources, a grievance that participants in this study also mentioned, especially in reference to the exportation of hydroelectric power from Galicia. In his introduction to the fourth edition of *O atraso económico*, published in 2020, Beiras acknowledges that economic 'backwardness' as a symptom of Galicia's social reality is a thing of the past. Nevertheless, he says that the concept of internal colonialism remains, and poses a new question: has Galicia ceased to be an internal colony of the Spanish state, or has it become a colony of the European Union, with the Spanish state acting as a protectorate?<sup>204</sup> This reframing of the issue shows the ongoing utility – and malleability – of internal colonialism to *galeguista* discourse.

The nationalist movement has continually re-imagined its vision of Galician identity. It draws on different elements of the past to legitimise Galicia's nationhood in the present. In September 2022 the Museo do Pobo Galego in Santiago de Compostela hosted a four-day conference on the medieval kingdom of Galicia. Orgullo Galego – the *galeguista* profile with the widest reach on social media – regularly produces content about '*O reino de Galiza*' on Twitch, Tik Tok, and Instagram, under the title '*coñecer o pasado para construírnos o futuro*' ['look to the past to build our future']. Orgullo Galego has posted various foreign medieval maps that show Galicia as a distinct territory. This invokes further questions about what

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<sup>202</sup> X.M. Beiras, *O atraso económico da Galiza* (Santiago de Compostela, 1971); R. López Suevos, *Dialectica do desenvolvemento: naçóm, língua, classes sociais* (Ourense, 1983).

<sup>203</sup> A. Memmi, *Portrait du colonisé, précédé par portrait du colonisateur* (Paris, 1957), quoted in Pillado Maior and Fernán-Vello, *A nación incesante*, p.112.

<sup>204</sup> Beiras, *O atraso económico*, p.7.

makes a nation. Does a nation only exist if others perceive it as such? This would represent a departure from Xosé Manuel Beiras's emphasis on an internal national consciousness as the key characteristic of nationhood.

We can trace this flurry of activity in 2022 to increased funding for cultural projects about the kingdom of Galicia, notably from the Deputación da Coruña.<sup>205</sup> Yet the decision to allocate funding to Galicia's medieval history constitutes, in itself, another change in the way Galicia draws on its past. Medieval Galicia is seen as a less problematic articulation of national history, unburdened by the racial connotations of Celtism, now largely confined to the banal. References to a Celtic past appear on signs and shopfronts across Galicia; from the 'Celtamotor' chain of car dealerships, to 'Viajes Celtravel', a travel agent in the fishing town of Cambados. Elements of the *galeguista* movement look further back to a medieval past in which Galicia claimed political autonomy. This trend has reached football. In the 2020–21 season, UD Ourense wore a kit that paid homage to the Suebic Kingdom of Galicia. As I explain in the next section, this is one of many historical links between Galician culture and football.

## Football and Galician identity

The prominence of football in Galician nationalist discourse fluctuated throughout the 20th century in response to the needs of the movement and the discursive trends of the day. Pre-Civil War intellectuals of the *Xeración Nós* appreciated the rhetorical value of football. But as

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<sup>205</sup> Though medieval Galicia has become more prominent in 2022, it is not new as a legitimising narrative. In 1996, the Unión do Pobo Galego launched a campaign to recover 'historical myths' that could symbolise resistance against Castille, including the rebellious count Pardo de Cela, executed by Castilian kings in 1483, Núñez-Seixas, 'National reawakening within a changing society', p.41. In 2001, the *galeguista* politician Camilo Nogueira introduced the medieval kingdom to Galician historiography: C. Nogueira, *A memoria da nación: O Reino de Gallaecia* (Vigo, 2001).

the Civil War and Francoist dictatorship stifled Galician nationalism, the relationship between the nationalist movement and football grew distant. The sport was absent from *galeguista* discourse until the 1990s, when the *Rock Bravú* movement reestablished ties between culture and football.

‘Politics enthuses me, politics is the life of the people and it has to enthuse me from the moment that the life of my people concerns me, and I really like football.’ Víctor Casas, an active member of the *Irmandades da Fala*, wrote these words in 1925, 11 years before he was executed by Francoist troops for his participation in *galeguista* and republican politics. The article appeared in *A Nosa Terra* – the *galeguista* newspaper that Casas edited at the time – under the title ‘*o fútbol e a política*’ [‘Football and politics’].<sup>206</sup> Casas defends football against the accusation that it is to blame for the political passivity of the Galician youth. He acknowledges that ‘these days the youth are more worried about the result of a match than by the abnormal situation that we are experiencing,’ but argues that one can combine political activism with a passion for football. After all, if the youth were not talking about football, they would be talking about something equally frivolous. Casas saw football as a legitimate distraction from the intellectual rigour of politics, rather than as a legitimate instrument of political action. Yet the presence of an article in a *galeguista* publication that so explicitly links football and politics – and Casas’ depiction of a football-obsessed youth – shows how the sport permeated Galician society in the first two decades of the 20th century.

In his superb social history of sport in Galicia, Andrés Domínguez Almansa attributes the rapid spread of sport to two relevant factors that I examine in turn: First, an appreciation

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<sup>206</sup> V. Casas, ‘O fútbol e a política’, *A Nosa Terra*, 217 (1925), p.10.

that sport could complement art or science, which encouraged close links between sport and culture; second, a belief in the capacity of sport to improve the physical virility of society.<sup>207</sup>

### Close links between Galician culture and football

Domínguez Almansa observes that during the early years of Galician nationalism, ‘a generation of intellectuals are connected from their youth to sporting sociability.’<sup>208</sup> For the first time, the curators of *galeguismo* viewed sport as a perfectly normal and positive pastime. Afonso Eiré ventures that ‘Until 1936, a lot of Galician clubs, most of the important ones, were linked to nationalism.’<sup>209</sup> It should be noted that Eiré edited the post-transition incarnation of *A Nosa Terra* – the Galician-language newspaper – from 1983 to 2007, during which time he strove to legitimise football as a tool of Galician nationalism. He may have emphasised the existence of historic ties between Galician clubs and nationalism to convince his contemporaries that to embrace football was to return to a romanticised, formative era. That said, although ties between clubs and nationalism were not necessarily close, and did not involve the use of clubs as vehicles of nationalism, they did exist.

Eiriña Club de Fútbol, founded in Pontevedra in 1922, represents the clearest example.

Antón Losada Diéguez – like Casas, a prominent member of the *Irmandades da Fala* – served as the club president, while Castelao was a spectator. Castelao even published a series of caricatures of the Eiriña players in the weekly magazine *Aire*, which although not an official

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<sup>207</sup> Domínguez Almansa, *Historia social do deporte en Galicia*, p.255.

<sup>208</sup> Domínguez Almansa, *Historia social do deporte en Galicia*, p.265.

<sup>209</sup> A. Eiré, *O fútbol na sociedade galega* (Vigo, 1998), pp.109–110.

*galeguista* publication, was an outlet for intellectuals to muse and vent about sport.<sup>210</sup> There were several other links between football and prominent literary and political figures. The author Eduardo Blanco Amor was the president of Orense Sporting Club.<sup>211</sup> Ramón Otero Pedrayo, in his best-known novel *Arredor de si*, introduces the football-mad character Xacobe, the brother of the protagonist Adrián.<sup>212</sup> Perhaps the most enduring *galeguista* contribution to Galician football is the name ‘Celta’ Vigo. Xan Baliño, a *galeguista* lawyer, was a founding member of Celta in 1923. In a 1991 interview published in *A Nosa Terra*, Baliño claimed that ‘the name Celta was my idea. I proposed two. Do you know what the other one was? Breogán.’<sup>213</sup> Both names are unmistakably Celtic. Baliño proceeds to mention his ‘friends’ Castelao and Valentín Paz Andrade, both important characters on the liberal left of the *galeguista* movement. ‘We ensured that it was not a *vigués* club, but rather a Galician one,’ he says. The use of ‘we’ implies that Castelao and Paz Andrade shared the desire to create a club to represent Galicia as well as the city of Vigo.

### Football and virility

In the same year that Víctor Casas defended football as a legitimate complement to political activism, *A Nosa Terra* published a less positive article about the sport. ‘Football is anti-culture,’ wrote Anxel Leiro. ‘It is not a sport that creates strong and rigorous men, on the contrary, it destroys and breaks apart the virility that the real sports create in the youth of

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<sup>210</sup> G. Vázquez Morandeira, ‘A prensa deportiva en Galicia: Historia, modelos e tipoloxía (1909–2009)’, doctoral thesis submitted to the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2012, p.225.

<sup>211</sup> A. Castro Fernández and R. Ventureiro Novo (eds.), *Valor e mestría: Galicia como fútbol* (Santiago de Compostela, 2019), p.20.

<sup>212</sup> For a full overview of the links between *galeguista* intellectuals and football, see the special issue of *Revista O Dez*, 8 (2021).

<sup>213</sup> G. Luca de Tena, ‘Entrevista con Xan Baliño’, *A Nosa Terra*, 482 (1991), p.12.



today.<sup>214</sup> Leiro's emphasis on strength and virility was typical of a period in which sport was a means to achieve the physical and moral rejuvenation of the population, often expressed in terms of ethnic superiority. Yet Leiro was in the minority who saw football as unfit for this purpose.

It is necessary to situate the use of football within the context of the period. As mentioned in the previous section, a new Galicianist discourse presented the national identity of Galicia as masculine and nationalism's capacity for political action as 'a question of virility.'<sup>215</sup>

Participation in sport became a characteristic of the new, idealised, muscular Galician man. Miguélez-Carballeira argues that Ramón Villar Ponte and other contributors to *A Nosa Terra* – among them his brother Antón – constructed this reimagined masculine nationalism on the printed page. Indeed, though Antón Villar Ponte worried about football's potential to stir localist hostility, he acknowledged in 1925 that 'as a means to invigorate the muscles of the youth [...] we think it is an excellent thing.'<sup>216</sup> Incidentally, Antón Villar Ponte wrote this shortly after the birth of his son, Antonio Villar Chao, who went on to become a footballer and represented Deportivo for ten years between 1939 and 1949. Through analysis of discursive material distributed by the Federación de Mocedades Galeguistas [Federation of Galicianist Youths] – the youth branch of the Partido Galeguista – Miguélez-Carballeira identifies an emphasis on sport and other outdoor pursuits as a way to promote a hyper-masculine model of Galician manhood. The material urged each local association to create a

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<sup>214</sup> A. Leiro, 'Touros e fútbol', *A Nosa Terra*, 219 (1925), p.8.

<sup>215</sup> Miguélez-Carballeira, *Galicia: A Sentimental Nation*, p.105.

<sup>216</sup> Quoted in Redacción, 'Antón Villar Ponte refuga do fútbol', *O Dez*, 8 (2021), p.12.

sporting division. By 1934, this had led to the formation of football teams in Vigo and Pontevedra.<sup>217</sup>

Galician nationalists were not unusual in their use of sport to present an idealised image of masculinity. Their discourse resembled the code of the Superman formed in early-20<sup>th</sup>-century Italy as a nationalist interpretation of the Nietzschean superman.<sup>218</sup> It also borrowed from – and sought to replicate – British muscular Christianity and imperial manliness, characterised by stoicism, athleticism, and a rejection of domesticity in favour of bracing adventure on the imperial frontier.<sup>219</sup> Such was the respect for British sporting values that Domínguez Almasa questions whether football would have taken such hold in Galicia, had it been introduced by a different nationality.<sup>220</sup> Of course, the Galicianists situated themselves on the other side of the imperial frontier to the British public schoolboys, as the oppressed rather than the oppressors.

It was natural, given the ongoing prominence of Celtism in nationalist discourse, that sport became an arena for the performance of ethnic distinction and superiority. The name ‘Celta’ Vigo and Xan Baliño’s alternative suggestion of Breogán provide a clear example of this.

Three days after the Galician national team’s inaugural match – a 4–1 win against the Centro XI made up of players from Madrid and Castille – A.B. Lino wrote in the *Diario de Pontevedra* that ‘it is not just a fight between eleven Galician players against eleven Castilians.’ With the Galician public ‘supporting them with all of the sentimental force of the country, the soul of

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<sup>217</sup> Miguélez-Carballeira, *Galicia: A sentimental nation*, p.117.

<sup>218</sup> G. Gori, ‘Supermanism and the cult of the body in Italy: the case of futurism’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 16/1 (1999), p.159.

<sup>219</sup> J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge, 1981); D.E. Hall (ed.) *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, 1981).

<sup>220</sup> Domínguez Almasa, *Historia social do deporte en Galicia*, p.383.

each race bravely fights.'<sup>221</sup> The author's words carry an assumption of racial difference between the Galicians and their opponents. Indeed, A.B. Lino echoes the sentiment of Eric Hobsbawm, who decades later observed that 'the imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people.'<sup>222</sup> In the two decades preceding the Civil War, Galician culture and football intertwined as the popularisation of the sport coincided with a discursive trend that emphasised virility with an ethnic undertone.

### The absence of football until *Bravú*

When Galician nationalism reemerged in the 1950s as a cultural movement and in the 1960s as a left-wing political project, the ties that previously bound culture and football had faded. Intellectuals no longer projected the image of the idealised muscular Galician. They did not rely on a Celtic identity to establish difference and superiority. Nor did they participate in football – or football administration – with the enthusiasm of their predecessors. Afonso Eiré, writing in 1998, lamented that the Galicianist left 'got caught up, from the start, in a critical-ideological, politico-economic, and socio-psychological analysis of the footballing phenomenon. It expended a great intellectual effort in this debate only to end up disregarding it.'<sup>223</sup> Eiré quotes Víctor Casas' 1925 article in *A Nosa Terra* at length and notes, dryly, that it remains as relevant as the day it was written.

Football was largely absent from Galicianist discourse by the 1990s.<sup>224</sup> In 1992, Javier Cabrera published an analysis of focused interviews – with an average length of three hours

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<sup>221</sup> *Diario de Pontevedra*, 22 November 1922, quoted in J.M. Deza Rey, *Historia da selección galega de fútbol, 1922–2006* (Ferrol, 2007), p.20.

<sup>222</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.143.

<sup>223</sup> Eiré, *O fútbol na sociedade galega*, p.117.

<sup>224</sup> *A Nosa Terra*, the newspaper edited by Afonso Eiré, was the exception.

– that he had conducted with 12 prominent nationalist figures. According to Cabrera’s analysis of the interview corpus, none of the interviewees mentioned football, or any other sport, in relation to their visions of and for Galicia.<sup>225</sup> Football is notably absent in other literature. Xosé Manuel Beiras, the figurehead of the BNG, does not mention football in *A nación incesante*, a wide-ranging interview published the year that Deportivo won the league title.<sup>226</sup> A reference to the Asamblea de Riazor, the inaugural conference of the BNG held next door to Deportivo’s stadium in 1982, is as close as football gets to the book. In *Nós no mundo*, a book about Galicia’s role in a globalised world, Xulio Ríos overlooks the ambassadorial clout of Deportivo and Celta, particularly when the two clubs were competing regularly in European competitions.<sup>227</sup> That is not to say these Galicianist thinkers were wrong to omit sport, or that they have committed a catastrophic oversight. Yet the absence of football from late-20<sup>th</sup>-century discourse is notable given the unprecedented success of Galician football at the time, and the tradition of pre-Civil War nationalist interest in the sport. It is possible that the Francoist appropriation of football in the intervening decades led *galeguistas* to view it as a tainted medium, a tool of the enemy.<sup>228</sup>

In the 1990s a cultural movement known as *Rock Bravú* emerged following a concert in the town of Chantada. Unofficially led by Xurxo Souto, the singer and accordionist of *coruñés* band Os Diplomáticos de Monte Alto, *Bravú* ‘asserted a modern Galician cultural identity’ at the intersections of the ‘old and new, the rural and the urban, and the local and the

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<sup>225</sup> J. Cabrera, *La nación como discurso: el caso gallego* (Madrid, 1992).

<sup>226</sup> Pillador Maior and Fernán-Vello, *A nación incesante*.

<sup>227</sup> X. Ríos, *Nós no mundo: unha política exterior para Galicia* (Vigo, 2010).

<sup>228</sup> For an account of the Francoist use of football, see A. Quiroga, *Football and National Identity in Spain: The Strange Death of Don Quixote* (Basingstoke, 2013).

global.<sup>229</sup> Xelís de Toro explains that *Bravú* was initially perceived as a cross between rock and folk music, but ‘later proved to be a more complex intersection of rock and folk, literature and music, politics and culture.’<sup>230</sup> *Bravú* also reunited Galician culture with football by lending artistic expression to the growing claims for a Galician national team. The first issue of *Revista Bravú*, edited by the prestigious publisher Xerais, included written and artistic content about the need for a national team, under the title ‘Selección Xa!’ [‘national team now!']. Each magazine came with a supplementary CD of music constructed around the same theme of Galician popular culture that appeared in the pages. In the accompanying CD to the ‘Selección Xa!’ issue, groups from the *Bravú* movement recorded tracks with prominent footballers: Xenreira with Nacho (Compostela), Korosi Dansas with Michel Salgado (Celta Vigo, latterly Real Madrid), and Os Diplomáticos de Monte Alto with brothers Fran (Deportivo) and José Ramón (Compostela). Os Diplomáticos performed their collaboration with the brothers live on *Luar*, a variety show broadcast on Televisión de Galicia. The show aired the day after Fran’s Deportivo beat Espanyol to clinch the league title for the first time. José Colmeiro argues that *Bravú* normalised Galician as a suitable language for rock music and youth culture.<sup>231</sup> It also normalised – or renormalised – football as a legitimate element of Galician culture.

## Conclusion

Galicianist movements since the 1840s have constantly evolved and adapted the ways in which they articulate Galicia as a province, region, and nation. In broad terms, political

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<sup>229</sup> J. Colmeiro, ‘Smells like wild spirit: Galician rock Bravú: between the “rurban” and the “glocal”’, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 10/2 (2009), p.225.

<sup>230</sup> De Toro, ‘Bagpipes and digital music’, p.246.

<sup>231</sup> Colmeiro, ‘Smells like wild spirit’, p.236.

*galeguismo* emerged as a primordialist movement that relied heavily on the idea of a distinct, Celtic ethnic identity. Culture and the notion of *volksgeist* gained prominence as nationalism replaced regionalism. Finally, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Galicianists articulated their vision of the nation through left-wing political activism.

It is interesting to track these phases of *galeguismo* through the theories of nationalism from the previous chapter. Hobsbawm's concept of invented traditions situates the regionalist focus on Celtic ethnicity within the context of rapid social change across Europe. It was a discursive mechanism for the regionalist intellectuals – Manuel Murguía in particular – to create a legitimising narrative based on a notion of continuity with the past. As *Volksgeist* replaced ethnicity as the main focus of liberal *galeguistas*, imagined community becomes the relevant analytical concept. As Anderson writes: 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.'<sup>232</sup> This passage, part of Anderson's definition of the imagined community, invokes the emotional sentiment that the early nationalists sought to inculcate.

The value of oral history lies in its suitability as a methodology to examine how Galicians imagine Galicia, and to what extent this conforms to official *galeguista* articulations of the nation. Do Galicians still conceive of themselves as ethnically or culturally Celtic? To what extent is language a key marker of identity? Does a Galician national consciousness exist and how does it interact with football? I engage with these questions in the empirical chapters that follow. And, in doing so, I gauge how different articulations of Galicianness have endured over the decades.

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<sup>232</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.5.

# Chapter Four: Radical groups and the performance of *galleguismo*

## Introduction

Xoán talks quickly, as if impatient to finish one word before he starts the next. His gaze is fixed but he gesticulates, animated. We are in a faded hospitality suite, deep in the bowels of Balaídos, Celta Vigo's stadium. We sit across from one another in white leather armchairs. The material makes it hard to not slide into a recline. I would cross my legs to hold an upright position, but fear I would too closely resemble a contemplative psychologist listening to a patient.

[Gal] The first radical group in Balaídos was born in '85, which was Xuventudes Celestes. That's the era when- I was there in the main stand with the old boys and their cigars, their hipflasks of whisky, but they didn't support, and I looked over at them with the flares, the smoke, the drums, 'I want to go over there, I want to go over there'.

Xoán's attire betrays a sartorial education on the terraces and in the fanzines; a Lyle and Scott t-shirt in the sky blue of Celta beneath a Stone Island jacket. The quick-fire speech continues.

I said 'you can watch football in a passive way, as it were, eating *pipas* and listening to the radio and that', and that's valid, my dad is still a Celta socio, but he prefers to

watch the matches *tranquilo*, sat down in the main stand, but I liked the more active [form of support].<sup>233</sup>

The panorama of Galician fandom changed in the 1980s. For decades, groups of friends – overwhelmingly male – performed the same rituals. They ate, they drank, occasionally they played the *gaita*, and then they watched the football together. In the stadium, though, they practised a passive form of support.<sup>234</sup> New groups formed throughout the decade and into the 1990s, made up of teenage boys like Xoán, conscious that they were pioneers of an alluring subculture. ‘Maybe it was about being the centre of attention,’ Xoán reflects. ‘Clearly, my dad smoking a cigar in the main stand isn’t going to get on TV, but me with a flare in my hand, I might.’ Xoán wanted to be an active participant in the spectacle of the football match, not merely a passive observer. He wanted to perform.

In this chapter I argue that ‘radical’ Galician fan groups have competed to perform the purest version of *galeguismo* since they began to form in the late 1980s. In doing so, they sought to undermine the Galicianist credentials of rival groups, while emphasising the ideological coherence of their own. I introduce a dual performativity that runs as a central thread through the chapter: first, the performative events the participants describe. Second, their performance in the interview; *how* they describe the events. I define the ‘ultras’ movement and explain why I used the alternative term ‘radical groups’ in this chapter. Then, I discuss the origins and characteristics of radical groups in Galicia. With this context established, I use data from the oral history interviews – supplemented by material from contemporary fanzines – to show how radical groups were proud to perform a version of

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<sup>233</sup> *Pipas* (sunflower seeds) are a popular snack at football matches in Spain.

<sup>234</sup> The *gaita* is a Galician form of bagpipe, the national instrument.



Galician identity underpinned by a belief in the importance of symbols, both Galician and Spanish. I consider the radical groups' performance of hegemonic masculinity and the extent to which it constitutes an ancillary performance of Galicianness. Finally, I examine a key strand of the oppositional performance of Galician identity: the weaponisation of ideological coherence, as rival groups sought to present one another as un-Galician.

Ultras are notoriously nebulous and difficult to define. Some groups have morphed into criminal gangs, many into neo-fascist cells, while others are anti-capitalist idealists that champion refugees' rights. They are fiercely local in their focus – their terrace, city, nation – yet part of a global sub-culture in which fans from different continents exchange songs, politics, and protests. The journalist James Montague travelled to 25 countries to spend time with ultras of all flavours. In *1312: Among the Ultras*, he concludes that contrariness and a mistrust of authority – particularly the police – unite the ultras.<sup>235</sup> They are united by what they stand against. In a broad sense, 'ultras' refers to an organised style of fandom characterised by 'an extreme sense of camaraderie' with fellow supporters, and the performance of 'an unwavering loyalty and support' for their team and each other.<sup>236</sup> Expressions of support take the form of collective behaviours such as choreographies and chants, as the ultras – overwhelmingly young men – produce and reproduce a shared sense of identity.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> J. Montague, *1312: Among the Ultras* (London, 2020).

<sup>236</sup> M. Doidge, R. Kossakowski, and S. Mintert, *Ultras: The passion and performance of contemporary football fandom* (Manchester, 2020), p.5.

<sup>237</sup> For an ethnographic analysis of female participation in groups of organised supporters, see: I. Pitti, 'Being women in a male preserve: an ethnography of female football ultras', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 28/3 (2019), pp.318–329.

'Ultras' is a charged term in Galicia. The media, academics, and supporters alike tend to refer to the groups that feature in this chapter as 'ultras'. The groups, however, rejected the term, which they associated with right-wing ideology. They referred to themselves as 'supporters', '*siareiros*' (the Galician word for 'supporters') or, in some cases, 'hooligans'.<sup>238</sup> Accordingly, I refer to 'radical groups', which is more precise than 'supporters' and conveys their extreme fanaticism, while respecting their vernacular preferences.<sup>239</sup> They are distinguishable from other match-going supporters by their collective behaviour, performance of ideological politics, and the vehemence of their support. These are the same traits that make them radical. The performance of ideological politics is central. Most radical groups in Galicia defend a staunchly anti-fascist and Galician nationalist ideology.<sup>240</sup> This, in itself, makes the Galician context notable. Radical groups tend to adopt *either* a progressive, anti-fascist *or* a nationalist ideology. It is rare in Europe to find an area in which multiple groups straddle both positions.

Radical groups originated in Galicia in the years following the 1982 World Cup, for which A Coruña and Vigo were host cities. They pursued an active form of support in conscious opposition to the passivity of the traditional match-going fan, whom younger radicals saw as fusty old men who mechanically nibbled on sunflower seeds, pausing only to chunter an insult at the referee or to puff on a cigar. Radical groups in Galicia have broadly similar origin stories. In the absence of compelling alternative leisure pursuits, teenage boys united in

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<sup>238</sup> 'Ultras' and 'hooligans' are often used interchangeably. The principal differences between 'British' hooliganism and 'European' ultras concern violence and the nature of performance. Hooligans focus on competitive violence against opposing groups. While ultras do use violence, their focus is the choreographed performance of support.

<sup>239</sup> C. Viñas, *Ultras: Los radicales del fútbol español* (Manresa, 2023), p.27.

<sup>240</sup> The main exception is Infierno Ferrolano, the radical supporters of Racing Ferrol, who presented themselves as the sole defenders of Spanishness in Galician football culture. The group has disbanded and been replaced by Diablos Verdes, a politically neutral group.

search of camaraderie and protagonism. As Xoán articulated at the start of the chapter, they aspired to be the active, collective producers of the spectacle, as well as its consumers. The social composition of the groups, Afonso Eiré argues, was decidedly middle class. Eiré – the long-time editor of *A Nosa Terra*, the Galician-language newspaper – stated in 1998 that 80 per cent of Celtarras (Celta Vigo) members were middle-class students (of whom 40 per cent attended university). Ten per cent were employed and only ten per cent were ‘without a declared occupation’. The composition of Riazor Blues (Deportivo) was, Eiré adds, identical.<sup>241</sup>

The Galician groups looked to Britain and Italy for inspiration. Italy, where fans engaged in elaborate choreography and the use of pyrotechnics, became the main aesthetic reference. Britain became the reference for those more interested in violence and ‘casual culture’.<sup>242</sup> This resulted in tussles within radical groups, as different factions sought to establish the Italian or British model. In the late 1990s, as Argentine football appeared on Spanish television screens, Galician groups also looked to Argentina to replicate the vibrancy and ceaseless melodic singing of the fans.<sup>243</sup>

Group	Club	Year of foundation
Celtarras	Celta Vigo	1987
Riazor Blues	Deportivo de la Coruña	1987

<sup>241</sup> Eiré, *O fútbol na sociedade galega*, p.53.

<sup>242</sup> For a chronological review of the casuals as a subculture of football hooliganism, see C. Blanco Rodríguez, ‘The origins of casual culture: hooliganism and fashion in Great Britain’, *Culture and History Digital Journal*, 8/1 (2019), pp.1–13.

<sup>243</sup> Despite the influence of Argentine football culture, never in my fieldwork did participants ever refer to mass emigration to – or the Galician diaspora in – Argentina as leading to a sense of kinship that groups sought to reproduce in the stadium.

Grei Xentalla	Deportivo de la Coruña	1996
Fende Testas	Compostela	1995
Muralla Norte	CD Lugo	c.1992
Brigadas Lucenses	CD Lugo	c.2002
Krusadas Boirenses*	CD Boiro	1994
UltraSil*	CD Barco	c.2000
Os Rapacollóns*	SD Fisterra	2015

*Table 1 – list of radical groups to which participants belong(ed). \*Groups associated with semi-professional or amateur clubs that play in the regional Galician leagues.*

I interviewed 15 members of the groups listed in Table 1. Though I do not quote all these people in this chapter, each interview was another twist in of kaleidoscope, revealing patterns that informed my perspective. One common thread ran through all 15 interviews, and it confirmed a central idea in the recent research of Doidge et al: the significance of performance for members of radical groups. This performance occurs on two levels. First, through the events and memories that the participants refer to in the interviews. Second, *how* the participants describe these events. The point of departure, Carlson says, is that ‘performance is always performance for someone, some audience that recognises and validates it as a performance even when, as is occasionally the case, that audience is the self.’<sup>244</sup> Members of radical groups perform to multiple audiences, both within the stadium and beyond: the players, the media, their fellow supporters in the stands, those watching on television, the police, other members of the same group, and more. Different members can perform to different audiences simultaneously or at different moments. Football matches

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<sup>244</sup> M. Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (Abingdon, 2018), p.5.

take place weekly throughout the season. They provide a space for regular performance and the enactment of rituals to create a shared identity that extends beyond the 90 minutes in the stadium. Doidge et al argue that through these ritualistic performances, ‘ultras produce a collective emotional energy that not only unites them during the match but also sustains their identification to the club between matches.’<sup>245</sup>

The use of oral history as a methodology introduces the secondary layer of performance. An interview is, in itself, a performance for a certain audience(s) in a certain context. As Lynn Abrams says, even if the audience consists only of the interviewer, ‘the narrator is aware that he or she is communicating experience in a heightened encounter’ in a way that differs from everyday conversation.<sup>246</sup> The narrator’s choice of language, their demeanour, the cadence of their voice, and the clothes they wear, are all performative elements of the interview encounter intended to portray – consciously or unconsciously – a particular version of the self. Indeed, a participant may have told anecdotes before or rehearsed what they were going to say before the interview. In the 2022 documentary *Oswald: El Falsificador*, director Kike Maíllo investigates the compelling character of Oswald Aulestia, a Catalan art forger. Maíllo filmed several interviews with Oswald. He spliced the interviews together in the documentary, so Oswald opened an anecdote in Venice, elaborated it in a Barcelona bistro, and closed it back in Italy. Not only did this create a rich audiovisual effect, it also demonstrated that people repeat stories and hone their performance across various encounters. The researcher can untangle the layers of performance to explore how, through football, the participants performed and continue to perform a version of Galicianness. The focus within oral history on individual testimony is particularly valuable given as Doidge et al

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<sup>245</sup> Doidge et al, *Ultras*, p.16.

<sup>246</sup> Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p.132.

state, 'to be an ultra is to subsume your identity into a wider collective.'<sup>247</sup> It permits engagement with the interaction between shared and individual memory.

## Performance of Galician identity

After Deportivo beat Celta in January 1999, most columnists indulged in the customary discussion of players and tactics. Yet in the Galician-language newspaper *A Nosa Terra*, Afonso Eiré – writing under the pseudonym 'Pucheiro' – turned to the latest conflict on the terraces. It concerned the contested ownership of *A Rianxeira*, a Galician folk song and cultural symbol. Riazor Blues had sung the song, with lyrical tweaks to incorporate jibes at Vigo and Celta. Celtarras, irritated, accused their adversaries of appropriation. 'We sung it first', they grumbled. The custody battle moved beyond the radical groups to traditional supporters. A Deportivo *peña* from Rianxo, the town from which the song originated, claimed it as their own. A Celta *peña* from Chantada, a town in Lugo province, objected. The song did not refer to the town of Rianxo, they argued, but to the smallholders from that area who travelled to Chantada to sell their seasonal produce.<sup>248</sup> The supporters of each team squabbled over who had the right, the privilege, to perform this cultural symbol in the stadium. This episode reveals two characteristics of the radical groups. First, an intense pride to be Galician. Second, a belief in the importance of symbols to the performance of that Galician pride.

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<sup>247</sup> Doidge et al, *Ultras*, p.2.

<sup>248</sup> Pucheiro, 'A Rianxeira non se quixo converter en regueifa', *A Nosa Terra*, 868, 4 February 1999, p.17.

### Pride in *galeguismo*

Anxo is a Deportivo supporter from Ourense. He is also fond of his local club, Unión Deportiva Ourense, and as a teenager he travelled to matches with the Ouligans, a left-wing, nationalist group from the city. 'It's not a majority view but those with the strongest voice tend to be left wing and Galician nationalists,' Anxo said. 'Everywhere, I think'. He expressed a belief that other participants shared; nationalism may not be the majority view in Galician stadia, but it is the prominent, vocal minority. Participants from radical groups were proud of this identification, proud to give a voice to what they considered a threatened identity. Some viewed ideological conviction as fundamental and unnegotiable. Fiz was a founding member of Fende Testas. He recalled how, over the years, people have suggested the group soften its anti-fascist, *galeguista* stance.

[Gal] Sometimes there were people who came to our meetings and proposed that our *peña* should maybe be less political, that it could grow and become bigger. And everyone said: 'absolutely not'. We'd rather be fewer and be political, than be an apolitical group and ignore politics, because for us it's fundamental.

This sense of a conscious Galician identity was fluid. Individuals were exposed to new ideas and formed new opinions as they became involved with radical groups. Edu recalled a process of politicisation through his membership of Riazor Blues in the 2000s. '[Esp] As a result of getting involved in football, being on the terrace, I became interested [in nationalist politics], for a few years I was actually pretty *reivindicativo*, radical, and my friends were too, some more than others.' Since Edu drifted away from Riazor Blues he has become less '*reivindicativo*', to use his own wording. He was at his most politically conscious when he

was part of the group. The stadium, therefore, was not just a space for the performance of Galician pride. It was a space in which, through involvement with radical groups, young men became consciously proud to be Galician.

Expressions of Galician pride in the interviews are consistent with content published in fanzines throughout the 1990s. Fanzines are independent ‘fan magazines’ made by the fans, for the fans. Haynes stated in 1995 that fanzines had become ‘a firmly established part of football culture’ in the United Kingdom, and it was the same in Spain.<sup>249</sup> Fanzines tended to be club specific and reflected current sporting and political issues in a satirical way, through a combination of articles and cartoons. In an early issue of *Bancada Norte*, the Fende Testas fanzine, the author of the opening editorial insisted: ‘Somos SIAREIROS e aínda por riba GALEGOS’ [‘We’re SUPPORTERS and above all GALICIANS’].<sup>250</sup> Various fanzines linked to Celtarras published overtly *galeguista* content, from an article on the history of the Partido Galeguista to a profile of the Galicianist intellectual Alexandre Bóveda (the first signed off, rather incongruously, with Celtarras’ slogan at the time: ‘*borrachos e orgullosos*’ [‘drunk and proud’]).<sup>251</sup> Celtarras had changed their slogan to the more serious-minded ‘*por Galiza e polo Celta*’ [‘For Galicia and for Celta’] by the publication of the second article. Galician groups were proud to defend Galician nationalism. The appropriation and rejection of different symbols was central to this defence.

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<sup>249</sup> R. Haynes, *The Football Imagination: The Rise of Football Fanzine Culture* (Aldershot, 1995), p.152. For further reading on fanzines, see: D. Jary, J. Horne and T. Bucke, ‘Football “fanzines” and football culture: a case of successful “cultural contestation”’, *Sociological Review*, 39/3 (1991), pp.581–597, and C. Prieto, A. Cuevas and M. Moreno, *Papeles subterráneos: Fanzines musicales en España desde la transición al siglo XXI* (Madrid, 1991).

<sup>250</sup> *Bancada Norte*, 4 (1995), p.4.

<sup>251</sup> *Fondo Celtarra*, 20 (1994), p.11., *Tropas de Breogán*, 4 (1996), pp.25–26.



## Defence of Galician symbology

It is late 2021 and drizzle blows across the pitch at SD Compostela's San Lázaro stadium, each wave illuminated by the long-legged floodlights that lean over the mottled roof like iron storks. I have spent the day with Fiz and the Fende Testas. Lunch, beers, and now the main event. Fiz ties a once-white banner that bears the group's name to the back of the stand. He looks at it admiringly and tells me that Castelao designed the calligraphy. A younger member of the group attaches an *estrelleira* to a fence.<sup>252</sup> Galician nationalist symbols are prominent in this corner of San Lázaro. Indeed, it is with Fiz and his fellow Fende Testas member Hadrián, several weeks later, that I appreciate how steadfastly the radical groups defend 'their' symbols. After the conclusion of an interview, they offer to drop me at the train station. As we round a corner on the way into the city centre, a temporary police checkpoint comes into view. There is a sense of inevitability as an officer waves us to the side of the road. We wait on the pavement as the police search the van and take our details. I wonder what they make of a Brit travelling with two Galician skinheads, but they make no comment. Subtle shakes of the head and exaggerated exhalation betray that Fiz and Hadrián are annoyed. This is a new experience for me. It is a tediously regular one for them. The search complete, we get back in the van. An officer comes to the driver's window. She explains that she found Fende Testas stickers in the glovebox and asks if she can take them to decorate her locker. Hadrián turns the key in the ignition and looks at her. 'Non', he says, straight faced, as he moves the gearstick into first and pulls away. 'Que fillos de puta', Fiz mutters. 'Que humillación'.

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<sup>252</sup> The *estrelleira* combines the Galician flag with a red star. It is associated with left-wing Galician nationalism.

The variety of flags on display in the stadium further reflects an attachment to symbols. A glance at the radical groups reveals a smattering of *estreliras* and flags that carry Castela's crest rallying cry '*denantes mortos que escravos*' ['better dead than enslaved'].<sup>253</sup> Zoom in further and the *galeguista* t-shirts and tattoos come into focus. Several participants mentioned flags in the interviews, unprompted. I asked seven participants about their memories of the *Nunca Máis* movement, formed in response to the mishandling of the 2002 *Prestige* oil disaster. Five recalled the presence of the distinctive *Nunca Máis* flag, with the white of the Galician flag replaced by black to represent the oil. Similarly, when I prompted participants for their memories of Galician national team matches in the 2000s, a significant number commented on the number of Galician flags on display in the stadium. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Emile Durkheim describes flags as a modern version of the totems he identifies in Australian aboriginal culture. Both are simple objects that are ritually displayed and cared for as if they were persons. According to Durkheim, the flag serves as the group's collective representation of itself. The soldier in battle 'forgets that the flag is only a symbol that has no value in itself but only brings to mind the reality it represents.'<sup>254</sup> This explains the allure of the flag and, by extension, why so many participants mentioned it. The faded Fende Testas banner is not just a decorative item, but a repository of meaning that reminds the group of the nationalist values it defends. The flag is an item to be defended or attacked depending on its positive or negative associations.

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<sup>253</sup> Castela designed the crest in 1937 as a potential future, secular Galician flag.

<sup>254</sup> E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York, 1995), p.222. Robert Shanafelt develops Durkheim's view of the flag as linked to mythology and ritual by emphasising its political connotations as an expression of dominance and subordination. See: R. Shanafelt, 'The Nature of Flag Power: How Flags Entail Dominance, Subordination, and Social Solidarity', *Politics and Life Sciences*, 27/2 (2008), pp.13–27.

In order to explore the significance of the flag further, I want to turn to a dialogue from an interview with Joni and Juan Ramón. Both men were members of Riazor Blues and, latterly, Grei Xentalla, an overtly political splinter group formed in 1995 to strengthen the claim for a Galician national team, as well as to support Deportivo. I asked about a rumour that Augusto César Lendoiro – the president of Deportivo La Coruña from 1988 to 2014 – offered Riazor Blues money to remove Galician flags from their terrace.

[Gal] JR: There was a meeting right there in Parrús [a bar in Coruña], and there- we were off to Logroño, Fran López arrived-

J: Well this I didn't know.

JR: Yeah, because you weren't at that meeting. And he [Fran López] said 'from now on they'll pay for our travel, but Lendoiro said we can't put up Galician flags.' Not even Spanish flags- he didn't want Galician flags. Yep, that was the proposal, that they'd pay for our travel.

J: Lendoiro was PP, you know.<sup>255</sup>

JR: Absolutely. He was involved in politics in that era, you know. We voted against- before Siareiros Galegos this was- so you get an idea that the Blues weren't- they voted against. We all voted. And it came out against, but that was the proposal.

J: That's a lack of respect, you know what I mean.

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<sup>255</sup> Joni referred to Lendoiro's affiliation with the conservative Partido Popular during the 1980s and 1990s.

Riazor Blues – and the other radical groups – funded themselves through membership fees and the sale of merchandise. To not have to pay for travel to away matches, as per Lendoiro's proposal, would have eased a significant financial and logistical burden. That Riazor Blues voted to decline the offer reveals the visceral attachment to the flag and the freedom to fly it. Joni saw the mere proposal as disrespectful and offers Lendoiro's affiliation to the Partido Popular as an explanation. Curiously, Afonso Eiré claims in *Fútbol na sociedade galega* that Riazor Blues accepted Lendoiro's proposal.<sup>256</sup> This contradicts both Juan Ramón's testimony and the version of events established by Grei Xentalla in a 1996 interview with *Bancada Norte*, the Fende Testas fanzine.<sup>257</sup> Regardless of the veracity of the competing memories of the episode, the existence of this contradiction reflects the prominence of symbols – and flags in particular – in the discourse around radical groups in Galicia. Yet the meaning of this prominence is the subject of debate. Scholars, journalists, and supporters have pondered whether those who waved the flag in the stadium did so as an expression of ideology, or as a performative ritual without social meaning. Spaaij and Viñas note:

although left-wing fan groups draw on 'thick' ideologies to articulate their beliefs and legitimize their actions, we must bear in mind their often shallow ideologization, which in many cases goes no deeper than the display of symbols and paraphernalia.

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<sup>256</sup> Eiré, *Fútbol na sociedade galega*, p.55.

<sup>257</sup> The representative of Grei Xentalla said: 'When we started out as a *peña* we had a lot of issues with putting up Galician flags on the terrace, the head of security at Riazor even spoke to us and said "I'm *muy roxo*, very left wing, I'm even a UPG supporter, but Bloque flags? Lendoiro won't allow it." There ended up being a few incidents that ended with arrests; now that the elections are over, they let us hang up big banners.', *Bancada Norte*, 17 (1996), p.5.

In that regard, it is arguably more pertinent to speak of a 'pseudo-ideology' built on image alone, lacking any coherence or depth of thought.<sup>258</sup>

Afonso Eiré considered the question from a Galician nationalist perspective in 1995. He argued too much importance is attached to the presence of nationalist symbols in the stadium. 'This paraphernalia has very little do with true political conscience', he wrote. 'The strife with their Galician rivals is a palpable lack of ideology.'<sup>259</sup> If radical groups were truly conscious of the symbolic meaning of the flags they waved, it follows, they would set aside localist posturing and unite in the name of Galicia. Similar concerns existed internally within the groups. A contributor to *Bancada Norte*, the Fende Testas fanzine, lamented that 'there are a fair few among our group who go around with Che, Lenin, or nationalist badges [...] when they have no fucking idea what that word means, or what the hell Che or Lenin did, etc.'<sup>260</sup>

Members of the radical groups are heterogenous, despite their performance of unity. Undoubtedly, some waved flags uncritically, to perform, to provoke, or to differentiate themselves from displays of Spanish symbology by ultras elsewhere in Spain. Others, however, adorned themselves in nationalist symbology to perform a coherent, informed ideological stance. Most 'radical' participants fit in the second category. They often steered the interview into a discussion of Galician culture and history in a way that revealed genuine erudition. Indeed, they were knowledgeable about sub-state nationalism beyond Galicia, in Ireland, Brittany, Corsica. This depth of interest may reflect the profile of the participants.

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<sup>258</sup> R. Spaaij and C. Viñas, 'Political ideology and activism in football fan culture in Spain: a view from the far left', *Soccer and Society*, 14/2 (2013), p.185.

<sup>259</sup> A. Eiré, 'As contradicións futbolísticas dalguns nacionalistas', *A Nosa Terra*, 692, 21 September 1995, p.14.

<sup>260</sup> *Bancada Norte*, 10 (1996), p.7.

They were prominent, long-term members of their respective groups, for whom ideological convictions forged decades ago remain strong. Perhaps if I were to interview the teenager who tagged along with a group for a couple of years but later drifted away, they would better reflect the idea of pseudo-ideology that Spaaij and Viñas present.

The prohibition of flags was a prominent topic in the interviews. Four participants lamented that they could not take their usual repertoire of flags into certain stadiums because security staff deemed them to be unconstitutional or overtly political. While this is not a high proportion of participants, those who raised this theme discussed it at length. It was clearly important to them. Albi is a Deportivo supporter from Vilagarcía de Arousa. He is a member of Old Faces, the section of Riazor Blues that is home to the group's elder statesmen.

[Gal] I had problems- I've got the cow flag, I don't know if you know it, the Galician one with the cow on it, a friend of mine from Coruña invented it, Antón Lezcano, and I went with him to a Dépor game in Valladolid, with the flag, which isn't illegal, in case you're thinking *estrelleira*, which is 'illegal' in inverted commas, but a Galician flag with a cow on it... I arrive there and the police on the gate say to me 'you can't take that flag in', 'what?', 'that flag's illegal', 'what do you mean it's illegal, it's just a Galician flag with a cow on it', are there not Spanish flags with a bull on them, for God's sake.

Albi implied that a Spanish flag with a bull is considered apolitical, yet a Galician flag with a cow is not.<sup>261</sup> This prohibition was not just about the affront, but tied up with broader

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<sup>261</sup> The 'Bandeira da vaca' is a non-official flag that fits a wider trend of displaying the animal that represents the sub-state nation, in response to the prominence of the bull in other areas of Spain. The equivalent Catalan flag has an image of a donkey.

grievances about the perceived unfair treatment of Galicia in relation to Madrid. It is useful at this point to return to Anxo, the Deportivo supporter from Ourense. We were talking about the Galician national team. If it played more often, I asked, what political consequences would follow?

[Gal] I think that given they'd played once and with all the Galician flags that were there, and everything that implies, it has political consequences, obviously I think it looks great but look, I don't have a vision- I'm not chauvinistic, if my country were independent or if it were a nation, I wouldn't be as patriotic, but my country doesn't have a state, we live under another state so for me it does- at this moment in time I think these kinds of displays are important, maybe if one day Galiza is more independent, well the national team may not matter as much to me, or the flag. But not at this moment in time, at this moment in time I think it's really important.

Anxo reminded here that the importance of symbols is situational and fluid. The flag assumes greater significance as a symbol of shared identity when the bearer perceives that identity to be under threat. To fly the flag in this context becomes an act of rebellion. And for some 'radical' participants, the Spanish flag represents the threat to Galician identity.

### Rejection of Spanish symbology

Participants discussed the rejection of three symbols of Spanishness: the flag, the language, and individuals perceived to belong to the far-right. '[Gal] These days you won't see a single Spanish flag in Riazor,' Carlos (Riazor Blues) said proudly. 'In a lot of Spanish stadiums you see loads of Spanish flags and loads of people in Spain shirts, but here not a soul.' Sime, a member of Celtarras, said remarkably similar: '[Gal] Spanish flags don't go down well in

Balaídos. You'll never see a Celta fan with a Spanish flag, never, never.' Indeed, Sime actively removed symbols of Spanishness from Balaídos. He recalled the summer that, as an adolescent, he removed a Spanish flag from the stadium.

In the 80s, Xuventudes Celestes started in '85, on the director's box there was a huge Spanish flag, huge. And obviously from the Río Baixo stand on the other side, we saw it, 'fucking Spain' and all that but it never went any further, we were four nerds, you know, the rest of the stadium wasn't nationalist in the bloody slightest. One summer, when there wasn't football on, well one night four or five of us got into the stadium, we took the Spanish flag down and they never put it back up, clearly it was there because it was there, but there wasn't more to it, it was simply what was there. So we took it down and they never bothered to put it back up.

Shanafelt develops the Durkheimian view of the flag as linked to mythology and ritual. He suggests that flags are not just symbols with arbitrary constructed meanings, but 'political signifiers that evoke predispositions related to dominance and subordination.'<sup>262</sup> The position of the flag in the director's box, the physical and institutional centre of the stadium, evoked a dominance that Sime objected to. As an extension of the same sentiment, Joni (Grei Xentalla) challenged the translation of toponyms from Galician to Spanish.

[Gal] There was a mural at the entrance to Coruña that had 'La Coruña' on it, and we would go there at night and get rid of the 'L' until they got fed up, and what did they put there instead? The *Torre de Hércules* [laughs]. They got tired of sending the gardeners there and bollocks to it, they put the *Torre de Hércules* there. They got so

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<sup>262</sup> Shanafelt, 'The Nature of Flag Power', p.24.



fed up of us taking away the 'L' that they end up putting the *Torre de Hércules* and a boat.

This anecdote, which Joni delivered through fits of giggles, reflects the importance that he attached to language as an expression of Galician identity. This is a recurring theme. In 1994 a contributor to *Fondo Celtarra* chastised fellow members of Celtarras for chanting in Spanish rather than Galician. 'For me that's an absolute embarrassment,' they wrote. 'What's going on? Don't they realise where we are?'<sup>263</sup> Of the 15 participants who are or were members of the radical groups listed in Table 1, I interviewed 14 in Galician. The one participant whom I interviewed in Spanish, Edu, was acutely aware of the contradiction inherent in this (see Chapter Eight for a detailed discussion of Edu's sociolinguistic self-awareness).

The rejection of Spanishness extended beyond physical and linguistic symbols. It also applied to individuals. It is useful to contrast the veneration of Nacho with the repudiation of Salva Ballesta. Nacho, a Galician, played at full-back for Celta and Compostela with sufficient prowess to spark speculation of a call-up to the Spain national team ahead of the Euro 1996 tournament. Salva Ballesta, meanwhile, played for Sevilla, Atlético Madrid and, briefly, Bolton Wanderers, before he became a coach in 2010. Three years later he was overlooked for the job of Assistant Coach at Celta Vigo because of his political views. Sime (Celtarras) took up the story of Nacho:

[Gal] Nacho was very discrete. All Nacho did was make it known to the coach of the Spanish national team, who was Javier Clemente, a Basque, a Basque nationalist, he

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<sup>263</sup> *Fondo Celtarra*, 13 (1994), p.4.

said to him: ‘don’t call me up because I won’t come, and if you call me up they’re going to ban me, ‘I’ll be banned from the league’. So Clemente was really smart, he said ‘don’t worry Nacho’. But Nacho has got some serious bollocks [spreads his hands wide] and he did something that a lot of Basque and Catalan players didn’t do, loads, as in loads of them were nationalists but they played for Spain. Nacho said ‘no’.

The details of this exchange between Nacho and Clemente – if it took place at all – are unknown. Nacho is reluctant to speak in public about the episode and declined my invitation to participate in this research. Yet ‘Nachonalista’, as he was affectionately nicknamed, became a symbol of ideological coherence and anti-Spanish sentiment. And crucially for Sime, he did what Basque players did not.

[Gal] In the case of the Basques, the legend goes that in the 80s there were a couple of players who were ETA militants back when ETA was much more than four blokes with- like, it was a much bigger thing, well Satrúsgetui was- they won the league with Real Sociedad, the other one was- Satrústegui and Zamora. Two Real Sociedad players. And they played for Spain, and people say that it was on ETA’s orders.

Not only did Nacho represent to Sime a rejection of Spain, but also a rare example of Galician conviction compared to Basque conformity. Participants, including Sime, lamented Galician submissiveness and admired the Basque Country and Catalonia as bastions of resistance (for more information see Chapter Six). Nacho contradicted this narrative at a time when his symbolic value was useful to Galician radical groups as a means to represent on the pitch the opposition to the Spanish state that they performed in the stands. Xoán

(Celtarras) explained why, on the other hand, he could not abide the presence of Salva Ballesta at Celta:

[Gal] Salva is a bloke who is very clearly on the far right, so he says ‘they [Celta] won’t sign me because I’m Spanish’. No, that’s nonsense, you can feel Spanish and play for Celta, and there are [Celta] players who have played for Spain, there’s no problem there, most Celta fans see themselves as Spanish. That wasn’t the problem, he twisted things, ‘they won’t sign me because I’m Spanish’, no, it’s lies. People don’t want you because you’ve got far-right views that our fanbase doesn’t share.

Sime (Celtarras) elaborated on how the group exerted pressure on the Celta board.

[Gal] Well for us, for Celtarras, it was a victory because we managed to stop them hiring an assistant coach because we rang the president, ‘you’re going to find yourself with real problems’- Salva had publicly said ‘anyone who doesn’t feel Spanish is a retard’, as always, you know, and of course among the Celta fanbase there are five or ten per cent of us who aren’t Spanish, so the assistant coach insulting you before- so we managed to bend the board’s arm and it was a proper result. In terms of the repercussions, even today you go to grounds like Real Sociedad and some older bloke will say ‘ah Celta, the Salva Ballesta thing’ you know, it shows that it’s more than a club.

It is notable that Xoán and Sime both acknowledged, in discussion of the same individual, that they are in the minority of Celta fans that do not identify as Spanish. This echoes the view of Anxo, the Deportivo supporter from Ourense, who saw the Galicianist element in stadia as highly visible but a clear minority. In any case, Sime believed that his group has the

power to affect change within the framework of a particular set of beliefs, and Celtarras performed this with tangible results in the Salva Ballesta episode. Participants were intensely proud of this distinctly Galician, anti-fascist ideology. And they performed this identity through the display of Galician nationalist symbols and the destruction of symbols of Spanishness. There is no question that they viewed football as a vehicle for the defence of Galicia against perceived Spanish oppression.

The othering of Spain by radical groups continues to this day. In March Vigo celebrates the anniversary of *A Reconquista*, a popular uprising in 1809 that expelled Napoleon's army from the city. In the 2022 edition, the *Casco Vello* – or old town – of Vigo heaved with traditionally dressed revellers, the air thick with sweet barbeque smoke and the smell of chorizo. Tropas de Breogán, the group that succeeded Celtarras in 2019, decorated the city with red stickers to mark the occasion. '*Nin español, nin franceses*' ['Neither Spanish nor French'], the stickers read. '*Somos galegos e vigueses*' ['We're Galician and *vigués*']. Tropas de Breogán grouped Spain and France together as foreign invaders.

### Performance of masculinity

The performance of Galician identity in a footballing context is entwined with various performances of masculinity. The ultras movement embraces hypermasculine imagery that draws upon militarism, virility and fraternal unity. In doing so, it adheres to Connell's categorisation of hegemonic masculinity, which privileges characteristics such as physical strength, emotional control, and solidarity, while excluding femininity and other forms of masculinity. It is understood, therefore, as 'hegemony over women' and 'hegemony over

subordinate masculinities.’<sup>264</sup> Galician radical groups performed masculinity in various ways. The names – Brigadas Lucenses or Tropas de Breogán – conjure images of warriors or armies. This is linked to the symbolic occupation of space, which manifests in two ways. First, the demarcation of territory. The streets of A Coruña and Vigo are decorated with stickers and graffiti that establish the zone as territory of Riazor Blues and Celtarras/Tropas de Breogán respectively. It is rare to find a gents’ toilet in a Vigo bar that does not have the cistern adorned with Celta stickers. Second, the language of invasion as a demonstration of dominance over the rival. When I asked Edu (Riazor Blues) about his memories of derby matches in Vigo, he told me about the *corteo*, the procession of visiting supporters through the opposition city with banners and chanting. ‘[Esp] With your banner at the front, defending it, and all the group behind singing,’ he recalled. ‘Absolutely class.’ Fanzines consistently reproduced this language of invasion and occupation. They also printed dozens of cartoons and drawings that depicted the group exerting physical dominance over the perceived enemy, be that another Galician group or, as was more common, right-wing groups from across Spain.

One could interpret this performance of masculinity as an extension of a performance of Galician identity. Helena Miguélez-Carballeira identifies a discursive change in the articulation of political Galician nationalism in the early-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>265</sup> The new discourse rejected the Spanish construction of Galicia as sentimental and feminine, and instead

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<sup>264</sup> R. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics* (Cambridge, 1987), p.183. Though the concept of hegemonic masculinity is the most influential element of Connell’s theory of masculinity, it has attracted criticism. For an account of its major criticisms and a defence of its underlying principles (with reformulations in certain areas), see: R. Connell and J.W. Messerschmidt, ‘Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the concept’, *Gender and Society*, 19 (2005), pp.829–859.

<sup>265</sup> H. Miguélez-Carballeira, ‘From Sentimentality to Masculine Excess in Galician National Discourse: Approaching Ricardo Carvalho Calero’s Literary History’, *Men and Masculinities*, 15/4 (2012), p.374.

presented Galician national identity as masculine. Galician nationalism's capacity for political action became, therefore, a 'question of virility'.<sup>266</sup> The proponents of this rhetoric – among them Ramón Villar Ponte and other contributors to *A Nosa Terra* – saw political activism as a physical as well as intellectual endeavour.<sup>267</sup> They sought to counteract the metaphor of Galicia as feminine and drive a discursive wedge between 'virile' political nationalism and apolitical cultural regionalism. The 'new nationalists', as Miguélez-Carballeira calls them, presented themselves as the bearers of an idealised Galician masculinity based on the assigned characteristics of rationality and aggressive virility.<sup>268</sup>

Participants emphasised the physical strength and cunning of their own radical group, often through the telling of anecdotes in which they had won a street battle despite a numerical disadvantage. Edu, for example, told me that he had a good anecdote, one that he thought I would like to hear. He proceeded to tell me the story of when a small band of Riazor Blues members travelled to Ferrol and won a fight against a larger group of Racing Ferrol ultras. '[Esp] I tell you what, we didn't lose many fights in the time I was- we weren't the hardest but we were smart, you know, we didn't try to go anywhere without really planning it so to speak.' In his emphasis of the group's cunning and ability to handle themselves, Edu performed in the interview a version of masculinity that adhered to the early Galician nationalist ideal of rationality and virility. But he did not frame this triumph in Galicianist terms, which he could have done given the common smear of Ferrol as a Spanish 'other' within Galicia. Indeed, none of the participants framed violence against non-Galician groups as a victory of Galician masculine strength over, say, Castilian weakness. Instead, they

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<sup>266</sup> H. Miguélez-Carballeira, *Galicia, A Sentimental Nation: Gender, culture and politics* (Cardiff, 2013), p.105.

<sup>267</sup> Miguélez-Carballeira, *Galicia, A Sentimental Nation*, p.115.

<sup>268</sup> Miguélez-Carballeira, *Galicia, A Sentimental Nation*, p.122.

viewed contested masculinity through the prism of violence between anti-fascist and fascist groups. '[Gal] Celtarras earned a strong reputation as a hard group, tough, antifascist,' Sime (Celtarras) explained, in respect of the 1990s. 'A lot of anti-fascist fanbases from other teams across the state saw Vigo as an example.' When I told Edu that members of Celtarras had brought up Riazor Blues' alleged flirtations with fascist symbology – to which I shall return later – he cited their record in combat.

[Esp] Seriously, in your next interview say to them 'all these years, the Riazor Blues lot, putting themselves on the line against far-right groups and where were you lot?' That's what I'd ask them because when I was involved at least, they barely fucking travelled anywhere, like not at all.

Participants did perform a version of hegemonic masculinity, both in the interviews themselves and in the events they described. They did not, however, do so in a way that explicitly placed virility as a virtue of Galician identity. Rather, they viewed violence through the prism of ideology, and themselves as the foot soldiers of anti-fascism in Spain. Ultras from Croatia to Egypt perform masculinity in similar ways.<sup>269</sup> To view it as inherently Galician, linked to the prominence of masculinity in early Galician nationalist discourse, would be to overlook this context.

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<sup>269</sup> M. Hamzeh and H. Sykes, 'Egyptian Football Ultras and the January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution: Anti-corporate, Anti-militarist and Martyrdom Masculinities', *Anthropology of the Middle East*, 9/2 (2014), pp.91–107; A. Hodges, 'Violence and masculinity among left-wing ultras in post-Yugoslav space', *Sport in Society*, 19/2 (2016), pp.174–186.

## Weaponisation of ideological incoherence

### Riazor Blues deemed incoherent

A central part of the performance of Galician identity through football involved the presentation of the rival group as inauthentic and un-Galician. Celtarras – and, to a lesser extent, Fende Testas – weaponised the perceived ideological incoherence of Riazor Blues to present themselves as the true representatives of Galicia on Spanish terraces. In the first few years of their existence, Riazor Blues displayed a jumble of contradictory symbols in the stadium and printed a similar mishmash in their fanzine, *Curva Mágika*. Galician nationalist paraphernalia appeared alongside far-right symbols. I sensed that this was a source of embarrassment for participants who, in time, sought to lead Riazor Blues on a more *galeguista* path (the implication, here, is that post-1939 Galician nationalism cannot be (seen as) far right). Yet they also acknowledged that they were young men, ignorant and desperate for attention by whatever means. Carlos (Riazor Blues) did not shy away from the matter. '[Gal] Initially Riazor Blues as a group was more focused on football, as it were, but it copied stuff from here and there.' He cites a specific example:

There's a famous photo collage, I don't know if you've seen it, but it says 'Auschwitz for the *vigueses*', these things happened, they're there. But the people who did it, and I know them, they didn't even know what they were doing, and it was more 'this is for messing with us' than- they didn't know about political ideology, a political cancer what they did, obviously. But once you gain consciousness, you realise how things are, you get rid of all that.



Around the same time, *Curva Mágika* published an image of the cartoon character Snoopy wearing a Celtic cross, a symbol co-opted by white supremacists. 'Back then I didn't even know what a Celtic Cross was, I got one out of an Italian fanzine, something that was there, I liked it, copied it, put it in ours,' Carlos explained. Here, he evokes the idea of an uncritical reproduction of symbols. Joni (Grei Xentalla) agreed. 'I don't think they had much of an idea of what they were doing, 'I'll get some attention, I'll stick this Spanish flag in the middle of all these [Galician flags]. Members of radical groups displayed symbols out of a lack of 'consciousness', but also to goad an adversary, to prod for a reaction. Carlos separated the uncritical display of symbols from the presence of a 'fascist' faction within Riazor Blues. He watched on as an adolescent at a match in 1991, when senior members of Riazor Blues physically fought the right-wing faction – Nikis Sur – off the terrace.

They went for them, 'boom, boom', 'fuck off fascists, fucking bastards'. [...] All that lot could have been knocking about with Riazor Blues for years, travelling to matches, being side by side, and it was allowed because they were Deportivo fans. Later when you become aware, by the time you're 14 or 15 you're a bit older and you say 'these people can't be here with us, however much they support Deportivo, they can't share a terrace with us anymore, we've got to get rid of them'. And they did end up getting rid of them. And all those people who ideologically were half fascist, on the right or the far right, who came to Riazor to play at being an ultra, they ended up founding the Coruña division of Ultras Sur, so you can see how much they supported Deportivo.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Ultras Sur are a right-wing radical group associated with Real Madrid.

To refer back to the previous section on masculinity, Carlos clearly framed this violence as a conflict between left and right rather than Galician and un-Galician, though these categories often overlap. It is striking that Carlos talked about becoming conscious – that word again – at the age of 14 or 15. It shows how youthful these groups were that one could be considered a wise head at the age of 15. This idea of evolution with maturity was clear in the interviews. Yet Riazor Blues did not aspire to be an explicitly political group. Rodri, a prominent member of Riazor Blues in the 1990s explained:

[Gal] Christ, I did a lot to make sure the Blues adopted let's say a left-wing, *galeguista* ideology, right. But becoming a purely pro-independence group- firstly it was nothing to do with- you can't- this applies to a lot of things, there might have been 100 of us and 60 were pro-independence, which I, well, I don't define myself as such anymore but anyway, that doesn't matter. But in the stadium there are 2000 of us and you can't force those 2000 to rally behind such a clearly political cause, so we were basically clear that we didn't want to be, in inverted commas, on the margins like that.

Rodri's account chimes with an article published in Spanish in *Curva Mágica* in 1991, under the title '*Riazor Blues no es un partido*' ['Riazor Blues is not a political party']. 'Riazor Blues does not want to identify with any political movement,' it reads. 'We think that our only ideology on the terrace should be the blue and white, the *deportivista* ideology, which both the *separatas* and the *fachotes* and the regulars can get behind, alright?'.<sup>271</sup> I asked Edu, who was involved with Riazor Blues in the 2000s, about the group's political stance. He affirmed

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<sup>271</sup> *Separatas* is a disparaging term for separatists which incorporates the word '*ratas*' ['rats']. *Fachote* is a colloquial term for fascist.

that Riazor Blues ‘was always antifascist, it defended Dépor above all else, and *galeguista*. And nobody who thought differently made it onto our terrace.’ This contradiction between generations suggests a process of forgetting has taken place within Riazor Blues, which has become an overtly Galicianist group. Perhaps, among younger members, memories of the contested past have faded, replaced by the assumption that things were always as they are now. Outside A Coruña, however, they did not forget so easily. I asked Xoán (Celtarras) if, as an adolescent, he knew people from A Coruña.

[Gal] No, no no no no. Look, back then Vigo always levelled at Coruña that for example Coruña on an ideological level- there was a division of Ultras Sur who called themselves Nikis Sur with their Celtic Crosses and all that, they hung up a Spanish flag, so from here in Vigo there was always that thing that, when we didn’t want them, when people from Celtarras didn’t want to join up with them, it was because they said ‘within the Blues there are people who don’t fit with our ideals’ and that, over time in Coruña they got rid of them, they got rid of them from the ground.

I did not detect a ‘gotcha’ undercurrent to Xoán’s words. He commented on Riazor Blues’ past but did not gloat about it. Throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, though, Celtarras fanzines were far more scathing. *Fondo Celtarra* reprinted embarrassing content – such as the Snoopy cartoon – from the early issues of Riazor Blues’ *Curva Mágica* fanzine. It added: ‘It’s incredible that our Galician flag now appears on their “Turkish Terrace”, they say they’re pro-independence, they put up “no fascists” stickers, when just last year they still had Spanish flags with their fucking fascist symbol.’<sup>272</sup> The reference to the *curva turca* [‘Turkish

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<sup>272</sup> *Fondo Celtarra*, 1 (1993), p.3.

terrace'] reproduces the 'Turkish' insult that Celta Vigo supporters aim at Deportivo supporters and, in some cases, people from A Coruña in general. In this context it seeks to other Riazor Blues, to present them as foreign and un-Galician. The use of the pronoun 'our' establishes ownership of the Galician flag, a principal national symbol. The implication is that it is not 'yours'. These attempts to other the rival extended to other radical groups too, namely Fende Testas of Compostela. 'We already know that La Coruña isn't Galician, but you could at least try to hide it,' wrote O Rei León in *Bancada Norte*, consciously using the Spanish toponym 'La Coruña' rather than the Galician 'A Coruña'. 'You're an embarrassment and an insult to a people and a flag'.<sup>273</sup> These passages appeared in the first issues of *Fondo Celtarra* and *Bancada Norte* respectively. The editors used the opening pages of the opening publication to attack the incoherence of the rival group. It should be noted that a denial of Galicianness also travelled from north to south. 'Selta [sic] are about as Galician as the Pope is Ethiopian,' jibed *Curva Mágika* in 1992.<sup>274</sup> The tit-for-tat was incessant, a ritual hostility that spilled from the stadium onto the printed page.

Vitriol of this nature was notably absent in the interviews. Ordinarily, I would emphasise that one cannot conflate the views expressed in a radical group's fanzine with the views of individual members. And that is true to an extent. Yet given how many participants were involved in the publication of the fanzines, they serve as a useful yardstick to see how participants' views have mellowed over time.<sup>275</sup> Most of these men are now in their 40s. The views they hold now are different from the views they held in the 1990s as cantankerous

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<sup>273</sup> *Bancada Norte*, 1 (1995), p.12.

<sup>274</sup> *Curva Mágika*, 28 (1992), page unknown as the sheets of the fanzine were not in order or numbered.

<sup>275</sup> Sime contributed to *Xuventudes Celestes*, Xoán edited *Tropas de Breogán*, Fiz edited *Bancada Norte*, and Carlos helped with the editing of *Curva Mágika*.

young men. The participants did not recall erstwhile displays of ideological symbols, like the Celtic cross, as genuine expressions of political culture. We should view radical supporters as bricoleurs in line with the French anthropologist Lévi-Strauss's concept of 'bricolage', who review the materials at their disposal to see what might be useful in the context of some present problem.<sup>276</sup> Members of Riazor Blues gathered items from different sources – Carlos, for instance, found the Celtic Cross carton in an Italian fanzine – and recontextualised them with a new meaning: a desire to protagonise, provoke, and rebel.

### Celtarras deemed coherent

In contrast to Riazor Blues' perceived incoherence, Celtarras portrayed and performed an ideological coherence based on a staunch commitment to anti-fascism and *galeguismo*.

Rodri (Riazor Blues) explained his perception of the rival group:

[Gal] The Blues belong to a very open ideological world, as it were, and that's a really importance difference from Celtarras. Celtarras are a purely ideological group, they're pro-independence and that's that. We weren't as political. We were more, within that- like, don't come here with Spanish flags, but Galician flags with the star weren't mandatory either.

Carlos (Riazor Blues) draws a distinction between footballing and political groups.

[Gal] I always had this vision, this perspective that Riazor Blues could be more or less politically homogenous, but it was essentially always a football *peña*. For me,

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<sup>276</sup> C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London, 1974), Second Edition.

Celtarras is sometimes more of a political *peña* than a football *peña*, I feel like

Celtarras got more people together for political events than for football.

Carlos saw this overtly political model, which he associated with Celtarras, as valid. Yet he thought it harmed a group's ability to remain relevant through the waves of generational change. Celtarras disbanded in 2019 to be replaced by Tropas de Breogán, which, it should be said, is also explicitly *galeguista*.

Participants perhaps overstate the ideological coherence that Celtarras achieved, particularly in the first few years of its existence. Xoán acknowledged that he took an American confederate flag to a match at Balaídos. He did not know what it represented but liked how it looked. Celtarras' occasionally jumbled messaging appeared in their fanzines in the late 1980s. In *Xuventudes Celestes*, a contributor named Xosé warned *fachas* – a derogatory Spanish term for fascists – to stay away from the group. And yet, on the back page of the same issue, the message '*esto de putísima madre*' ['this is fucking class'] accompanied a sticker bearing the name of Frente Atlético, right-wing ultras associated with Atlético Madrid.<sup>277</sup> Xoán's anecdote about the confederate flag, and contradictory content in fanzines, show two things. First, the narrative that Celtarras was always a beacon of ideological coherence, in opposition to Riazor Blues' incoherence, has become an invented tradition, reproduced in the interviews by participants from both groups. The regularity of the football match and the ritual nature of fandom allows continuity of performance over months and years, even decades. The exclusive presence of Galician symbols becomes a tradition, as does the narrative that Celtarras always performed a pure Galician spectacle.

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<sup>277</sup> *Xuventudes Celestes*, 4 (1989), pp.3, 5.

The invented traditions shape what the group members recall and, just as importantly in this case, what they forget.

Second, these incoherences were products of the era. They reflect the ambiguity of the nascent Spanish ultras movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Groups had yet to become entrenched in ideological positions. '[Gal] In that era in the Spanish state folk weren't as politicised,' recalled Juan Ramón (Grei Xentalla). '[...] From the 90s onwards they became more politicised.' Sime (Celtarras) established a similar timeframe. '[Gal] In the 90s I met people from Ultras Sur, partly because there was a merchandise exchange, scarves and fanzines, but also because you weren't really bothered about the other group's ideology,' he explained. '[...] From the mid-90s the politicisation was far more stronger.' There is consensus, therefore, that ideology was peripheral until the mid-1990s. Yet groups in Galicia used the volatility of that period, and the perceived incoherence that it produced, to undermine the *galeguista* credentials of the rival.

### The formation of Siareiros Galegos

A development in 1996 created further potential for the weaponisation of ideology and competitive performance of Galicianness. The formation of Siareiros Galegos pitted the alleged localism of Riazor Blues against the coherent nationalism of Celtarras and Fende Testas (see Chapter Seven for further discussion of 'localism' in the Galician context).

Siareiros Galegos was a collective formed by members of various Galician radical groups to campaign for the reformation of a Galician national team. Groups held internal votes to decide if they would participate. The majority of Riazor Blues voted against joining Siareiros Galegos, leading to the splinter formation of Grei Xentalla, which did take a seat at the table.

The majority of Celtarras, on the other hand, voted to join.<sup>278</sup> Fende Testas (Compostela), Muralla Norte (Lugo), and Radikais Vermelhos (Ourense) also participated. The collective organised a petition to demonstrate widespread support for the reformation of a Galician national team, which had not played since 1930. There followed various cultural events – mainly concerts – and charity football matches. Xoán presented Riazor Blues' decision to not participate as a clash between localism – used as a pejorative – and nationalism:

[Gal] Riazor Blues continued to be a really localist *peña*, Celtarras was the opposite. Celtarras voted in favour of uniting with the Blues because there's something more important than our rivalry, something more- which is the unity of Galicia, the unity of our Galician national team, so because of that I buried the hatchet, I buried the hatchet so to speak, 'I'll come together with you because we have a common aim'.

Carlos (Riazor Blues) voted 'no' to Siareiros Galegos. But he insisted that this did not reflect a lack of support for the idea of a Galician national team.

[Gal] People like me always wanted a national team to support but as Riazor Blues- what we didn't want was to work with people like Celtarras, because we were fierce enemies back then, turning people against us like the Bilbao lot. Back then Celtarras basically said that Riazor Blues was a fascist group. So how do you unite with these sorts of people, you know? Year after year there are fights, conflict, and they have this image of you, they go around spreading this bullshit that we were a far-right group.

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<sup>278</sup> There was still a split in Celtarras. Some members formed a group called A.D. (Anti-Dépor) and, according to an article written by members of Siareiros Galegos a decade later, dedicated themselves to the decoration of Vigo with anti-Coruña graffiti. *Dende as Bancadas*, 13 (2006), pp.20–21.



Carlos spat the words '*estrema dereita*' ['far right'], unable to mask his contempt for accusations made decades ago. This episode was a matter of honour for participants like Carlos, who were active at the time and shared a deep ideological conviction with their fellow members. But beyond this limited circle of men, I did not get the impression that controversy around membership of Siareiros Galegos achieved 'cut-through', to borrow a political term. Even participants who were members of the groups involved, but were not active in 1996, had hazy memories. I asked Edu, a prominent member of Riazor Blues in the 2000s, if he knew the story of the formation of Grei Xentalla. '[Esp] I'm vaguely aware of it, yeah,' he replied, coy. 'I don't have an opinion either way, to be honest.' I put the same question to Albi, the Deportivo fan from Vilagarcía de Arousa, who had been a member of Riazor Blues in its early years. He paused and looked at me quizzically. '[Gal] Grei Xentalla, that was a Celta *peña*, wasn't it?'. These responses serve as a reminder that not all members of a particular movement follow or remember events that seem formative to those directly involved.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that radical Galician groups competed to perform their *galeguista* credentials. Symbols were intrinsic to this performance, as groups displayed the Galician flag and related items with pride. Simultaneously, they sought to strip 'their' territory of Spanish symbology, whether in the form of flags or football coaches who held views the group deemed incompatible. In some cases this politicisation occurred on the terrace, a space in which young men became consciously Galician. Not everyone who held a flag aloft did so as an expression of ideology. For many, it was a shallow ritual act with meanings that are best understood as the impulse to appear and to be part of the spectacle.

Yet participants in this study displayed in the interviews a deep knowledge of, and interest in, the meanings associated with the symbolic collage they performed. Spaaij and Viñas' argument that left-wing groups adopt a pseudo-ideology, built on image alone with a lack of coherent thought, is too sweeping. Given radical groups' performance of unity, it is easy to treat them as homogenous.

The groups in question did not always perform through the prism of Galician identity. In the performance of masculinity, participants framed conflict as a clash between anti-fascism and fascism, rather than Galician and non-Galician. The concept of un-Galician behaviour, and its ascription as a negative value, was prominent in the weaponisation of ideological coherence. Celtarras (and Fende Testas) presented Riazor Blues as incoherent and un-Galician. This narrative of Celtarras' coherence in opposition to Riazor Blues has become an invented tradition, entrenched by repetition and the ritual nature of fandom. While this narrative may have some basis, it has been repeated enough to inculcate an acceptance among participants from both sides of the divide.

Two strands of performance run through this chapter. The first refers to the events the interviewees participated in and described. The second, which I shall reflect on here, refers to how they described these events in the interview. A strength of oral history as a methodology is that it draws out individual testimony in a culture defined by the absorption of the individual into the collective. As a general observation, participants who had formed part of radical groups spoke for longer and with greater facility than those who had not. They appeared comfortable despite the strangeness of the interview encounter. They seemed comfortable and expressed memories and opinions with conviction. Perhaps, in part, this was an element of their performance of self; they wanted to project the masculine

traits of self-assurance and control to this audience of one. Yet I left these interviews with the impression that this sub-set of participants had spent decades contemplating the relationship between football and Galician identity. That is, the theme at the heart of this research. They had honed their views – and the articulation of these views – through years of internal reflection and social discussion. They mulled over themes that others deemed banal or simply irrelevant. In this sense, members of these groups truly were radical.

# Chapter Five: Football and identity within Galicia

## Introduction

In Galicia one can be in a remote setting yet still feel like a cluster of properties is never far away. These tiny, dispersed settlements have various definitions that are indistinguishable to the outsider; *parroquia* [parish], *aldea* [hamlet], or the more modest *lugar* [place]. Even these smallest of settlements did not escape the cohesive effects of football. Martínez Torres and Sanfiz Arias analysed the arrival and evolution of football in O Ribeiro, an area of Ourense province known for its vineyards. They found that by the early-20<sup>th</sup> century, football had assumed an important role – along with agrarianism – in the formation of parochial identities. Indeed, a sporting association in the parish of San Clodio codified in its statutes that it would defend ‘through all legal means the parish of San Clodio.’<sup>279</sup> Once football spread across Galicia, from the port cities to the wine-producing parishes, it shaped how people interacted with place. Football became a symbolic vehicle for the articulation of collective identities – parochial, civic, national – and acquired political value as a means to express Galician unity in opposition to perceived external threats. Participants expressed these perceptions of football in two salient ways.

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<sup>279</sup> M. Martínez Torres and R. Sanfiz Arias, ‘Nuevos espacios de sociabilidad en el ámbito rural en el primer tercio del siglo XX. Fútbol en la comarca ourensana del Ribeiro’, *Studia Historica. Historia Contemporánea*, 40 (2022), p.30.

First, participants perceived that politicians at both ends of the spectrum frustrated a collective, popular desire to express Galicianness through football, which grew throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. On one end, participants believed that the conservative Partido Popular resisted the reformation of the *Irmandiña* – the Galician national football team, which did not play a match between 1930 and 2005 – to deny Galicians a sense of national consciousness embodied by 11 players on the pitch. Some participants invoked the oil-stained aftermath of the *Prestige* oil disaster as another instance of conservative politicians stifling displays of Galician unity in the football stadium. On the other end of the spectrum, participants felt that Galician nationalism was slow to recognise the symbolic and political value of football.

Second, participants believed football to be a repository for ‘local’ pride. They discussed in particular detail how the success of Deportivo increased self-esteem in A Coruña and across Galicia, with wide-ranging political and social consequences.<sup>280</sup> Many participants expressed a sense of disillusionment with ‘modern’ football, which they saw as hyper-commercialised and sanitised. I introduce the ‘Against Modern Football’ movement and use it to contextualise this disillusionment and participants’ nostalgia for the 1990s. Participants used the language of resistance to present the supporting of a Galician club as an act of rebellion; a defence of the local, under threat from the ubiquity of behemoth clubs – Real Madrid and, to a lesser extent, Barcelona – which have become global brands. ‘Modern’ football is geographically located in this formation as something that occurs outside Galicia. Implicit in

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<sup>280</sup> Participants from across Galicia presented the spirits of their town or city as cresting and following with the fortunes of its football team, but this shared narrative was pronounced among participants from A Coruña in discussion of Deportivo.

these perceptions of stifled unity, and of football as a repository for local pride, is the conviction that football, if given the chance, can affect meaningful change in Galicia.

### ‘Politicians’ stifled expressions of Galician unity

The political dimension of Galician football came into focus in the 1990s and early 2000s.

The Partido Popular had governed Galicia since the transition to democracy. Yet electoral support for the BNG swelled during this period in municipal, autonomous community, and general elections. Though *galeguista* politicians were slow to harness the symbolic power of football – or were simply unaware of it – supporters articulated this resurgent nationalism through sport. The emergence in the late 1980s of the radical groups discussed in the previous chapter gave supporters a platform to perform a ritualistic, shared Galician identity from the terraces. There was a growing sense that Galician football and Galician nationalism could establish a mutually beneficial relationship. This coalesced around two prominent issues: the *Prestige* oil disaster and the *Irmandiña*.

#### The *Prestige*

The *Prestige* defied jurisdiction. It was an oil tanker built in Japan, registered in the Bahamas, owned by a Liberian company, and sailed by a Greek captain with a Filipino crew. In November 2002 the *Prestige* was carrying 77,000 metric tonnes of fuel oil from Lithuania to Gibraltar. It encountered bad weather off the Galician coast. The aptly named *Costa da Morte* [Coast of Death], to be precise. The tanker sustained severe damage and, after listing

for six days, split in half. An estimated 60,000 tonnes of oil blackened the Galician coastline.<sup>281</sup>

The consequences were social and political as well as ecological. A grassroots movement called *Nunca Más* [‘Never Again’] formed in response to the official denial of the severity of the disaster. It adopted a modified Galician flag as its emblem, with the traditional white background stained black to represent the spread of the oil. *Nunca Más* demanded political accountability – and resignations – on autonomous government, state, and European Union levels.<sup>282</sup> It organised huge protests on this platform, notably in Santiago de Compostela and Madrid. Alongside these protests, thousands of volunteers from Galicia and beyond donned hazmat suits to clean, by hand, the thousands of miles of contaminated coastline.<sup>283</sup>

There was a wider context to the outrage. Anger at the inadequate response from Madrid added to existing frustration with the long-lived Partido Popular regime in Galicia. The rise of a new, national grassroots movement provided a collective social, political and creative impetus that was reflected in football as in other areas of the public sphere. Football was distinctive in its ability to publicly and performatively unite staunch adversaries – A Coruña and Vigo, Deportivo and Celta – under a common cause. This response from football revealed its potential as a vehicle for collective Galician identity, fuelled by a perception that conservative politicians sought to divide that very sense of Galicianness.

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<sup>281</sup> R. García-Mira, J.E. Real, D.L. Uzzell, C. San Juan, and E. Pol, ‘Coping with a threat to quality of life: the case of the Prestige disaster’, *Revue européenne de psychologie appliquée*, 56 (2006), p.54.

<sup>282</sup> ‘Manifiesto da plataforma cidadá “Nunca Más”’, <https://plataformanuncamais.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/manifestonm.pdf>, accessed 20 December 2022.

<sup>283</sup> For more information on the reaction in Galicia to the *Prestige* disaster, see: X.M. Pereiro, *Chapapote* (Madrid, 2022), R. García-Mira (ed.), *Lecturas sobre el desastre del Prestige: contribuciones desde las ciencias sociales* (A Coruña, 2013), ‘Chapapote: la mancha del Prestige’, four-part podcast series produced by *Cadena Ser*, 2022.

Galician football clubs showed solidarity with affected communities. Supporters used their collective voice – and presence on television – to amplify the *Nunca Más* message. In December 2002, at a match between Celta and Deportivo Alavés, supporters displayed black binbags in protest, while the players wore t-shirts that carried the message '*todos co mar*' ['all with the sea']. Exhibition matches took place to raise funds. Deportivo hosted a Costa da Morte XI, made up of amateur players from the affected area, at Riazor. A combined Deportivo-Celta XI faced Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabéu stadium in the Spanish capital.<sup>284</sup> Yet the Galician derby between Deportivo and Celta in January 2003 – the first since the disaster – represented the biggest platform for collective protest.

Filipe is a Celta supporter in his 40s from Vigo. I asked him what he remembered about the *Prestige* disaster. Filipe recalled crying as he watched the television reports. On the screen he saw oil lap at the beaches of the Cíes Islands, a national park off the coast of Vigo. Then he steered the conversation to football. Specifically, to that match between Deportivo and Celta, held in A Coruña in January 2003. It was the only derby, Filipe said, for which away supporters had to pay a deposit (€3000) to attend the match in case they damaged a seat or vandalised a toilet. He reiterated that in all the derbies he had attended going back to 1993, this had never happened before.

[Gal] Nobody stumps up the cash because nobody can stick their head above the parapet and say that there won't be a vandalised toilet, as in- there wasn't an organised away following to A Coruña, a few would have gone off their own back and

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<sup>284</sup> Despite the symbolic potential of Galicia's two biggest clubs putting aside their rivalry to play together – against Madrid – no participants mentioned this match. I asked two about their memories of it. Both recalled the match in a negative way, as an 'official' event intended to placate Galicians, not to empower them.



sat undercover in the home end without a [Celta] shirt, but there wasn't like a proper away day that year. It was around the time of the *Nunca Más* platform, and I reckon it was politically motivated, I mean I can't prove it, but I think it was the only time they [Deportivo and Celta] could have something in common, both in Coruña and in Vigo, against the handling of it, against what the Directors' Box represented, and the politics, lies, that year they didn't want there to be that union between the two fanbases.

Filipe alleged there was a political intervention to prevent the unification of Celta and Deportivo supporters – and, by extension, Vigo and A Coruña – under a common cause. I asked why he thought politicians had intervened.

I mean, good question. Ultimately I think it's in their interests, right, that people don't become conscious of Galician identity, the nation, that we're the same, when it comes down to it we're the same. It was our sea, they were our interests. And ultimately I think that the divisions between us, north-south, Coruña-Vigo, on a political level it's in their interests.

Filipe suggested it was in the 'interests' of certain people to keep Galicia divided.<sup>285</sup> This is significant. To believe there was a political manoeuvre to prevent the symbolic union of enemies in the stadium, Filipe must see the stadium as a space in which meaningful change can occur, in which those present can gain consciousness of the unity of Galicia. The Celta fanzine *Dende as Bancadas* made the same accusations as Filipe in an article titled '*O derbi*

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<sup>285</sup> Arsenio Iglesias, the legendary Deportivo coach and the joint-coach of the Irmandiña from 2005 to 2009, said something similar in an extensive 1994 interview: '[Celta and Deportivo] have to stick together for our country, for Galicia, they also want to divide us on that, and that can't bloody happen.', B. Rubido, *Arsenio: El factor humano* (A Coruña, 1994), p.53.

*chapapote* [‘The oil slick derby’]: ‘The people in charge of the PP didn’t want that coming together [of rival supporters]. [...] It had turned into a public outcry against the policies they’d brought in. In that instance, for them, there was certainly value in stoking the Deportivo-Celta hatred, or one and the same, the Coruña-Vigo hatred.’<sup>286</sup>

There is a minor yet revealing discrepancy in Filipe’s narrative. He recalled that there was not a visible presence of Celta supporters in Riazor, that any who did attend were hidden in the home end. While the travelling support was not as numerous as in other derbies – due to the requirement to pay a deposit, which was only rescinded two days before the match – Celta fans were present and vociferous. César Lorenzo Gil wrote the match report in *A Nosa Terra*. ‘If it was true that he [Augusto César Lendoiro, President of Deportivo] didn’t want to see Celta fans and *coruñeses* calling for resignations, he did at least have to endure that “*Nunca Máis*” rang out louder in Riazor than “Vigo, non”’. The journalist describes how the Deportivo and Celta supporters remained silent in protest for the first five minutes of the match, as the Celta contingent held aloft black *Nunca Máis* flags.<sup>287</sup> The two sets of supporters *were* able to make a shared statement with symbolic clout. Yet Filipe reproduced an alternative narrative, that supporters were silenced and prevented from the performing of a powerful protest. This narrative is underpinned by the memory that no Celta fans were present.

In the spirit of Alessandro Portelli’s approach to oral history, such discrepancies between fact and subjective memory enhance the value of Filipe’s testimony.<sup>288</sup> The importance of oral

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<sup>286</sup> *Dende as Bancadas*, 1 (2003), p.2.

<sup>287</sup> *A Nosa Terra*, 1064, 10–16 January 2003, p.22.

<sup>288</sup> A. Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (New York, 1991).

sources, often, does not lie in their adherence to facts, but in their divergence from them. Narratives like Filipe's, which are untrue to the fact but true to the narrator, reveal how memories refract through imagination, symbolism, and desire. Filipe believed that certain political interests sought – and seek – to keep Galicia entrenched in localist divisions, and he invested the *Prestige* derby with this meaning. At the centre of Filipe's narrative is the conviction that football can act as a conduit for an imagined, aspirational Galician identity, free from localist squabbles.

### The reformation of the *Irmandiña* was stifled

The *Prestige* disaster was not the only subject of protest when Deportivo hosted Celta in January 2003. With the score 2-0 in favour of the home team, Deportivo supporters unfurled a banner that read '*Selección galega xa!*' ['Galician national team now!'].<sup>289</sup> Various participants accused politicians affiliated with the Partido Popular of blocking the reformation of a Galician national team. In this section I argue that perceived resistance to the *Irmandiña* reveals that it was – and remains – a deeply political institution in the minds of the participants.

After the *Irmandiña* beat Central Spain in June 1930, it did not play another match for 75 years, as the Civil War gave way to dictatorship. Grassroots movements campaigned for the reformation of the team throughout the 1990s. Siareiros Galegos – the collective formed by members of various Galician radical groups – organised a petition and a series of concerts. At the same time, the *Rock Bravú* movement collaborated with prominent footballers to lend a popular cultural voice to the campaign, which was ultimately successful. The

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<sup>289</sup> *A Nosa Terra*, 1064, 10–16 January 2003, p.22.

*Irmandiña* did reform in 2005, after a PSOE-BNG coalition had replaced the PP as the majority party in the Galician parliament. The composition of this coalition, with BNG politician Ánxela Bugallo as the Minister for Culture and Sport, meant the reformation of the national team had institutional and economic support to match the grassroots clamour. The *Irmandiña* played four matches in as many years from 2005, against Uruguay, Ecuador, Cameroon, and Iran. Once the PP returned to power in 2009, the political will for the *Irmandiña* faded. It played once more, against Venezuela in 2016. I asked Bixu, a Celta supporter in his 30s from A Guarda, why he attached importance to the Galician national team.

[Gal] Mate, because it gives visibility to an entity, to a people, that could be just as strong as any number of others. And I think it's a way to defend our country, it's a shame that it couldn't happen more, and it couldn't happen more because the politician didn't want it to.

Bixu said that Galicia can be as strong as other 'entities'. He saw the *Irmandiña* as a means to express and realise this strength. Football invites us to imagine the nation not just as it is in the present, but as it can aspire to be in the future. The national team allowed Bixu to imagine a potential Galicia that is visible and strong, and recognised as such on the international stage. I asked Bixu to explain his comment that the politicians did not want the *Irmandiña*. Why not? 'Because they don't, because the more visibility you give Galicia as a nation or as a people, people can rebel. That's what they think. It's an absolute aberration to be honest.'

Sime, a member of Celtarras in his 40s, elaborated further in response to why politicians resisted the *Irmandiña*.

[Gal] Bloody hell, let's see, because the president of the *Xunta*, at the first Galicia match, Galicia-Uruguay, for him it was a *papelón*, a *papelón* means a really difficult situation. He was in a stadium, the stadium in Santiago holds 12 or 13 thousand, full of Galician flags with the star, the Galician anthem- for him it's like being in enemy territory, regardless of whether he's the president of the *Xunta*, he understands that everyone who follows the [Galician] national team are nationalists, because everyone else supports Spain.

Sime went on to use the same phrase as Filipe in reference to the '*Prestige derby*': '*non interesa*'. It was not in the interests of the PP to encourage a platform for the collective performance of *galeguista* sentiment replete with nationalist paraphernalia. And, as with Filipe, the most significant part of Sime's narrative is what he leaves unsaid but implies: that football is a valuable tool for the promotion of Galician identity. Otherwise, why would the PP fear its potential? Another participant ostensibly confirmed this wider suspicion of PP hostility. Afonso, in his 60s, edited *A Nosa Terra* – the Galician-language newspaper – from 1983 to 2007. He used this platform to campaign for a Galician national team. In the early issues of *A Nosa Terra* under his editorship, he published hypothetical squads that would represent Galicia based on their performances for their clubs. '[Gal] The election of the BNG is key', Afonso said of the factors behind the reformation of the national team. 'For example, I spoke many times with Fraga about putting together a Galician national team, and Fraga said: "I know full well why you want to put it together, to play the nationalists, you won't get

any help from me”.<sup>290</sup> Participants believed that the PP understood the potential of football to produce and reproduce a shared identity, but saw that potential as dangerous and subversive.

It is worth engaging with the extent to which participants presented the *Irmandiña* as a social glue. It had an adhesive effect strong enough to soothe tensions between Riazor Blues and Celtarras. Carlos was a member of Riazor Blues throughout the 1990s and 2000s. He set the context of a febrile period of constant verbal and physical skirmishes between the two groups. In the mid-1990s, he recalled, a group of Riazor Blues members travelled to Santiago de Compostela for the annual *Día da Patria* celebrations on 25 July. As they nursed their hangovers outside a café, a far larger group of Celtarras approached. They made it clear that the *coruñeses* needed to leave, or there would be trouble. Even on a day of national – Galician – celebration, hostility trumped union. But the *Irmandiña* was different.

[Gal] Then we get the coalition, the first game is played in Santiago, and you had Blues and Celtarras in Santiago and no issues at all. To be honest the police were more surprised than anyone, they were saying: “we never thought we’d see Celtarras and Riazor Blues together on the same terrace”.

Ten years passed between the two events that Carlos contrasts. It is possible – indeed, probable – that the protagonists mellowed during that time. After all, most of the ‘radical’ fans I interviewed described a process of maturation as a sense of shared Galicianness replaced tribal angst. Yet Carlos himself did not introduce this caveat. Even those who were not directly involved in Coruña-Vigo conflict saw the reformation of the *Irmandiña* as a

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<sup>290</sup> Manuel Fraga represented the PP as the President of the Xunta from 1990–2005 and was a former Francoist minister.

turning point in relations between Riazor Blues and Celtarras. Estevo is a CD Boiro supporter from Boiro, a coastal town in the south of Coruña province.

[Gal] That was the day that Galician football stopped fucking about, it was the day that Riazor Blues, Celtarras, and Fende Testas started to make peace. They were enemies, declared enemies, but everything changed that day, it started to change. You stopped seeing these massive confrontations between Riazor Blues and the others- still with the Ferrol lot, who do their own fucking thing, but not with the others, not with the rest. With the others friendships started to form, there wasn't as much aggression between Coruña and Vigo.

Estevo added: 'I think that match, the first Galicia match, was a before-and-after moment in terms of the violence between Celta and Dépor.' He was clear that the *Irmandiña* did not just encourage a temporary truce, but a permanent thawing of tensions. This appears exaggerated. Violence persisted between Riazor Blues and Celtarras. That Estevo recalls the first Galicia match as a watershed, though, reveals the symbolic power he invests in the national team as a nation-building institution. Some participants spoke effusively about the nationalist pageantry and paraphernalia around *Irmandiña* matches. One described it as a 'utopia', a day of celebration, of buried hatchets, a means to imagine a possible Galicia that could compete as an equal with Catalonia, Scotland, or Wales. A smaller number of participants were uncomfortable with such overt politicisation of the national team. One felt it was a divisive atmosphere that could have offended those who view themselves as both Galician and Spanish. We already have a national team that represents us, one participant reasoned: Spain. Whatever their opinion, implicit in all these narratives is an appreciation

that – for better or worse – the *Irmandiña* is inherently political. Football, by extension, is an arena in which to express – or contest – a vision of Galicia.

### Galician nationalism was slow to grasp the potential of football

Alongside a perception that conservative politicians stifled expressions of Galician unity through football, participants lamented that Galician nationalism was slow to appreciate the symbolic potential of the sport. In the two decades preceding the Civil War, *galeguismo* and football intertwined as the popularisation of the sport coincided with broader discursive trends that emphasised virility and ethnic distinctiveness. When Galician nationalism re-emerged in the 1950s as a cultural movement and in the 1960s as a left-wing political project, the ties that previously bound culture and football had faded. Football remained largely absent from *galeguista* discourse until the 1990s, when the *Rock Bravú* movement renormalised football as a legitimate expression of popular Galician identity, as discussed in Chapter Three.

Afonso Eiré, the editor of *A Nosa Terra* who spoke to Manuel Fraga about a Galician national team, felt out of place in the Unión do Pobo Galego [UPG] as a football supporter – and advocate of the symbolic power of football – in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>291</sup>

[Gal] I had a totally different vision for sport, or sport like- it forms part of national liberation, the liberation of peoples, and what that means, what the sporting element means. [...] I felt like an alien in that battle. I didn't have anyone to discuss it with.

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<sup>291</sup> The UPG was a Marxist-Leninist and Galician nationalist political party formed in 1964.



I asked Afonso how the dynamic changed as Deportivo and Celta became increasingly successful during the 1990s.

Things changed a lot within the organisation. People who had criticised me because of sport and all that, senior figures, they ended up being Deportivo supporters. Anyway, I remember being at a UPG conference and Deportivo were playing, it was a Sunday afternoon and at the end of the conference Deportivo had an important game. I had a radio on me, and Bautista, the president, said: 'if they score, let me know' [laughs]. And I stand up, 'gool goool goool', Bautista stands up, 'gool goool goool' and they said 'you're both mad'. They called both of us to order [laughs].

Afonso identified the success of Deportivo, in particular, as a factor that contributed to a greater acceptance of football within the *galeguista* left. Yet the fact that the congress called Afonso and Bautista Álvarez – a founding member of the UPG and a highly respected figure – to order for celebrating a Deportivo goal reveals the limits to this acceptance. He depicted a scene of two people celebrating a goal, as the rest of the congregation looked on, bemused.

Rodri, a Deportivo supporter and member of Riazor Blues in his 40s, attributed this nationalist resistance to football to a deep-rooted cultural conservatism.

[Gal] I think there's a- it's [football's] really good fun, it's basically something that's fun, and there's a certain part of the left, a certain part of nationalism, and also of course a certain moralistic right, that always has a problem with fun [laughs]. It's true, it's all- like, football has a solemnity to it, but it's a very working-class world, very- and, well, those who defend the people don't always respect how the people are. They often want to turn the people into something else. [...] Within the

nationalist movement there's a strong element, the most influential element with Galician nationalism is very culturally conservative, right. As in, I mean conservative in the sense that their first- pretty much the only thing they talk about is the past, Castelao and that lot, which is great, but they're not particularly comfortable with more contemporary expressions of culture.

Other members of radical groups – especially participants involved in the formation of Siareiros Galegos – echoed Rodri's frustrations. They emphasised that *they* had applied the pressure and created favourable conditions for the reformation of the national team. It was, they said, a bottom-up, grassroots movement that succeeded without the support of political parties. Yet once it achieved its aim, and 11 Galician players took to the pitch against Uruguay in 2005, politicians became interested.

Participants believed that conservative politicians understood the potential of football to unite factions around a shared expression of Galician nationhood. Yet they feared this potential and stifled its realisation through a collective response to the *Prestige* disaster from within football, and the reformation of the *Irmandiña*. On the other hand, participants did not see Galician nationalism, with its own form of cultural conservatism, as a firm ally to the grassroots campaign for the national team. A belief in the political value of football, as a means to imagine a possible Galicia, runs through the participants' responses as a central thread.

### Football as a repository for local pride

Henrique sits across from me in the office of Radio Fene, the local radio station in the town of Fene, across the bridge from Ferrol. Henrique has been the director of the station since it

first broadcast in 1984. The office appears largely unchanged since then. In the adjoining studio the walls are stained yellow by decades of nicotine-fuelled debate. Henrique speaks slowly and deliberately. I cannot tell if this is for my benefit as an outsider or just the cadence of a man who has spent his adult life broadcasting. An hour into the interview, discussion turned to the consequences of Deportivo's success in the 1990s. I shall quote Henrique at length. In one passage of the interview he married several themes that are prominent in this chapter.

[Gal] Deportivo's success provoked that self-esteem boost in the city of A Coruña, but not just the city of A Coruña, I think also across Galicia. In fact the supporters that Deportivo gain across the Spanish state, well in part it's because they were sympathetic to the underdog that faced up to historic giants like Barcelona and Real Madrid, because the team that's David against Goliath always captures the attention and is popular. But there's also a certain- in Galicia specifically, there's a massive boost in self-esteem, that thing of 'well look, we can also compete with big cities like Barcelona or Madrid', and I think that was an effect that without the nationalist movement being aware of it, also played into that greater appreciation for the local that was reflected in the same decade, from 1995 to 2005, in political activity, where there was also an increase. Obviously I'm not going to say that Deportivo winning the league led to more votes for the BNG, that's not it. Rather there's a context in which a sporting team triumphs, that causes an increase in self-esteem, and that's also related with the fact that there are more favourable conditions for the development of political forces within Galicia, forces that appreciate the local and put the local at

the forefront, the language, the culture, territory, economy, industry, that- I think it's a reasonable argument from that point of view.

Henrique's narrative relates to the previous section, and the perception that Galician nationalism did not appreciate the potential of the phenomenon at its disposal. Yet he also encapsulates the themes that run through this section of the chapter. First, the idea that the success of Deportivo increased the self-esteem of A Coruña (and, according to Henrique, across Galicia). In the case of A Coruña, football was the foremost symbol of civic identity in a city that experienced significant economic, social, and urbanistic change in the 1990s. It is important to define the nebulous term 'local' in the context of this chapter. Participants used it in different ways. I take 'local' pride to mean 'civic pride', that is, local refers to the town or city one is from. While this is an imperfect definition, it is consistent with the concept of localism – a salient theme in Chapter Seven – which denotes the promotion of the interests of the city over the interests of Galicia.

Second, the desire to resist 'modern' football and the ubiquity of Real Madrid (and, to a lesser extent, Barcelona). The 'Against Modern Football' sentiment had a geographic dimension. Participants located 'modern' football as a scourge that emerged outside Galicia, probably in Madrid. For some participants, to support a Galician team was to defend Galicia against the external threat of centralism. In this sense, and as I discuss in Chapter Six, the sport became a vessel for broader political grievances.

### Deportivo boosted self-esteem in A Coruña

In each interview I introduced a deliberately open-ended question. I asked the participant how their town or city had changed since their childhood. I wanted to elicit the participant's

taken-for-granted understanding of place and temporality. And, by attaching positive or negative value to certain changes, the participants revealed much about their own concerns, assumptions, and judgements. The 1990s was a time of rapid change in A Coruña.

Participants discussed transformative urbanistic development, notably the construction of the Paseo Marítimo, the promenade that runs around the peninsula as a border between city and sea. Participants also discussed the growth of Inditex, the multinational fashion company headquartered just outside the city, which counts Zara as its flagship brand. Noelia, in her 30s, grew up in Cambre, on the outskirts of A Coruña. She appreciated the economic contribution of Inditex to the city. Yet she also blamed Inditex for sowing a tendency for *'postureo'* – a performative sophistication. '[Gal] The whole Inditex thing also made us- think of ourselves as really modern and we wanted to have everything.' The collective perception of change in A Coruña was of a city that began to believe in itself. Deportivo was both a symptom and a cause. 'People always say the same thing,' Noelia added. 'That if Dépor are going well, everything else goes well. [...] I mean, the self-esteem is through the roof.'

Participants credited Deportivo with this increase in self-esteem in A Coruña. Like Noelia, Rubén, a man in his 50s from Coruña, located football within a broader pattern of positive change in the city.

[Esp] I've argued about this with people who aren't that into football, they said, 'come on, this Dépor stuff, it doesn't matter' but it does, it does matter. I think it's a fundamental or very important part of this city when it comes to cohesion, to pride, all of that. Look at it this way, the best period for Dépor coincides with what is probably the best period for the city too, in terms of- we're talking culturally, economically, right.

Rubén's belief that Deportivo acts as a repository for – and creator of – local pride fits with the conclusions of a study conducted in 2003. The Deputación da Coruña enlisted three academics to ascertain the economic and social value of a football club – in this case Deportivo – to the city it represents.<sup>292</sup> The social value aspect is of particular interest. The academics analysed responses to a lengthy questionnaire and found that residents of A Coruña considered that Deportivo had increased the self-esteem of the city, improved quality of life, and enhanced the city's external image. The study concluded that Deportivo can be considered 'emotional patrimony' and 'symbolic capital' of A Coruña.<sup>293</sup> This fillip was welcome in the context of the loss of A Coruña's historic status as the capital of Galicia. In 1982 it was confirmed that the Xunta de Galicia – the autonomous parliament – would be located in Santiago de Compostela. The decision provoked protest and wounded pride in A Coruña (see Chapter Seven for more information).

Carlos, the Deportivo supporter and Riazor Blues member who discussed how the *Irmandiña* soothed relations with Vigo, went further than Rubén and Henrique. He argued that not only did Deportivo create a general sense of civic pride, the club contributed to the success of Galician nationalism in the 1990s.

[Gal] In the 90s the nationalist movement was really strong, and the fans that came here with Spanish flags, we went for them, that kind of thing. So there was an association between being a Deportivo supporter and defending Galiza as a cultural and territorial entity, there definitely was. I think that in some ways, well it's what I

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<sup>292</sup> The Deputación da Coruña is the provincial government of A Coruña province, one of the four that make up Galicia (A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense, Pontevedra).

<sup>293</sup> J.M. Sánchez Santos, P. Castellanos-García, A. Peña Lopez, *Economía, fútbol y bienestar social: el valor de un equipo para una ciudad* (A Coruña, 2003), pp.269–271.

told you earlier, right, we went to political demonstrations as well, so there was that connection at that time, especially with the younger ones. Maybe not so much with the older people, but those of us who were let's say 17, 18, 20, 22, there was that identification and I think Deportivo's rise mainly, but also Celta's, did influence a bit the rise of the nationalist party, the *Bloque*, nationalism in Galicia. They kind of went hand in hand. Clearly in A Coruña you really saw that association, or at least I saw it on the terrace, Riazor Blues, because it was a time when you'd see loads of Galician flags, and with the star as well, so there was that sense of identification between being in Riazor Blues and being on the left, nationalist, defenders of Galicia, there absolutely was.

For Carlos, and those of his generation, to support Deportivo carried a connotation of the defence of Galicia, particularly among members of radical groups. The stadium was a space for young people to perform their belief in the importance of the local, through active support of the local – that is, *coruñés* – club and the display of *galeguista* symbology. There was a clear perception that Deportivo contributed to a broader pattern of change in A Coruña, as the city grew in confidence. Some participants extrapolated this boost in self-esteem to Galicia as a whole, and connected it – directly or indirectly – to the success of the BNG in the same period.

### Support your local team, 'Against Modern Football'

*Ser de los que ganan es muy fácil, ser del Deportivo nos parece mejor.* 'Supporting the teams that win is easy, we prefer to support Deportivo'. It is a common chant when Deportivo play. I associate it with 21 January 2018, the day I attended a match between Real Madrid and

Deportivo at the Santiago Bernabéu stadium. I went with the Madrid-based Deportivo *peña* I had joined a year earlier, *Chamberí Branquiazul*. My fellow members chanted as we emerged from the metro station at the base of the stadium, banging the metal staircase for rhythm. It is a sign of Deportivo's sporting decline in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that its supporters have adopted a chant that fetishises suffering and the absence of glory. Another, coarser chant was prominent in their repertoire on the short journey north from Chamberí area of the capital. 'Put a Real Madrid, puta Real Madrid' ['Fuck Real Madrid']. The message was clear. We do not like you. We are more authentic supporters than you. Deportivo opened the scoring after 23 minutes. The match finished 7-1 to Real Madrid. The chant I associate with the match seemed even more pertinent after the final whistle, as the away supporters sang it with the same gusto on their descent back into the metro.

That chant ties in with two values I identified in the interviews: the performance of the 'Against Modern Football' sentiment, and the consequent belief that one should support a representative team of one's city. These feelings are not distinctive to Galician supporters. Yet, in Galicia, these concepts have a political dimension as support for the local club entwines with a broader cultural, political, and linguistic defence of the nation. To renounce the local club in favour of the 'modern', more successful rival from outside Galicia, was to renounce part of one's identity.<sup>294</sup> The Against Modern Football movement – '*odio eterno al fútbol moderno*' in Spanish – is defined by resistance to the commercialisation of football. It is underpinned by a sense that football has become a business dominated by transnational

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<sup>294</sup> This idea is problematised by the existence of a Madrid-based Deportivo supporters' club. While most members were from A Coruña but live in Madrid, some were Madrid natives. As an observer of the 'support your local team' discourse, there is only consternation when one foregoes support of the local team in favour of a more successful, geographically distant rival. It is acceptable for someone from Madrid to support Deportivo – or Celta or Compostela – because the decision to support the 'non-local' team is not motivated by footballing success.



financial interests, at the expense – economically and experientially – of the authentic supporter.<sup>295</sup> Though far from a coherent movement, it unites supporters across Europe who feel disillusioned with football.

Galician supporters expressed common frames of discontent. Most prominent was the perception that football has become nothing more than a hollow business. Participants did not exempt Galician clubs from this criticism, but their main grievance was with the ‘superclubs’: Real Madrid, Barcelona, and to a far lesser extent, Atlético Madrid. Linked to this perception of commercialisation, participants believed that clubs increasingly treat them as consumers in an attempt to attract a ‘new’ type of fan. This clashed with a belief that authentic fandom cannot be bought through merchandise consumption, but is produced organically through participation and a sense of belonging. Other grievances included that players no longer have a sentimental attachment to their club, and the idea that the matchday experience has been sanitised. ‘[Gal] These days everything is a bit more decaffeinated,’ Carlos, a Deportivo supporter, summarised.<sup>296</sup> This sense of disconnect was more pronounced among, but not limited to, radical supporters. Participants of different ages and attitudes to fandom held fairly consistent grievances.

Borja, a Deportivo supporter in his 30s from A Coruña, accused Real Madrid of being the main corrosive element in football.

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<sup>295</sup> D.M. Webber, “Playing on the break”: Karl Polanyi and the double-movement “Against Modern Football”, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 52/7 (2017), p.886.

<sup>296</sup> These concerns are not exclusive to supporters in Galicia or Spain. Peter Millward discovers very similar frames of discontent in a study of British football fanzines from the 1980s to 2010. See T. Hill, R. Canniford and P. Millward, ‘Against *Modern Football*: Mobilising Protest Movements in Social Media’, *Sociology*, 52/4 (2018), p.696.

[Esp] Football has evidently become a business since- I'd say that it all started more full on since Florentino Pérez<sup>297</sup> got involved with football, because he started making hugely expensive signings with exorbitant clauses. [...] And from that point football has exploded, like, it's become something that nobody recognises anymore. Like, as a football fan, I love football, football as a sport, but I think what it has become socially is grim, it's the worst thing in the world.

Borja's disappointment in football, as an industry, was exacerbated by a belief that it should be a force for good, a platform to promote social justice and help the disadvantaged. Several participants made the same distinction between football as a sport and football as a business. The timing of the fieldwork informed this perspective. I conducted most interviews – including the one with Borja – in the months following the announcement of the European Super League [ESL] in April 2021. The ESL was a proposed competition that would have been contested by 20 elite European clubs, including 12 founder members (of which Real Madrid, Barcelona, and Atlético Madrid formed the Spanish contingent). The plan collapsed within days amid criticism of elitism and a lack of legitimate competition. I sensed that this context heightened the participants' suspicion of those three Spanish clubs, and intensified their hostility to the commercialising processes of 'modern' football. This hostility manifested in a tension between local and global interests. Joni, a Deportivo supporter in his 50s, felt that football no longer existed for match-going supporters.

[Gal] [Football] has turned into something else. Against Modern Football, you know, that's how it is. It used to be purer, more- it was sport. And now what? Now they

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<sup>297</sup> Florentino Pérez has twice served as the President of Real Madrid, first from 2000 to 2006, then from 2009 to the time of writing.

fight because the Chinese watch a Madrid-Barça and they play it at three in the afternoon so the Chinese can watch it.

Implicit in Joni's comment is the idea that Real Madrid and Barcelona have inconvenienced domestic supporters in favour of expansion in lucrative foreign markets. Not only that, he associated this renunciation with broader concerns about the degradation of the essence of the game. This deep pessimism about the present state of football contrasts with – and, perhaps, is exacerbated by – a sense that the 1990s represented the embers of a purer version of the game. A version that has gone and cannot return. Not only were Deportivo and Celta successful in that era, its 'purity' allowed participants to experience that success in a visceral way, with access to players that is unthinkable 20 years hence. It was a more violent time. And yet, paradoxically, it was a more innocent time. Carlos attended the 2019 Champions League final between Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur, held in Madrid. He used that match as an example of how football has changed for the worse since the 1990s, when he followed the Deportivo team that achieved unprecedented success.

[Gal] It wasn't an atmosphere, it was hundreds and hundreds, thousands of people who got in with sponsors' tickets, they didn't care about the game, they just wanted the canapes. That's why we were lucky to experience football in a different way, because in the 90s it was completely different. It was purer, so to speak, a far more passionate sport, you know, way purer, cleaner. The emotions were completely different. I remember back in the day the rivalry with Celta, the derbies were fucking class, but class because there was so much intensity, so much adrenaline, it was – honestly it was fucking brilliant mate, fucking brilliant.

Carlos was animated at the end of this passage. He smiled and shook his head as he struggled to express what has been lost. Rubén, in his 30s, is from O Barco de Valdeorras and supports the local semi-professional club, CD Barco. He follows them across Galicia but is not interested in professional football. I asked him why, what is the difference? 'The difference is that this is football, that is business,' he replied. What about in the 1990s, I asked, the era of Euro Celta and Super Dépor?

[Gal] Maybe back then the first division still respected what I'm talking about, it wasn't all about the money, there were teams like Celta at the time or Dépor which were humble teams, it wasn't long before that Dépor were in the third division, and in five years they're in the first division with Arsenio [Iglesias], with Beбето, with all that gang. And they still conserved some of that- street football.

The 1990s 'conserved' a residual amateurism that faded from elite football along with Deportivo and Celta. In this context, participants perceived the supporting of one's local team as an antidote to the commercial excesses of modern football. And, crucially, as an act of resistance. I asked Iago, a Celta supporter in his 40s, how he feels when he sees someone in Vigo wearing a Real Madrid shirt. '[Gal] I don't like it at all,' he replied, laughing. I asked why. 'To me it feels a bit like renouncing your identity, what you are, where you come from.' For Iago, to support Real Madrid is to deny, on some level, your civic and Galician identity. He added later in the interview: 'Even though for me they're the main rival, Deportivo are the team I detest more than any other, I'd rather see a lad from Coruña in a Deportivo shirt than in a Madrid or Barça shirt.' Carlos, a Deportivo supporter in his 50s, said very similar but with the roles reversed.

[Gal] I have a theory, people from A Coruña have to be Deportivo fans and people from Vigo have to be Celta fans. That's how it is. So, do I hate Celta Vigo? What they represent? Yes. But I also respect people who are from Vigo and who support Celta. These days it's hard to support your local team because, mate, you see global products that carry a lot of weight. You watch a game, a Madrid-Barcelona for example, that they've been pushing on TV, and how are you supposed to sell Celta's home match against fuck knows who, a Celta-Getafe, nobody is arsed about that when there's a Madrid-Barça on that they've been pushing left, right, and centre.

His comment is prescriptive. It is necessary, not merely desirable, that a person from A Coruña supports Deportivo and a person from Vigo supports Celta. Carlos sees support for the local team – whether Deportivo or Celta – as the resistance of autochthonous culture against the encroachment of a soulless product. Just as Deportivo or Celta are underdogs on the pitch when they face Real Madrid, so too are they underdogs in this battle for allegiances. Iago and Carlos both acknowledged that it is easy to support Real Madrid or Barcelona. To choose Deportivo or Celta, therefore, represents a more authentic form of support in which the individual foregoes constant success in favour of belonging. As a general observation, several participants used a particular phrase to question why a Galician would support Real Madrid or Barcelona: *'ter que ver'* ['to have to do with']. *'Que ten que ver co Madrid?'* ['what do they have to do with Real Madrid?'] was a common rhetorical question in reference to Real Madrid-supporting Galicians. It carries the implication of a lack of relation or representation, in contrast to support of local teams, which do represent their (more authentic) supporters.

A steadfast belief in the importance of supporting one's local team did not always translate to a conviction that Galician clubs should promote Galician players. Many participants did take pride in seeing homegrown players represent their team. This was pronounced among Celta supporters. In the late 2000s, under threat of bankruptcy, Celta promoted local players to the first team. It was as much an act of economic necessity as an autarkic vision. By 2021, the year in which I conducted most interviews, Celta had become the club in the top five European leagues (Spain, England, Italy, Germany, and France) with the second most homegrown players in the first team squad. Only Athletic Club de Bilbao, which still employs a Basque-only selection policy, had more.<sup>298</sup> With this background, some participants stated that they felt a greater connection to the team if there were more Galicians on the pitch. It was also a tonic to the excesses of modern football. The same participants who bemoaned that players have become mercenaries with no emotional attachment to the club, were passionate about the presence of local players who would 'defend the badge'.

Football changed drastically between the period in discussion and when the interviews took place. The vast majority of participants considered that it had changed in a negative way. This mournful conviction produced a pattern of nostalgia in the interviews, but also a belief that support for the local team represents an antidote to the avaricious nature of 'modern' football.

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<sup>298</sup> <https://elpais.com/especiales-branded/es-laliga/2021/lo-que-hace-al-rc-celta-un-equipo-singular-en-europa/>, accessed 25 November 2022.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I argued that participants invested football with symbolic capital as a means to articulate Galician identity. This has two strands. First, the belief that expressions of Galician unity through football have been stifled because ‘politicians’ feared their cohesive potential. This occurred in the wake of the 2002 *Prestige* oil disaster. Filipe vehemently believed that there was a conspiracy to thwart the uniting of Celta and Deportivo supporters in a common protest. Yet the protest did take place. It reverberated throughout Galicia and Spain. Filipe’s testimony shows the value of discrepancy in oral history. It permits a richer analysis than if the participant had recalled events in adherence to the official record. There was a broader perception that the conservative Partido Popular resisted pressure to reform the *Irmandiña* because to do so was not politically expedient. That it understood – and feared – the potential of the national team as a nation-building institution. Many participants felt a visceral belief in the importance of the *Irmandiña*, not just as a means to articulate Galicia in the present, but also to imagine a potential, future, aspirational Galicia that competes with – and is recognised by – the nations of Europe. Conservative elements of Galician politics appreciated the symbolic value of football but feared its potential.

Participants saw Galician nationalism, on the other hand, as somewhere between oblivious to and distrustful of football as a political tool, due to a deep-rooted cultural conservatism.

In the second part of this chapter I showed how participants viewed football as a repository for local pride. They saw football – and Deportivo in particular – as capable of raising the self-esteem of a city and the wider autonomous community. One participant went as far as to identify footballing success as a cause of the upward trajectory of Galician nationalism in the 1990s. A range of participants lamented the sanitisation or commercialisation of football

in a way that is consistent with the broader 'Against Modern Football' movement. They located global 'superclubs' as the main culprits. Concurrently, participants used the language of resistance to express a belief that one should support one's local club, even if that meant a person supporting the rival. This was grounded in the conviction that to support the local team is to practise a truly authentic form of fandom, as well as a vindication of the local over the global. Implicit throughout this chapter is the conviction that football is capable of affecting social change, if given the chance.



# Chapter Six: Football and identity in Galician external relations

## Introduction

In the previous chapter I argued that people invest football with symbolic meaning to articulate both a Galician national identity and local identities *within* Galicia. In this chapter I shift the focus to the role of football in the shaping of Galician attitudes to external territories and communities. Consistent across the two chapters is the notion that football was a symbolic vehicle for the articulation of Galician identity that acquired political value as a means to express Galician unity against perceived external threats. Here I develop the idea that footballing allegiances exaggerated resentment or unease with certain other regions – Madrid, namely – yet simultaneously nurtured a sense of connection with other sub-state nations, in Spain and beyond.

In the first section I explore the expression of centre-periphery relations through football. Participants lamented the ubiquitous presence of Real Madrid – and to a lesser extent Barcelona – in Galicia. This was partly a symptom of the usual animosity toward a successful team. Yet it also manifested in two overtly ideological grievances. First, the perception of Real Madrid as a centralist institution and a vestige of Francoism. The second manifestation concerns internal colonialism, a firmly established frame for Galicia's political and economic situation in relation to the Spanish state (refer to Chapter Three). The extension of this

concept to football provides new insights, as participants presented Real Madrid and Barcelona's presence in Galicia as a form of footballing colonialism.<sup>299</sup>

In the second section I consider how football shaped participants' views of other sub-state nations, and how, in turn, this informed their perceptions of Galicia. Despite *galeguismo's* long history of adopting Celtism to differentiate Galicia from the rest of Spain, few participants presented themselves as ethnically Celtic, or even as interested in cultural expressions of a Celtic identity. More prevalent, though, was the presentation of matches between Celta Vigo and Glasgow Celtic as symbolic of a pan-Celtic brotherhood with Ireland and Scotland. In terms of attitudes toward other 'historical nationalities' in Spain, participants displayed a strong sense of connection to the Basque Country. This kinship co-existed with a perception that Basque and Catalan people express their national identities – as distinct from that of Spain – with more confidence than Galicians. I engage with Galician self-perceptions in this section because they were so often relational; informed by a sense of difference from the Basque Country and Catalonia. The participants were morose in their perceptions of how other Galicians view Galicia. The notion of '*auto-odio*' ['self-hate'] was prominent, as was the observation that people are *galeguista* but not nationalist. That is, they embrace cultural or folkloric expressions of Galician identity but do not support nationalism at the ballot box.

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<sup>299</sup> By 'presence' in Galicia, I refer to the number of supporters, media coverage, and the prominence of replica shirts and other memorabilia.

## Centre-periphery relations expressed through football

In 2014 the Spanish Centre for Sociological Research (CIS) published data on football club support organised by province. The four provinces of Galicia revealed contrasting results. Celta and Deportivo had the highest proportion of support in their respective provinces (Pontevedra and La Coruña). In the province of Lugo, 67 per cent of football supporters expressed a preference for Real Madrid. This figure rose to 83 per cent in the province of Ourense.<sup>300</sup> Even allowing for a generous margin of error, these figures demonstrate the clout of Real Madrid in Galicia (and, conversely, the relatively limited support for Barcelona).

Supporters of Galician teams attached negative value to the pervasiveness of Real Madrid. Joni, a Deportivo supporter from A Coruña, cited the Trofeo Teresa Herrera – a prestigious, long-running pre-season tournament held at Riazor – as formative for his interest in football.<sup>301</sup> He went to his first match with his uncle in the late 1970s, ‘more to eat an empanada than to watch the football.’ Yet Joni’s uncle only went if Real Madrid participated. ‘[Gal] If Madrid weren’t playing he didn’t take me to the Teresa Herrera,’ Joni said. He laughed as I raised my eyebrows. ‘Mate, that’s how it is. It’s sad but that’s how it is. If Madrid weren’t playing in the Teresa Herrera, there wasn’t a Teresa Herrera for 90 per cent of people here.’ It is significant that Joni deemed this to be ‘sad’. It reveals a value judgement that the excitement and intrigue that Real Madrid provoked in the city was negative. The implication is that Joni values local football and rejects the idea that football is only relevant

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<sup>300</sup> <https://www.jotdown.es/2014/09/mapa-de-las-aficiones-del-futbol-espanol/>, accessed 24 November 2022. It should be noted that there is a higher margin of error in sparsely populated provinces, such as Lugo and Ourense. Indeed, the absence of support for Celta, Deportivo, Lugo, or UD Ourense in the data is very surprising and may reflect methodological shortcomings.

<sup>301</sup> For a comprehensive history of the Teresa Herrera, see: H. Pena, *Historia del trofeo Teresa Herrera: 75 aniversario del torneo decano del fútbol (1946–2021)* (A Coruña, 2021).

if a glamorous club is involved. Other participants made similar judgements. Estevo, a supporter of CD Boiro, a semi-professional club, described the presence of *Madridistas* in Boiro as ‘unha pena’ [‘a shame’]. Ana, a Celta supporter from O Grove, revealed that her grandfather supported Real Madrid. ‘[Esp] Something that does not make me proud,’ she added, laughing. Ana did not make the same negative judgement of her grandmother’s fondness for Barcelona. She felt the need to distance herself from her grandfather’s affiliation to Real Madrid. Yet while she did not celebrate her grandmother’s support of Barcelona, she did not deem it necessary to excuse herself in the same way.

The strength of anti-Madrid sentiment reflects, in part, the profiles of the participants. Though I interviewed a handful of Real Madrid sympathisers, the majority of participants were proud supporters of Galician clubs who saw their ‘choice’ of club as an expression of pride in the local.<sup>302</sup> Like Joni, Estevo, Ana, and the Deportivo supporters with whom I attended a match against Real Madrid in 2018 (as described in Chapter Five), these participants performed a hostility to Real Madrid. Expressions of hostility came across as a dutiful, obligatory reflex, as if the authenticity of their support for Deportivo or Celta relied on a simultaneous mistrust of Real Madrid and the values that club represents.

### Real Madrid as a symbol of centralism and Francoism

There exists a natural undercurrent of resentment toward Real Madrid as an historically successful team, in the same way as Manchester United and Bayern Munich attract ire in

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<sup>302</sup> I place the word ‘choice’ in quotation marks because many participants do not feel that they ‘chose’ their football team, but rather that their football team ‘chose’ them. To support their team is an obligation, passed down through generations or imposed by where they grew up.

England and Germany respectively.<sup>303</sup> For some participants, though, hostility to Real Madrid reflected deeper ideological grievances. This manifested in two ways. First, the presentation of Real Madrid as a vessel of centralism and Francoism. Second, the reproduction through football of the idea that Galicia is an internal colony within the Spanish state.

I asked Carlos, a Deportivo supporter in his 50s from A Coruña, what Real Madrid represented to him. His response was visceral.

[Gal] Pfft, look, Madrid represent basically everything that I'm not as a person. As in, because first, they're a team- how do I explain this without sounding really bad. I don't want to go too far here and be too crude with my words, but firstly they represent the political centralism of a Francoist dictatorship, an arrogant team, weirdly up themselves.

It is clear from what Carlos says – and what he leaves unsaid for fear of being too crude – that his dislike of Real Madrid goes beyond sporting rivalry. The club represents arrogance and centralism, values that Carlos finds repellent, against which he defines his own identity. Carlos's response explains why I have grouped together 'centralism' and 'Francoism' in this section. He referred to these terms interchangeably. Carlos proceeded to recall the insults that he received as a member of the Deportivo away support at matches in Madrid (at both Real and Atlético).

Mate, 'Portuguese', 'cokeheads', 'traffickers', the insults had nothing to do with sport, they were political and social. I mean, they weren't insulting me because I was a

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<sup>303</sup> For an overview of rivalry and opposition in football, see: G. Armstrong and R. Giulianotti (eds.), *Fear and Loathing in World Football* (Oxford, 2001).

Deportivo fan, they were insulting me because I was *galego* and back then in the 90s with the whole drug trafficking thing, Oubiña, etcetera, Sito Miñanco, so those were the kind of insults aimed at us, every time you went to Madrid, so there was a clear geographic, territorial, cultural, and political rivalry that went beyond just the sporting rivalry.<sup>304</sup>

Carlos received insults that he saw as symptomatic of geographic, cultural, and political condescension. It is unsurprising that he invested Deportivo's matches with Real Madrid with political meaning. He continued:

Given I was born in Coruña, I could never be a Madrid fan, Barcelona, Atlético Madrid, none of that. So that's what Madrid represent, that idea of a closed Spain, fascist, intolerant, that's what they represent. So for many years, 18 years, Madrid came to A Coruña and they always lost. And for me that was a sporting victory but also a political and social victory. [...] It was a really important part of defending our own culture, so to speak, our own identity.

The Deportivo players did not just represent the club, or even the city. To Carlos, when they took to the pitch, they defended broader values that encompassed Galician culture and identity. For people already sympathetic to Galician nationalism, the football stadium was a unique platform for the ritualistic performance of *galeguismo* in opposition to centralism and the perceived remnants of Francoism. Simultaneously, it is likely that football fans

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<sup>304</sup> Laureano Oubiña and Sito Miñanco are convicted drug traffickers from Cambados, Pontevedra. For further context on the history of drug trafficking in Galicia, see: N. Carretero, *Fariña: Historia e indiscreciones del narcotráfico en Galicia* (Madrid, 2015). For an account of Sito Miñanco's presidency of local football club Juventud Cambados, see: F. de Luis Manero, *Sito Presidente* (Logroño, 2020).

*became* sympathetic to nationalist discourse through exposure on the terraces to opinions like those of Carlos, for whom matches against Madrid had significant symbolic value. The perception of Real Madrid as a Francoist institution was not limited to devout supporters of Galician clubs. María, a woman in her 40s from Ourense, was one of few participants who did not identify as a football fan. Indeed, she justified her aversion to football through the ‘Against Modern Football’ trope discussed in the previous chapter: that football has become a business detached from its amateur roots. Yet María still associated Real Madrid with Francoism.

[Gal] I particularly hate Real Madrid, but that’s about the history [laughs], erm Franco-football was our opium, right, at the time he gave out that opium at the time and as a result Real Madrid was, erm it was politicised, as in I knew- I know what Real Madrid was. [...] Not so much these days, but in the past it was- in the past if you were a Real Madrid fan, like it’s clear, you’re a Real Madrid fan, you vote for the PP, and you liked Franco [laughs]. There was that sort of line, if you like.

The reproduction of the ties between Real Madrid and Francoism – by a person with a limited interest in football – shows how deep-rooted these assumptions are in Galicia. Though the veracity of these ties is not my focus, it is useful to reflect on the nature of the relationship between Real Madrid and the Francoist dictatorship. Alejandro Quiroga argues that the dictatorship took advantage of Real Madrid’s victories in the nascent European Cup (1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1966) to link the regime to the club’s success and to mitigate Spain’s international isolation.<sup>305</sup> Yet Quiroga questions the extent to which official

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<sup>305</sup> A. Quiroga, ‘Spanish Fury: Football and National Identities Under Franco’, *European History Quarterly*, 45/3 (2015), p.514.

propaganda was effective, as ‘malfunctioning’ state-controlled sports agencies struggled to inculcate the unity of the dictatorship and the nation. Carlos and María’s testimonies reveal that a residual perception of Real Madrid as ‘Franco’s club’ persists, among both diehard supporters and people whose attitude to football lies somewhere between ambivalence and antipathy. Perhaps the regime was more successful than Quiroga gives it credit for in its attempts to take ownership of Madrid’s success, albeit in a way that has been co-opted by its detractors.<sup>306</sup> For many Galician football supporters, matches against Madrid assumed deep political and cultural meaning as an opportunity to perform their Galician identity against a perceived symbol of centralism and Francoism.

### Footballing colonialism

The second manifestation of ideological hostility to Real Madrid took the form of the reproduction of the theory that Galicia is an internal colony. As discussed in Chapter Three, internal colonialism became a dominant strand of thought within Galician nationalism in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It refers to the idea that colonialism applies beyond overseas imperialism; it can also explain uneven development within a single state. Participants expressed general, non-football-related grievances that adhere to nationalist narratives of internal colonialism. In particular, the exportation of Galician energy to the rest of Spain. In 1981 Xosé Manuel Beiras identified the ‘pillage’ of Galician hydroelectric power as a principal element of internal colonialism.<sup>307</sup> One participant, Adrián, a Deportivo supporter

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<sup>306</sup> For a complete review of the relationship between Francoism and football, see: E. González Calleja, ‘El Real Madrid: ¿"equipo del regimen"? Fútbol y política durante el Franquismo’, *Esporte e Sociedade*, 14 (2010), pp.1–19, S. Lowe, *Fear and Loathing in La Liga: Barcelona vs Real Madrid* (London, 2014), D. Shaw, *Fútbol y Franquismo* (Madrid, 1987).

<sup>307</sup> Beiras, *O atraso económico*, p.29.



in his 30s from Vilagarcía de Arousa, became involved in nationalist politics when he realised the injustice of the extraction of natural resources. Bibiana is a Deportivo supporter born and raised in London to Galician parents. Now in her 40s, she has lived near Betanzos, A Coruña, since 1999. She was vigorous in her choice of words.

[Eng] I'm not being funny but with the electrical companies, that is bloody terrorism sort of thing, like we produce the electricity, our land, our landscape is being, being, it's being raped by electrical companies basically, and- and we pay, Galicians pay some of the highest prices for electricity sort of thing. So in that sense, that's when I'm very Galician nationalist and I think we do have to have more power over our resources and over the way we run this part of Spain.

Adrián and Bibiana reproduced a grievance that has been central to nationalist discourse for decades. Two other participants referred to the popularity of Real Madrid and Barcelona in Galicia as a form of colonialism. Anxo is a Deportivo supporter in his 30s from Ourense. I asked him if Ourense is a 'footballing' city.<sup>308</sup>

[Gal] It's not a particularly footballing city in terms of the football within the city, but obviously everyone supports Barça or Madrid, that Spanish footballing colonialism. Barça and Madrid, yep, you notice when there's a game on, when there's a *clásico* or

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<sup>308</sup> I asked this question soon after I had watched *Cuñados* (2021), a Galician-language film set in Ourense. The narrative plays out with a sporting rivalry in the background, between Ourense and Lugo. Yet it is basketball rather than football that engrosses the two cities – and the protagonist played by Xosé Touriñán – in this comedy-drama.

something like that you notice because the streets are quiet, everyone's in the bars, but I think that's the case wherever you go.<sup>309</sup>

Anxo called this dominance a '*coñazo*' ['a pain in the arse'] and '*unha merda*' ['shit']. He did not see it as a Galician affliction, but as a problem that exists across Spain. Rodri, on the other hand, conceived of footballing colonialism as a specifically Galician – and even *coruñés* – problem. It is necessary to quote Rodri at length to appreciate how he composed a narrative that combined football, colonialism, and the formation of a youth culture in A Coruña that valued the local. He discussed the formation in 1987 of Riazor Blues, the radical fan group of which he was a member.

[Gal] It was our way of being part of a group, of having an identity, that more than anything else is the really important thing, no, it broke away from what I call colonialism, but anyway, it broke away from that dependency that Coruña had on the teams- Real Madrid basically, Barça and that as well, which had the Teresa Herrera as its symbol, the summer tournament. And then, all of a sudden us lads from the city started to say: 'no, no, I don't support Madrid, I don't support Barça, none of that, I support Deportivo', something that wasn't easy at the time, there wasn't an atmosphere, a few of us started it, some of us got it going. That's really revolutionary. Really revolutionary, and that ultimately explains what went on to happen, that the youth in the city started to- because they felt comfortable and they had a good time, because it gave them an identity, because going to the football was no longer just something that old boys did. And all of that energy also created- it really played a

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<sup>309</sup> *El clásico* ['the classic'] is a colloquial term for the derby between Real Madrid and Barcelona.

part in the success that would come, because genuinely, it broke away from that dependency-

M: The word 'colonialism' caught my attention, can you explain a bit-

R: Well basically because people supported Real Madrid, as in they were looking- I don't know about Vigo, they were looking elsewhere for something that was already on their doorstep, right. Basically- it's sort of linked to the culture of Francoism, basically. The culture of Francoism in which Real Madrid plays a vital role, it still plays a vital role [laughs], it did assume that role, and that did a lot of damage to the image of A Coruña, we forget that Coruña, Meirás, o Pazo de Meirás was almost the Francoist capital during the summer. Franco spent time at Meirás, he brought his whole court with him, as well as the local court.<sup>310</sup>

It is striking that Rodri equated the end of footballing colonialism with an emancipation of the youth of A Coruña, who, for the first time, had in Deportivo and Riazor Blues a successful civic institution and collective sub-culture around which to forge an identity. Rodri associated colonialism with Franco. When I asked him to elaborate on his use of the term, he immediately mentioned Real Madrid and Franco. He discussed the extent to which the Teresa Herrera trophy operated as a symbol of footballing colonialism. Two minutes – and a cigarette – later in the interview, Rodri returned to the theme. He did not attend the Teresa Herrera unless Deportivo participated, which was not a regular occurrence until 1990.

It didn't fit with the identity that we- that me and loads of people like me, wanted to have, so we completely broke away from that, we broke away from it. So yeah, if you

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<sup>310</sup> The Pazo de Meirás is a mansion in Sada, near A Coruña, that Franco used as a summer residence.

create something from here that renounces something from elsewhere, well you're doing an act of anticolonialism.

For Rodri, then, to renounce the foreign – the 'other' in this case being the perceived colonial oppressor – in favour of autochthonous culture is an act of anticolonial resistance. And this resistance had a reputational element. Support of the local football club served to distance A Coruña from association with Francoism. Indeed, radical groups presented football as a space for the contestation of colonial disputes in fanzine articles. In Santiago de Compostela, the Fende Testas fanzine *Bancada Norte* featured a preview of a match with Atlético Madrid in May 1996. It referred to the travelling Atlético supporters as arriving in Galicia like '*unha expedición de colonizadores*' ['an expedition of colonisers'].<sup>311</sup>

Football was a stage for Galicians to express discontent with centre-periphery relations in Spain. Some participants took pride in resisting the dominance of Real Madrid – and to a lesser extent Barcelona – both on the pitch and in terms of their level of support in Galicia. Others invested this sentiment with more specific grievances concerning centralism and internal colonialism. Crucially, they viewed football as a legitimate vehicle to address these grievances.

## Sub-state kinship expressed through football

Catalonia, the Basque Country, Ireland, Palestine, Timor-Leste, Kurdistan. These are among the sub-state nations and independence movements – past and present – with which radical groups expressed solidarity in their fanzines. Football was a platform for the expression of

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<sup>311</sup> *Bancada Norte*, 18 (1996), p.1.

allegiances as well as grievances. In this section I consider how football promoted a sense of kinship between Galicia and other 'Celtic' nations, and between Galicia and the Basque Country (but not Catalonia). There exists a perception that Basque and Catalan people express their national identities with more confidence than Galicians. Participants discussed at length how Galicians perceive themselves, with a strong focus on the notion of '*auto-odio*' ['self-hate'], and the idea that people are culturally *galeguista* without being nationalist. I include this analysis of how Galicians view themselves in this section because it was so often relational. Participants made sense of their own national identity through (unfavourable) comparisons to Catalonia and the Basque Country.

### Celtic kinship

The presentation of Galicia as ethnically Celtic was the salient discursive trend of the *galeguista* movement in the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This belief in a 'Celtic connection' has faded into the banal. It exists more prominently as a brand name for unimaginative small businesses than as a collective origin story. Only two participants explicitly identified with the idea of a Celtic past and saw themselves as, in some way, Celtic. More participants may have held similar views but did not express them in the interview. I did not ask direct questions such as 'to what extent do you identify as Celtic?' On the rare occasions that I asked questions of this type – phrased like an exam paper – participants tended to give a rigid, uncomfortable response. I also wanted to see how many participants would steer the conversation in that direction and volunteer Celtism as a prominent part of their identity. Few, as it transpired.

Though explicit references to Galicia's Celtic past were uncommon, the minority of participants who did speak about Celtism did so with passion. Celta Vigo supporters viewed matches with Glasgow Celtic in the 2002-03 UEFA Cup as a symbolic union of Celtic brothers. Indeed, almost a decade before that tie, a sense of brotherhood was prominent in fanzines affiliated to Celtarras. Issue 13 of *Fondo Celtarra*, published in March 1994, included a four-page spread on the history of the 'Old Firm' derby between Glaswegian rivals Celtic and Rangers. The article expressed solidarity with Celtic and Ireland: 'We also want to show our sympathy for Glasgow Celtic and for the Irish struggle to recover the national liberties that England has systematically denied them for centuries.'<sup>312</sup> The same fanzine dedicated five pages to Celtic later that year, complete with images of balaclava-clad IRA militants and the Irish language sentence '*tiocfaidh ár lár*' ['our day will come'], a prominent Republican slogan. The article ends with the unifying exclamation: '¡¡¡NÓS SOMOS OS CELTAS!!!'<sup>313</sup>

Sime, a Celta supporter and member of Celtarras, travelled to Glasgow for the away leg in late 2002. He contacted Celtic supporters prior to the match. '[Gal] I remember that I'd written, I'd written on one of those Celtic forums, using this macaronic English, "Hi, I'm from Vigo and some of us go to Glasgow, brothers, Celtic brothers", right.' Sime and his group travelled to Glasgow to share the experience with Celtic supporters, with whom Sime emphasised a deep-rooted connection. He talked for eight minutes, pausing only for the occasional swig of beer, about the trip to Scotland and a chance meeting with a senior member of the IRA. I did not ask Sime about this trip. He chose to discuss it – at such length – because he has composed a narrative of kinship between Celta and Celtic, rooted in shared origins and consecrated across two matches in late 2002.

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<sup>312</sup> *Fondo Celtarra*, 13 (1994), p.6.

<sup>313</sup> *Fondo Celtarra*, 17 (1994), pp.15–19.

The fanzine *Dende as Bancadas* presented the return leg in Vigo as a festival of fraternity. Celta supporters unfurled a 'Welcome Bhoys' banner – a reference to Celtic's nickname – in a street close to the stadium. A reported 1,000 supporters from both teams congregated beneath the banner to drink and sing together throughout the afternoon. The Scottish fans further ingratiated themselves to their hosts by collecting money on the outbound flights to support Galicians affected by the *Prestige* oil disaster, which happened weeks before the fixture.<sup>314</sup> The sense of kinship spread beyond the more radical and politically active fan groups. Xoán, though himself a member of Celtarras, recalled an uncle who was a Celta season-ticket holder until 2001. That year, the meek manner of Celta's defeat to Real Zaragoza in the final of the Copa del Rey led the uncle to boycott Balaídos until Celta won a trophy. Yet he made an exception for the Celtic match, which Xoán described as a 'special day' because of that collective experience with the opposition supporters. This reveals the symbolic importance of the match against Celtic, both for more passionate supporters like Xoán, and casual – albeit stubborn – supporters like his uncle. Football enabled a festive performance of the 'Celtic connection', underpinned by a sense of brotherhood between sub-state nations past and present: Ireland, Scotland, Galicia.

### Sense of connection with the Basque Country

In August 2021 Spanish football clubs tentatively reopened their stadiums following the coronavirus pandemic. On a Saturday afternoon at the end of that month, Celta hosted Athletic Club de Bilbao. Groups of Basque supporters propped up bars in the centre of Vigo, identifiable by their red-and-white striped attire and berets. I walked through Praza da

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<sup>314</sup> *Dende as Bancadas*, 1 (2003), pp.4–7, 11.

Constitución two hours after the match, as the light faded and the square fizzed with the sound of dozens of conversations. One table caught my eye. It was the biggest table. 15 Celta and Athletic supporters sat together. They talked and laughed as empty bottles gathered in the centre of the table. I sensed from the familiarity of their interactions that this was an annual reunion, a ritual meeting assigned to the calendar by the fixture computer. The scene reflected a sentiment that many participants expressed: a sense of connection with the Basque Country, often accompanied by an envy of the strength of Basque national identity.<sup>315</sup>

Iria and Miguel are Celta supporters from Vilagarcía de Arousa. They both spoke warmly about the Basque Country.

[Gal] Miguel: I've got a real soft spot for the Basque Country.

Iria: Yeah, they're so similar to us. They're coarse like us [laughs].

Miguel: I really like them, like they're proper loyal people, and also they have that connection with their culture that I'm so envious of. Like watching a Basque derby, to see all of them, Real Sociedad and Bilbao get together whether it's in Bilbao or San Sebastián, and they can just do that, all on the wines, all laughing and joking, and to be able to go with your shirt on, without everything that comes with that, for me that comes from their upbringing and their culture. Here for example, we can't go to Coruña because-

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<sup>315</sup> None of the participants attributed this sense of connection to Galician emigration to the Basque Country, which was particularly notable in the 1960s. For further information, see: J.I. Ruiz Olabiénaga, 'Emigración gallega al País Vasco' in M.L. Suárez Castañeira and I Seoane (eds.), *Letras galegas en Deusto: dez anos de estudos galegos, 1991–2001* (Deusto, 2001), pp.159–164.



Iria: No, because it would be hassle.

They expressed the same sentiments as several other participants; that Galicia and the Basque Country share character traits, an admiration for how the Basque people value their own language and culture, and a tinge of jealousy. Filipe is a Celta supporter in his 40s from the outskirts of Vigo, and a member of the *galeguista peña* 'Colectivo Nós'.<sup>316</sup> He talked effusively about a brotherhood with Basque supporters of Athletic Club and Real Sociedad.

[Gal] They're amazing, like they spend the weekend here and we spend the weekend there and we have that kind of brotherhood because outside football we have a few problems and issues in common right, as nations without a state, and it feels like there's this backdrop that we just get each other. [...] Ultimately when you're a Celta fan, it's your club, it's your country's club, it's like a Galician thing, and it's the same in the Basque Country.

For Filipe, then, to support Celta has a deeper meaning that (only) fans of Basque teams can also appreciate. To support Celta has a national connotation that Basques understand, as the team embodies the nation as well as the city. Alejandro Quiroga affirms that Athletic Club and Real Sociedad functioned as vehicles for Basque nationalist and anti-Franco (though not anti-Spanish) sentiment, as Basque nationalists became directors at both clubs from the early 1970s.<sup>317</sup> It is curious that participants did not express the same sense of kinship with FC Barcelona, or Catalonia more broadly. Quiroga states that the 'Catalanization' of FC Barcelona 'followed a social process by which the club had become a symbol of Catalan

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<sup>316</sup> Colectivo Nós formed in 2013 as a 'Celtista e galeguista' group. Its name derives from the *Xeración Nós* – the early-20<sup>th</sup> century group of *galeguista* politicians – and its logo is based on Castelao's mermaid flag design.

<sup>317</sup> Quiroga, 'Spanish Fury', p.519.

identity and anti-Francoism in the late 1960s.<sup>318</sup> The distinction probably lies in the perception of FC Barcelona as a member of the global footballing elite. And, despite its symbolic heft, as one of the main perpetrators of the rampant commercialisation that led so many participants to lament 'modern' football. Athletic Club, meanwhile, remains staunchly local with its Basque-only selection policy. As for general attitudes beyond football, participants did not discuss Catalonia with the same warmth – or frequency – as the Basque Country. Among those who did discuss Catalonia, there was an admiration for their self-interest and ability to obtain concessions from central government. Yet I also detected an unease derived from the divisive independence referendum held in 2017.

A sense of kinship with the Basque Country was particularly pronounced among members of radical groups that performed a left-wing, *galeguista* identity. Carlos is a member of Riazor Blues, the hardcore element of the Deportivo support. He emphasised a connection with Basque supporters.

[Gal] There was also that extra component of, like, that territorialism, cultural identity, and that sense of coming together with the people of Euskadi was always really strong. Especially with Athletic Club fans. With Real Sociedad fans, Osasuna fans, as far as Riazor Blues was concerned and the Deportivo fanbase in general, there was always an affinity with those guys. Fanbases who also had this pro-independent and nationalist character.

Tellingly, one of Carlos's main gripes with Celtarras was their interaction with Herri Norte, a radical group associated with Athletic Club.

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<sup>318</sup> Quiroga, 'Spanish Fury', p.518.

There was a period when Celtarras completely manipulated the Bilbao lot, from Herri Norte, they played them against us for years, we were constantly scrapping with Herri Norte. These days we have an excellent relationship, they realise that they were totally influenced and that they were wrong, that Riazor Blues wasn't a fascist group.

Carlos felt indignation at the misrepresentation of his group to their Basque counterparts. This reveals how important it was to Carlos to command the respect of Basque supporters and maintain close relations with them. This eagerness to fraternise with Basque supporters is clear in Galician fanzines throughout the 1990s. Various Celta fanzines published features on Basque history and football culture, including profiles of radical groups such as Herri Norte (Athletic Club) and Peña Mújika (Real Sociedad). Before a match between Compostela and Athletic Club in November 1995, the Compostela fanzine *Bancada Norte* welcomed their guests to Galicia. 'Today we have a visit from our friends from EUZKADI, none other than ATHLETIC the pride of a nation.'<sup>319</sup> On the back page of the same issue, a cartoon strip depicts a skinhead reminding his fellow Compostela supporters that Herri Norte are in town, 'Let's make sure they leave with great memories of Fende Testas and Compostela.' It adopts the tone of a welcome for a venerable guest, to whom the hosts must extend the best hospitality. The write-up of the weekend in the following issue of *Bancada Norte* reveals that the Basque guests acquired a taste for the local Ribeiro wine, as they moved from one free bar to another.<sup>320</sup> At the same time, the sense of brotherhood ran deeper than a raucous, Ribeiro-fuelled weekend. The next two pages of the fanzine reproduced an article from *Peña Mújika*, the fanzine associated to the Real Sociedad group by the same name, about the plight of Basque political prisoners. A reader of *Bancada Norte* would receive from the pages

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<sup>319</sup> *Bancada Norte*, 6 (1995), p.1.

<sup>320</sup> *Bancada Norte*, 7 (1995), pp.5–6.

not only a sense of admiration and kinship, but also a sense of the strength of Basque national identity. As with the 'Celtic connection' in the previous section, football was a focal point for the articulation of shared characteristics and experiences between Galicians and Basques. A performance of kinship was pronounced among members of radical groups, which sought to establish ties with, and command the respect of, their Basque counterparts.

### **Basques and Catalans express their national identity with more confidence than Galicians**

When I asked about Galician identity, participants often responded by talking about Catalonia or the Basque Country. They defined Galician identity by its comparative weakness, and located sub-state national identity as something that occurs elsewhere. Implicit in this deflection was the assumption that I, as a researcher of national identity, would be more interested in Catalonia or the Basque Country, or at least require them as references. I asked Albi, a Deportivo supporter in his 60s from Vilagarcía de Arousa, about his experience of watching the Galician national team in the 2000s.

[Gal] Ah, fucking class. It was like, obviously- how do I put it, a utopia, like they played, then didn't play again for five or six years, so we'll never have a Galician national team, never. If the Basques and the Catalans don't have one, who are way more nationalist than us, then how are we going to get one here. So- well they do have one, but they just play friendlies, but nothing more.

Albi imposed a ceiling on the potential of expressions of Galicianness based on what the Catalans or Basques had achieved. He held little expectation that Galicia could usurp either of its sub-state neighbours in the assertion of cultural, political, or linguistic distinctiveness.

Albi's judgement that '*son moito máis nacionalistas ca nós*' ['they're much more nationalist than us'] demonstrates this dynamic.

It is significant that Albi grouped together Catalonia and the Basque Country in this passage. Participants did not express the same sense of kinship with Catalonia as they did with the Basque Country. Yet they tended to discuss Catalonia and the Basque Country together, as a single aspirational 'other', when discussing the strength of nationalist movements in contrast to Galician weakness. In the previous section I included a passage from an interview with Iria and her partner Miguel, in which they emphasised that Galicians and Basques share character traits, but did not mention Catalonia. Later in the interview, in a different context, Iria referred to Catalonia and the Basque Country together.

[Gal] As I see it here in Galicia we don't have, I dunno, we don't have that self-respect that they have in the Basque Country for example or in Catalonia, we're missing something because there they really defend their culture and us here, some do but loads don't.

In Iria's view, more people in Catalonia and the Basque Country have '*amor propio*' ['self-respect'] for their own distinct culture, which leads them to defend it with more vehemence than the Galicians defend theirs. Pili made a similar observation of her participation in women's football. She represented Karbo CF, a pioneering women's football team from A Coruña in the 1970s and 1980s, before becoming a successful coach. In 1985 Pili represented Galicia in the Spanish Championship, a competition between autonomous communities. Galicia won the final at Barcelona's Camp Nou stadium. When I asked Pili about the experience, she talked about how proud the Catalan players were to stand behind

their flag and represent their nation. The Galician delegation had not even brought a flag, Pili recalled.

[Gal] It was maybe there, at that first tournament, when you start to say: ‘why aren’t we fighting to have a national team? Are we not just as proud as they are?’, do you know what I mean. You saw it with the other national teams, with the Basque Country and Catalonia especially, you saw how emotional they were to be there with their flags and all of that. And we- we just had a badge. The Galician Federation badge, we didn’t even- it didn’t even have ‘Galicia’ on it, nothing.

The experience was chastening for Pili, but it solidified a conviction to fight for a Galician national team. On this occasion Catalonia and the Basque Country did not symbolise what Galicia could never achieve, but rather what Galicia could aspire to. This perception of Catalan and Basque national pride contrasted markedly to how participants discussed Galicia and their fellow Galicians.

### *Auto-odio*

‘*Auto-odio*’ [‘self-hate’] seems like an excessively strong term to describe one’s attachment to the homeland. Yet multiple participants used this phrase, without my asking about it, to refer to a Galician inferiority complex. Sime, the Celta fan who spoke at length about his trip to Glasgow, had a theory about this lack of self-confidence, which also refers to the idea of a Celtic connection. He talked me through his theory in the quiet upstairs of a bar in Vigo’s *Casco Vello*.

[Gal] With the self-hate that the Galician has for their own, you know that self-hate that the Galician always- I have a theory but it's a long story. It all adds up. What's my theory? Let's see, the short version, the Romans get to Spain, well what would become Spain, so they invade the Iberian peninsula and there weren't any journalists obviously, there wasn't the BBC or anything like that, so they took scribes with them. Well there was one called Heraclitus, and Heraclitus defined the Celtic people, which was what they called the people of the north west, we were the Celts, which is the name of the group. Keltoi is the race of- Keltoi, Celtic Celta. So Heraclitus defined the Celts as the most fierce in battle and the most submissive in defeat. So you put up a real fight but once they're defeated, we're the biggest cocksuckers, you know.

Sime is the front man of a band called Keltoi!, which combines 'Keltoi' – the Greek name for the ethnic group that came to be known as Celts – and 'Oi!', the sub-genre of punk rock in which the band situates itself. Sime returned to the theme of '*auto-odio*' throughout the interview. An hour after he had explained his theory, he added:

The only people who doubt the Celtic origins of Galiza are the anthropologists from here, probably because of that pressure to have a unified Spanish historiography, you know, where everything is completely simplified, 'we're all Spanish here'. So that's further proof of the famous self-hate.

Here, then, Sime takes '*auto-odio*' to mean a lack of desire to differentiate Galicia from Spain. Through his mentioning of '*presión*' ['pressure'] to establish a single, coherent narrative of Spanish history, Sime invokes the idea of an historiographical collusion to deny Galicia its own, distinct history. That is, a collusion designed to make the Castilian nation congruent with the Spanish state, at the expense of other sub-state narratives. This

perception of a lack of confidence to differentiate Galicia – and to embrace its distinctive features – was prominent in the interviews. It usually took the form of exasperation at the perceived devaluation of the Galician language, a theme that I engage with in more detail in Chapter Eight.

While the concept of *'auto-odio'* often referred to a general Galician mentality, two participants used the same trope on a localised scale, to lament a defeatist attitude within their cities: Ferrol and Ourense. In December 1992, the *Aegean Sea*, a Greek oil tanker, ran aground on the ragged headland around A Coruña, just beyond the Tower of Hercules. A vast plume of black smoke engulfed the tower as the ship burned. Paco Vázquez, the mayor of A Coruña, consoled the people of the city. *'Tranquilos,'* he said, *'the smoke is blowing toward Ferrol'*. This flippant remark reveals much about broader attitudes toward Ferrol, a naval city in the north of Galicia. Participants maligned Ferrol as ugly and decrepit. Among football supporters of a certain political persuasion, Racing Ferrol bears the ignominy of being the only major Galician club without a visible *galeguista* element within the fanbase.

Fran, in his 40s, is from a village just outside the city and supports Racing Ferrol. We met on a wet evening in the Esteiro neighbourhood, illuminated by the lights of the sprawling shipyards. Fran chose this location for two reasons. First, as Esteiro is an historic working-class *barrio*, and much of Fran's interview consisted of a defence of Ferrol's left-wing and *galeguista* tradition.<sup>321</sup> Second, so he could show me the Campo de Batallones, the football

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<sup>321</sup> After about an hour I felt the interview had reached a natural end. I thanked Fran for his time and asked if he wanted to add anything. He spoke continuously for five minutes about Ferrol's contribution to left-wing and Galician nationalist politics, and denied the stereotype of Ferrol as a pro-Spanish enclave within Galicia. Fran mentioned that Pablo Iglesias, the founder of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, was born in Ferrol. As was Ricardo Carvalho Calero, a prominent *galeguista* academic. Fran proceeded to emphasise the centrality of Ferrol to the Galician workers' movement.



pitch within a military compound that hosted some of the first matches in the city. Fran mentioned that Ferrol suffers from a lack of self-esteem. I asked how that manifested.

[Gal] Well it manifests itself for example in what I told you earlier, in our lack of support for each other, in not appreciating what is our own, that- I'm conscious that it happens generally in Galicia, but in the case of Ferrol it's crazy. We're our own worst enemies in the city and in the county. We don't value anything, we don't like anything. And I became aware of that when I left. When I was here, I thought everything was horrible as well, it always rains, it's industrial, it's ugly, the *ría* is polluted, there's no work, everything was bad.

Fran saw Ferrol as a salient example of a broader Galician problem. According to Abel, a supporter of UD Ourense in his 50s, Ourense suffers from a similar complex.

[Gal] The problem with Ourense, the province, is that it's full of *ourensáns*. If feels like us *ourensáns* are annoyed if things go well. So a lot of the time it's us *ourensáns* who either- don't help or 'well let's see if it goes badly', I think there's a certain cainism that obviously doesn't help anything prosper.

Abel identified this attitude as the reason why Ourense is the only Galician city without a professional football club. 'All [other Galicia cities] have a team of some description that's competing at a high level. Ourense doesn't. It might just be a coincidence, it's not a biblical curse or anything, I reckon us *ourensáns* are to blame for not appreciating what we have.'

Participants saw '*auto-odio*', or a lack of national self-esteem, as an impediment to the

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Notably, it was the scene of the police shooting of Amador Rey and Daniel Niebla on 10 March 1972, during a workers' protest. The *Día da Clase Obreira Galega* ['Day of the Galician Working Class'] is held annually on 10 March to commemorate the tragedy.

positive expression of Galician identity. Catalonia and the Basque Country served as examples to the contrary. Yet within Galicia, Fran and Abel reveal that there are additional layers to this complex, which manifest on a provincial and civic level.

### People are *galeguista* but not nationalist

Alongside this self-critical analysis of the Galician mentality, participants discussed another trend. They believed that people embraced cultural expressions of Galician identity, but qualified that this did not translate to support for the BNG at the ballot box. In perceived contrast, again, to Catalonia and the Basque Country, people are *galeguista* without being nationalist. Adrián, the Deportivo supporter from Vilagarcía de Arousa, articulated this when I asked him if a Galician national team would have political consequences if it played regular fixtures.

[Gal] Yeah, I think ultimately it happens at parties, you stick a *gaitero* in there and you see that people start to dance a *muiñeira* and that.<sup>322</sup> In the end those feelings- in Galiza, despite being very pro-Spanish in a lot of cases, there's a lot of *galeguista* sentiment. Not nationalist but *galeguista*. We're very proud. I think the majority of Galicians are very proud of what we have. Of our wine, the country's wine, the country's cheese, of Galicia in itself, the beaches.

Adrián distinguished between a sense of pride – particularly in gastronomy and landscape – in Galicia, and nationalist sentiment. He added an important point: 'even closed-minded PP supporters are *galeguista* and they like that.' Various participants in their 30s and 40s

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<sup>322</sup> A *gaitero* is a person who plays the *gaita*, a traditional Galician instrument similar to the bagpipes. The *muiñeira* is a traditional Galician dance and musical genre.

identified a contradiction in their parents' generation. These participants struggled to reconcile their parents' *galeguista* sentiment and use of the Galician language with their support for the conservative Partido Popular, which the participants in question saw as hostile to expressions of Galician identity. Borja, in his 30s, from Lugo spoke emotionally about his parents' post-dinner rituals.

[Gal] It is true that there's one thing that stands out. That even though they're, well, more to the right, when they got together with their friends, with this Julio, I remember that after meals they always ended up singing the Galician anthem, they'd finished eating, they had their post-meal *chupitos*, and always, I remember they'd sing Galician songs and the Galician anthem. It's something that always stood out to me, and in fact- you can see my hairs are standing on end, my parents met dancing, at a folkloric dance. Julio was the president of the association. My parents always did Galician dances, so I mean despite being a bit to the right, they always felt that connection to Galicia and Galician culture, yeah.<sup>323</sup>

Bixu, a Celta supporter in his 30s from A Guarda, identified the same contradiction in his father.

[Gal] He's always encouraged Galician artists, tributes to late Galician artists, at home he's got Nós encyclopaedias all over the place, loads of them, Galician artists, he's got loads of documents and paintings and stuff. And then, well he went about *fachote* on

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<sup>323</sup> Despite the Franco regime's suppression of regional identities in Spain – which complicated its vision of a single national identity – it promoted folkloric dance and choral groups that represented different sub-state cultural identities. This occurred through the female cohort of the Falange, the Sección Feminina, and its 'Coros y Danzas de España' programmes, which Sandi Holguín argues served to 'domesticate' political regional aspirations 'in the service of the Spanish state', S. Holguín, *Flamenco Nation: The Construction of Spanish National Identity* (Madison, Wisconsin, 2019), p.189.

me, I dunno, it's the way it is. He's from another era and this and that, I dunno. But anyway, ultimately the most important thing is that he always- that he organises events and he wants to encourage the Galician people and history. I can't deny him that, but then when it comes to the ballot box he goes another way.

I sensed that Borja and Bixu saw this as simultaneously natural and contradictory. It was a set of behaviours they had grown up with. Yet as they grew older and formed their own political views, they came to see their parents' stance as incongruous. Manolo is a Lugo supporter in his 40s from Lugo, with a sleeve tattoo of the city's Roman wall to demonstrate his origins. He identified the same distinction between *galeguismo* and nationalism in the context of the stadium.

[Gal] The Galician derbies here in the *segunda división*, the years that Lugo coincided with Deportivo [...] the whole stadium was on its feet for the Galician anthem before the match. There were seven or eight thousand here, 30 thousand there, on their feet singing, you must have been able to hear the anthem ten kilometres away. Are all those people nationalist? No. Are all those people Galician? Yes. Do all those people feel Galician? Of course. Are they nationalists? Some might be, we don't know. The problem is- well, the 'problem', it's one of these things where *Galicia is different*.

Manolo switched to English at the end, as he articulated this observation as a point of difference, a curiosity, rather than a problem. These testimonies reveal an appreciation of the nuance of expressions of Galician identity. One can sing the Galician anthem – at the dinner table or in the stadium – without the need to vote for a nationalist party or feel anti-Spanish sentiment. One can assume this is also the case in other sub-state nations, in

Catalonia or the Basque Country. Yet participants conceived of it as a uniquely Galician trait, rooted in a collective lack of self-confidence.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have considered how participants expressed their perceptions of external places and people through football, in terms of centre-periphery hostility toward Madrid and a sense of kinship with other sub-state nations. Participants lamented the presence of Real Madrid (and, to a lesser extent, Barcelona) in Galicia. For many, this was a simple dislike of the successful, glamorous rival. Yet for some participants, Real Madrid attracted deeper ideological grievances as a perceived symbol of centralism, Francoism, and colonialism.

Alongside this politicised relationship with Madrid, participants felt a sense of kinship with other peripheral, sub-state nations. This was clear in the way Celta Vigo supporters presented their matches with Glasgow Celtic in the 2002-2003 UEFA Cup as a unique occasion and a platform for the performance of pan-Celtic brotherhood. Participants also emphasised a sense of similarity with the Basque Country and a desire to be liked and respected by their Basque counterparts. Although participants did not extend the same warmth to Catalonia, they tended to combine Catalonia and the Basque Country when lamenting how Galicia is incapable of expressing its national identity with the confidence of its Iberian neighbours. In this respect, Catalonia and the Basque Country represented an elusive template that was at once desirable and unachievable. Participants lamented the Galician '*auto-odio*' ['self-hate'] – with its internal nuances within Galicia – in the context of perceived Catalan and Basque national pride. They also identified a subtle distinction in the expression of Galicianness, that people are *galeguista* without being nationalist. That is, they

may speak *galego*, imbibe the culture, and feel an intense pride to be Galician, without converting this sentiment to a vote for a nationalist party at the ballot box. This observation was common among participants in their 30s of their parents' generation.

Participants understood and articulated their sentiments toward the kin and the 'other' through football. Footballing allegiances exaggerated resentment and unease with Madrid. Participants viewed the Spanish capital as symbolic of centralism and the pursuit of a homogenous national identity at the expense of sub-national communities. At the same time, the same allegiances to Galician clubs provided a regular platform for the ritual performance of kinship with other sub-state nations, in Spain and beyond. In line with the conclusions of the previous chapter, it is clear that participants invested football with symbolic meaning and political value for external – as well as internal – relations.

# Chapter Seven: ‘*Señoritos versus traballadores*’: Civic rivalries and shared Galicianness

## Introduction

On 25 May 1924, a late own goal by Pedro Vallana sealed victory for Italy against Spain in the Paris Olympic Games. Three days later the *galeguista* journalist and politician Antón Villar Ponte discussed the result in *Galicia*, a nationalist newspaper edited in Vigo. He reminded readers that the collective honour of a nation does not depend on the performance of 11 footballers. ‘Something the *celtistas* and *deportivistas* should bear in mind,’ he added, ‘insistent on resuscitating between La Coruña and Vigo those parish-against-parish village fights.’<sup>324</sup> Just one year after the foundation of Celta Vigo, Villar Ponte recognised the potential of football to inflame the rivalry between the two biggest cities in Galicia. His warning was prescient.

In this chapter I explore the shifting and sometimes paradoxical conflict between an overarching, shared Galician identity, and the confrontational expressions of local, civic identities on matchday. I draw on Michael Billig’s theory of ‘banal nationalism’ and Michael Skey’s associated concept of ‘ecstatic nationalism’ as a framework to understand participants’ behaviour. Banal nationalism refers to the ways in which national identity is maintained and reproduced through the daily, unconscious flagging of the nation. As I argue in Chapter Two, Billig’s conceptualisation of the banal is applicable to civic identity. And the

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<sup>324</sup> Quoted in Redacción, ‘Antón Villar Ponte refuga do fútbol’, *Revista O Dez*, 8 (2021), p.13.

football club, as a prominent civic institution, assumes a key role in the daily flagging of the city. Billig distinguishes banal nationalism from 'hot' nationalism, which arises in 'times of social disruption'.<sup>325</sup> Yet he does not examine in detail how nationalist fervour heats and cools over time. This is where 'ecstatic nationalism' is valuable. Michael Skey coined the term to apply Billig's work to events that celebrate the nation 'on a mass public scale', such as major football matches.<sup>326</sup> Skey argues that the two concepts interact. Banal forms of nationalism 'make ecstatic events meaningful', and simultaneously 'ecstatic events illuminate the banal'.<sup>327</sup> As with banal nationalism, ecstatic nationalism is applicable to civic identity. These related ideas permit an analysis of how matchday and non-matchday behaviours inform one another, despite the stark difference in tone and emotional intensity.

I begin this chapter with an explanation of the term 'localism' and how participants understood its application in Galicia as a cause of civic rivalry. The title of this chapter includes '*señoritos versus traballadores*', the posh versus the workers. Participants made sense of the rivalry between A Coruña and Vigo through this crude trope that the former is a bourgeois city and the latter proletariat. The question of capital status dominated their understanding of the rivalry between A Coruña and Santiago de Compostela. In both cases, participants argued that localist posturing by politicians and the press inflamed existing tensions, which caused rivalries to become 'hot', or ecstatic, on matchdays. This was characterised by heightened emotional energy: outbreaks of violence, verbal aggression, and the ritual exchange of insults inside and outside the stadium.

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<sup>325</sup> Billig, *Banal nationalism*, p.44.

<sup>326</sup> Skey, "'Carnivals of Surplus Emotion'", p.151.

<sup>327</sup> Skey, "'Carnivals of Surplus Emotion'", p.148.



In the next section I engage with a widespread perception that although radical groups incited much of the hostility, animosity spread to non-radical supporters and residents of A Coruña and Vigo. At the same time, participants acknowledged that their incendiary behaviour and remarks on matchday did not reflect their true, more moderate beliefs. Indeed, supporters of each club generally maintained a respectful rivalry. In the final section, I explore a sense of a shared Galician identity that participants believed to increase as they matured. This was underpinned by a belief that sporting rivalry between cities is perfectly normal, even desirable, and not detrimental to national unity. This idea of a growing sense of shared Galicianness reflects the fluidity of identity. It also reminds of the episodic nature of memory for many participants, who did not renounce or regret parochial views they had held in the past, but discussed those views as if they were held by a different version of the self, on a previous stage of their ideological journey.

## Localism fuelled civic rivalries

Most participants discussed 'localism', directly or indirectly. Usually in a negative way. Greg Sharzer defines localism in broad terms as an ideology that suggests social change happens most effectively at the micro level.<sup>328</sup> Participants broadly understood 'localism' in the Galician context to mean the placing of the interests of a city – usually A Coruña or Vigo – ahead of the interests of Galicia as a whole. Those sympathetic to Galician nationalism tend to present localism as a scourge that Galicia must overcome to flourish. Galicia cannot achieve its potential if distracted by internal confrontation. Participants associated localism with contemporary political figures Paco Vázquez (Mayor of A Coruña, 1983–2006) and Abel

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<sup>328</sup> G. Sharzer, 'The political economy of localism', PhD thesis submitted to York University, Toronto, 2011, pp.12–14.

Caballero (Mayor of Vigo, 2007 to present). The response of Paco Vázquez to the Aegean Sea oil tanker spill in 1992 – ‘*tranquilos*, the smoke is blowing toward Ferrol’ – captures the petty, oppositional nature of Galician localism. It is important to note that participants who identified as ‘localists’ – or as having held localist views in the past – were often aware of these politicians’ discursive strategies. They were not manipulated, but believed the football stadium was an appropriate arena for the performance or release of localist tension.

There was a time when the major Galician football clubs had cordial, even chummy, relationships. Fortuna F.C. of Vigo made plans to inaugurate a new ground in January 1908. The board invited Club Deportivo de la Sala Calvet – which would become Deportivo de La Coruña – to play an exhibition match to mark the occasion. Three weeks later, the delegation from A Coruña travelled south with a letter from the mayor to his counterpart in Vigo, in which he toasted the prosperity of both cities and their respective teams. After the match, the hosts arranged a banquet at the Hotel Colón, with Japanese soup, Parisian lamb, and champagne on the menu.<sup>329</sup> The following year, Real Club Coruña invited Vigo F.C. to inaugurate its new ground in the suburb of Monelos. The reception was similarly warm. The *vigués* delegation returned south and published effusive articles in the local press about the display of brotherhood by Galician players.<sup>330</sup>

Such pleasantries did not endure. Eduardo Archetti, the Argentine anthropologist of sport, argues that ‘no identity can ever exist by itself and without an array of opposites, negatives and contradictions.’<sup>331</sup> Fans require a symbolic other through which to construct and

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<sup>329</sup> C. González Villar, *Albores del fútbol vigués, 1905–1923* (Vigo, 1959), p.45.

<sup>330</sup> González Villar, *Albores del fútbol vigués*, pp.70–71.

<sup>331</sup> E. Archetti, ‘The spectacle of a heroic life: the case of Diego Maradona’ in D.L. Andrews and S.J. Jackson (eds.), *Sport Stars: The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity* (New York, 2001), p.154.

articulate their own identity. The rivalry had mutated by the time Carlos – a Deportivo supporter in his 50s – began to attend derby matches against Celta in the late 1980s.

[Gal] Back then the rivalry was really unhealthy, really unhealthy. Unhealthy in the sense that- like I said, a lot of the time or almost always, it went beyond the footballing rivalry, it was almost a geographic hatred, you know. It was ‘you’re from the south, we’re from the north’, and that north-south dichotomy, it was an issue that was localist, geographic, political, maybe even economic, and it went way beyond football.

The rivalry had warped beyond the sporting realm to encompass broader geographical, political, and economic grievances. As Carlos said, football became an arena for the contestation of localist disputes.

### A Coruña versus Vigo, ‘*señoritos versus traballadores*’

In this section I examine the nature of civic rivalries between A Coruña, Vigo, and Santiago de Compostela, and the appropriation of these rivalries by localist politicians and elements of the press. Participants relied on variations of a popular expression to articulate the rivalry between A Coruña and Vigo: ‘*Santiago reza, Vigo trabaja, A Coruña se divierte*’ [‘Santiago prays, Vigo works, A Coruña has fun’]. I asked Albi, a Deportivo supporter in his 60s from Vilagarcía de Arousa, about the enmity between the two cities.

[Gal] [It’s] Not just related to football but rather- there’s a saying here, that I don’t remember too well, which is ‘Santiago prays, Vigo works, and La Coruña enjoys itself’, right? So Vigo is a city that until Inditex arrived, Inditex these days is thousands and

thousands of people, was far more industrial than Coruña. [...] But the rivalry comes from all that, the capital of Galicia, those from Coruña say that it has to be Coruña, those from Vigo that it has to be Vigo, even though it's Santiago.

Albi explained the nature of the rivalry through the trope that A Coruña and Vigo occupy distinct socio-economic realities. A Coruña, according to the stereotype, is a white-collar city inhabited by '*señoritos*' ['rich kids'] who work in the provision of services. Vigo, conversely, is a blue-collar city inhabited by '*traballadores*' ['workers'] who work in the production of goods. Santiago, which some participants included in the expression while others did not, simply 'prays', a reference to its ecclesiastical significance. The prominence of this trope in the interviews suggests that Galicians understand the dynamics between these cities through a series of generalisations. Or, at least, they explained it in these terms to me, an outsider. I sensed that most participants used the expression knowingly. That is, they knew it was a crude oversimplification, but also a catchy curiosity to share with the foreigner. If I were Galician, I doubt participants would have referred to the trope. They would have assumed that I understood the 'inside joke' and its associated nuances. Nevertheless, it is useful to explore the ways in which participants expressed the '*señoritos versus traballadores*' dichotomy. Bixu is a Celta supporter in his 30s from A Guarda, in the extreme south-west of Galicia. After our interview, Bixu had to drive to A Coruña to collect furniture for his father. I asked him what he thought of A Coruña as a city.

[Gal] Well, they say that the city is really beautiful, all of Galicia is pretty. All of Galicia, you'd be hard pushed to find a spot that isn't pretty. But anyway, they always say that Coruña is a city- Vigo is a more working-class city, there's more industry- there aren't more workers because ultimately everyone is a worker in their job,

whatever they do. But the city of Vigo is a bit more working class. They always say that there [Coruña] they're a bit posher but, I dunno, that's one of the differences there are between us as fanbases.

Bixu's response was positive in that he referred to A Coruña as a beautiful city. Yet he still invoked the '*señoritos versus traballadores*' trope. He did so without attaching himself to that perception. Twice in this extract, Bixu used the qualifying phrase '*sempre din que*' ['they always say that'] before he reproduced elements of the trope. So Bixu did not uncritically reproduce the stereotypes or even present them as coherent with his own opinions. Rather, he reported the opinions of other people that he thought would be valuable to me as the researcher. Rodri, a Deportivo supporter in his 40s from A Coruña, spoke in a similar way. In this extract he is discussing the late 1990s and early 2000s.

[Gal] Back in those days there was a kind of tradition or it was said that in Vigo their footballers were more technical- no, sorry, in Vigo the players were more about being up for the fight, the battle and all that, and in A Coruña we were more technical, we preferred technical players. I don't know to what extent it's true, I don't know. I don't know how much it's to do with that image of Vigo as a tough city and us as the posh kids, which isn't true, we were never like that. There are posh people here, but there are posh people in Vigo too.

Rodri suggested that a football team embodies the characteristics of the city it represents. He used this theory to introduce the same trope. Like Bixu, Rodri reported rather than endorsed this perception. He used the phrase '*se dicía que*' ['it's said that'] to distance himself from the subsequent comment. Indeed, at the end of this extract, Rodri suggested

the trope is untrue. That he deemed it worthy of mention, however, implies a belief that even if he rejects the trope, others rely on it to make sense of the relations between A Coruña and Vigo. I also asked Noelia, a Deportivo supporter in her 30s from Cambre, A Coruña, about the rivalry between the cities.

[Gal] There always was [a rivalry]. There always was. They think that up here we're rich kids, posh and stuff, and here people think that people from there are, well I dunno, they're not- it was always said that 'Vigo works, Coruña enjoys itself', as in them, industry, working-class people and that, and people from here always a lot more involved with, I'm not sure, culture, but really it's nonsense.

Noelia used '*sempre se dixo que*' ['it was said that'] to indicate reported speech, before she dismissed the trope. Though many participants replicated this pattern – of mentioning the trope but ultimately dismissing it – some did accept its logic. Paula is a Deportivo supporter from A Coruña who lived in Vigo for several years. '[Gal] Look, it's that honestly the socioeconomic reality of Vigo is pretty different to that of A Coruña,' she said. 'Coruña is a city where people live more from the services sector. Vigo is an industrial city.' Crucially, she did not present this analysis as positive or negative. She delivered it in a neutral way to explain why the prevalence of shift work in Vigo makes it harder for people to attend Celta matches. But the trope was not always reproduced without judgement. In the mid-2010s – the exact date of publication is unknown – Celtarras published a special issue of the *Dende as Bancadas* fanzine. It focussed on the rivalry between Deportivo and Celta, and reinforced negative stereotypes about A Coruña:

In the case of Coruña and Celta it was always maintained that the two cities they represent are very different on a social and economic level. The northern city had the reputation as the better off, going back to the times when Franco summered in Meirás, while Vigo was historically a much more working-class city. Haven't we all heard that Vigo works and Coruña enjoys itself?<sup>332</sup>

The writer used this expression in the final sentence to evidence – and weaponise – a socio-economic inequality between the two cities. The reference to Franco presents A Coruña as un-Galician and simultaneously positions Vigo as the more appropriate representative of Galicia. As I have shown, several participants referred to the trope that A Coruña is a city of 'señoritos' and Vigo a city of 'traballadores' but did not always indicate that they believed it. Indeed, many discussed the trope in a knowing way, as a curiosity of interest to an outsider, rather than a sound socio-economic analysis. The extract from *Dende as Bancadas*, and my wider conclusions in Chapter Four, reveal that some radical supporters not only accepted the trope as a reality, but exploited it to disparage the 'other' city.

### 'Capitalidade' – A Coruña and Santiago

A Coruña and Vigo are not the only rival cities in Galicia. The decision in 1982 to establish the autonomous Galician parliament in Santiago de Compostela meant A Coruña ceded its status as the historic capital of Galicia. This provoked huge protest in A Coruña. I asked Joni and Juan Ramón, Deportivo supporters in their 50s from A Coruña, about the consequences of this decision.

[Gal] M: What impact did the issue of the capital have?

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<sup>332</sup> *Dende as Bancadas*, 30 (date unknown), p.1.

J: Oof, when they took the capital away from here there was a protest- I can't remember, I was really young, but when they took the capital status away from Coruña, all hell broke loose here, it was one of the biggest protests in memory in the city. And they took it to Compostela.

JR: Yeah, I was 10 because it was in 81, 80.

J: Absolutely everyone was out on the streets.

JR: Yeah, yeah. But it was about pride as well, and a lot of things that you think about afterwards, you realise, this is above all else a services city. So they thought that there was no future for the city, they'd take everything down there.

Juan Ramón was a child when Santiago became the capital. Yet he recalled the episode as a question of pride, tinged with a fear that A Coruña would face a bleak future without capital status. Joni repeated the same word – 'pride' – a couple of minutes later: 'But it was a question of pride, you know, of "bloody hell, they're taking capital status away from us and giving it to a fucking village," and this was already a proper, fully-fledged city, what does Compostela have? The headquarters of the Xunta and the cathedral [laughs].' Rubén, a Deportivo supporter in his 50s from A Coruña, discussed the loss of capital status in the context of broader civic pride. He recalled a comment by Henrique Tello, the spokesperson for the BNG in A Coruña from 1989 to 2011, about Paco Vázquez, the mayor of the city.



According to Rubén, Tello credited Vázquez with the recuperation of *coruñés* pride after the loss of capital status to a provincial neighbour.<sup>333</sup>

[Esp] The self-esteem, wounded, I'll say it again, because of the whole capital thing, that is fundamental, I remember as a really young boy that protest, thousands of people, and the recovery founded upon commercial success as it were, sporting success, and also the success of urban planning, so to speak.

Rubén identified sporting success as one of the factors behind this recuperation of pride. This supports the conclusion of Chapter Five, that football raised self-esteem in A Coruña in a moment of fragility. A perception that A Coruña had been wronged, with Santiago the undeserving beneficiary, fed a rivalry with Santiago that bled into football. 'For our "bitch of the day" it's the turn of our much-loved *compostelana* "capital";' began a 1991 article in *Curva Mágika*, the Riazor Blues fanzine. A few weeks earlier, Deportivo supporters had insulted Santiago during a match against Athletic Club in Bilbao. In response, SD Compostela released a statement in condemnation of this offensive behaviour toward 'the representative club of the capital of Galicia'. The article in *Curva Mágika* offered an explanation:

In Bilbao we defended our city as it deserves, and all of Galicia fighting for the right to have a respectable capital, like all of the other peoples of Spain, and not a village

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<sup>333</sup> It is highly unusual for BNG politicians to publicly praise Paco Vázquez, given the perception that he exploited and developed inter-city rivalries for political reasons that were detrimental to the greater Galician good.

with four houses and a badly placed church where the *guiris* go to take photos of four rocks (badly placed as well).<sup>334</sup>

Celta supporters did not tend to share the same animosity toward Santiago or its football team. On the contrary, Celta and Compostela radical groups – Celtarras and Fende Testas – treated matches between their clubs as opportunities to perform a shared *galeguismo* in opposition to Deportivo and A Coruña. The dynamics of civic rivalry within Galicia are complex. The issue of capital status added a layer of animosity alongside the deep-rooted rivalry between A Coruña and Vigo. Such disputes invited exploitation by localist politicians and newspapers. Football became a prominent theatre for the performance of confrontational civic pride in opposition to the neighbour.

### Press and politicians stirred localism

Participants believed that elements of the press and certain politicians used football to inflame pre-existing localist tensions, both between A Coruña and Vigo, and A Coruña and Santiago. In the case of the rivalry between A Coruña and Vigo, participants mentioned two names: Paco Vázquez and Antonio Nieto Figueroa, better known as Leri. The former, whom I have already introduced, was the mayor of A Coruña from 1983 to 2006. The latter was a councillor in Vigo and a vocal supporter of Celta. I asked Carlos, a Deportivo supporter from A Coruña in his 50s, how the rivalry with Celta had changed throughout his lifetime. He turned the discussion to these two men.

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<sup>334</sup> *Guiri* is a colloquial term for tourists, generally those from northern Europe.

[Gal] Before Paco Vázquez came onto the scene we also had Leri in Vigo, who was a councillor who was anti-Coruña, really localist, so obviously this is the sort of stuff that, if you don't know Vigo, or vice versa, if you don't know Coruña, it makes an impact on you, all this that 'those people are my enemy, look what they're saying', and the media also emphasise what's in their interests. So I think on a political level, Paco Vázquez's localism played a part in a lot of people using Deportivo as the localist flag of Coruña, when really it wasn't, Deportivo was a very open club. I mean Coruña is a very open city.

The incendiary language of Vázquez and Leri shaped Carlos' perception of Vigo as the 'enemy'. He saw the media as complicit in this. Iago, a Celta supporter in his 40s from Vigo, also recalled the vocal presence of these two figures.

[Gal] After that as well, on both the council in Coruña and in Vigo, there are two characters, the mayor of Coruña who was Paco Vázquez, and a councillor in Vigo who was called Leri. They started to belittle each other but already on a city vs. city level, so that clearly got people going, before the matches the public leaders and everyone else heated up the atmosphere, there days it's the opposite, but yeah, you went to the match ready for war.

The last sentence highlights the extent to which political discourse created favourable conditions for heightened confrontation between rival supporters. Paco Vázquez did not limit himself to verbal provocation. At a match between Deportivo and Celta in November 1986, he raised his forefinger and little finger toward the Celta supporters. The gesture represents horns. It is a physical representation of the Spanish phrase '*mandarle al cuerno a*

*alguien* ' [‘to tell someone to go to hell’], the literal translation of which is ‘to send someone to the horn’. ‘[Gal] Paco Vázquez and the famous horn gesture, that’s the trigger,’ said Xoán, a Celta supporter in his 40s. ‘[...] People here in Vigo are going mad with Dépor fans because of what Paco Vázquez did, because they didn’t criticise Paco Vázquez, so it was like they supported his actions.’ Xoán emphasised that Vázquez and Leri were localist politicians who sought to solidify their base through the performative provocation of the rival. His recollection that Celta supporters conflated Vázquez’s behaviour with the attitude of Deportivo supporters in general, suggests football could be an effective tool in this strategy.

It is worth noting that two participants – one Deportivo supporter and one Celta supporter – recalled that the press incited the rivalry as well as politicians. Yet they deemed the press and politics to be inseparable on the grounds that politicians controlled the media discourse. The question is whether these participants held this conviction at the time. Did they lament the role of the press during the period of tit-for-tat insults and lewd gestures from politicians in the directors’ box? Or did they absorb the incendiary rhetoric at the time, only to reflect on its intentions years later?

The influence of the press was more pronounced in the ‘fabrication’ of a rivalry between Deportivo and Compostela. ‘The footballing clash between Compostela and Deportivo (0-1) served attempts to play the two fanbases against each other in a sterile and anti-Galician localism,’ wrote Afonso Eiré in *A Nosa Terra* in 1994. ‘Provoked by the ignorance of some, the stupidity of others, and the political-ideological interests of those who sought to exploit a sporting rivalry that never existed.’<sup>335</sup> In this article Eiré argues that the localist press in A Coruña and Santiago created an artificial rivalry between supporters of each team. The

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<sup>335</sup> Pucheiro, ‘Como se fabrica un derby’, *A Nosa Terra*, 642, 6 October 1994, p.13.

fabrication of the rivalry took place ahead of the first meeting between the two clubs in the top flight of Spanish football. While the clubs had previously played each other – usually when Deportivo dropped to the lower divisions – such matches were not febrile occasions.

This changed when the teams met in 1994. Eiré attributes much of the blame to *Urbe*, a free newspaper affiliated to *La Voz de Galicia*. *Urbe* edited and distributed a bespoke edition in each Galician city. Ahead of the match, the front page of the Santiago edition of *Urbe* led with ‘¡A por ellos!’ [‘Let’s get ‘em’] accompanied by a photo of animated Compostela supporters. ‘The *compostelán* blood is boiling and passions are running high,’ read the text. It proceeded to list insults that Compostela supporters could use against Deportivo in the stadium, among them ‘*Santiago capital, Coruña sucursal*’ [‘Santiago capital, Coruña a branch office’]. *El Correo Gallego*, a newspaper edited in Santiago, reprimanded *Urbe* for its incendiary tone. Yet it still reinforced the idea of a deep-rooted rivalry that ran deeper than football. ‘An old rivalry will reignite in today’s clash,’ it described. ‘A rivalry between two cities, between two different ways of thinking. For a lot of people, far more than two points are in play.’<sup>336</sup> The idea that the cities represented different ways of thinking seems particularly farfetched. Eiré repeated his accusation of the media fabrication of the ‘derby’ four years later in his book *O fútbol na sociedade galega*.<sup>337</sup> He also mentioned it in his interview for this thesis. It is a view he has held for almost 30 years.

Eiré’s analysis overlooks some crucial context. He admonished the newspapers as mouthpieces of un-Galician, localist political interests. But he did not mention the issue of

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<sup>336</sup> These extracts from *Urbe* and *El Correo Gallego* were reproduced in the *A Nosa Terra* article on 6 October 1994. As *A Nosa Terra* is a Galician-language newspaper, the extracts have been translated into Galicia. It is likely that they were originally published in Spanish.

<sup>337</sup> Eiré, *O fútbol na sociedade galega*, pp.73–76.

capital status, so fundamental to the oppositional, 'us against the world' localist discourse that Paco Vázquez honed in A Coruña. Eiré is correct to assert that certain newspapers encouraged an unprecedented rivalry between Deportivo and Compostela. To dismiss the rivalry as entirely artificial, however, underplays the extent of the grievance in A Coruña as a result of the loss of capital status, not to mention Deportivo's function as a vehicle to recuperate wounded civic pride. Eiré was the only participant to mention the role of the press in the shaping of dynamics between A Coruña and Santiago. And in the case of the rivalry between A Coruña and Vigo, participants identified individuals (Paco Vázquez and Leri) and moments (Paco Vázquez's 'horns' gesture) as far more provocative influences than the press. They did not present the press as necessary for the dissemination of these individuals and incendiary moments. Yet without the press, few people would have been aware of Leri's comments or Vázquez's gesture.

Other participants did echo Eiré's visceral objection to localism. When I asked Henrique, a Deportivo supporter in his 50s, how the rivalry between clubs had changed over the years, he did not answer the question. Instead, he talked about the cause of localist rivalry.

[Gal] I think that the localist rivalries, the localist rivalries are something always sharpened by- or rather, incentivised by the most conservative elements by- even before the sporting rivalries, the rivalries between parishes for example. It's incentivised by the conservative elements because it's a guarantee of the maintenance of their power, as long as the people are caught up in- in disputes between Coruña and Vigo, well- it's good that there are common problems like employment, economic or political problems, that equally affect the working class whether they live in A Coruña or Vigo. So the most conservative elements have

always incentivised these localist movements as they're straightforward issues, they're basic, they're issues that bring success, it's easy to incentivise a localist movement.

Henrique described a sense of constriction. 'Conservatives' constrain Galicia because that is how they maintain power. Implicit in this interpretation is the idea that an unshackled – and united – Galicia would be somehow progressive. That Henrique framed the rivalry in such overtly political terms, without my prompting, reveals the strength of his conviction in this narrative and the centrality of football to it. Rivalries between Galician cities go beyond football. Participants discussed the animosity between A Coruña and Vigo through the '*señoritos versus traballadores*' trope. Yet reference this trope does not imply accepting it as a socioeconomic reality. I sensed that participants shared it as a humorous curiosity, not as pithy analysis. The question of capital status was predominant in participants' perceptions of a civic rivalry between A Coruña and Santiago. There was a widespread belief that localist politicians and, to a lesser extent, newspapers, used football to intensify and entrench pre-existing rivalries. Matchdays became ecstatic events stoked by the banal reproduction of rivalries in political and media discourse.

### Civic rivalries became 'hot' on matchday

A plastic bottle of Diet Coke flies over my head and spirals toward the pitch. At the front of the stand, young men dressed in black destroy the seats with frenzied stamps and fling the discs of sky blue plastic. It is March 2022 and Celta B have just beaten Deportivo in the Spanish third division. I am in the away section with 800 Deportivo supporters, in the upper corner of Balaídos, Celta's stadium. Hundreds of jubilant Celta supporters invade the pitch

and congregate in front of the away section. They goad and jeer. To lose to your main rival is bad. To lose to your main rival's reserve team is humiliating. I see a shoe arc toward the fans on the pitch, laces flailing. Two rows in front of me, a man with 'Vigo no' printed on the back of his replica shirt looks for things to kick. He bellows an array of swearwords as his face reddens. The mood turns from rage to revelry as riot police charge at the crowd of pitch invaders. They scatter, slipping on the watered turf. This calms the 'Vigo no' man. Now he holds six fingers aloft in defiance, to symbolise the six trophies Deportivo have won.<sup>338</sup> I doubt he was old enough to witness most of them. More riot police occupy the aisles in the away end. The loudspeaker instructs Deportivo supporters to remain in the stand until the home fans have dispersed.

The ideological habits by which Galician cities are reproduced as imagined communities, locked in ritual confrontation, are routine and quotidian. It is the article in the local newspaper that laments the number of flights from the 'other' city's airport. It is the graffiti that marks territory and insults the neighbour. Skey considers football matches as 'ecstatic' mass public events that represent and recreate the image of the nation – or city – for many people. He argues that 'ecstatic events illuminate the banal'.<sup>339</sup> These ritualised, collective performances inform and elucidate the daily articulation of banal identities, and vice versa. Furthermore, it is useful to view the rivalry between cities through the interaction between the banal and the ecstatic. The everyday production of oppositional civic identities provides the underlying meaning for the rivalry to become hot, or ecstatic, on matchday. This, in turn,

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<sup>338</sup> Six trophies became seven in March 2023, when the Spanish Football Federation recognised Deportivo's victory in the 1912 Copa de España as an official title. See: <https://www.rcdeportivo.es/noticias/la-rfef-ratifica-la-oficialidad-de-la-copa-espana-conquistada-por-el-rc-deportivo-en-1912>.

<sup>339</sup> M. Skey, "'Carnivals of Surplus Emotion?'" , p.148.



feeds the banal reproduction of belonging and opposition. The Deportivo supporter in the 'Vigo no' shirt does not erupt in rage in the stadium without the daily reproduction of the idea that Vigo is the 'other', the enemy. When the same supporter wears his 'Vigo no' shirt to jog along the Paseo Marítimo in A Coruña, he forms part of that unconscious flagging of civic identity. Yet all who see the shirt know that its message has little meaning without the ecstatic, confrontational matchday experience.

### Perception that radical groups led violence

The late 1980s was a period of increased violence between supporters of Deportivo and Celta. Young men and adolescents formed radical groups Riazor Blues and Celtarras, to perform an active, more confrontational style of support. At the same time, the two clubs were competing for promotion to the *primera división*. They played four times in the 1986–87 campaign, twice in the regular season and twice in the play-offs. It was amid this cluster of derbies that Paco Vázquez made his inflammatory 'horns' gesture. In the following match in Vigo in March 1987, Celta supporters unfurled a banner that read: '*Vázquez, cabrón, cornudo maricón*' ['Vázquez, bastard, horned poof'].<sup>340</sup> Sime, a member of Celtarras, recalled a particularly volatile trip to A Coruña for the final play-off match in June 1987.

[Gal] The councillor from Vigo, Leri, who came on the train, I remember- I was 13, and he was shouting through a megaphone 'don't respond to this verbal aggression', and at the same time everyone is kicking the shit out of each other [laughs], but

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<sup>340</sup> *A Nosa Terra*, 312, 26 March 1987, p.15. The message on the banner has a double meaning. 'Cornudo' means 'horned', in reference to the gesture. It also means 'cuckold', a man whose partner is cheating on him.

yeah, the atmosphere was so intense that of the 1,000, 1,500 who went by train, all of us with tickets, I reckon 100 Celta fans made it into the stadium.

Such a small number of Celta fans entered the stadium due to widespread fighting. Sime was only allowed to attend subsequent Celta away matches because he rang his mother from a café to tell her he was safe. She was watching on television back in Vigo and had seen footage of policemen bleeding and Celta flags burning. Participants expressed a belief that derby matches became increasingly violent due to the formation of radical groups. '[Esp] I think it was more a question of certain sectors of the fanbase,' said Rubén, a Deportivo supporter in his 50s. 'It's more a question of the so-called "ultra" groups from each team.' Suso, a Lugo supporter in his 70s, agreed with Rubén.

[Esp] S: In Coruña they think they're- anyway [laughs], and there were localists, ardent ones too, and that moved over to football too.

M: In what sense?

S: Because of the Dépor-Celta pressure, that was a war, a bloody war. The Celtarras on one side and Riazor Blues on the other, a war. Obviously that moved across to the football. And even so, a lot of politicians from Coruña didn't like that Santiago was the capital of Galicia, you'll experience that and hear it out and about.

Suso described the 'war' between Riazor Blues and Celtarras as moving 'into football', as if it were a separate conflict that polluted sport. It is interesting that Suso combined localism, radical violence, and the capital status in one brief passage of speech. This suggests he viewed each as interrelated factors behind the violence in football. Rodri, a member of

Riazor Blues, acknowledged that the late 1980s and 1990s was a violent period, but emphasised that football merely reflected society.

[Gal] They often went too far, there was too much violence, but that had to do with the times, as in if there wasn't violence outside football, there wouldn't have been violence in football. These days there's basically nothing. Alright, there might be some verbal insults, but there's not need to overplay it. There's no need to overplay that. You can be more or less keen on it, obviously society in the present day is less keen, so it'll disappear. But it's like, were there incidents in the 80s? Of course there were, because society was violent basically- much more violent than it is today, I mean- but I'll say it again, in the 30s this was already happening, in fact it was happening more.

Football was violent because society was violent, according to this analysis. As society has become gradually less violent in the last 30 years, football-related violence has decreased. Rodri did not deny that radical groups contributed to this violence, but he contextualised it. His comment that violence has been a feature of Galician football since the 1930s is valid. In their study of the evolution of football in Ourense province in that era, Martínez Torres and Sanfiz Arias found that 'reports of violent episodes on the pitch and in the stands were frequent in the press.'<sup>341</sup> Fights at village carnivals in A Arnoia and Rabiño spread to football matches between Arnoya F.C. and Rabiñense F.C. Participants associated violence primarily with 'radical' groups. Members of radical groups did not deny their contribution. Stories of scraps and ambushes were often central to the performance of their narrative. They sought to contextualise the violence as symptomatic of a febrile society.

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<sup>341</sup> Martínez Torres and Sanfiz Arias, 'Fútbol en la comarca ourensana del Ribeiro', p.31.

## Animosity spread beyond radical groups

Participants recognised that animosity spread to casual supporters on matchdays, and even to those with little interest in football. This reflects the interaction between the banal and the ecstatic, as individuals performed the ritualistic confrontation that was reproduced in the background of their daily lives. When Deportivo won the league title in 2000, Pili – a Deportivo supporter and football coach – was staying in Vigo for a tournament, with a group of young players from A Coruña.

[Gal] It was- Dépor had a game and Donato scored here in Riazor, it would've been against Espanyol, when the title was sealed. I was in Vigo with the boys, Christ alive, they were nine-year-old boys and I had issues that night. They called me from downstairs- erm, we'd eaten dinner, I got them in, made sure they were under control, and we were in a hotel on Gran Vía, round there. The little bastards, my boys had their Dépor shirts on, insulting people, I mean, you're nine years old!

Pili recalled the anecdote with only a trace of residual exasperation. Enough time had passed for her to see the humour in their boisterousness. Yet she added a serious observation. 'That's why I say that the rivalry is already drilled into people', she said. Even at nine years old, these boys understood the dynamics of the rivalry. They knew that their being in Vigo at a time of jubilation in A Coruña presented an opportunity – an obligation, even – to gloat and revel. Albi is a Deportivo supporter from Vilagarcía de Arousa in his 60s. He recalled a particularly unpleasant visit to Vigo.

[Gal] I've had a really rough time at Balaídos, actually I don't think I've set foot in Balaídos for 20 years. I've had a really bad time there, I've had problems, I remember

one time with my son, my son is 39, but back then he was 12, and we went to Balaídos- obviously I was an idiot, we didn't go with the rest in the police escort, my son, the little boy, had a Deportivo scarf. I didn't wear any colours, just the little boy. 'Here come the Coruña lot, fucking posh bastards', so that's something I haven't forgotten. I haven't forgotten it. And the day that my wife came, she was like this to me, my ex-wife said 'calm down, calm down', and that lot were behind us, 'Fucking posh *coruñeses*' and she said to me- because she knew that any moment I was going blow. And it was about to kick off, I was going to swing for anyone and everyone.

The use of the '*señoritos*' insult toward Albi, as a Deportivo supporter, stands out in his account. It is a reproduction of the trope, laced with class connotations, that I examined at the start of the chapter. Albi's account reveals how people drew upon a banal generalisation, probably reproduced in everyday interactions, and used it in a sudden outburst of emotion on a matchday. That Albi remembered the wording of the insult 30 years later suggests this weaponisation of the stereotype stung him. Celta supporters who travelled to A Coruña to watch their team also suffered abuse. Sime travelled with the Celtarras. Each year the police led the supporters' buses in and out of A Coruña via a different route, to reduce the possibility of locals throwing rocks at the convoy.

[Gal] I remember one year they took us out along the Paseo Marítimo, the poshest part of Coruña, full of cafés, and just as the bus stopped at a traffic light everyone was like 'keep going, keep going, keep going', it stopped, and I remember there was a family sat there with two children, the wife and the dad, the dad stands up, picks up a bottle of Coca Cola, throws it at the bus and sits back down with the kids- you know. That was the level of hatred that day, you know. That dad wasn't in Riazor

Blues, he was a normal *coruñés*, but he was there ‘fucking *vigueses*, fucking portuguese’, maybe we won that day, and in front of his kids. You don’t see that sort of attitude these days. You might see younger people, drunk, hooligans and that but not a family man with his kids.

Sime distinguished between a member of Riazor Blues and ‘a normal *coruñés*’. He expected abuse and confrontation from a fellow radical supporter. But not from a man enjoying a drink with his family in a well-to-do area of the city. The wording of the insult – ‘*putos vigueses, putos portugueses*’ – is significant. Like the ‘*señoritos*’ insult that Albi received, the intention is to ‘other’ the rival city, to present it as un-Galician. These accounts from Pili, Albi, and Sime show that, in different contexts, hostility spearheaded by radical groups filtered down to more casual supporters on a matchday.

### Respectful rivalry beyond matchday

Participants presented the matchday as a uniquely ‘ecstatic’ event, unrepresentative of normal relations between supporters of each team. Moreover, participants acknowledged that their behaviour on a matchday did not reflect the more moderate views they held on other days of year, when the rivalry returned to a state of relative hibernation. ‘[Gal] We did get up to all sorts of nonsense in the stadium,’ said Rodri, a member of Riazor Blues in his 50s. ‘On derby day we messed about, maybe we did. But that wasn’t our daily life and it wasn’t our way of thinking.’ He emphasised that throughout the 1990s there were friendships that crossed the Celtarras-Riazor Blues divide, facilitated in many cases by a shared passion for music. ‘We weren’t fanatical people, like “if I see a *vigués* I’ll kill ‘em”, not

at all, we couldn't be further from that.' Anxo is a Deportivo supporter in his 30s from Ourense.

[Gal] I've got friends all over the place so for me the Vigo-Coruña question- in terms of the cities isn't a priority for me. I might sing 'fuck Vigo' and that but it's not a priority for me, why do I say that, because I'm from Ourense. If I were from Coruña I'd probably say 'Vigo's a shithole' or whatever, but anyway.

Anxo, like Rodri, acknowledged that he insults Vigo and Celta in the stadium, but does not carry that hostility with him when he exits through the turnstiles. He adds the caveat that if he were from A Coruña, he may have a more belligerent attitude. Anxo was not the only participant to suggest that supporters from the cities experience the rivalry in a more intense, visceral way. María is a Celta supporter from Zacande, just north of Pontevedra. '[Esp] Maybe those who are more anti-Celta, or the other way round anti-Dépor, are more from the cities,' she mused. Gabriel, a Deportivo supporter from Fisterra, made a similar observation.

[Gal] I think that in Coruña that rivalry with Celta is really intense, but not here. Here it's a derby but you do have a bit of that imposter syndrome, it's still a derby and everything but you don't sit down to watch it like- in A Coruña they do- it's something personal. They experience it like we experience a Fisterra-Cee, that same thing but extrapolated to a city. It's different, they experience it in a different way, yeah.

Not only did Gabriel perceive a difference in the way supporters from the cities experienced derby matches and civic rivalry, he felt like an 'impostor' in the relationship. Yet even

participants from the cities presented an image of a generally respectful rivalry. Of course, there was banter beyond the matchday, but not overt hostility. Paula, a Deportivo supporter from A Coruña, lived in Vigo for several years.

[Gal] Like I said, never- I never had any issues there. In fact there were a lot of funny moments, I remember one day in this bar I'd always go to watch the football, I said to the bloke behind the bar 'Modesto, two Estrellas please', and a man sat at the bar said 'don't order Estrella, order Mahou, can't you see that Estrella is from Coruña?', and I said 'yeah, like me', and the bloke behind the bar was pissing himself [laughs], it was brilliant. But it is true that there seem to be- they say that there are still people in Vigo who don't drink Estrella because it's from Coruña, which is ridiculous, it's like being from here and not buying a Citroen because it's from Vigo.

She presented the rivalry as based fundamentally on humour. The need for supporters of each club to coexist peacefully was greater in towns like Vilagarcía de Arousa, in which Celta and Deportivo both have a lot of supporters. I spoke to Iria and Miguel in the headquarters of *Embruxo Celeste*, the Celta *peña* in Vilagarcía.

[Gal] Matt: How do Deportivo and Celta fans get along in Vilagarcía?

Iria: Look, I've got Deportivo-supporting cousin, like, I get on well with him [laughs]. We're not about to kill each other. But yeah, I think they do their own thing and we do ours, no problems. We don't get along badly.

Miguel: There's respect, there aren't any issues. There aren't any fans here who take it too far.



Iria: Well, there'll be a few [laughs]. It comes back to what I said before, there are fewer than 40,000 of us here, we pretty much all know each other, you're not going to go about causing issues with the neighbours.

Adrián is a Deportivo supporter from Vilagarcía de Arousa, and the president of the *Perla de Arousa peña*. He is also Iria's cousin.

[Gal] And the other *peña* is an example, my uncle is the president and my cousins are on the committee, so yeah, we get on well apart from the odd radical that you might come across who you don't know, but with everyone else I have a lot of *Celtista* friends and you have the typical arguments about football but after we're on the beer or the wines together. You have to learn to live together, obviously it's not the same hatred as in Coruña or Vigo, here ultimately Celta and Dépor fans come from the same families, mates, you're not going to go round fighting with them every day.

Participants drew a clear distinction between appropriate matchday and non-matchday behaviours. They acknowledged that they would insult the opposition in the heat of the stadium, but would maintain a respectful – and even humorous – rivalry away from the ritual confrontation. This was particularly marked in towns such as Vilagarcía, where peaceful coexistence was a necessity of civil life. Some participants appreciated, at the time of the interview, that the banal, non-matchday civic rivalry influenced the ecstatic, matchday fervour. They linked everyday localist discourse to confrontation through football, and understood how confrontation simultaneously justified and sustained that everyday discourse.

## ‘Temos unha cousa en común’ – a sense of commonality increased with maturity

Participants expressed a belief that despite the ecstatic hostility on matchday, a shared sense of Galicianness united supporters of rival Galician clubs. In the same way that you can insult your own family, but will retaliate if an outsider insults your family, one participant referred to the rivals as *‘os nosos fillos de puta’*. They may be idiots, but they are *our* idiots. This sense of an underlying shared identity increased with maturity, as participants were exposed to the ‘other’ and gradually shed their negative preconceptions.

### Rivalry is natural and desirable

A few participants rejected the suggestion that a civic rivalry between two cities, expressed through football, is detrimental to national unity. One of those was Anxo, the Deportivo supporter from Ourense.

[Gal] People usually say that we have to put an end to localism because- Galician nationalist people, that we have to put an end to localism because that’s best for the good of the country as a whole. For me I reckon it’s better for the good of the country to have that rivalry between cities and football teams, than to not have it. There’s absolutely no chance that if I had to choose between throwing a punch at a Celta fan or a fascist or something like that, no chance I’d punch the Celta fan. It’s a really odd situation, right, but fuck me, the rivalry is a good thing, the rivalry is what makes us a country as well, for fuck’s sake, I’m absolutely sure of that, like for me- I

think it's great that we sing the anthem, and it's fucking great to insult each other when the anthem finishes.

Other participants echoed Anxo's statement that the rivalry is perfectly normal, desirable, and perhaps even a nation-building ritual. Participants did not see national pride and internal civic rivalry as mutually exclusive. '[Gal] There are people who are really patriotic about whichever country, but then there's beef between certain cities,' Xoán, a Celta supporter, reasoned. 'So I don't think it's something that's just Galician, really.' For many the Basque Derby, characterised by Athletic Club and Real Sociedad supporters watching the match together in an unsegregated stadium, represents a utopia. But for others it is an outlier, and an undesirable one. '[Gal] This whole thing about being on the terrace together, hugging each other and all that, no,' said Iago, a Celta supporter. '[...] I want the rivalry, but yeah, the footballing rivalry, "healthy" to put it one way.' Edu, a Deportivo supporter, responded in a similar way when I asked how he would feel if the Galician derby were more like the Basque derby.

[Esp] If I think about it with a clear head I'd say yes, but there needs to be passion in a derby, there needs to be certain rivalry, losing has to piss you off, there has to be that- hate is a very strong word but there has to be that 'ooh'.

Edu distinguished between a rational view that a more convivial atmosphere would be positive, and his irrational preference for a match with edge. After all, we do not always desire the rational. The stadium facilitates a performance and indulgence of visceral, ecstatic energy. Rodri, the Deportivo supporter and member of Riazor Blues, went even further. To him, the Galician derby was not detrimental to a sense of national consciousness. It was the most powerful way to articulate the nation.

[Gal] No doubt any Celta-Dépor derby does more for the *galeguidade* as it were, it does more than all of the 25<sup>th</sup> July demonstrations put together, because- because there's a symbolism, because the two teams carry the Galician flag on their shirts. It's the same with Lugo, the same with Breogán, the same with Obradoiro. Like, it's a really really- it's an unbelievable act of *galeguidade*.<sup>342</sup>

Laura, a Celta supporter from Pontevedra in her 20s, expressed a similar sentiment. I asked her how she experienced the rivalry with Deportivo.

[Esp] Erm, I mean I like it, as in I think all fans of both teams miss that game, because it's a special game, I think even for people who don't follow either team, but for Galicians it's a special game.

Despite the hostility of the occasion, Laura and Rodri both presented the match as a celebration of Galicianness, rather than an exhibition of fractures in Galician society. It is striking that two supporters of different profiles expressed this view. Rodri was a prominent member of Riazor Blues throughout the 1990s. We conducted our interview in Galician. Laura is younger and, by her own admission, a more casual supporter who attends one or two games per season. Laura preferred to do our interview in Spanish, the language she feels more comfortable with. One does not need to be a fervent Galician nationalist – or a fanatical supporter – to view football matches between Galician teams as nation-building events. Equally, individuals may unintentionally participate in nation-building, without viewing Galicia as a nation. This perception of derby matches as acts of *galeguismo* reflects a sense of common Galician identity that participants valued increasingly as they grew older.

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<sup>342</sup> Breogán and Obradoiro are professional basketball teams from Lugo and Santiago, respectively. As of 2023, both are in the top division of Spanish basketball.

## Sense of shared identity increased with maturity

'*Put a Coruña y puta Riazor!*' ['Fuck Coruña and fuck Riazor!']. A group of teenagers chant, arms aloft, as they march down the street in that lead-footed way that betrays a certain level of inebriation. It is approaching midnight in Vigo. The revelers head in the direction of Rúa do Areal and its row of nightclubs. I wonder if these young men will still be chanting the same insult in 20 years. Participants perceived that they became less 'localist' and developed a greater sense of kinship with the rival city as they grew older. It is worth quoting Carlos, a Deportivo supporter in his 50s, at length to appreciate how his attitude changed over time.

[Gal] C: Vigo first comes onto your radar when you start to go to the football, you learn about the rivalry as well, but not before then, a *coruñés* lad who went to the *aldea* at the weekends, to the *aldea* in the summer, so I had far more contact with Abadín and Candia, which are my *aldeas*, or with Mondoñedo where I have family, than I had with Vigo. Until I started going to the football, I started to see the rivalry that existed with Celta, Vigo for me was well – p-t. [Makes a staccato sound to signify 'nothing'].

M: Your perception of Vigo comes from football?

C: At the start, definitely, for the first few years yeah, obviously. And for the first few years you hold all these prejudices against the city, because it's what the football club represents, and you never stop and think about it. And then with time, well for different reasons you go to Vigo, you get to know people from Vigo, so you start to view the city in a different way, but while you don't have those opportunities to be in contact with the city and to go to the city, apart from for football, well you're really

prejudiced, of course, there's a really intense rivalry, that kind of thing. But my first idea of Vigo was through football, through Deportivo-Celta naturally. I saw a team that was our main rival, the enemy, and that was your enemy's city, so it was eternal hatred, basically. Obviously with time you become more nuanced, maybe it was an irrational rivalry, and it's become a rivalry that's just as intense, but channelled through the football. But it takes time, it takes time.

Football introduced Carlos to Vigo. The only version of Vigo that he received was through the lens of the 'hot' matchday. That was his only point of reference. He added:

I became a socio in 1990, which was the promotion year, and let's just say that for the first part of the 90s, the first five years, four or five years, my idea of Vigo was very simple, it was that Vigo was the enemy, basically. Then with time, obviously you mature, I went to university as well, you meet people from different places, and you start to see things- there was also a pretty strong political movement, left wing and nationalist, you start to see things. So you start to be a bit more open-minded, you start to see that it is true that Vigo- or that Celta does represent that city if Vigo, but the city of Vigo isn't just a football team, it has far more too it, right.

The role of university in facilitating contact between young people from different parts of Galicia appeared in several interviews. It was at university that Noelia, a Deportivo supporter from Cambre, began to change her view of Vigo. I asked her if she had much contact with Vigo as a child.

[Gal] No, absolutely nothing. No. Erm, and also no one from my family lived down there or anything. I started to have more to do with Vigo when I started my degree

and became really good friends with a girl called Miriam, who's a Celta *socia* and a massive Celta fan. [...] So because of that I started to understand a bit more and look at it from the Celta fans' perspective, but at the beginning nothing. 'Vigo's grim, I don't want anything to do with it', and I had loads of arguments with her, loads.

For Noelia, like Carlos, her perception of Vigo changed as she encountered people from the city. The notion of progress is fundamental to these narratives. Sime, a Celta supporter, described his own journey as a necessary evolution from localist to nationalist.

[Gal] It's something I always say, that I'm very pro the Galician national team, and when I was younger I was very localist, but you start becoming a nationalist and, well, it flips around, I founded Siareiros Galegos which- I was really really involved in that, so yeah, you change.

These participants discussed their changing perceptions of the 'other' city as if it were a natural journey. They looked back on their adolescent obstinance as a product of their preconceptions. But, as they matured (and, crucially, travelled within Galicia), a localist instinct subsided, to be replaced by a more moderate, fraternal perspective.

## Conclusion

This chapter began with the banal assumptions that underpin civic rivalries within Galicia; namely that A Coruña is a city of '*señoritos*' in opposition to Vigo, the city of '*traballadores*'. My status in this context as an outsider – that is, a non-Galician – was advantageous. It encouraged participants to share this trope, even if they deemed it to be superficial or

inaccurate. In doing so, they revealed much about the shared assumptions that underpin ritual behaviour when Deportivo and Celta clash.

Participants displayed a clear belief that localist politicians used the rivalry between Deportivo and Celta to entrench division and solidify their political bases. Their inflammatory discourse – and actions, in the case of Paco Vázquez – encouraged a general atmosphere of hostility around the rivalry. While some participants perceived radical groups to be the sole perpetrators of violence on matchday, the animosity spread to more moderate supporters and even people with little interest in football. I heard several anecdotes of elderly women in Vigo and A Coruña leaning over their balconies to insult and hurl crockery at groups of opposition supporters. This reveals how entrenched the animosity became, and also the extent to which the clubs became repositories of local pride, even for those who did not regularly attend matches.

The participant narratives also show how the banal and the ecstatic interact and fuel one another. Michael Skey's contribution to Michael Billig's existing framework is valuable because it informs our understanding of how the banal and the ecstatic interact and sustain the rivalry between A Coruña and Vigo, with matches between Deportivo and Vigo the ecstatic events that symbolise the rivalry. The constant, low-level reproduction of localist discourse by politicians and the media created favourable conditions for excess on matchday. Participants took confrontation between A Coruña and Vigo for granted. This hostility in and around the stadium further entrenched the quotidian performance of civic rivalry.



Yet the matchday does not tell the whole story. One of the main findings of this chapter is that supporters' behaviour in the ecstatic atmosphere of the matchday, with its ritual confrontation, did not reflect their behaviour or beliefs outside the stadium. Participants described their default, non-matchday experience of rivalry as one of begrudging respect and playful banter. Hostility on the matchday did not impede a sense of shared Galician identity that became stronger as participants matured and shed their localist instincts. It is clear that civic rivalry ran deeper than football. It reflected political and socio-economic grievances. But football merely served as a convenient outlet.

# Chapter Eight: The Galician language

## Introduction

The football has competition for my attention as Alondras host UD Ourense in the regionalised *tercera división*, the fourth tier of Spanish football. My eyes follow the frenetic action. But really, I am fixated on the supporters around me. I eavesdrop intently. In the row in front, a middle-aged man with a portly frame and a mullet sits beside two elderly companions. His parents, presumably. The trio exchange commentary and idle chat in Galician. Alondras is a well-established amateur club from Cangas, across the water from Vigo on the Morrazo peninsula. The spectators' speech is marked by phonetic traits prominent on Galicia's Atlantic coast. Hard 'g's become rasping 'h's that emerge from the back of the throat: the *gheada*.<sup>343</sup> 'C's and 'z's, pronounced with a lisp in much of Galicia, are delivered in Cangas as a hard 's': the *seseo*.<sup>344</sup> The man with the mullet interrupts a conversation to yell at the referee in Spanish, then resumes the conversation in Galician. On the pitch, the players communicate in Spanish. This linguistic discrepancy between players and spectators repeated at the dozens of matches I attended across Galicia. Attitudes toward the Galician language – *galego* – are nuanced and often contradictory.

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<sup>343</sup> See A.I. Boullón Agrelo, 'A gheada na onomástica (achegas á estandarización), *Estudos de lingüística galega*, 4 (2012), pp.151–168.

<sup>344</sup> The *seseo* is also prominent in Castilian Spanish spoken in Andalucía. For further reading on its presence on the Illa de Ons, and island off of the Morrazo peninsula, see: J. Dopazo Entenza, 'Variación lingüística interxeracional na Illa de Ons (Bueu). Seseo', *Revista galega de filoloxía*, 18 (2017), pp.49–68.

In this chapter I argue that participants invested *galego* with symbolic value as the most powerful, quotidian marker of Galician identity. Yet they did not associate football – or football clubs – with the use and promotion of the language. I begin by introducing the official status and sociolinguistic context of *galego*. With the background established, I examine a widespread perception among participants that *galego* is belittled and disrespected, often by Galicians themselves. Next, I explain how participants viewed *galego* as a marker of identity that must be conserved. This attitude was pronounced among *neofalantes* – individuals raised in Spanish who, at some point, decided to communicate in *galego* – but extended to Spanish speaking participants. Finally, I address the limited interaction between football and language. Participants perceived that football clubs have done little to promote *galego*. Members of radical groups were passionate about the use of *galego* in the stadium, yet for most participants language was peripheral to their sense of belonging and shared identity as a supporter. Football is not as prominent in this chapter as in others. This, in itself, reveals how few participants viewed football as a vehicle for the advancement of *galego*. When I asked participants general questions about the language – how they feel it is perceived, the situations in which they use *galego* or Spanish, and so on – most answered without reference to football.

*Galego* is a romance language with lexical and grammatical similarities to Portuguese and Spanish. Approximately 90 per cent of Galicia's three million inhabitants claim an ability to speak *galego*. 80 per cent of the population report the use of *galego* as part of their daily linguistic repertoire.<sup>345</sup> *Galego* has, therefore, shown some resilience following four decades

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<sup>345</sup> B. O'Rourke, 'The Galician Language in the Twenty-First Century', in H. Miguélez-Carballeira (ed.), *A Companion to Galician Culture* (Woodbridge, 2014), p.73. It is important to note here that an ability to speak *galego* does not always, or indeed often, translate to use of *galego*. For the latest data on the

of repression during the Francoist dictatorship, when Spanish was the obligatory language for administration, education, and the media.<sup>346</sup> This created a linguistic landscape in which Spanish dominated the public domain, in a diglossic relationship with *galego*.<sup>347</sup> Following the death of Franco in 1975, Spain accelerated the process of official recognition of multilingualism that began in 1970 with the ‘Ley General de Educación’ [‘General Education Bill’], which recognised and established the need to provide Galician, Basque, and Catalan classes in those ‘regions’ at primary and secondary level. Article 5 of the 1981 Estatuto da Autonomía (the Galician Statute of Autonomy) accepted the co-official status of *galego* alongside Spanish, and recognised it as the *lingua propia* of Galicia; its own language.<sup>348</sup> It also committed to guarantee the use of both languages in the public sphere.<sup>349</sup> Along with Catalonia and the Basque Country, Galicia executed this mandate in 1983 by passing a law of linguistic normalisation to establish a legal framework for official and public use of the language. O’Rourke asserts that Galician language planners have campaigned for ‘normalisation’ since the 1980s, understood as ‘a process by which the language can fulfil

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use of *galego*, see: IGE, ‘Enquisa estrutural a fogares. Coñecemento e uso do galego’, [https://www.ige.gal/estatico/html/gl/OperacionsEstruturais/PDF/Resumo\\_resultados\\_EEF\\_Galego\\_2018.pdf](https://www.ige.gal/estatico/html/gl/OperacionsEstruturais/PDF/Resumo_resultados_EEF_Galego_2018.pdf).

<sup>346</sup> A. Nandi, ‘Language Policies and Linguistic Culture in Galicia’, *LaborHistórico*, 3/2 (2017), p.32. For further reading on the repression of Galician during the dictatorship, see: H. Monteagudo, *O idioma galego baixo o franquismo: da resistencia á normalización* (Vigo, 2021); C. Callón, *O libro negro da lingua galega* (Vigo, 2022).

<sup>347</sup> In line with Fishman’s loose concept of diglossia as a functional compartmentalisation of codes, regardless of their linguistic relation. J. Fishman, *The Sociology of Language: An Interdisciplinary Social Science Approach to Language in Society* (Rowley, MA, 1972). Fishman’s approach has been subject to extensive comment and reevaluation. For a comprehensive overview, see: A. Hudson et al, ‘Outline of a theory of diglossia’, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 157 (2002), pp.1–48. For a Galician (re)interpretation of Charles Ferguson’s original definition of diglossia, see: A. Gil Hernández, ‘Diglossia: concepto adecuado à Galiza?’, *Folhas de Cibrão*, 1 (1989), pp.68–75.

<sup>348</sup> That said, this article should be interpreted in accordance with Article Three of the Spanish constitution of 1978, which established an explicit hierarchy whereby Castilian Spanish is awarded a higher status than other (unnamed) languages.

<sup>349</sup> Estatuto de Autonomía de Galicia, [https://app.congreso.es/consti/estatutos/ind\\_estatutos.jsp?com=73](https://app.congreso.es/consti/estatutos/ind_estatutos.jsp?com=73).

the range of communicative functions previously dominated by Castilian.<sup>350</sup> That is, that *galego* becomes appropriate in all aspects of social interaction: formal and informal, public and private.

The field of sociolinguistics emerged in Galicia in the 1960s, as a resurgent cultural nationalism emphasised linguistic identity. In 1967 the *galeguista* intellectual Ramón Piñeiro, himself a pioneer of the culturalist movement, joined the Real Academia Galega.<sup>351</sup> In his acceptance speech, Piñeiro proposed a study of the attitudes of Galicians toward their own language.<sup>352</sup> While the speech itself did not constitute a rigorous analysis, it introduced arguments that would form the basis of sociolinguistic investigation in the subsequent decades.<sup>353</sup> In particular, Piñeiro established the notion of ‘sociological prejudice’, by which he referred to social discrimination according to language use. A small but dominant urban bourgeoisie spoke Spanish, while the socially subordinate rural majority spoke *galego*. This abandonment of the language in social spheres of prestige had a qualitative rather than quantitative effect. *Who* speaks a language is more important than *how many* people speak it. Piñeiro identified a resultant inferiority complex around the language, closely linked to the concept of ‘*auto-odio*’ [‘self-hate’] that is prominent in Chapter Six. These assumptions continue to inform sociolinguistic studies of *galego* in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. O’Rourke argues that, in general, ‘Galician speakers are characterized by their lower socio-economic status, while

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<sup>350</sup> O’Rourke, ‘The Galician Language in the Twenty-First Century’, p.78. For more information on Galician language policy after 1989, and its impact on the construction of national identity, see: A. Losada Trabada, ‘From Political Consensus to Political Conflict and Back Again: Language Public Policy in Galicia (1989–2020)’, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 28/4 (2022), pp.448–470.

<sup>351</sup> Founded in 1906, the Real Academia Galega (or RAG) is the main institution responsible for the study of Galician culture and the promotion of the language.

<sup>352</sup> R. Piñeiro, ‘*A lingoaxe i as lingoas*’: *discurso lido o día 25 de Novembro de 1967* (Vigo, 1967).

<sup>353</sup> H. Monteagudo, ‘Sociolingüística galega. Problemas e pescudas’, *Treballs de sociolingüística catalana*, 22 (2012), p.274.

Spanish speakers, although numerically weaker, tend to be socially and economically dominant.<sup>354</sup> Beswick adds that *galego* acquired a reputation as a ‘corrupt and degraded dialect of Castilian, its use perceived as indicative of the low social status of Galicia within the nation-state of Spain.’<sup>355</sup> Not only was *galego* associated with low status in Galicia, but also with Galicia’s low status within Spain. This context of historic denigration shaped how participants reflected on perceptions of the Galician language.

## Perception that Galician is looked down upon

Several participants used the same phrase to describe attitudes to *galego* during the dictatorship: to speak *galego* was *mal visto*, frowned upon, or, literally, ‘badly seen’. In most cases these participants were reflecting on their own childhood, or their parents’ experiences. Yet a conviction that people still look down upon *galego* – both within Galicia and from outside – runs through the participant narratives. Indeed, this belief that *galego* is disparaged appeared in the data with greater frequency than any other theme.<sup>356</sup> Whether the participant spoke in *galego*, Spanish, or English, they had a lot to say about attitudes to the language. They raised three main ‘negative’ connotations: an association with rurality, a lack of sophistication, and an ageing demographic.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> O’Rourke, ‘The Galician Language in the Twenty-First Century’, p.75.

<sup>355</sup> J.E. Beswick, *Regional Nationalism in Spain: Language Use and Ethnic Identity in Galicia* (Clevedon, 2007), p.226.

<sup>356</sup> During the coding process I assigned 154 extracts, or passages of transcribed speech, to the theme ‘*galego* is looked down upon’, significantly more than to any other theme.

<sup>357</sup> I place ‘negative’ in inverted commas because participants did not necessarily regard these associations as such, but rather reported the prejudices they observed in fellow Galicians.

## Galician and rurality

Participants identified a correlation between rurality and the use of *galego* that is reflected in sociolinguistic data. A 2018 survey by the Instituto Galego de Estatística (the Galician Institute of Statistics) revealed that in towns or villages with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants, 45.7 per cent of households usually spoke exclusively in *galego*. This figure plummeted to 5.66 per cent in towns or cities with a population greater than 50,000 people.<sup>358</sup> There is a linguistic divide between predominantly Castilian-speaking cities, and rural areas in which *galego* remains the day-to-day language. Yet, as I shall discuss further in Chapter Nine, language use is situational. A person may speak *galego* in the ‘*aldea*’ (literally meaning ‘village’, a significant space in the Galician imaginary) but change their language behaviour when they migrate to a city. Suso is a Lugo supporter in his 70s. His parents spoke *galego* at home. At school, though, Spanish was obligatory. After all, Suso grew up during the dictatorship and went on to complete military service.

[Esp] When I was at school, and sixth form, we didn’t study Galician, it was as if it were prohibited by the regime because I was born and brought up in a dictatorship. So if you spoke Galician they treated you like a villager, a country bumpkin, it was like they singled you out, ‘you’re not as good’. But anyway, that’s changed, thank God.

‘*Aldeano*’ [‘villager’] is not a neutral term in this context. It is laced with derision. To speak *galego* did not merely imply that the speaker was from the countryside, but that they were lesser as a result. Curiously, Suso insisted that we conduct the interview in Spanish, despite my assurances that I was happy to do it in *galego*. This happened with a few participants. I

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<sup>358</sup> IGE, ‘Enquisa estrutural a fogares. Coñecemento e uso do galego’.

think they were motivated by politeness. They assumed that as a foreigner, I would be more comfortable in Spanish, and saw my offer to speak *galego* as excessive politeness on my part. They made a linguistic choice based on a desire to not inconvenience me. In some cases, the participant admitted that they simply expressed themselves more freely in Spanish. Pili is in her 50s and grew up in A Coruña. She discussed rurality and language in a similar way to Suso.

[Gal] Look, I know people my age, who I've spoken to a few times, and they've said to me 'bloody hell, but I came from the *aldea*, we arrive here and people laughed at us because we spoke Galician', I think that for years here Galician speakers were seen as the idiots, the hicks from the *aldea*, and were even marginalised for it.

Again, the '*aldea*' carries a strong negative connotation. While Suso felt that this had improved since his childhood, Pili was less positive about the current status of *galego*. She lamented that in A Coruña she often speaks to people in *galego* who respond in Spanish. 'We're some right *señoritos* up here,' she added, with the implication that some *coruñeses* act this way because they see the Galician language as below their social class. Participants who were positive about *galego* and advocated its use still associated the language with rurality. Manolo is a Lugo supporter, from Lugo, in his 40s. In the 1990s he was a member of the radical group Muralla Norte. I asked Manolo to what extent Lugo was a Galician-speaking city.

[Gal] Yes, it's a city- I think it's one of the most for a clear reason, Lugo is an eminently rural province. Whichever road you take out of the city, in five minutes you're out in the sticks, whichever road, choose whichever, it doesn't matter, you're out in the sticks. Lugo is an eminently rural province, therefore the capital, it's a



capital of a rural province, where a lot of people come from the *aldeas* and towns around it, and there's a lot of Galician spoken.

Manolo explained the prevalence of *galego* in Lugo, a city of some 100,000 inhabitants, by its proximity to the rural. This statement reveals the depth of Manolo's association of *galego* with rural Galicia. It was inconceivable to him that *galego* could flourish in an urban environment. People speak *galego* in Lugo because they come from the *aldeas*. Their being in Lugo is incidental to this linguistic behaviour. As an aside, there is a clear contrast between the rurality of *galego* and football, which emerged as an urban pursuit. It became popular as Galicia urbanised in the early-20<sup>th</sup> century, as a leisure activity for the city-dwelling bourgeoisie and urban workers alike.<sup>359</sup> As Spanish became the dominant language in expanding Galician cities, one can see how the representative football clubs of these cities detached from the Galician language.

Participants both associated *galego* with rurality, and reported this association in the attitudes of others. Many believed that this was not a neutral association, but one intended to deride both the language and rural Galicia. Indeed, participants hinted, implicitly, that *galego* was incompatible with urban life.

### *Galego* as unsophisticated

[Esp] People have always worked the land in Galicia, and ultimately Galician has always been seen as the language of people who work the land, who don't have qualifications and have never left their town, who've never travelled, you know, who have never left their *aldea*. Ultimately it's- and in fact these days I'm convinced that

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<sup>359</sup> Domínguez Almansa, *Historia social do deporte en Galicia*, p.255.

when youngsters hear someone speaking Galician they'll think 'country bumpkins from round Carballo', for sure.

In this passage, Borja – a Deportivo supporter in his 30s from A Coruña – combined rurality with another, closely-related trope: that *galego* is unsophisticated and reflects a lack of education. This came across in the previous section. Suso and Pili referred to '*paletos*' and '*pailáns*' respectively – pejorative terms that translate to 'country bumpkin' or 'hillbilly' – in discussion of the assumptions other Galicians make about people who speak *galego*. It is impossible to separate rurality from a perceived lack of sophistication. Participants conflated the two associations, as Borja did when he suggested young people would hear *galego* and think: '*paletos del pueblo*'. Iago, a Celta supporter from Vigo in his 40s, spoke with conviction about the dictatorship, when Spanish was '*unha imposición*' ['an imposition']. '[Gal] You couldn't study Galician,' he said, 'speaking Galician was frowned upon, you were basically illiterate.' He presented *galego* as a language that has suffered long-term institutional denigration, which Galicians have internalised. Several participants revealed an appreciation of this sociolinguistic context. Tania is a Deportivo supporter from A Coruña in her 30s. She contrasted the status of *galego* to that of Catalan and Basque.

[Esp] A lot of people tend to think- it's not like in Cataluña or the Basque Country, Galician- like for them, Catalan and Basque are more associated with the upper classes, here Galician is more associated with the country bumpkins, and it's seen as something bad. So my parents speak Galician to each other, even today, but when they're addressing someone who they consider isn't from the *aldea* like they are, they always address them in Spanish.

Tania revealed an appreciation of how (perceived) power dynamics affect linguistic behaviour in everyday interactions. Tania did not pass judgement on her parents' tendency to address those not 'from the *aldea*' in Spanish. She did not admonish them because she appreciated how, over a long time, they internalised the assumption that *galego* is unbecoming of interactions with perceived social superiors. Tania situated Catalan and Basque as high-prestige, bourgeois languages, in contrast to *galego*.<sup>360</sup> In doing so, she showed how sociolinguistic assumptions interact with a broader trend I discussed Chapter Six. Many participants located sub-state national identity as something that occurs elsewhere on the peninsula, where autochthonous language and culture have value. It is another manifestation of '*auto-odio*' ['self-hate']. Participants presented rurality and unsophistication as intertwined strands of a collective attitude of disrespect toward *galego*.

### *Galego* associated with the elderly

Participants associated *galego* with use by elderly people and, conversely, its rejection by younger generations. Laura is a Celta supporter in her 20s from Pontevedra. She was brought up in Spanish. Laura continues to speak Spanish at home and with her friends, but she replies to people in *galego* if they address her in *galego*. There are limited situations in which Laura speaks exclusively in *galego*. '[Esp] For example when we visit my grandmother's family we speak Galician,' she said. Laura speaks *galego* with the older members of her family and, implicitly, associated the language with that demographic.

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<sup>360</sup> For context on the prestige of the Catalan language, refer to the following: P.E. O'Donnell, 'Catalan and Castilian as Prestige Languages: A Tale of Two Cities', *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 12/3 (1988), pp.226–238; R. Soler Costa, 'The Catalan language in the Cataluña's social identity construction: linguistic nationalism analysis', *Revista Electronica Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado*, 12/4 (2009), pp.123–128.

Albi, a Deportivo supporter, and Iria, a Celta supporter, are both from Vilagarcía de Arousa, a town in Pontevedra province with a population of some 37,000. They are not only separated by footballing allegiance, but by generation. Albi is in his 60s. Iria is in her 30s. Yet their perceptions of language use in terms of demographics were similar. I asked Albi how much *galego* is spoken in Vilagarcía.

[Gal] Galician was always pretty widely spoken in Vilagarcía, although over the years it's lost more and more, the usual story, the youth don't pick up the Galician language, Galician is spoken less and less in Vilagarcía.

Albi perceived the use of *galego* in Vilagarcía to be in decline because of youth apathy. It is implicit in his observation that *galego* is the preserve of middle-aged and elderly Galicians. Iria had a similar perception.

[Gal] If you speak Galician to a young lad, they'll always reply in Spanish, apart from certain people who do reply- but it's weird, in fact I always say, when they reply to me in Galician I say 'woah, a youngster speaking Galician, that's weird', yeah.

It is revealing that Iria reacts with surprise when a 'young' person speaks *galego*.

Furthermore, it is interesting to contrast these participants' perceptions of 'young'. Albi may consider Iria's generation to be part of the demographic that shows little interest in *galego*. Iria had similar views to Albi, but lamented the apathy of the generation below her. Data from a sociolinguistic survey by the Instituto Galego de Estatística shows a stark generational divide in language use. 48.48 per cent of respondents older than 65 'always' speak *galego*, compared to 14.27 per cent of respondents between five and 14 years old. Among

respondents between 15 and 29 years, the figure rises slightly to 18.94 per cent.<sup>361</sup>

Paradoxically, though most young people report exclusive or dominant use of Spanish, they consistently hold more favourable attitudes toward *galego* than other demographic groups.<sup>362</sup> This reveals the discrepancies between language attitudes and actual behaviour, which are important to consider throughout the chapter. Participants may share their desires or expectations of language use, rather than reflect on – or confront – their own linguistic behaviour. Anxo, a Deportivo supporter from Ourense in his 30s, raised a recurring theme that relates to this demographic divide.

[Gal] A: [exhales] That legendary thing of speaking to your kids in Spanish, because speaking to them in Spanish is-

M: What do you think of that?

A: What do I think of it? Well it's fucking shit to be honest, it's like, I dunno, when I go to my wife's grandmother's house, and she does this obviously without any bad intentions, my wife speaks Galician, she speaks Galician, my father-in-law speaks Galician, but she [the grandmother] when she talks to her granddaughter she speaks Spanish, that's how it is, it's a mindset. It's a question of self-hate, you know, of thinking that Galician is no use to you.

That Anxo refers to Galician-speaking parents raising their children in Spanish as '*a mítica cousa*' ['that legendary thing'] suggests that he views it as common. Indeed, many

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<sup>361</sup> IGE, 'Enquisa estrutural a fogares. Coñecemento e uso do galego'.

<sup>362</sup> O'Rourke, 'The Galician Language in the Twenty-First Century', p.80.

participants were raised in Spanish by parents who spoke to each other in *galego*.<sup>363</sup> They often lamented their parents' linguistic choice, yet understood it in the context of the Francoist suppression of the language. Anxo did not blame his wife's grandmother, but attributed her behaviour to '*auto-odio*'.<sup>364</sup> Research by O'Rourke hints at an attitudinal shift on this matter. She distributed a sociolinguistic self-assessment questionnaire to 725 undergraduate students at the University of Vigo during the 2002–03 academic year. O'Rourke discovered 'an explicitly expressed desire among respondents to transmit the Galician language to the next generation.'<sup>365</sup> Though, of course, this desire may not have translated to action.

Participants believed institutions and individuals – both within Galicia and elsewhere in Spain – look down on *galego*. Within this shared perception they invoked three, intertwined strands: that *galego* is associated with rurality, with a lack of sophistication, and with an elderly demographic. Participants often reported these tropes with a sense of exasperation, derived from an appreciation of the sociolinguistic challenges that *galego* faced, and continues to face. Almost all participants, regardless of which language they chose to

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<sup>363</sup> It is interesting to note the different attitudes toward *galego* outside Galicia, among diasporians. In *Migrantes: A nova diáspora galega contada por mulleres*, María Alonso Alonso interviews Galician women who have emigrated since 2008. One of these women, Ana, moved to Poland in 2010. She subsequently had a daughter, with whom she speaks *galego*. Ana mused that it is easier to raise a Galician-speaking child in Warsaw than in Galicia, because she is insulated from the various prejudices that participants in this study have raised, and the resultant pressure to use Spanish. See M. Alonso Alonso, *Migrantes: A nova diáspora galega contada por mulleres* (Vigo, 2021), p.140.

<sup>364</sup> O'Rourke and Nandi conducted focus groups with parents who themselves were raised in Spanish, but have made a conscious choice to raise their own children in *galego*. They have exercised agency to become policy makers in their own homes. See B. O'Rourke and A. Nandi, 'New speaker parents as grassroots policy makers in contemporary Galicia: ideological management and practices', *Language Policy*, 18/4 (2019), pp.493–511.

<sup>365</sup> B. O'Rourke, '¿Falas galego? The effects of socio-political change on language attitudes and use in the Galician sociolinguistic context', *Teanga*, 22 (2003–2004), p.123.

conduct the interview, believed *galego* was a fundamental marker of Galician identity that must be conserved.

## Participants invested *galego* with symbolic value

Participants presented language as the most important collective symbol of identification among Galicians. This conviction was pronounced among *neofalante*, or ‘new speaker’, participants. O’Rourke defines *neofalantes* as ‘individuals who were brought up speaking Spanish but at some point in their lives (usually during their teenage or early adult years) made a conscious decision to change their sociolinguistic behaviour and become active users of Galician.’<sup>366</sup> Sociolinguistic data suggests that *neofalantes* account for 50,000–60,000 speakers, approximately two per cent of the population.<sup>367</sup> It is significant that O’Rourke refers to a ‘conscious’ decision. Various participants used the terms ‘conscious’ or ‘unconscious’ to explain their relationship with *galego*. Henrique is a Deportivo supporter in his 50s from A Coruña. I asked him which language his parents used when he was growing up.

[Gal] At home my grandparents spoke Galician. But my parents spoke to us in Spanish. I spoke Spanish at home until I was 14, when I was 14 or 15 I became conscious, I came home one day and said ‘I’m going to speak Galician’, which was a

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<sup>366</sup> O’Rourke, ‘The Galician Language in the Twenty-First Century’, p.87.

<sup>367</sup> O’Rourke, ‘The Galician Language in the Twenty-First Century’, p.87. For further reading on *neofalantes*, see: B. O’Rourke, ‘Linguistic conversion and identities of resistance amongst Galician new speakers’, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 39/5 (2018), pp.407–418; B. O’Rourke and F. Ramallo, ‘Neofalantes as an active minority: Understanding language practices and motivations for change amongst new speakers of Galician’, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 231 (2015), pp.147–165; F. Ramallo and B. O’Rourke, ‘Profiles of new speakers in Galician’, *Digitum*, 16 (2014), pp.59–66; G. Tomé Lourido, ‘The role of social factors in bilingual speech processing: the case of Galician New Speakers’, PhD thesis submitted to University College London, 2018.

surprise for my parents [laughs] but since that day I've carried on speaking Galician [laughs].

Henrique then told an anecdote to demonstrate a collective acquisition of 'consciousness'.

He started secondary school in 1976, a time of rapid political change following the death of Franco the previous year. Henrique recalled that Galician was not on the curriculum.

Henrique and his friends approached a teacher to ask if she would give Galician lessons after school. She accepted.<sup>368</sup> 120 students signed up for the extra-curricular classes, Henrique recalled with pride, too many to fit in a single room. In his interview, Henrique said that he became 'conscious'. But he did not say what he became conscious of. Pili, on the other hand, discussed consciousness with greater precision. She is also in her 50s and from A Coruña. She became an active user of *galego* when she was 19 or 20. I asked why she made that change.

[Gal] At that age you start to become more conscious of your country, you start to think that we don't do- I don't know, why do they have to order us around from Madrid? We have a language, we have autonomy, we're a nation. We don't need to be submissive to others. You start to become a bit more conscious and that was when I decided to start.

For Pili, linguistic consciousness accompanied a political realisation. She saw the language – and her own use of it – in the context of a broader assertion of Galician identity in

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<sup>368</sup> As I stated in the opening section of this chapter, the 1970 'Ley General de Educación' established the need to provide Galician classes in schools. Yet the provision in law did not mean that the teachers and infrastructure were immediately in place in every school. And in some schools it is reasonable to assume there was ideological resistance to the teaching of Galician. That said, the provision may have made it easier for the teacher in Henrique's school to start providing Galician classes in such a 'successful' manner.



opposition to centralism. Other *neofalante* participants described a simultaneous linguistic and political ‘awakening’, albeit less pithily than Pili.<sup>369</sup> A deep appreciation of the symbolic importance of *galego* was not limited to *neofalantes*, or even Galician speakers. Edu is a Deportivo supporter in his 30s from A Coruña. He was an active member of Riazor Blues as a younger man. I asked which language he spoke at home.

[Esp] E: We spoke Spanish at home, my parents brought me up in Spanish, all of us. It’s still the case that every so often I’d speak a bit of Galician but my language- my mother tongue, though I don’t like to say so, at home we spoke Spanish.

M: What do you say you don’t like it?

E: Mate, because I always consider myself a proper defender of Galicia and the homeland, and I struggle a bit- it’s a bit contradictory.

Edu identified a ‘contradiction’ between his political beliefs and his linguistic behaviour. He used the phrase ‘I don’t like to say’ when acknowledging that Spanish is his mother tongue, as if he were ashamed or embarrassed. Tania, another Deportivo supporter in her 30s from A Coruña, expressed in Spanish a similar fondness for *galego*. She discussed an inherent classism in the treatment of the language, in which Galician speakers are dismissed as lower status.

[Esp] It’s a shame that Galician is viewed in that way, because ultimately I personally don’t have pro-independence views so to speak, but what I do value is that we have

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<sup>369</sup> O’Rourke makes a relevant observation on this point. She notes that although nationalist ideology may stimulate ‘greater language consciousness’, it also has the effect of stigmatising the behaviour of *neofalantes* as ‘deviant’, O’Rourke, ‘The Galician Language in the Twenty-First Century’, p.88.

our culture, our own language that differentiates us from other communities or other countries or other nations, however you want to call it. And the language is great.

Edu and Tania's testimonies support Xosé Luis Regueira's argument that even people who do not speak, or even read, Galician, identify with the language as a symbol of their ethnic origins.<sup>370</sup> To speak Spanish does not imply a rejection of *galego*. Edu and Tania simply speak the language in which they were raised. A majority of participants expressed a sense of duty to preserve the language and encourage its use. Yet they also felt powerless. They felt their personal behaviour had limited impact without effective language planning at institutional level. No participants questioned the value of *galego*. That is not to say every Galician values the language. It is possible that participants expressed a positive view of *galego* because that was what they thought I wanted to hear as a researcher of Galician identity. It had a performative element. Moreover, those ambivalent to the language – or those who did not view Galicianness as a salient part of their identity – may have been reluctant to participate in the first place. In any case, Spanish-speaking and Galician-speaking participants – especially the *neofalantes* – were unequivocal in their support for and appreciation of the Galician language.

## Participants perceived that football clubs have done little for the language

On 1 February 2022 Celta Vigo launched a Galician-language Twitter account to share content and updates about the club. This was a response to pressure from vocal elements of the fanbase to make *galego* more prominent on the club's social media channels. Yet the

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<sup>370</sup> X.L. Regueira, 'Política y lengua en Galicia: la 'normalización' de la lengua gallega', in J. Kabatek and M. Castillo Lluch (eds.), *Las lenguas de España: Política lingüística, sociológica del lenguaje e ideología desde la transición hasta la actualidad* (Madrid, 2006), pp.90–91.

launch of the 'RC Celta Galego' account provoked anger among the very supporters it sought to placate. Numerous Twitter users condemned it. They wanted the club to use *galego* on its principal Twitter account, not to relegate the language to a secondary level. A Mesa pola Normalización Lingüística – an independent platform that seeks to promote *galego* in all areas of social interaction – deemed the development '*unha falta de respecto*' ['a lack of respect'].<sup>371</sup> In *El Faro de Vigo*, the local newspaper, Manuel Bragado presented the new subsidiary account as an affront to Celta's *galeguista* origins (refer to Chapter Three).<sup>372</sup> Bragado acknowledged that at points throughout its history, Celta have made generous gestures to support *galego*. In 1971, the club donated 30,000 pesetas to the Rosalía de Castro Foundation, one peseta for every spectator at a match between Celta and Real Madrid. Yet, as with other professional Galician clubs, such gestures have punctuated long periods of institutional Castilian dominance.<sup>373</sup> Indeed, *Revista Celta*, a short-lived, official magazine published in the mid-1990s, even Castilianised Galician toponyms. A page containing information about the Under-19 squad listed their places of birth with Castilianised spellings. For instance, Michel Salgado's birthplace on the Portuguese border became 'Las Nieves', rather than the Galician 'As Neves'.<sup>374</sup> It is in this context that participants – who support Celta, Deportivo, and various other Galician teams – perceived that football clubs have done little to encourage *galego*.

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<sup>371</sup> <https://twitter.com/amesan/status/1488785592431304704?s=20>, accessed 1/5/2023.

<sup>372</sup> <https://twitter.com/RamonadoCurral/status/1491348325563777024?s=20>, accessed 1/5/2023.

<sup>373</sup> The *Fundación Rosalía de Castro* is a cultural institution founded in 1947 to promote the life and literary works of Rosalía de Castro, the key figure of the literary *rexurdimento* discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>374</sup> *Revista Celta*, 1 (1994), p.21.

I asked Anxo, a Deportivo supporter from Ourense in his 30s, about instances in which Deportivo have promoted *galego*. His response revealed that Celta are not the only club to overlook the language in the eyes of the supporters.

[Gal] Hmm, well these days they tweet pretty much everything in *galego*, but I think not much. I can't remember about when I was young but these days, the majority of communications are in *galego*, I think over the Tannoy in the stadium they speak *galego*, but: not a lot, it's more about the fans, and for the record, I have to say that Dépor fans and especially Riazor Blues have got their act together in recent decades, but in the early 2000s way more Galician was spoken on the terraces in Vigo, chants and all that, than in Coruña. I think these are important details to put right, among others, but anyway, I think Deportivo have done little for the Galician language, little that can be attributed to them.

Anxo acknowledged that Deportivo publish social media content and make stadium announcements in *galego* (I shall return to the stadium announcements later in the chapter). Yet he deemed such actions to be insignificant and located language activism firmly on the terraces. Anxo did not elaborate on what more Deportivo could have done, or should do in the future, to promote *galego*. When I asked Henrique – the Deportivo supporter who arranged extra-curricular Galician classes – the same question, he discussed individual behaviour rather than institutional policy.

[Gal] Deportivo's sensitivity to the Galician language was always scarce, if not non-existent, because they didn't have that worry and they didn't- they were preoccupied with other matters, they never made even the smallest gesture in favour of the Galician language, I think the only gestures they made, people for example,

individuals, were favourable to the Galician language, they defended it, they spoke it, for example Arsenio or Fernando Vázquez, and they were part of the furniture there and they defended it, but I don't think Deportivo as an institution ever did.

Henrique distinguished between highly-respected individuals – like Arsenio Iglesias and Fernando Vázquez – who spoke Galician as representatives of Deportivo, and Deportivo as an institution. That Iglesias and Vázquez spoke Galician should not, necessarily, be viewed as a political choice related to the 'consciousness' that various participants described earlier in the chapter. Participants like Edu and Tania embraced the symbolic value of *galego* despite speaking Spanish in their day-to-day lives. Conversely, many people speak *galego* as a communicative habit, because their parents raised them in that language, not as a political or sociolinguistic statement. Arsenio Iglesias claimed that his use of *galego* did not imply support for nationalism in a 1994 interview with Bieito Rubido, published as a short book. 'People often ask me: what are you, more nationalist or more Spanish? And I say that I'm Spanish [and] a proud Galician.'<sup>375</sup> Publicly, at least, Arsenio depoliticised his linguistic behaviour. Bixu, a Celta supporter from A Guarda in his 30s, aligned with Anxo and Henrique.<sup>376</sup> Asked what Celta had done to promote *galego*, he was dismissive.

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<sup>375</sup> B. Rubido, *Arsenio*, p.53.

<sup>376</sup> Bixu was the only participant to mention *reintegracionismo* ['reintegrationism'], the belief that *galego* and Portuguese are historically the same language, pulled apart by centuries of political pressure and contact with Castilian Spanish. Proponents of *reintegracionismo* advocate the (re)integration of Portuguese orthography in Galician and strong cultural ties with the lusophone world. Bixu framed reintegration as a necessary response to the 'prostitution' of *galego*, which he considered to be at risk due to its 'adaptation' to Spanish. For further reading on *reintegracionismo*, see: T. Peres Gonçalves, *Breve história do reintegracionismo* (Ourense, 2014). For an analysis of the role of Ricardo Carvalho Calero in the movement, see: E. Maragoto, 'Do ideário de Ricardo Carvalho Calero ao reintegracionismo do século XXI', *Boletín da Real Academia Galega*, 381 (2020), pp.239–259.

[Gal] Very little, very little to be honest. Very little. This isn't a matter of changing signs in Galician or Spanish, of sending letters in Galician or Spanish, of having the option on the website of Spanish, English, or Galician. Like, that's not encouraging the language.

Like Anxo, Bixu dismissed the club's actions as insignificant or lacking in impact, but did not communicate what a healthy institutional approach might involve. I interviewed Bixu a month before Celta introduced the Galician-language Twitter account. Had this happened before the interview, he would probably have been more scathing of Celta. It is clear that participants felt their clubs have done little to encourage *galego*. Either they did not connect football and language, or they lamented how little football clubs do to support the language. None of the participants presented the stadium as a symbolic space in which, as a collective, spectators felt empowered to speak *galego* during the dictatorship, as is the mythology around FC Barcelona's Camp Nou stadium.<sup>377</sup>

Anxo, Henrique, and Bixu assumed that Galician football clubs have a responsibility to the language. One participant questioned this assumption. I asked Iria, the Celta supporter in her 30s from Vilagarcía de Arousa, if clubs should adopt a stronger language policy.

[Gal] No, I think that maybe- look, it's all well and good that they do all that, right, Galician music, videos about Galicia and that, it's all good, but I think that has to come from elsewhere more than from football. The institutions need to support it, ultimately football is a sport. It's great that they do things in Galician, obviously we're

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<sup>377</sup> See H. Shobe, 'Place, identity and football: Catalonia, Catalanisme and Football Club Barcelona, 1899–1975', *National Identities*, 10/3 (2008), pp.329–343.

in Galicia and they have to do things in Galician. But promoting the language has to come from elsewhere, from the institutions.

Iria's statement that 'o fútbol ao final é deporte' ['ultimately football is sport'] implied a belief that there are limits to the linguistic change a club can affect. Clubs can contribute, but political and cultural institutions must lead. This perception that football is peripheral to the sociolinguistic reality of *galego* is widely held. In *A Lingua en 2050*, the academic Fernando Ramallo invited 25 people from diverse backgrounds – journalism, academia, education, and politics – to answer two questions in a short essay: what do you *think* will be the state of *galego* in 2050? What do you *hope* will be the state of *galego* in 2050?<sup>378</sup> None of the contributors mentioned football, nor any sport, as a means to sustain and promote the language in the coming decades. The notion that clubs have a responsibility to *galego* is a minority position, both among supporters and especially among those with a more tangible influence on language policy. This may be symptomatic of the tendency within post-Civil War Galician nationalism to overlook the nation-building role of football, as I discussed in Chapter Three.

The interviews revealed a lack of consensus as to the salience of language as a marker of supporter identity. Participants who formed part of radical groups performed a steadfast commitment to *galego* in their interviews, both through the language they spoke and how they spoke about language. To speak *galego* was an integral part of radical groups' collective behaviour and shared, coherent sense of identity. Supporters who did not form part of these groups, however, presented language as peripheral to their sense of belonging to an imagined community of supporters.

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<sup>378</sup> F. Ramallo (ed.), *A Lingua en 2050* (Vigo, 2021).

Sime is a Celta fan from Vigo in his 40s. He was a prominent member of Celtarras from its formation in 1987. 'In Celtarras everything was done in *galego*', he said. 'We tried in every statement, banner, all in *galego*. But everyone was a *neofalante*, absolutely everyone was a *neofalante*, who spoke *galego* to rebel, rebellion, that's the word for it.' Sime was satisfied with his choice of the word '*rebeldía*' ['rebelliousness' or 'rebellion']. It reflects a tendency among radical supporters to react against something, to push back. They find unity, often, in what they stand against. Rebellion against the perceived linguistic dominance of Spanish was coherent with the group's performance of *galeguista* politics, and a broader subcultural reaction against the existing order. It was also a question of uniformity. 'For a long time various members of the *peña* have been complaining about the chanting in Spanish,' wrote a contributor to *Fondo Celtarra*, the group's fanzine, in 1994. 'From now on, we're going to launch a campaign in this fanzine to finally banish *espanhol* from our terrace, a language imposed by the Spanish powers that be.'<sup>379</sup> The unified, coherent use of *galego* was central to Celtarras' performance of *galeguismo*, as discussed in Chapter Four. As Doidge et al observe, 'to be an ultra is to subsume your individual identity into a wider collective.'<sup>380</sup> The collective cannot be unified or harmonious if it performs in two languages with such divergent symbolic connotations in the eyes of its members; one that represents the nation, another imposed by the colonial oppressor.

'Non-radical' supporters presented language as peripheral to their experience of the matchday. In the build-up to a game and in the stadium, language fades as a category of belonging. Shared memories of euphoria and hardship bind the supporters in such

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<sup>379</sup> *Fondo Celtarra*, 14 (1994), p.9. Note the use of 'nh' instead of 'ñ' in the spelling of 'Espanha', in line with the Portuguese spelling system used by reintegracionists. Though, curiously, the writer of the article did not always adhere to the Portuguese system.

<sup>380</sup> Doidge et al, *Ultras*, p.2.



moments, and these are not contingent on communication in one language or another. Most participants did not discuss the language in which fans chant, or that clubs use to communicate. When I asked them directly, they were sometimes unclear. Tania and Borja are both Deportivo supporters from A Coruña in their 30s. I interviewed them together, which produced a revealing exchange.

[Esp] M: When you go to matches, which language do they speak over the Tannoy?

B: Galician.

T: No, *'cambio ofrecido por Abanca'*.

B: That's the same in Spanish and Galician. They speak in Galician, *'primeiro cambio no-'*, yeah, they speak in Galician. Unless- anyway, I'll let you know on Wednesday at the Osasuna game.

T: *'Que recordamos a los aficionados que tienen que estar sentados con las mascarillas'*, or whatever, they write in Galician but I think they say it in Spanish.

B: That bit I think they might do in both languages, but the substitutions 100 per cent in Galician, I'm absolutely sure of it. I think so, *'primeiro cambio no Real Club Deportivo'*, always in Galician.

T: Also last year the legendary stadium announcer did die and this one is new, maybe this one always speaks Galician.

Their lack of conviction suggests the language the stadium announcer used was a banal element of their experience in the stadium. The participants, as a collective, presented a muddled relationship between football and language. Various participants expressed a belief

that clubs do little to support *galego*, yet did not elaborate on what would constitute meaningful support. Others questioned whether it is even the clubs' responsibility, given the existence of cultural and political institutions. Participants also presented a mixed picture of the relevance of the language to a sense of belonging and shared identity in the stadium. For radical supporters, language was central to their performance of ideological and aesthetic unity. Most participants, though, viewed language as peripheral to their support of their team.

## Conclusion

Attitudes toward – and use of – *galego* are full of contradiction and subtext. This chapter opened with a scene from a typical lower-division football match in Galicia, where a spectator paused his conversation in *galego* to remonstrate with the referee in Spanish. Why? At that level of football, the referee would almost certainly have been Galician. The discussion of participants' attitudes toward *galego* up to this point has provided the context to further interrogate his behaviour. Perhaps the spectator's abrupt linguistic change had to do with assumptions about authority and social class; he viewed the referee as a figure of authority – and, therefore, prestige – so afforded him the deferential privilege of abuse in Spanish. The referee was a young man, certainly younger than 40. The spectator was probably in his 50s. Maybe he considered the referee to be of a younger generation, a predominantly Spanish-speaking generation, and adapted his speech accordingly. The spectator may have assumed the referee was from Vigo, across the water, an urban environment in which Spanish dominates. Perhaps it was a combination of these assumptions that led the spectator to switch to Spanish in that moment. Had I asked him directly why he chose Spanish, he would probably have been unable to tell me. It was an

unconscious decision moulded by a lifetime of exposure to sociolinguistic currents and pressures.

There is relatively little direct discussion of football in this chapter. There are two reasons for this. First, because it was necessary to explore, in detail, participants' attitudes and assumptions about *galego*. They presented a shared narrative of denigration of the language, and related the plight of *galego* to other themes that run throughout this thesis: 'auto-odio', migration, and Galicia's perception of itself in relation to Catalonia and the Basque Country. Second, because participants' unequivocal support of *galego* – regardless of the language they used in the interview – did not translate to a widespread perception of football clubs as vehicles of linguistic activism. The majority viewed football and language as parallel threads of identity. They run alongside each other, but rarely interact.

# Chapter Nine: Football provided roots in a universal experience of migration

## Introduction

We Galicians know how to get our papers in order and ask for a third-class passage.

We know how to lie low in a liner's holds when we are out of money. We know how to take to the road with just the shirt on our backs or pushing a knife-grinding wheel.

We know how to open up sealed borders and ask for work in all languages. We know, in short, everything that a good traveller must, even though the journey is the first in our lives.<sup>381</sup>

With these words written in New York in 1940, Castelao, the doyen of Galician nationalism, reveals the importance of migration to the self-imagination and articulation of modern Galicia. Resilience in the face of dislocation was, for Castelao, a national characteristic. He presented intrepidity and resourcefulness as traits that come as naturally to the Galician as walking or talking. Castelao's own experience of migration to Argentina – first as a child and later in life as a political exile – informs the composition of *Sempre en Galiza*, his multi-volume work written between 1937 and 1944. This foundational text of Galician nationalism weaves narratives of emigration with anticolonial political conviction.<sup>382</sup> This chapter takes as its starting point the contention that football allowed Galician migrants to negotiate the

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<sup>381</sup> Castelao, *Sempre en Galiza*, p.240.

<sup>382</sup> For more on Castelao's relationship from afar with Galicia, see: C. Patterson, 'Forever in Galicia? Castelao and the homeland made in exile', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 48/1 (2011), pp.86–98.

fluid connections between ‘home’, ‘here’, and ‘there’.<sup>383</sup> I consciously use the open term ‘migration’ in the title of this chapter, because I engage with two groups of migrants. First, diasporans who left Galicia – or whose forebears left Galicia – for the United Kingdom. These are emigrants. Second, those who migrated within Galicia from rural to urban areas, the internal migrants.

In the first part of this chapter, I argue that support of a Galician football club allowed diasporan participants in the United Kingdom to imagine themselves as members of fan communities with roots in the homeland. In doing so, they alleviated a sense that they were outsiders everywhere; seen as foreign both in the homeland, Galicia, and in the United Kingdom. I focus on members of the Galician diaspora in the United Kingdom for practical reasons. As a British researcher it was easier to recruit and interview participants in my own country. This focus avoided linguistic challenges that may have arisen had I interviewed, say, German-speaking individuals of Galician descent. A focus on one diaspora community also produced narrow yet rich data that facilitates the identification of shared narratives.

In the second part of this chapter, I argue that football clubs in the major Galician cities had an adhesive effect for internal migrants. Support of a football club allowed these migrants from the countryside – and their children – to develop a sense of belonging to a place that did not always feel like ‘home’. Internal migration is not as salient as emigration in the political and cultural imaginary of Galicia. The scarcity of literature on the experience of

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<sup>383</sup> Other cultural forms, such as popular music, perform a similar function to football. Kirsty Hooper has explored the symbolic importance of ‘Un canto a Galicia’, a 1971 song performed by Julio Iglesias, for Galician emigrants and their descendants. See K. Hooper, ‘The many faces of Julio Iglesias: “un canto a Galicia”, emigration and the network society’, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 10/2 (2009), pp.149–166.

internal migrants is stark in comparison to the scholarship on emigration.<sup>384</sup> Yet the participants perceived that internal migration involved similar processes of dislocation and placelessness, even if the distances travelled were short.

As Kirsty Hooper observes, Galicia occupies ‘a paradoxical position with regard to the outside world.’<sup>385</sup> On the one hand, it is a minority culture mediated through the Spanish state, where Galicia accounts for six per cent of the population. On the other hand, its tradition of emigration meant that by 2011 some 27 per cent of Spaniards registered overseas were Galician, making it the public face of Spain in much of the world. Emigrants left Galicia in waves. Most emigrants in the first wave, spanning roughly from the lifting of Spanish government restrictions in 1853 to the global depression of the 1930s, crossed the Atlantic to Latin America.<sup>386</sup> It is estimated that some 600,000 Galicians made the journey in this period, of a total population of just two million in 1900.<sup>387</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s a second wave of emigrants crossed the Pyrenees to northern Europe. After 1992 a third wave occurred within the newly borderless Europe. It is possible to speak of a fourth wave triggered by the 2008 financial crash, notable for the changing demographic composition of emigration. In 2016 and 2019 more women than men left Galicia.<sup>388</sup> A harbourside sculpture in Vigo depicts a man, suitcase in hand, marching away from his wife and child to board a

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<sup>384</sup> Where literature on ‘internal migration’ does exist, it often takes ‘internal’ to mean ‘within the Spanish state’ rather than ‘within Galicia’, for example: J. Hernández Borge, ‘Los estudios sobre la emigración interior gallega’ in M.C. Faus Pujol (ed.), *Aportaciones geográficas en homenaje al profesor A. Higuera Arnal* (Zaragoza, 2004), pp.195–203.

<sup>385</sup> K. Hooper, *Writing Galicia into the World: New Cartographies, New Poetics* (Liverpool, 2011), p.13.

<sup>386</sup> For more information on Galician emigration to Latin America, see: X.M. Núñez-Seixas, *O inmigrante imaxinario: estereotipos, representacións e identidades dos galegos na Arxentina (1880–1940)* (Santiago de Compostela, 2002); R. Villares, *Historia da emigración galega a América* (Santiago de Compostela, 1996).

<sup>387</sup> Hooper, *Writing Galicia into the World*, p.40.

<sup>388</sup> Alonso Alonso, *Migrantas*, p.9.

boat bound for Latin America. Galician emigration has changed since that first wave of departures, the era of the solo male traveller.

Shared experiences of emigration informed the cultural and political development of Galician nationalism. The Galician national anthem was performed for the first time in Cuba. Castelao published *Sempre en Galiza* in Buenos Aires in 1944. Intellectuals and activists forged a sense of Galicianness from afar. Xoán González Millán argues that in the 1940s and 1950s a split emerged between exiled *galeguistas* such as Castelao, whose distance enabled political activism, and those who remained at 'home', such as Ramón Piñeiro, who were limited by Francoism to cultural expressions of Galician identity. This led to a debate as to which group had the 'legitimacy' to shape a Galician national character.<sup>389</sup> Núñez-Seixas argues that Galicianist intellectuals have fluctuated between negative and positive appraisals of emigration. For some, it represented an opportunity to generate the wealth to drive economic development in the homeland. An alternative interpretation emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, which held that emigration was a collective failure provoked by mass poverty. This collective failure stifled the growth of nationalism by providing a social release valve; public discontent did not find an outlet in nationalism because the discontented simply left.<sup>390</sup>

Cultural expectations of the diasporans' relationship with the homeland have also shifted over time. In 1989 Manuel Fraga – a former Francoist minister and returned migrant who spent part of his childhood in Cuba – was elected as the conservative president of the

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<sup>389</sup> X. González Millán, 'Exilio, literatura e nación', *Grial Anuario de Estudos Galegos* (2003), P.21. Ironically, Ramón Piñeiro was more positive about emigration than most post-war nationalists.

<sup>390</sup> X.M. Núñez-Seixas, 'History and Collective Memories of Migration in a Land of Migrants: The Case of Iberian Galicia', *History and Memory*, 14/1–2 (2002), p.233.

Galician parliament. Fraga emphasised the symbolic links that united Galicians on both sides of the Atlantic. The number of registered Galician overseas voters swelled from 6,000 in 1989 to 300,000 in 2005. Political parties competed for the sympathies of emigrant voters, who would ultimately decide the outcome of the close-fought Xunta election in 2005.<sup>391</sup> This episode reminds that migration should not be discussed in purely sentimental terms, as a melancholic longing for the homeland. Whether in the articulation of Galician nationalist discourse or at the ballot box, emigrants have had a tangible influence on the political development of Galicia.

## External migration – the Galician diaspora in the United Kingdom

Members of the Galician diaspora in the United Kingdom who participated in this study often felt like they were from neither ‘here’ nor ‘there’. They were not quite British. They were not quite Galician. Support of a Galician football team allowed these participants to imagine themselves as members of fan communities with firm roots in the homeland. In this sense, diaspora fandom allowed participants to negotiate their sense of ‘home’, ‘here’ and ‘there’, albeit in different ways. Cohen argues that diasporas ‘can be constituted by acts of the imagination’. They can be re-centred and held together ‘through the mind, through cultural artefacts and through a shared imagination.’<sup>392</sup> Football clubs acted as cultural artefacts that encouraged a shared imagination of the homeland. In this section I seek to contribute to an increased appreciation of the experience of post-war emigrants from

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<sup>391</sup> Hooper, *Writing Galicia into the World*, p.44.

<sup>392</sup> R. Cohen, ‘Diasporas and the Nation-State: From Victims to Challengers’, *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1944–)*, 72/3 (1996), p.516.



Galicia, and the salience of diasporan fandom for a broader understanding of how we imagine belonging in transnational communities.

I use a loose concept of diaspora, defined by Daniel Naujoks as all groups and individuals '(I) who trace their roots back to the homeland but (II) who live (permanently) outside that homeland and (III) whose ethnocultural relation to that homeland has not vanished.'<sup>393</sup> I am wary of closed conceptual models such as William Safran's multiple-criteria definition of diaspora.<sup>394</sup> Safran's contribution was significant in the context of critical engagement with transnational identity. Yet, as Clifford says, the consequence of a model that defines diaspora by recourse to an ideal type is that groups are identified 'as more or less diasporic' according to how many criteria they satisfy.<sup>395</sup> Such models do not account for the fluidity of diasporan identity over time.

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<sup>393</sup> D. Naujoks, 'Diaspora Identities – Reflections on Transnational Belonging', *Diaspora Studies*, 3/1 (2010), p.2.

<sup>394</sup> Safran argues that the concept of diaspora should apply to expatriate minority communities whose members share several of the following characteristics:

1. they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral," or foreign, regions;
2. they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements;
3. they believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it;
4. they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate;
5. they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and
6. they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.

W. Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 1/1 (1991), p.83.

<sup>395</sup> J. Clifford, 'Diaspora', *Cultural Anthropology*, 9/3 (1994), p.306.

Galician emigrants in the United Kingdom are not as visible as their counterparts across the Atlantic. As Hooper says, in much of Latin America a '*gallego*' refers to anyone from Spain or of Spanish origin. Galicians became, therefore, the 'public face' of Spain in Latin America.<sup>396</sup> Jaine Beswick concluded from fieldwork among a Galician community in Guildford, near London, that unlike other migrant communities, Galicians make a conscious choice to conceal their identity.<sup>397</sup> As a result, despite the BBC's Galician-language broadcasts of the 1940s and 1950s, the presence of a Galician community in the United Kingdom is not obvious to the external observer.<sup>398</sup> Football represents an exception to this invisibility. A semi-professional club called F.C. Deportivo Galicia has participated in amateur leagues around London since its formation by Galician emigrants in 1968.<sup>399</sup> Though it now considers itself to be a Galician and Spanish club, the name and badge – the Cross of Saint James around a Galician flag – make it immediately identifiable with Galicia.<sup>400</sup> Deportivo and Celta both have registered *peñas* in London: RCD London and London Celtas. A now defunct Deportivo *peña* – Peña Super Dépor – readily interweaved London-ness and Galician-ness on the banner its members took to matches, which carried the English and Galician flags, an image of Tower Bridge, and the scallop shell of Saint James.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> Hooper, *Writing Galicia into the World*, pp.63–64.

<sup>397</sup> J. Beswick, 'Galician-Spanish-British? Migrant identification practices, transnationalism, and invisibility in Guildford, England', in K. Hooper and M. Puga Moruxa (eds.), *Galician Cultural Studies: Between the Local and the Global* (New York, 2011), pp.125–142.

<sup>398</sup> A.R. de Toro Santos, *Galicia desde Londres: Galicia, Gran Bretaña e Irlanda nos programas galegos da BBC, 1947–1956* (Oleiros, 1995).

<sup>399</sup> For a snapshot of life as a Galician emigrant in London in the 1970s, see: C. Durán, 'Galicia en Londres', in *Galicia no ano 79 por 41 autores* (Vigo, 1980), editor unknown, pp.63–69.

<sup>400</sup> G. Álvarez, 'FC Deportivo Galicia, el equipo español de barrio que aspira a jugar la FA Cup', *Vice*, 7 November 2016, <https://www.vice.com/es/article/pgjmzk/deportivo-galicia-londres-equipo-barrio-fa-cup-inglaterra-futbol>, accessed 13 March 2023.

<sup>401</sup> Author unknown, *Libro de oro del Real Club Deportivo de la Coruña* (A Coruña, 2000), p.234. A participant, whose father was a member of Peña Super Dépor, believed that more recent emigrants founded RCD London without knowing that a previous *peña* existed. They attributed this to a lack of

## Outsiders everywhere

Participants who were residents in the United Kingdom expressed a perception of placelessness. They felt like outsiders in the homeland their parents or grandparents had left, and in their adopted 'home' country, the United Kingdom. This perception contextualises the importance of football clubs as institutions that harness identification with a particular, static place. It also introduces a thread that runs throughout the thesis but is especially pronounced in this chapter: that identity is relational and fluid. One can shuffle multiple identities according to the situation. Indeed, the negotiation and selection of certain versions of the self is one of the salient experiences of diaspora. Angela was born in Hampshire in the 1960s, to parents who had emigrated from the countryside outside A Coruña. She was one of the only 'foreigners', as she put it, at her school.

[Eng] When I started secondary school, that's where I noticed that I was different, OK, and they started calling me 'paki', 'wog', you know, and I didn't wanna tell my parents because I think for them that would have hurt them tremendously. So I decided that- it made me a much stronger person. The person I am today was because of that, erm, basically they said something, I didn't think twice, 'boom' [punching motion] I just hit them until they stopped, and it took them about two and a half years to actually begin to respect me for who I am, the names stopped.

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contract between emigrants who arrived in London in the 1960s and 1970s, for whom the Centro Gallego was a hub of social interaction, and post-2008 emigrants from whom Facebook was a primary point of contact with fellow Galicians.

This experience of xenophobia led Angela to lament her parents' decision to leave Galicia. If she had grown up in Spain, she reasoned, she would not have been different from the other children. She would not have been the 'other'. Angela moved to London in her late teens.

Because it's more cosmopolitan and whatever, I used to take the piss out of my colleagues because they would say 'you're English' and I'd say 'no I'm not, I'm Spanish'. And that would piss- 'you're English' [forceful] like that and I'd go 'no I'm not, I'm Spanish'. And it would piss them off more than me but I think from being- I never wanted to be hurt, again, obviously I was English, alright, but I played that card so nobody else could hurt me again.

This recollection reveals the situational nature of diasporan identity. Angela acknowledged that she was English. But she emphasised her Spanishness to prevent others questioning her Englishness. She othered herself to gain agency. It is notable that Angela referred to 'Spanish' rather than 'Galician' in her memory of this exchange. In part, this reflects the invisibility of the Galician community in the United Kingdom. Angela's colleagues may not have known about Galicia, whereas Spain was a common point of understanding. It is easy to see how Galician emigrants emphasised their Spanishness out of convenience in such interactions.<sup>402</sup> Angela lived in London with her Galician (born and raised) husband. Their daughter, Bibiana, grew up in the capital until her late teens, when the entire family 'returned' to Galicia. She discussed her experience of this change.

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<sup>402</sup> Naujoks identifies this as a common diasporan experience: 'For Indians in India, the feeling of being 'Indian' might not be too strong and pronounced, while regional and linguistic markers are more salient. When Indians move abroad, they are not labelled as Bengalis or Tamilians, but as Indians.', Naujoks, 'Diasporic Identities', p.8.

[Eng] You hear my accent and you see the way I look. People don't assume I'm Spanish. So it's only until they ask me my name and I say Bibi, or Bibiana, and they say 'that's not an English name, where are you from?' [laughs] and I'm like 'Spanish', 'you don't look Spanish', that was the typical thing that came out of people's mouths in London. So I would have to say 'I'm Galician' and I'd explain why Galicians are completely different to maybe that stereotype Spanish person, so I was, I was very Galician when I lived in London, and it was only when I came to live here that I realised I'm very English.

Like Angela, Bibiana experienced the situational nature of identity. Whether she was 'here' or 'there', she did not feel like she belonged. Later in the interview she reflected on how this changed over time.

I remember coming here I was '*a inglesa*', and not- it was quite despective the way it was said. I'm now Bibi because I've been here 20 years so it's like, I'm now just someone else, but at the beginning I was the foreigner.

Bibiana believed that Galicians saw her as a foreigner when she first moved from London. But with time they came to see her as Galician. In his essay 'Cultural identity and diaspora', Stuart Hall frames cultural identity as a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past or present. He describes diaspora identities as those which 'are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.'<sup>403</sup> Bibiana's experience suggests that one can become – or 'rebecome' – Galician with time. Yet if identity formation is a matter of becoming, it involves a concurrent process

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<sup>403</sup> S. Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in J. Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London, 1990), p.235.

of unbecoming. Rubén is in his 30s and comes from O Barco de Valdeorras, a slate mining town in eastern Galicia. He told me about his aunt and uncle, who had emigrated to Germany.

[Gal] They were in Germany for a long time, they came back, but the children are about my age or maybe a bit older, they have partners, they have kids who obviously were born out there, and they're German not Galician, and they still live there.

In Rubén's view, then, his cousins and their children 'unbecame' Galician as they assimilated into German society, as if it were a transactional process. Implicit in his judgement is the idea of Galician-ness as contingent on a return to the homeland. Rubén did not comment on his aunt and uncle, because they are first-generation immigrants who returned. This begs the question: if Rubén's 'German' cousins were to move to Galicia, would they immediately (re)become Galician or remain German in a land foreign to them?

Carlos and Edgar grew up in Fulham, west London. Their mother is Bolivian and their father is Galician, from Mosende, between Vigo and the Portuguese border. As children the brothers spent every summer in Mosende with their paternal family. I asked how the Galician family viewed them. Carlos answered:

[Eng] They call it an identity crisis, I don't think my brother and me, you know, consider it an identity crisis, but in England we were Johnny Foreigners in Spain we were Johnny English Foreigners and in Bolivia we were Johnny Spanish Foreigners. [...] my dad's uncle, the one who lived next door that I was explaining, he would say, er, 'you're half Bolivian, half Spanish, with the head of Margaret Thatcher'. So that's how he used to describe us to others no less [laughs].

Carlos and Edgar were different things to different people, in different places. The common denominator was, to use Carlos's phrase, that they were 'Johnny Foreigner' to everyone. The summers they spent in Galicia nurtured a fondness for Celta Vigo. Both brothers have Celta kits in their wardrobes. Carlos has the club badge tattooed on his upper arm. Curiously, neither showed much interest in football in general. Carlos lamented that players are too soft these days. Edgar preferred rugby. Celta was different. They were Celta fans, not football fans. Yet even this affiliation was complicated. Edgar presented football as a means for people to project onto him an identity that he did not recognise.

[Eng] The thing was you'd find yourself, you'd find yourself sort of erm defending Celta Vigo to all your English pals at school cos I had a tonne of Liverpool fans where I was at school so you'd find yourself defending Celta Vigo saying 'yeah yeah don't worry it'll be a closer game than you think, 9-0 or whatever' so you'd be defending them in London and yet when you spoke to your family from Spain they'd be thinking th-that you wouldn't give a shit about Celta and you'd want the English team to win, so you're a little bit on the defensive both sides. [...] I think in their eyes because we were born here and obviously live here, er, they kind of assumed that everything English we would put above whatever comes from Spain, which I mean, you can talk to them as much as you like, I don't think they'll 100 per cent believe us when we say 'well no, we've got a lot of time for Galicia, Spain, Bolivia as well obviously'. But they kind of have a little slightly skewed version of what we consider ourselves.

Carlos and Edgar's narratives reinforce, using football as an example, the sense that they were always outsiders. Yet in line with Stuart Hall's analysis, one can become Galician (in the

case of Bibiana) or unbecome Galician (in the case of Rubén's cousins). Each participant's testimony revealed a perception that diasporan identity is situational and fluid.

### Football allegiances and rivalries played out in the diaspora

In the context of these constantly shifting identities, support of a Galician football club allowed emigrants to imagine themselves as participants in allegiances and rivalries deeply rooted in Galicia. Some participants felt their separation from the homeland gave them the perspective to rise above internal civic rivalries outlined in Chapter Seven. Others embraced these rivalries from afar and sought to 'other' the rival as un-Galician within the diaspora. Whether affinitive or antagonistic, football allowed emigrant participants in the United Kingdom to express their own, personal sense of belonging to the homeland.

It is important to recognise the fundamental changes to the diasporan fan experience during the 1990s. The availability of satellite television allowed supporters in the United Kingdom to watch Deportivo or Celta most weeks.<sup>404</sup> Diasporan supporters could watch football collectively in small groups – at home or in a bar as part of a *peña* – in the knowledge that other groups were repeating the ritual across the transnational community. Indeed, John McManus argues, in his study of diaspora fans of the Turkish club Besiktas, that satellite television performs the function of the newspaper in Benedict Anderson's concept of 'imagined community'. That is, it allows diasporans to imagine simultaneous belonging, both with other members of the diaspora, those watching on screens in the homeland, and those

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<sup>404</sup> For a deeper insight into the relationship between television broadcasting and the success of Deportivo, see: J.O. Rodríguez Nieto, 'El decisivo papel de la TVG en la conformación del fenómeno del Super Dépor', PhD thesis submitted to the Universidade de Vigo, 2015.



in the stadium itself.<sup>405</sup> Monica, a Deportivo supporter in her 30s, was born in West London to parents from Malpica, on the Costa da Morte. Her sense of Galician pride and solidarity overrode the enmity with Celta.

[Eng] Monica: I would happily sit with them [Celta fans] and watch, even a *derbi*. And during the game we always say, 'yep, I'm gonna call you so and so, and you're gonna hit right back, but when the match is over, we're gonna shake hands, have a beer, and that's it.' Cos one thing that I find really nice about being immigrants is that being Gallego overpowers the football team. You know, at the end of the day we see that we're just both in that situation. Whereas maybe if you watch it in Coruña or in Vigo, it's more like 'Ehh Portuguese *por aquí*, Turkish *por allá*', but here the important thing is that we're *gallegos*, and that's something we don't have over there.

Matt: Why?

Monica: Umm, because you miss home. So any sort of interaction with *gallegos* or similar is... is, you know, good, it's nice. And again, I don't think we see each other as Deportivo and Celta, we see each other as just immigrants. Like, the *morriña* just totally overpowers anything else.

Adam is a Deportivo and Liverpool supporter in his 30s from West Wales, where his paternal grandparents migrated from Ortigueira, A Coruña. He also expressed a sense of underlying union.

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<sup>405</sup> J. McManus, 'Playing the Game: A Study of Transnational Turkish Football Fans, Imaginations and the Internet', PhD thesis submitted to the University of Oxford, 2015, p.216.

[Eng] They [Deportivo and Celta fans] do sing the Galician anthem in the stadium together don't they, I guess they're proud. Galicians are proud of their culture anyway as we were saying before, you know football's just yeah I guess something to get in the way of it you know but it's- I guess push comes to shove and they're all proud, they're all proud of their region aren't they.

It is striking that Monica referred to Galicians using the pronouns 'us' and 'we', while Adam used 'they' and 'their'. Monica visited Malpica every summer as a child. In London she spoke Galician and Spanish. Adam did not visit Galicia until he was 16. English is his first language. He recalled watching Deportivo matches on television with his father and uncle. They travelled from Wales to London to watch Deportivo face Arsenal in the 2001–02 Champions League. Despite these collective experiences, his choice of pronouns reveals a perception of detachment from Galicia, that football could perhaps reduce but not eradicate.

Carlos and Edgar represent the other side of the coin to Monica and Adam. They performed a role as anti-Deportivo Celta fans in London. Indeed, they expressed a sense of cultural difference between north and south Galicia that was far stronger than any participants born and raised in Galicia. '[Eng] Certainly in rural Pontevedra, [we have] that tradition of people having a proper sharp wind-up with each other,' Carlos said. 'I think the further north you go the less used they are to that.' He implied a fundamental distinction in how people interact with each other and experience humour. There was an element of wind-up to the comment itself. Carlos delivered the judgment with a smile. I interviewed Carlos and Edgar together, online. It is possible that the presence of the other sibling encouraged Carlos and Edgar to create a light-hearted narrative. The dynamic in a one-on-one interview may have differed. Yet I sensed that Carlos and Edgar genuinely believed that Galicians in the north and south

have a different sense of humour. They expressed their views of Deportivo with similar conviction. I asked what it was like, as Celta fans, to see Deportivo flourish from the mid-1990s. Carlos answered.

[Eng] Well you saw a lot more of them Johnny Foreigner tops [referring to Deportivo shirts] err [laughs] them non-Galician looking tops with the daft leather football on them, err you'd see a lot more of them and people would-in fact I dunno if you know but QPR for some reason took on Dépor as a secondary team, and QPR are up the road from where we grew up, so you'd see loads of QPR fans with Deportivo tops on. I'd be like 'what the fuck you doin' with that shit?' so I would get into them with it and explain to them the whole thing about the Turks and this that and the other you know.

I asked Carlos to elaborate. How exactly did he explain 'the whole thing about the Turks'?

So I would start with why they call us Portuguese, a-and I would use- it would all be based on the language so we speak our own language, which is their language as well but they choose not to speak it, er, that's the narrative whether or not it's true I dunno but that's what we're putting on it, and I'd be saying 'so they call us Portuguese because we're talking the language that we've given to the Portuguese to speak, so we call 'em Turks because basically they're Moors like the rest of Spain, that's why you've got bullfighting and the Alhambra and all that carry on because the Moors come and fucked you all up, whereas us we're pure- in Vigo we're pure, unsullied' [laughs]. So that's how I'd explain.

Again, it is important to note that Carlos delivered this speech with a mischief that suggested he did not entirely believe its content. The thrust of his narrative was similar to the performative ‘othering’ of the rival city by members of radical groups, as discussed in Chapter Four. Carlos presented Vigo as the cultural, linguistic, and even ethnic bastion of Galician identity, with close ties to Portugal rather than Spain. He playfully tarnished A Coruña, conversely, as un-Galician through association with symbols of Castilian or Andalusian Spanishness, such as bullfighting and Islamic architecture.<sup>406</sup> Even though Carlos articulated this contrast between Vigo and A Coruña in jest, his selection of exclusionary tropes demonstrates how deep-rooted the tendency to ‘other’ the rival city is both within Galicia, and in the diaspora. In both locations, football acted as an arena for the performance of competing visions of Galicia.

When Deportivo and Celta played European matches in the United Kingdom, the ‘local’ diasporan supporters often invested the occasion with different meaning from fellow supporters who had travelled from Galicia.<sup>407</sup> Participants born in the United Kingdom overwhelmingly embraced a dual Spanish-Galician identity. They referred to themselves as ‘Galician’ or ‘Spanish’ in a broadly interchangeable way. The football stadium was a space in which already faint lines between the two identities faded. When Adam, the Deportivo

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<sup>406</sup> Though Carlos did not list flamenco as a symbol of the Spanish nation present in A Coruña, his comment relates to a central thread in Sandi Holguín’s book *Flamenco Nation: The Construction of Spanish National Identity*. Holguín emphasises the role that foreign nations play in the construction and reaffirmation of national identity. She refers to this as a ‘feedback loop’. Romantic travel writers from France, Britain, and the United States told exotic tales of flamenco, which encouraged a nascent tourism industry to present flamenco as Andalucía and Andalucía as Spain. Over time flamenco became affixed to Spanish national identity and, in the minds of tourists, Spain came to occupy ‘a liminal space between European power and exotic other’ (p.148). Bullfighting and Islamic architecture also form part of this presentation of Andalucía as Spain.

<sup>407</sup> Since the 1990s Celta Vigo have played the following teams in European competition: Aston Villa, Liverpool, Celtic, Arsenal, Newcastle United, and Manchester United. Deportivo have played: Aston Villa, Liverpool, Newcastle United, Manchester United, Leeds United, and Arsenal.

supporter from Wales, recalled his trip to Highbury for the match against Arsenal, he mentioned the presence of 'Manolo with his drum'. This was a reference to 'Manolo, el del bombo' ['Manolo the drummer'], the most famous supporter of the Spain national team. Manolo, a septuagenarian recognisable by his black beret and drum, also supports Valencia. He had no reason to travel to London to support Deportivo (and would probably not have been welcome). It is highly likely that Adam misremembered his presence at the match. That Adam placed Manolo at Highbury reveals how he conflated footballing symbols of Spanishness and Galicianness. Football allowed him to connect with the homeland, but the homeland can mean Spain as well as Galicia.

For other participants, especially members of radical groups, the stadium was a space in which to assert and perform the distinction between Galicia and Spain. In 1999, the fanzine *Tropas de Breogán* – affiliated to Celtarras – published a review of matches against Aston Villa and Liverpool from the perspective of the fans who travelled. Titled 'Celtarras in England', the article lamented how Liverpool and Villa supporters conflated Spain and Galicia. 'You would not believe how difficult it was to explain to the English that we're Galician, not Spanish,' it read.<sup>408</sup> Carlos, a Deportivo supporter who travelled to various away games across Europe, recalled the tendency of diasporan fans to view the event as a Spanish experience.

[Gal] When Deportivo qualify for Europe, and start to play regularly in Europe, it was a shop window to show the world what Galician identity is about, so when we went on European away days it was a bit harder because there were a lot of Galician emigrants who felt Spanish, with their flags. We had problems in Paris, in London,

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<sup>408</sup> *Tropas de Breogán*, 16 (1999), p.23.

people with Spanish flags and well we didn't want them on show. Conflicts, you know.

For Carlos, displays of Spanishness diluted a performance of Galician identity to a British – and, through television coverage, global – audience. Celta supporters experienced the same conflicts. Sime, a member of Celtarras, expressed outrage when he saw a Spanish flag among the Celta supporters at Celtic Park in Glasgow. '[Gal] All of a sudden there's a Spanish flag in the middle and we went mad, for us that was something anti our team,' he said, 'and I remember the whole time I was just trying to get to that lad.' A vigilant steward kept Sime and his group away from the supporter with the flag. When they accosted the supporter at half time, it turned out that he was a student from Zaragoza who did not realise the provocative nature of his act. It is likely that Sime felt particularly sensitive to this display of Spanishness given the location. As discussed in Chapter Six, Celta fans felt a strong sub-state kinship with Celtic. They would have been eager to perform a united display of Galicianness in Celtic's stadium, above all others.

Diasporan participants conceived of fandom from afar in different ways. For Monica and Adam a sense of placelessness encouraged a perception of common experience that outweighed the enmity between clubs or cities. Carlos and Edgar located their Galicianness in a specific, rural, Pontevedra province context, which they presented as oppositional to A Coruña and Deportivo. 'Home' does not always mean Galicia. It could refer to a particular region, or even a small town or village. It could refer to Spain. For all the participants featured in this section, football affirmed a sense of connection to 'home', whatever that meant to them.

## Internal migration

At the start of every interview I asked the participant about their family. I asked where their parents and grandparents came from, what they did for a living, and so on. My intention was to ease the participant into the interview with a conversation around a subject they knew intimately. This approach had an unintended consequence. It revealed a shared perception of internal migration as a ubiquitous experience. The vast majority of participants told a family story of migration from the *aldea* [‘village’] to the city in search of better opportunities. These participants used similar language of dislocation – or suspension between ‘here’ and ‘there’ – to diasporans in the United Kingdom. These anecdotal narratives of movement fit broader patterns of demographic change. Galicia has experienced a depopulation of rural areas – particularly in the provinces of Ourense and Lugo – and a concentration of the population along the AP-9 motorway corridor that runs from Ferrol in the north to Vigo in the south.<sup>409</sup>

Despite its demographic salience, and the ruralist tendency of *galeguismo* to locate the essence of Galicia in the *terra* [‘land’], internal migration does not occupy as prominent a role as external emigration in the Galician imaginary. This is probably, in large part, because the depopulation of rural areas is not a uniquely Galician phenomenon. Indeed, a political party called ‘España Vacía’ [‘Empty Spain’] formed in 2021 in response to the falling population in Spain’s interior provinces, particularly in the region of Castilla y León. In the first part of this section I establish how participants perceived internal migration as a universal experience. In the second part I explore how football acted as an *‘elemento*

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<sup>409</sup> For a comprehensive, quantitative study of demographic change in Galicia throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see J.A. Aldrey Vázquez, *A poboación galega, 1900–2005* (Vigo, 2006).

*aglutinador* [‘a unifying element’] for migrants – and the children of migrants – to Galician cities.

*‘Todo o mundo ten aldea’*

Anxo holds his hood between thumb and forefinger and pulls it up to cover his ears. It is November in Ourense and just warm enough to do our interview outside in Praza de Saco e Arce, a small, irregular square with one bar in the corner. Anxo is a tattoo artist. He works all over Europe but Galicia is present in his designs, many of which depict *labregos* and *labregas*, the men and women who worked the land. ‘[Gal] You know that here in Galiza everyone has a village,’ he says. In this brief statement-cum-question, Anxo summarised a thread that ran through almost every interview. Participants perceived that every Galician ‘has’ a village to which they feel a deep connection, even if they – or their family – have long since migrated to the city. Often it is the village where their parents or grandparents grew up and, in some cases, still live. Anxo’s use of the verb ‘*ter*’ [‘to have’] is significant. The village is not simply a place one visits, it is a thing – a feeling – that one possesses. This implies a permanence of connection that does not depend on presence. One could never visit the *aldea*, or visit seldom. Yet in their mind and in the minds of others, it would still be their *aldea*. I asked Filipe, a Celta supporter in his 30s from Vigo, if all his family were from the city.

[Gal] Yeah, I’m a rare breed. Everyone has a village in Ourense or in the interior, it’s their parents’ or grandparents’, but I can say that on both sides of my family- one side from Matamá, the parish, the other from San Andrés, I’m 100 per cent *vigués*, I’m a strange case, yeah.



Filipe's maternal and paternal families both come from Vigo. Yet he recognised that his case is exceptional. I had asked Filipe about his own family. He responded by talking about other families, the vast majority that have an *aldea* outside Vigo. Filipe viewed internal migration as a ubiquitous experience more representative than his own. Most participants presented internal migration as a fundamental part of their family history. This applied across Galicia. Participants from all major urban areas – A Coruña, Ferrol, Santiago, Lugo, Vigo, Ourense, Pontevedra, and Vilagarcía de Arousa – described how their forebears had left agrarian, rural lives in search of more remunerative and less back-breaking work. I asked Fran, a Racing Ferrol supporter in his 40s, who grew up just outside the naval city, if his family were from the area.

[Gal] No, no. Well my family is very much the standard so to speak, very normal erm, as an industrial area it was like an attractive area. So both my paternal and maternal families came from the countryside, from the interior of A Coruña province. On my father's side they're from an *aldea* in Arzúa and on my mother's side from Monfero, which isn't far away, but it's a different world from a social and economic point of view.

Like Filipe, to whom I directed the same question, Fran situated his family's migration within the context of the 'standard' Galician experience. While Filipe saw his background as exceptional, Fran recognised that his conformed. It is interesting that Fran referred to his maternal *aldea*, in Monfero, as 'a different world' in social and economic terms, despite its relative proximity to Ferrol (some 20 miles). Carlos, the Deportivo supporter who noticed the tension between diasporan and 'homeland' supporters, used the word '*emigraron*' ['they emigrated'] to refer to his parents' move from a village in Lugo province to A Coruña

in the early 1970s. 'To emigrate' is understood to mean migration to another country.

Carlos's use of the verb implies a perception of distance between 'here' and 'there'. People can migrate a short distance but feel a long way from home.

Migration from rural to urban areas raised questions about belonging and the emotional location of 'home'. A few participants told me that '*Vigo está chea de ourensáns*' ['Vigo is full of people from Ourense']. This comment referred to people born in Vigo who 'had' an *aldea* in Ourense province. In the eyes of these participants, to be born and raised in Vigo was not sufficient to be considered *vigués*. One can live an entire life in a city, yet be defined by the village they visit every other weekend.<sup>410</sup> Fiz, a Compostela supporter in his 40s from Santiago, spoke about the inhabitants of his city in a similarly paradoxical way. He explained to me why relatively few people from the city support its football club.

[Gal] Do you know why? Because loads of people from Santiago aren't actually from Santiago. At the weekends they go to their *aldeas*, they do their own thing, I dunno. It's worth thinking about. [...] In Santiago you'll be hard pushed to find people who are the third, fourth generation from Santiago.

This response invites further questions. What is the criteria to be 'from' somewhere? How many generations does one need to trace up the family tree? It is unsurprising that internal

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<sup>410</sup> This is also a matter of self-identification. Some people born in Vigo to parents who migrated from the *aldea* do not identify as wholly *vigués*. In March 2023 the actor María Vázquez responded on Instagram to an article in the newspaper *La Voz de Galicia* that described her as 'viguesa'. 'I was born in Vigo (the daughter of emigrants, like so many)', she wrote. '[...] But with family from Carballedo and Chantada. So my origins and my heart is between A Barrela (Carballedo) and Belesar (Chantada).' Vázquez added that she studied in Ourense and lives in Santiago. The fact that Vázquez deemed it necessary to clarify her identity reveals an appreciation, shared by many participants, for the multiplicity of identity.

migrants felt – and feel – a sense of placelessness. Not only did they have to negotiate a social, linguistic, and economic transition, but also pursue an unattainable assimilation.

Rodri is a Deportivo supporter in his 40s. He was the first member of his family in generations to be born outside Fisterra. His parents moved to A Coruña in the early 1970s for better work conditions. ‘They were among the thousands and thousands of people who leave the *aldeas* and live in the cities,’ he mused. The linguistic change was clear to Rodri. His parents conversed in Galician but raised the children in Spanish, a common theme. As I explain in Chapter Eight, to speak Galician in the city was to invite association with poverty and a lack of sophistication. To speak Spanish was to display social aspiration. Rodri appreciated the difficulty of the transition from Fisterra to A Coruña.

[Gal] It's really important this matter of how involuntarily, and for my parents, this move, this emigration from rural areas or the *aldea*, the towns, to the city, brings with it a process of adaptation that's far more traumatic than it seems. Because nobody spoke about it, right.

Rodri related a perception of suffering in silence. Everyone felt the same dislocation. Nobody spoke about it. He still feels a strong connection to Fisterra. A few months after our interview, I saw Rodri at the final of the Copa da Costa, an amateur competition contested by teams from the Costa da Morte. Dressed in the green of SD Fisterra, he supported the team with a fierce intensity of emotion.

[Gal] I never lost that connection with Fisterra so to speak, because I still spent four months of the year there, it was something pretty- it was a double life, but it was strange, it was strange, you don't realise as a kid but it does cause those conflicted

identities, in that sense Deportivo was the glue that held together a lot of very lost identities, like in my case, in my case like in lots of *barrios* of A Coruña, maybe less so in Monte Alto, but in the *barrios* of A Coruña, I lived over there, but most people come from the *aldea*, yeah, that's clear. But it isn't so clear if that's something to be discussed, in school I barely spoke about when I went to Fisterra, it's something- without thinking about it obviously, you're a kid, you don't think.

Rodri presented football in general and Deportivo in particular as the glue that united young internal migrants like himself. They had experienced a 'double life' and an 'identity conflict', even if their parents had migrated a short distance. Participants viewed migration from the *aldea* to the cities as a ubiquitous journey often defined by trauma and an absence of belonging. Even after decades in the city, others still associated migrants with the *aldea* they had left behind. Football provided a means to identify with the new 'home'.

### Football as an '*elemento aglutinador*'

Football fandom allowed internal migrants to participate in communities with strong connections to place. Participants presented A Coruña in the 1980s as a fractured city that relied on Deportivo to forge a shared identity. Carlos, the Deportivo supporter whose parents had 'emigrated' from Lugo province in the early 1970s, believed the football club gained importance in a city of migrants

[Gal] Deportivo also allowed a lot of people who weren't from the city to feel part of the city. In this *barrio* my dad was from Lugo, the potato guy was from Coristanco, the guy from the fishmonger was from Malpica, everyone was from elsewhere. It was

a *barrio* of Galician immigrants, from Galician towns. So those people sometimes, to be part of the dynamic of the city, to integrate, used Deportivo.

Carlos's language invoked Stuart Hall's idea that cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' as much as 'being'. It is not static. Carlos perceived that Deportivo allowed people like himself – born in the city but with a strong connection to the *aldea* – to 'become' *coruñés* through the ritual performance, week after week, of a collective identity formed around a prominent civic institution. Carlos believed this process to be especially crucial given the divisions within the city.

[Gal] Back then Deportivo was like, how to put it, it was like a unifying element for different identities that came from outside the city, which came together in Riazor. And for us, for those of us who were born in the city, in the 80s there were big splits between *barrios*, there were- it was really territorial, in Coruña in the 80s there were fights between the Monte Alto lot and the Labañou lot, the Katanga lot and the Elviña lot, the Monelos lot with- then later those people came together in the stadium, in fact back in the early days of the Blues a lot of *barrio* sub-sections, you had Fossa Herculina who were from Monte Alto, the Sección Elviña were from Elviña, it was all like that in sub-sections, people from the *barrios* who then came together in Riazor. So Deportivo had that thing of being able to unite people who were maybe from lower social classes, so to speak, people who had come from the *aldeas*, working people, humble people, who found in Deportivo a way to feel proud of their city.

Rodri, who spoke of the 'double identity' between A Coruña and Fisterra, also felt that Deportivo allowed him to find a place.

[Gal] Let's say that it's the number one reason for integration, as in Deportivo is definitely the most direct way, the easiest way, to find your place in the city. [...]

When I started going alone to the football, in 86 or 87, 86 I think it was, absolutely loads of Galician was spoken on the terrace at Riazor, absolutely loads. People who were my age and that. A load who came from Perillo and round there, and that did surprise me, and that grows, you notice that a lot of people too, from here, from Coruña, felt really- yeah, they had that pride to be *coruñés* in that way, that allowed them to combine all those different identities.

For Rodri, then, the terrace at Riazor was a space in which he could negotiate a simultaneous attachment to A Coruña and his familial hometown. The linguistic element was a significant part of this. Rodri saw people of his age speaking Galician in an urban environment, which surprised him. This surprise reveals the broader association of the Galician language with rurality, one of the key arguments of Chapter Eight. Perhaps, as a noticeably Galician-speaking environment, the terrace occupied a symbolic space between urban and rural that appealed to Rodri and Carlos.<sup>411</sup> A collective performance of support for Deportivo allowed them to celebrate their widespread roots across Galicia rather than internalise them.

It is notable that both of these participants were members of Riazor Blues as adolescents. And both emphasised the unifying effect of Deportivo with greater vehemence than participants who were not part of radical groups. This may be a question of age. Carlos,

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<sup>411</sup> On a similar note, internal migrant supporters could easily identify with Fran, who played over 500 matches for Deportivo between 1988 and 2005. Not only was Fran the most prominent Galician player, he was an internal migrant himself. As Rodri said: '[Fran is] a homegrown lad, from Ribeira as well, not a pure *coruñés* as it were, a *coruñés* who came from the *aldea*.'

Rodri, and many of the fellow radical supporters, were born in A Coruña in the early 1970s to parents who had recently arrived from the *aldeas*. They presented a city fraught by division, in which networks of internal immigrants from the same area of rural Galicia tended to live in the same neighbourhoods of the city. The 'ultra' subculture was nascent and alluring. It is easy to see how in the specific context of A Coruña in the late 1980s, Riazor Blues appealed to teenagers like Rodri and Carlos, who found in radical fandom the stage to perform a sense of belonging that they had yearned for.

Vigo experienced a similar rate of internal migration to A Coruña during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yet participants from Vigo did not talk about Celta in the same way as those from A Coruña talked about Deportivo. Those from Vigo did not present a divided city. Nor did they associate particular areas of the city with migration from certain areas of Galicia. In short, they did not present Vigo as a city that needed its football club to act as a unifying institution. Yet Celta still allowed people to become *vigués*. When Celta score a goal, the supporter does not care if the stranger they are hugging is from Vigo, because in that moment their support for Celta is the salient identity. Bixu is a Celta supporter in his 30s from A Guarda. I asked how much of a connection he felt to Vigo as a city.

[Gal] I feel *vigués*, I feel *vigués* thanks exclusively to Celta. It's not because my aunts and uncles or friends live there, a lot of them went to Vigo for work and settled down there, but yeah, I feel like just another *vigués* thanks exclusively to Celta, absolutely.

Alejandro, a Celta supporter in his 40s, is from Vigo but has lived in Barcelona for almost two decades. He expressed a similar sentiment of 'becoming' to Bixu when I asked if his family were from Vigo.

[Esp] Erm no, well my mum- my mum was born in Soria, but from a young age, yeah, my mum's family- because my uncle as well, they're from Soria but they moved to Vigo when they were really young. When I ask my mum whether she feels Galician, *viguesa*, or *soriana* she says *viguesa*, even though she wasn't born- the same with my uncle, my uncle's a massive Celta fan, always has been, but he wasn't born in Vigo.

The common thread is that football clubs helped internal migrants to urban areas to develop a sense of civic pride and belonging. Participants emphasised this 'unifying effect' in the case of A Coruña, where Deportivo allowed young men like Rodri and Carlos to convert a sense of transience into belonging. The club acted as a magnet for disparate elements within the city and allowed participants to negotiate and articulate their fluid sense of 'home'.

## Conclusion

Migration is fundamental to both the lived experience of Galicians and the imagination of Galician identity. In the first section of this chapter, I explored how diasporan participants in the United Kingdom experienced a sense of placelessness. Other people saw them as neither Galician, nor British. They were outsiders everywhere. As Carlos and Edgar, the Galician-Bolivian brothers from Fulham put it, they were 'Johnny Foreigners' wherever they went. Yet participants emphasised the fluidity of diasporan identity. Their narratives bore out the argument of Stuart Hall's essay on diaspora, that cultural identity is not static but involved a constant process of 'becoming' (and unbecoming).

Galician diasporans in the United Kingdom contested the symbolic role of football. On one hand, participants such as Monica felt that emigration created a shared feeling of *morriña* (nostalgia or homesickness) that overpowered the enmity between A Coruña and Vigo,



Deportivo and Celta. On the other hand, Carlos and Edgar reproduced negative tropes about A Coruña with a vehemence – and, it should be said, a touch of humour – that was more pronounced than any participant born and raised in Galicia. Football allowed them to participate from afar in the tit-for-tat, ritual performance of rivalry with the ‘other’ city. In both cases, football allowed diasporan participants to imagine themselves as members of the homeland through an emotional connection – and the performance of connection – to civic institutions rooted in Galicia. Clearly, this imagination was not always harmonious with ‘homeland’ supporters. Participants affiliated to radical groups deemed diasporan supporters to be more comfortable in the performance of a dual Spanish-Galician(-British) identity, which clashed with their vision of the terrace as a space for the performance of a staunchly Galician identity.

Internal migration may be less prominent than emigration in the Galician imaginary, but participants conceived of rural-to-urban movement as a ubiquitous experience, pithily summarised by Anxo’s assertion that *‘todo o mundo ten aldea’* [‘everyone has a village’]. Crucially, participants appreciated the potential trauma associated with migration from rural to urban areas. This perspective implicitly reinforces the idea that the soul of Galicia is located in the rural. To leave the rural heartland, whether for A Coruña or London, is to leave behind the ‘true’ Galicia. Even if the distance travelled was short, the linguistic and social changes produced a sense of dislocation comparable to that experienced by emigrants. As a methodological note, the use of oral history was crucial to this engagement with narratives of internal migration. By encouraging the participant to lead the conversation from a starting point of a ‘loosener’ question about their family, the interviews produced rich insights that would not have emerged within a more rigid, researcher-led approach.

For participants born in A Coruña to parents who had recently migrated from the countryside, Deportivo acted as a unifying element that allowed them to 'become' *coruñés* through the repeated, ritual performance of civic (and Galician) identity. It is curious that Celta supporters of a similar age and radical profile did not discuss their club in the same terms. After all, Vigo has the same history of receiving internal migrants. Perhaps Vigo did not require its football club to act as a unifying element, because the city had not experienced an episode of collective indignation and outcry comparable to the removal of capital status from A Coruña (see Chapter Seven). Whether in the United Kingdom or urban Galicia, football fandom allowed participants to negotiate conflicting relationships with 'home', 'here' and 'there' by nurturing a sense of belonging that provided emotional roots in a transient existence.

# Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated how football allowed participants to negotiate and (re)articulate civic, Galician, and Spanish identities, which often overlapped or competed with one another. In this context, football in Galicia is a malleable vehicle for multiple identities; it simultaneously permits the ‘othering’ of the perceived adversary, as well as the performance of kinship with the perceived ally. Throughout this thesis I have demonstrated how the participants saw football, in different ways, as capable of effecting social and political change. In what follows, I set out the main conclusions from this investigation, structured broadly around the research questions.

The first conclusion to draw is that the rivalry between Deportivo and Celta did not impede a sense of shared Galicianness. Participants held deeply negative views about the ‘other’ team. They engaged in the tit-for-tat banter that inevitably arises when a team from one city faces that of the rival city. Yet participants still conceived of the rival club – and its supporters – as members of the same imagined community of Galicians. *Son uns fillos de puta, pero son os nosos fillos de puta*; they’re bastards, but they’re our bastards. Animosity was not a significant impediment to commonality. Derby matches between Deportivo and Celta (and Compostela when they were in the same division) represented nation-building events that were volatile and confrontational, but unifying nonetheless. This statement runs against the grain of much Galicianist discourse, which holds that localism is detrimental to the wellbeing of Galicia as a whole. Most participants showed an intuitive understanding of localism as politically corrosive, but permissible – or even desirable – as part of a footballing

rivalry. They were able to distinguish between these two sides of localism. The football supporter who shouts '*puta Coruña*' or '*puto Celta*' on the terrace has not necessarily been manipulated. They are not unconsciously manifesting oppositional localist discourse, or even necessarily fiercely localist. Rather, they view the football stadium as a site in which such sentiments can be expressed, perhaps playfully, sometimes tribally.

There is a temporal, episodic element to the question of localism and shared Galicianness. Several participants composed narratives united by a sense of personal progress or enlightenment, in which they became more conscious of their common ground with the Galician 'other' as they matured. These participants recognised that as adolescents, they embraced the idea that the rival city was the 'enemy', often without much exposure to that city. With the passage of time they gained a more holistic perspective. They still playfully belittled the rival city, especially in the stadium, but this antagonism was underpinned by a belief that Galicians have far more in common than that which divides them. Participants who recalled this personal transition from a localist to an holistic perspective often ordered their life in an episodic way. That is, they discussed their former self as if it were a different person. I did not sense that this was an attempt to renounce their former self or avoid responsibility, but a way to make sense of a personal journey.

As a second point on the rivalry, the prevalence of the *traballadores versus señoritos* trope in participant narratives reveals how broader civic tensions bled into football. It would be inaccurate, though, to present football as merely 'reflecting' those tensions. Football refracted tensions. It changed them, sent them in different directions. That is, the rivalry between Deportivo and Celta actively shaped the nature of the rivalry between A Coruña and Vigo. For instance, radical groups formed in the late 1980s sought to 'other' the rival city

and present it as somehow less Galician. The construct of A Coruña as 'Turkish' and Vigo as 'Portuguese' was a reinterpretation of the civic rivalry that spread from the terraces and the fanzines into wider society.

This example of the role of radical fandom is a segue into a broader observation: it is necessary to distinguish between participants who form(ed) part of radical groups, and those who did not. The most striking radicalism of the former was not in the intensity of their support, nor the coherence of their aesthetic performance in the stadium. As I conducted the fieldwork it became clear that these participants were radical in terms of the thought they had given to the political and social role of football in the articulation of Galicia. I left interviews with the perception that participants from Celtarras, Riazor Blues, Fende Testas, and other smaller radical groups, had already reflected at length on the questions and assumptions that underpin this research. Consequently, they delivered coherent and reflective narratives that felt almost rehearsed, polished by repetition in bars and fanzines. There are two interrelated explanations for this form of radicalism. On one hand, people with a pre-existing interest in football as an expression of Galician identity were likely to participate in this study, which explores that subject. On the other hand, it is clear that through membership of radical groups, young men became consciously proud to be Galician and perform (a masculine) Galicianness.

It is important to consider this distinction between radical and 'non-radical' supporters in respect of the second main conclusion. While footballing allegiances interacted with Galician-Spanish dual identity in deeply personal ways, it is possible to discern two broad patterns in participant narratives. First, participants from radical groups performatively rejected the notion of dual identity. They tended to view themselves as exclusively Galician,

in a way that could not coexist with Spanishness. Indeed, these participants presented Galicianness and Spanishness as oppositional, as mutually exclusive, as if to consider oneself Spanish implied a renunciation of Galicianness. The notion of performance is central to this. Radical participants performed a Galician identity in opposition to Spain both in the actions they recalled in Chapter Four – the removing of a Spanish flag from Balaídos or the ‘L’ from a La Coruña sign – and again in the interview itself.

Participants who were not members of radical groups form the second, very broad, group. Many of these participants presented their support of a Galician team as a vindication of Galicia. They were proud to support the ‘local’ team. They felt the local team represented them. But there was not such an oppositional, conflictive tone. For instance, many participants saw no contradiction in the supporting of a Galician club and the Spanish national team, and possibly never reflected on the existence of a potential contradiction. To them, support of, say, Celta and Spain, was a perfectly normal and logical expression of the dual Galician-Spanish identity that radical participants emphatically rejected.

Football did exaggerate resentment of and unease toward Madrid. Participants reproduced the deep-rooted idea that Real Madrid represents a symbol of Francoism and political centralism. Some even located the high level of support for Real Madrid within Galicia as a manifestation of internal colonialism. These participants invested matches between Deportivo or Celta and Real Madrid with meaning that went beyond a mere sporting rivalry. Indeed, it went beyond a social, political, or cultural rivalry. These matches were an opportunity to perform an act of anti-colonialism. It should be noted that although most participants did not view these matches in such overtly political terms, many did resent Real Madrid as a symbol of ‘modern’ football that has become detached from its roots.

While football exaggerated unease with Madrid, it facilitated a strong kinship with other communities. Several Celta Vigo-supporting participants had fond memories of matches against Glasgow Celtic as symbolic of a pan-Celtic brotherhood with Scotland and Ireland. Across the interviews there was a clear sense of connection with the Basque Country, and a perception of football as a means to consolidate and perform this connection. Though participants did not extend the same warmth to Catalonia, they did tend to group the Basque Country and Catalonia together when lamenting how Galicia does not express its national identity with the conviction or confidence of its Iberian neighbours. In this respect football not only channelled resentment and allegiance toward other regions and communities, but also unease with how Galician people express their own identity.

Oral history was an appropriate and valuable approach for this research, yet it did present challenges. I shall reflect first on its strengths as a methodology. Football and nation share a tendency for one discourse or version of the past to dominate. Just as the nation curates its own mythology and invented traditions over time, football supporters invoke collective heroes and villains to make sense of past and present. The supporter who mutters 'typical Celta' is, often unconsciously, expressing a shared and accepted understanding of what it means to support that club, with fears and assumptions moulded by past events. Oral history is so valuable to a study of football and nation because it emphasises the importance of the individual testimony where the collective version dominates. Furthermore, oral history permits an analysis of the cultural and social discourses that the individual selects to make sense of their own experience.

The data was richest when discrepancies emerged between the participant's testimony and the actual version of events. For instance, in Chapter Five, one participant recalled that

visiting Celta supporters were effectively barred from attending the first derby in A Coruña after the *Prestige* oil disaster. This was not quite the case. There was a visible – and audible – Celta contingent in Riazor. Yet the value of this testimony does not lie in its adherence to the facts but in its divergence from them. The participant was articulating a common Galician nationalist theory that conservative political interests sought – and seek – to maintain Galicia entrenched in localist divisions. He invested the ‘*Prestige* derby’ with this layer of meaning. Such insights into the interaction between shared and individual memory were possible because oral history gives participants the opportunity to compose and perform their own narrative in a supportive environment. And, crucially, oral history embraces the subjectivities within these narratives.

There were also methodological challenges. There was a tension between the ‘life story’ approach of the oral history interview, and an investigation with a clear focus on Galician identity and football. Rather than discussing their lives beyond football, participants saw the title of this thesis and spoke at length on that subject, or exaggerated their fanaticism. In some cases I allowed the participant to take the conversation in this direction. For instance, one participant spoke animatedly about the virtues of Basque football and society before we had even ordered our coffees. This digression parted from my loose, pre-conceived interview structure, but it revealed much about how the participant articulated his own Galicianness through a comparison with the Basque Country. I encouraged him to continue. In other cases, especially in the early stages of interviews, I steered the participant back toward the life story with, for example, a question about family.

It was tempting to give undue prominence to participants who were particularly articulate or reflective. That is, to include excerpts from their interviews more than those of other



participants. Of course, the narratives of participants who had little to say reveal just as much about the subject in question. Their testimonies serve as a reminder that for many people, questions of identity and belonging are peripheral or taken for granted. We often give little active thought to our identities. As valuable as these testimonies are, the absence of an opinion is difficult to capture in a thesis. I sought to mitigate this issue by advocating for the views – or ambivalence – of participants who may not feature heavily in the thesis, but who informed my overall approach and understanding. This reflection leads to the next section of this conclusion, on what is absent from this thesis.

## Silences

Silence can reveal as much as speech. It is interesting to reflect briefly on what participants did not commit to memory, the gaps in their narratives. This may break the convention of not introducing new material in the conclusion, but it is a valuable exercise given memory and forgetting run throughout the thesis as twin concepts. The oral historian must not overlook what goes unsaid.

On 8 October 2003, Manuel Ríos Suárez, a 31-year-old Deportivo supporter, was attacked outside Compostela's San Lázaro stadium. In the build-up to a Copa del Rey match between Compostela and Deportivo, members of Riazor Blues were intimidating Compostela supporters. When Manuel Ríos intervened, one of the aggressors kicked him in the stomach. Paramedics attended the scene but Ríos died before he arrived at the local hospital in Santiago. A member of Los Suaves, a sub-group within Riazor Blues, handed himself into the police. Riazor Blues disbanded the following day, only to reform under the same name shortly after. Carles Viñas opens the introduction of his comprehensive book, *Ultras: Los*

*radicales del fútbol español* [‘Ultras: The radicals of Spanish football’], with the tragic story of Manuel Ríos.<sup>412</sup> Yet none of the participants mentioned his death, or the temporary dissolution of Riazor Blues that it provoked. The response to this traumatic event was a form of collective amnesia. I did not necessarily expect participants who were members of Riazor Blues to discuss the incident. It did surprise me, though, that rival supporters did not mention it. Participants who had formed part of Celtarras discussed the alleged ideological incoherence of Riazor Blues, but not an act of violence – with tragic consequences – by one of its members. This reveals two things. First, the importance that radical supporters attach to the performance of ideological coherence, a main argument of Chapter Four. Second, how many participants ordered and made sense of their life in an episodic way, with the implicit idea that they are a different self to the one whose actions and feelings they recall.

As a further observation, I was struck by how few participants viewed football as relevant to the conservation and promotion of the Galician language. As I discuss in Chapter Eight, participants lamented the denigration of *galego*. They presented the language as a fundamental, quotidian element of Galician identity. Many of the same participants also held the conviction that football can provoke political and social change. But they did not combine these two convictions to present football, and football clubs, as an institutional tool to change attitudes to – and use of – *galego*.

## Further research

I see two directions in which future scholars could develop the ideas I have presented in this thesis. The first relates to internal migration within Galicia, from rural to urban areas. I was

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<sup>412</sup> Viñas, *Ultras*, pp.25–27.

surprised by how many participants had experienced this migratory phenomenon, either personally or through their parents. Indeed, only a handful of participants had no experience of *aldea to cidade* migration. Despite the ubiquity of internal migration, and the perception that it invokes a sense of dislocation and placelessness, academic scholarship and popular literature focusses overwhelmingly on emigration to the Americas and Europe. Future research could explore the lived experience of internal migration in Galicia. How and to what extent does migration lead to this sense of social and linguistic dislocation, even when the distances travelled are short? Such a study would illuminate a migratory experience that, according to many participants in this study, Galicians tend to internalise or suffer in silence. It would also enrich our understanding of a current demographic trend, as Galicians continue to vacate rural areas and gravitate toward the Atlantic axis that runs from Ferrol to Vigo.

The second is to investigate how football allows diasporans to imagine themselves as part of an imagined community with roots in the homeland. In Chapter Nine I focussed on the Galician diaspora in the United Kingdom. A comparative study of the emigrant experience in Argentina or Switzerland would develop the idea that football permits 'universal' elements of belonging, and address the absence of sport as a means of collective identification in the literature on Galician emigration. In the case of Argentina, for example, enough time has passed since the wave of Galician emigration in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to explore generational attitudes to the homeland through football. How do second generation Galician immigrants in Argentina express a sense of Galician identity compared to third generation immigrants? What does this reveal about the role of football in the retention of connections with 'home'?

As a musing rather than a call for further research, it would be fascinating to read the conclusions of a similar oral history investigation to this one, conducted in 2040 or 2050. The golden era of Galician football came at a cost. As I write in the summer of 2023, Deportivo wallow in the third tier of Spanish football for a fourth consecutive season. Celta only survived in the *primera división* by the barest of margins. Compostela endured financial chaos and reformation in the 2000s and have since risen to the fourth tier. Racing Ferrol, promoted to the *segunda división* in 2023, are probably the only contented fanbase. How will Galician supporters reflect on this fallow period? How does footballing allegiance interact with Galician identity in the bad times? My sense is that the expression of Galicianness through football becomes more prominent in the absence of success. While the trophy cabinet gathers dust, the fan seeks solace in the conviction that to support the 'local' team is to participate in a more authentic form of fandom, in which the club not only represents the city, but Galicia as well. Hardship often provokes deeper reflection than glory.

In July 2023 the opportunity arose to conduct one final interview, which I did not have time to include in this thesis. Along with two fellow researchers, I interviewed Augusto César Lendoiro, the president of Deportivo from 1988 to 2014 and a former Partido Popular politician. Lendoiro summoned us to the mezzanine floor of a plush hotel in A Coruña, all sea views and soft edges. During a 90-minute interview, Lendoiro discussed and embodied the contradictions and nuances that permeate this thesis. We conducted pleasantries and introductions in Galician. One of my colleagues led the first section of the interview in Galician. Lendoiro responded in the same language. Then it was my turn. I also asked questions in Galician. Yet Lendoiro responded in Spanish, probably an unconscious response to conversation with a foreigner, and then continued in Spanish for the final part of the

interview with my other Galician-speaking colleague. A captive audience seemed to invigorate the 78-year-old Lendoiro. He recalled his own experience of internal migration, as an infant, from Corcubión to A Coruña. He launched into anecdotes about the radical group Riazor Blues, derbies with Celta, and the importance of Deportivo matches in England and Germany for diasporan supporters. When I asked about the *Irmandiña*, the Galician national team, he talked about the contribution of Galician footballers to the Spanish national team. One interview captured the complicated, multi-layered identities that make Galicia – and football in Galicia – such compelling subjects. There are endless angles of approach. Narrow questions about fandom can produce wide-ranging discussions that find an echo far beyond this corner of the Iberian peninsula.

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### **Fanzines**

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