THE EUROPEAN PUZZLE

The Political Structuring of Cultural Identities at a Time of Transition

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Chapter 7

Through the Looking Glass of Football

Christian Bromberger

Having first surfaced in the English public schools[1] of the middle of the nineteenth century (and officially recognised since 1863),[2] the sport of football not only was born and nurtured in Europe, but also came to encapsulate the values and contradictions of the European industrial societies that were its cradle.[3] The massive expansion of modern sport, with its competitive calendars and autonomous organisation, was inextricably linked to the emergence of 'free time' and a 'civilisation of leisure' amongst the popular classes. It was in this context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that a game which was originally played by the aristocratic elite spread rapidly in the new industrial cities. In just 20 years, this sport would become one of the most prominent symbols of British working-class culture with the same resonance as the 'pub', 'fish and chips' and the 'flat cap'. Football clubs sprang up from a variety of sources such as the local parish (Aston Villa and Everton, for example) or enterprises (West Ham and Arsenal) as part of a movement of social reform designed to get young workers off the street or to prevent them from indulging in less salubrious pastimes, while promoting a sense of solidarity.

A striking symbol of this swift popularisation of the sport was provided by the victory of the working-class club of Blackburn Olympic over the aristocratic Old Etonians in the FA Cup final of 1883, a competition first held in 1871. Once established as the people's game, football would quickly come to represent a series of values very different from those of its initial promoters in the public schools. The values of fair play, of an honourable defeat and of playing for the pleasure of the game that were seen as fundamental for an amateur

Notes for this chapter are located on page 139.

creed were replaced by the spirit of competition and professionalism (the first professional championship was held in England in 1888), accompanied by the passionate and turbulent support of the fans of 'our club'. Thereafter football would be intrinsically linked to the industrial milieu, to the town and to the sociability of local pubs and bars where matches were dissected, victories celebrated and defeats drowned in beer amidst the exaltation of local patriotism.

The diffusion of football over the European Continent would follow a pattern similar to that which we have just sketched out for England. An amateur sport that was initially the pastime of aristocrats or the upper bourgeoisie would be transformed into a popular sport, a point of identification for the working-class population of a factory, a district or an industrial town. The employees of British maritime or commercial companies were the pioneers of this rapid spread of the game, which first took root in the northern ports with the founding of Havre Athletic Club in 1872, Antwerp FC of Belgium in 1880 and Hamburger SV in 1887. The new sport was soon to appear in the more distant ports of Southern Europe with the creation of Panionos of Athens in 1890, the Genoa Cricket and Athletic Club (the future FC Genoa) in 1893, the Naples Football and Cricket Club (soon to be Calcio Napoli) in 1904 and finally Athletic Club Bilbao in 1898. Students – whether English in European colleges and universities or their European counterparts in England – would also play an important role in the diffusion of the game. Thus, the famous Juventus of Turin was formed in 1897 as a cosmopolitan student club, while Olympique Marseille was founded in 1899 by the young men of the local bourgeoisie who had completed their studies in Great Britain. The presence in Switzerland of large numbers of wealthy young Englishmen in private educational institutions helps to explain the relatively precocious development of football in that country with the emergence of FC Saint Gall in 1879 and the Grasshoppers of Zurich in 1880. The Swiss themselves would contribute to the further spread of the sport at the beginning of the twentieth century, with FC Barcelona being established by Hans Gamper. According to one of the many local legends regarding the birth of the club, Gamper gave the colours (blue and dark red) of his home canton to the team's jersey. Through the intervention of students and the managers of British enterprises, football was soon established in the cities of the Austro-Hungarian empire (Ujpesti of Budapest in 1885, and Slavia and Sparta Prague in 1893). Likewise, in the Russian empire the Morozov Cotton Mills team, a club that after the revolution would become known as Dynamo Moscow, first saw the light of day in 1887.

Very often, football was originally a symbol of modernity and was adopted by the middle classes who appreciated the novelties spawned by the nation known in the nineteenth century as a country of innovation and leisure – that is, England. As the game became popularised, local industries, anxious to organise the leisure time of their workers, associated their names and their wealth with the growth of football clubs. In 1923, Juventus of Turin became the team of Fiat, led by the director of the enterprise, Edouardo Agnelli. In 1930, Peugeot

founded FC Sochaux, the first club in France to be composed of professional players, who would later be known as *les lionceaux* (lion cubs) in reference to the emblem of that make of automobile. As for RC Lens, it was managed from 1934 to 1969 by the Société des Mines, with the club stadium situated in the middle of the mine shafts, between the first and ninth pits, and named Bollaert after the then president of the company. In Holland, FC Eindhoven was linked by contract to Philips, while the German team Bayer Leverkusen was named after the chemical and pharmaceutical company which supported it. It would be easy to multiply these examples of ties between football and industry, a connection that appears clearly not only in the major clubs of the early twentieth century but also those of today. In contemporary Germany, nearly all of the principal clubs are concentrated in the Ruhr, and in England, in the northern cities. Finally, in Italy, too, football is above all a northern affair, with the three great cities, Milan, Genoa and Turin, all possessing two large clubs.

Patrons, Trade Unionists and Patronages

Football's rapid spread across the cities of the Continent was not without conflicts and tensions that highlighted the divisions of European societies. In Germany, it was white-collar rather than industrial workers who first sought to imitate Anglophile students by adopting the game (Eisenberg 1998). The diffusion of the sport clashed perhaps more sharply than in other countries with the major development of the pre-eminent discipline at the end of the nineteenth century, gymnastics, which was intended to foster military and patriotic virtues. Football, this 'foreign' sport, which had the additional disadvantage of being professional, aroused distrust and stigmatisation in conservative circles. The importance of industrial companies in sponsoring football was another source of conflict in an era marked by class struggle. The trade unions and socialists of the period feared that the bosses would use football as a means of defusing social tensions and of suppressing the class-consciousness of their employees. As a result, working-class sporting federations were created, which organised their own competitions with the aim of thwarting the 'capitalist football of the exploiters who excite the workers on the playing field as they strive to increase work production in their factories'.[4] This workers' football, with its own structures, was especially important in Germany in the period before the establishment of the Nazi regime; no less than 140,000 players participated in the competition organised in 1930.

The conflicts between the churches and the partisans of laicity, between Protestants and Catholics, would also leave their mark on the origins of football. The Catholic Church initially looked upon football with suspicion, as it involved bodily contact between players and risked encouraging 'the horrible crime of pederasty'. However, they were also anxious to control an activity which was popular with young people and were therefore quick to create their

own associations and competitions. The Fédération gymnique et sportive des patronages de France was founded in 1903. A federation of sporting and gymnastic companions, it could claim having supported more than 1,000 football teams on the eve of the First World War. As for the Federazione delle associazioni sportive cattoliche italiane (FASCI), the Federation of Italian Catholic Sporting Associations, created in 1906, it could claim more adherents in 1914 than its lay counterparts. Confronted by these successes, the lay associations created their own organisations. In France, where the conflict was particularly acute, an association of former pupils of the lay schools was formed and organised its own competitions. In the south-west of the country, state school teachers embraced the sport of rugby, in opposition to the football supported by the local clergy. Religious factors played a significant role in towns or regions that were divided on confessional lines. Thus, in Liverpool, the Blues of Everton (Protestant) opposed the Reds of Liverpool (Catholics). The division was even more marked in Glasgow, where the Celtic Football Club, which was founded by a Marian brother and had the local archbishop as president, was supported by Irish immigrants, who opposed their great rivals, the Rangers (Protestants and unionists), who still celebrate, through their songs and slogans, the victory of William III of Orange over the papists in 1689–90.

The Theatralisation of Modern Society

The growth of leisure time and the desire to provide a structure for the activities of young people and workers in particular encouraged the spread of football, and the properties of the game itself, in tune with the values of industrial society, were powerful ingredients in this process of popularisation. The success of football was no doubt connected to a variety of characteristics unique to this competitive contact sport. It was possible to play football in the working-class outfit of blue overalls or in town shoes, in a public square or in a factory courtyard (unlike rugby, for example, which requires large areas of well-maintained grass), with two players or the regulation 11 (or more), with a ball or a substitute for one. Tall or large, fat or thin, everyone can find a place on the pitch (unlike basketball, where great height is a real advantage).

It could also be argued that football's popularity is founded upon the visual and dramatic qualities that the matches create. A match is a singular event, but one that is repetitive at the same time, comparable to the principal forms of representation that have fascinated Western societies. The classic trilogy is respected: a unity of place, of time (two halves of 45 minutes; the length of time traditionally associated with a play) and of action. The progression of a match is not jerky or interrupted (as with American football), but instead echoes the time of a story that Western societies traditionally prefer, with its period of inertia, its twists and turns, its pauses and dramatic moments. Here one rediscovers the *bonne dimension* (right dimension), which, according to Aristotle in his *Poetics*,

was that of the tragic model, that is to say, 'one that includes all the events which move individuals from sorrow to happiness or from happiness to sorrow'. But if football has become 'the most serious trifle in the world' (Bromberger 1998a), it is because it condenses and plays out theatrically, in the manner of the true illusion, the cardinal values of modern industrial societies.

As Alain Ehrenberg (1991) has indicated, the popularity of sports resides in their capacity to represent the ideal of democratic societies by showing us, through the actions of their heroes, 'that anyone can become someone', that status is not acquired at birth but is gained through the course of our existence. If Di Stefano, Kopa, Beckenbauer, Blokhine, Cruijff, Rumennige, Figo and Zidane fascinate, it is, of course, because of the quality of their play, but also because we know that they achieve glory through their own merit and not through the accident of birth. It is revealing that sporting competitions took shape at the points in European history when the democratic ideal had come to the fore – in ancient Greece and in nineteenth-century England – and where social competition meant that the overturning of existing social hierarchies was conceivable. It is unimaginable that in the Middle Ages serfs could participate in chivalric tournaments. Football, on the other hand, exalts competition between equals. It puts before our eyes and in our thoughts, in the most stark and realistic fashion, both the fragility and ever-changing nature of collective and individual status, symbolised by the substitutes on the touchline, the rise and fall of star players, the promotion and relegation of teams, the rigorous rules for classification. These competitions could emerge only in societies that preached the ideal of equality of opportunity, where the most lowly can become the leader. Such is the figure of the champion, this invention of modern society.

Several aspects of the game symbolise the essential characteristics of the industrial societies of which it was the product. On the pitch, to achieve success it was necessary to combine collective planning (tactics), the division of labour (a strict definition of independent tasks) and personal initiative. Each position makes specific demands on the individual player – the strength of a defender, who knows how to make himself respected; the endurance of a midfield dynamo, the heart of the team; the skill of the winger, dribbling on a pocket handkerchief; the organisational skills of a number 10, whose vision of the game makes him the 'leader' of the team.

The club and the team were long thought of in rigidly hierarchical terms as an enterprise in which the players were expected to submit, out of a spirit of solidarity, to the directives of managers and owners. This paternalist disciplinary model was particularly notable in the case of large industrial companies such as Peugeot, whose teams were expected to display the company's *esprit de corps*. The 'Juventus style', invented by the legendary Eduardo Agnelli, was symbolised by three s's – simplicity, seriousness, sobriety. Agnelli thus defined a style of play as well as that of a company. The same rigour was on display at Sochaux. According to the company newspaper of 1954: '[I]t is the responsibility of the team to know intimately each player in order to place him in

the position where he can achieve his maximum. In the factory, it is the same story; everyone must be in his place, and it is up to the bosses to keep an eye on their behaviour. One football manager later repeated the same formula in 1976: "No consultation, no disputes, a well-established hierarchy."

A similar and yet very different pattern prevailed under Communism. The pattern was similar in the sense that the clubs were frequently associated with major industrial complexes, but different in that they belonged to the state. We can cite the examples of teams, such as Rotor (previously Traktor) Volgograd and the various Lokomotiv, which were designed to symbolise the 'socialist industry' of Moscow, Sofia, Tbilissi, etc. They were different too because the organisation of many clubs was taken in hand by the police force or the army, and was therefore under the aegis of the Ministry of the Interior or the Ministry of Defence. The famous Dynamos (of Moscow, Kiev, Zagreb and Bucharest) were attached to their respective national police forces, while CSKA Moscow, Steaua Bucarest, Dukla Pragua, Legia Varsovia and Partisan Belgrade were the pride of the army. In Hungary, Honved (Defender of the Fatherland), the team of Puskàs and Kocsis, the stars of the great national sides of the early 1950s, depended directly on the Ministry of Defence, whereas Ujpesti-Dozsa was the official police team, whose badge claimed solidarity with the Dynamos, their brothers in socialism.

The authoritarian model which prevailed in both Eastern and Western Europe has been profoundly transformed in recent decades as a result of the political changes in the East, the restructuring of traditional industries and the emergence of a new generation of club directors. The team owners who had achieved success in the car, textile and other heavy industries have been gradually replaced by a new breed of entrepreneurs whose fortunes derive from media[5] and communications, consumer goods and even public works. Their different management styles are reflected in that of their teams, with risk taking and a high media profile distinguishing them from the older generation of owners, who were content to remain in the shadows. The paternalistic values underpinning the loyalty to the team, with former players being assured of the opportunity to work for the company once their careers were over, have been replaced by a liberal approach emphasising the importance of transfers; stars no longer remain tied to their clubs for life.

The Exaltation of Identities

The rapid spread of football was linked to its capacity, as a team game, to symbolise collective identities as well as local, regional and national antagonisms. Football was created in a Europe that was divided into nation-states, where a sense of collective belonging was part of an atmosphere of patriotic mobilisation. It was also a continent marked by religious differences (between Catholics and Protestants, or in the case of the Balkans, between Orthodox and Muslim)

and by ethnic and linguistic divisions within the same state (Flamands and Walloons in Belgium; Basques, Galicians and Catalans in Spain; Czechs and Slovaks in the former Czechoslovakia, etc.). In a fragmented continent, where national sentiments have been so virulently expressed, football has offered a call to action and a means of propaganda for a variety of national, regional and confessional allegiances.

It was above all during the inter-war period, marked by the totalitarianism of both left and right, that matches between nations took on a form of ritualised warfare, with appeals for the mobilisation of the community, the use of bellicose symbols and an insistence upon the lessons of history. The second and third World Cups, which took place in Italy in 1934 and in France in 1938, provided the setting for such nationalist and ideological demonstrations, especially in France. In Mussolini's Italy, the success of the national team (winners of the two competitions) was presented as proof of the superiority of fascism over democracy. After the victory of the Italian team in 1934, *Il Messaggero* informed its readers: 'It is in the name of Mussolini that our team has won in Florence, in Milan and yesterday in Rome for the conquest of the world title.' The players themselves were lauded by *il Duce* as 'soldiers of the national cause'. As for the Italian victory of 1938 in France, where the government of the Popular Front had just collapsed, it was attributed to 'the sporting and intellectual excellence of fascist youth in the very capital of the country whose ideals and methods are anti-fascist'. This rather extreme example demonstrates the role that football could play in the affirmation of a nationalist ideology. More commonly, these international competitions reawaken and amplify traditional animosities, as the often bellicose atmosphere arising from matches between France and Germany, Holland and Germany, Poland and Russia, and England and Ireland attest.

Football has not simply been a form of peacetime mobilisation for nation-states. It has also been, and remains, a powerful catalyst for peoples aspiring to autonomy and independence. The Barça Stadium of Barcelona, with its 110,000 supporters, continues to act as the symbol of Catalan identity. Its eulogists describe it as nothing less than 'the epic sublimation of the Catalan people in a football team', as an 'army without arms', as 'the ambassador of a nation without a state' (Colomé 1998: 82). This is not mere metaphor or hyperbole. During the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, then during that of Franco, the blue and dark red flag of Barça was waved instead of the *senyera*, the Catalan flag, which was banned. Similarly, in the Basque country, the club of Bilbao, Athletic (renamed Athletico under Franco), has maintained its status as an emblem for the Basques.

In Eastern Europe, the competition between football clubs prefigured the implosion of federal republics. Matches between Slovan of Bratislava (supported by Slovaks) and Sparta Prague (supported by the Czechs) were the scenes of brutal conflicts between rival fans, a pattern repeated when Spartak Moscow and Dynamo Kiev played each other in the Soviet Union. One of the first measures taken by newly independent republics of Central and Eastern

Europe was to organise their own national championships and to demand admission to FIFA (Féderation Internationale de Football Association, the world football governing body). The recent example of Yugoslavia reveals the intensity of the emotions aroused by the game and the continuing association with nationalist ideology. Some particularly grave incidents, involving rival players and supporters of Dynamo Zagreb and Red Star Belgrade, were the precursors of the impeding destruction of the federation. These confrontations saw the emergence of an especially violent and bellicose individual, Zelijko Raznatovic, known as Arkan, the leader of a group of supporters of Red Star Belgrade. Together with his followers, he would subsequently found a Serbian militia, the Tigers, during the Bosnian war. The militia was distinguished by its atrocities and then by its mischief under the protection of the Serbian president, Slobodan Miloševic, before Arkan's death in obscure circumstances.

Football also offers a rich terrain for the expression of religious antagonisms. Thus, in Belfast, Protestants support Lindfield and Glentoran, while Catholics are fans of Celtic and of Cliftonville. The recruitment of players has long posed a problem for clubs with a support base constructed on confessional lines. Thus, in 1989, the Glasgow Rangers signed Maurice Johnston, their first Catholic player in over 80 years, inaugurating a less sectarian era, even if unionist and anti-papist slogans continue to be sung in the terraces. At Lindfield, the persistent opposition to the presence of Catholic players was eventually thwarted by the Irish National Committee, which exerted pressure on Coca-Cola, the US sponsor of the Irish Football Association, which threatened to end its sponsorship unless Lindfield changed its stance. The Irish example leads us to one of the strangest and most significant episodes in the history of European football. There have long been two national teams in Ireland, one based in Belfast, which was created before the independence of Ireland (by treaty in 1921), the other established in Dublin in 1921. The two federations (the Irish Football Association of Belfast and the Football Association of Ireland) both claimed to represent Ireland. Two Ireland teams therefore competed in international competitions, and it was only during the 1970s that the confusion was resolved with the appearance on the sporting scene of Northern Ireland.

Linguistic divisions are no less apparent within the world of football. This is the case in Belgium in particular, where the major cities (which are bilingual) and towns on the linguistic frontiers share their favours between Walloon clubs, of which Standard Liège is the standard-bearer, and Flemish clubs, represented principally by FC Brugge (Bruges).

The legacy of history is also reflected through football. In numerous great cities that have experienced crises and decline, such as Liverpool, Naples, Marseille, and are nostalgic for a grandeur that has passed, the local population clutches with even greater fervour to teams that are seen as representing their struggle. Each confrontation with a team that is reputed to be 'cosseted' is perceived as an opportunity for revenge over the vagaries of fortune and often as a means of expressing a rivalry between north and south, which is

another powerful feature of the 'mental map' of Europe. Supporters of Naples are accosted on their arrival in the northern stadiums with the cry 'Benvenuti in Italia' (Welcome to Italy) or 'Africani' (Africans), while they reply after a victory with the chant 'Milano, Torino, Verona, questa e l'Italia? Meglio esere africani!' (Milan, Turin, Verona, is that Italy? It's better to be African!).

The various national religious and regional antagonisms that are such a feature of European societies are therefore expressed in football, to which are added the different legacies of sporting history. On such a canvas, the establishment of various competitions (European Cup, Champions League, Cup Winners Cup, European Nations Cup, etc.) has played an ambiguous role. On the one hand, these competitions have helped to reinforce, even to create, a sense of Europeanness by defining a common geographical space, including the East, with a circulation of common ideas and references. On the other hand, they have created a forum for the expression of hostile sentiments between communities and the perpetuation of stereotypes. The genuine fervour that surrounds these competitions underlines one of the major paradoxes of the times: on a European scale, lifestyles are becoming increasingly indistinguishable, yet the sense of belonging to a particular community within the whole is proclaimed with ever-greater intensity.

Styles and Identities

If football consecrates through the colours that one supports different allegiances and loyalties, it indicates at the same time a variety of styles of play, a geography of behaviour that is unique to each town, region or nation. This style, which is perceived as a badge of common identification, is often far removed from the reality of the game that is actually played by the team; it is instead something of a myth or an ancient image that a community hopes to see in itself and to project upon others. This is therefore less a matter of relating how men play and live than a means of understanding how they like to recount their team's game (and their own existence).

From the 1920s onwards, every major team was conscious of the need to emancipate itself from the British model of 'kick and rush', developing in its stead a unique style that was rapidly perceived and commented upon, by both professionals and spectators, as an illustration of either local or national virtues. The technical proficiency, elegance and precocity of the Austrian 'Wunderteam' of 1928 to 1934, for example, was presented as an expression of national virtues. During the 1930s, on the other hand, the Swiss national team invented the defensive strategy known as the *verrou* (bolt), which was interpreted as that of a neutral state that was falling back on itself in the increasingly threatening international context. Similarly, the Italian *catenaccio*, characteristic of the Squadra Azzurra of both the 1930s and the early 1980s, was, according to some observers, an ideal metaphor for the Italian way of life,

founded upon the alliance of the *braccianti del catenaccio* (the hard men of the defensive wall) and the *artisti del contropiede* (the artists of the counter-attack). This, it was believed, symbolised two diametrically opposed aspects of what it meant to be Italian: one negative, the other positive; one displaying an absence of method, the other displaying organisational preparation; one marked by creative genius, the other by generosity of effort.

On a regional scale, every local team imposes its own imprint on the game. The 'total football' preached by Rinus Michels, of which Ajax of Amsterdam was the standard-bearer at the beginning of the 1970s, was, at the same time, the image of a unique urban style and culture – that of a city and a generation breaking with the rigours of tradition and emphasising spontaneity and rhythm, interspersed with hints of nonchalance, impertinence and disrespect for convention. At the same time, in opposition to this festive approach, it was possible to cite the deliberate, almost mathematical precision of the tactics employed by Dynamo Kiev and its trainer Lobanovski. The technical mastery, pre-programmed moves and complementarity of the different lines illustrated the virtues of the 'scientific' football of a Soviet capital.

In every nation, the great teams define themselves with a style of their own, symbolising the personalities of the cities that they represent. Thus, an inexhaustible, laborious bravery was said to be the dominant style of the players of Saint-Etienne, a working-class bastion of the 1970s. It is not surprising that in the list of stars established by their supporters, it was Oswaldo Piazza, an Argentinian feted for his courage, combativeness and continual work rate, even when all hope seemed lost, who came out on top. In opposition to this valorous style, we could cite the *jeu à la nantaise* (the Nantes style), noted for its rapid, short-passing game of geometrical patterns rather than excessive effort. The Marseille style is another that is associated with panache, virtuosity and the spectacular rather than hard labour, and the same could be said of the Neapolitan style in Italy. The players who best encapsulate this local style are the South American stars who have coincidentally arrived in pairs and who have deeply marked the history and memory of the club: Pesaola and Vinicio in the 1950s, Sivori and Altafini a decade later, and Careca and Maradona during the 1980s. As for Juventus of Turin, they have traditionally been associated with a style totally opposite to that preached by Marseille and Naples. Marked by a rigorous, disciplined and measured industrialism, its values, including respect, can bring support from some unexpected quarters. Palmiro Togliatti, the former secretary-general of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) was a *juventino* and was occasionally to be seen watching a match alongside the president of Fiat and of the club. On the pitch, the aim was not to pursue 'art for art's sake' or to dazzle, but rather to win: simple tactics, a strong defence and efficiency in scoring were the dominant features of the local style.

We could provide many other examples of these connections between playing styles and the imagined representation of identities. These bonds, however, have become frayed over the last 20 years. Whereas players and trainers once spent

the majority of their career with one club, thus ensuring a sense of continuity, they have now been replaced by the modern professionals who flit across the life of their teams, like footballing meteorites, transforming them in the process.

The Team as a Figure of the Community

The composition of the national team (and, until relatively recently, of local teams) offered another metaphor, both expressive and enlarging, of this collective identity and of different conceptions of belonging in the various European countries. To get an idea of the French conception of the nation, of the right of soil over that of blood, of the republican tradition of integration, one could do no better than consult the make-up of the teams that rendered famous the so-called champagne football. Amongst the most feted French players have been Kopa (of Polish origin), Platini (Italian origin) and Giresse (son of a Spanish mother), and in the team that won the World Cup in 1998 and the Euro 2000 were to be found Zidane (Algerian origin), Pires (Portuguese origin), Djorkaeff and Boghossian (Armenian origin), Trezeguet (Argentinian origin) and Desailly (born in Ghana). Such a team illustrates more effectively that any political speech the ideal of the melting pot *à la française*. This 'tricolour and multicolour' team can be contrasted with the German team that won the World Cup in 1990, which was an almost perfect example of a nation constructed on a community of blood ties. Only Guido Buchwald (whose Christian name recalls the Italian background of his mother) and Pierre Littbarski introduced an element of discordance into an otherwise homogeneous group. To offer another illustration of how football can act as a barometer of integration, it is worth recalling that in 1979, Viv Anderson became the first black player to represent England in an international match.

At the local level, the team has also long been treated as an idealistic reflection of a population's sense of belonging. Sometimes the choice of a player has been directly subordinate to an ideological project, as we have seen in the case of Glasgow. Indeed, another form of exclusion can be identified in this particular context: despite their wealth, both the Rangers and Celtic were reluctant to buy English players. In the Basque country, Athletic Bilbao, also closely associated with a nationalist movement, was composed, with some remarkable exceptions, of local players. In many other cases, the team does not reflect in such a pronounced way the population of which it is the standard-bearer. However, through the composition of the team, it is possible to read some of the intentions of the organisers. In Turin, the formation of the Juventus team has been thought of over the years as the reflection of the universal image of Fiat, which maintains the club. The team must therefore include major international stars, such as the Welshman Charles in the 1950s; the Pole Boniek, the Frenchman Platini and the Irishman Brady in the 1980s; and the Frenchman Zidane in the 1990s. The team also includes players from the Mezzogiorno,

where many of the workers in the company's factories originate. Throughout its history, Olympique Marseille has also featured foreign stars amongst its ranks with whom its supporters have strongly identified. Can we not see in this practice the imprint of a history marked by important waves of migration, the ideal image of a cosmopolitanism characteristic of the city?

In short, until very recently, the team symbolised and rendered tangible, through its playing style and composition, the real and imagined identity of the community that it represented. We are now living through the swan song of this period. The Bosman ruling of 1995 (which in accordance with European Union law forbade the existing practice of limiting the number of players from member countries who could be played by a team) and the transformation of clubs into private enterprises have changed the nature of the identification between star players and the public. The players who, in the past, emerged from the streets and who passed most of their careers with the same club (at the price, it has to be said, of a one-sided contract) have been transformed into shooting stars subject to the forces of the market. This transformation has been spectacular in Spain, Italy and, above all, England, where more than half – even on occasion all – of the players of major teams (Arsenal, Chelsea) are foreigners. The English case is all the more surprising because up until the end of the 1970s, foreign players were not recruited; in 1987, no more than 1.9 per cent of players came from abroad, mainly from Holland, Norway and Denmark, together with a handful from Yugoslavia. If today the fervour of support for the team is undiminished, as the crowds in the stadiums would seem to confirm, its nature has gradually changed in significance: the celebration of a closed community has been replaced by a galaxy of stars brought together under the same colours.

The Public and Football

Who are the stalwarts of the terraces, the fans of the football matches that are today shown almost continually by so many television stations? One initial characteristic of the public in football stadiums is its youth: 70 per cent of the crowd, on average, is under 35. This youthfulness is, however, less marked in two of the great footballing nations: England and Italy. This youthful dominance of football crowds is a recent phenomenon which can be seen through a new placement of age groups within the stadium. The 'youth' (15–25 years old) gather on the slopes behind the goals that were once called in France the *populaires* and that we could rename today the 'juveniles'. The emergence of this group of 15–25 year-olds and their attendant subculture is a characteristic of modern European societies, offering an example of how social change is mirrored on the footballing stage.

Contrary to what is commonly thought, this public is not dominated by the working class. Today, those sitting in the stands or in front of their television sets are a diverse group, and throughout Europe there has been a rise in the numbers

drawn from the middle classes. This movement, which has been developing steadily over the last 30 years, is in direct contrast to that which occurred in Victorian Britain. Until the 1880s, spectators of football matches were mainly middle class before being replaced by skilled workers. Today, by contrast, the public is diversifying socially from above rather than below. Should we therefore conclude that football no longer constitutes a 'popular' spectacle? The answer is probably no. These representatives of the middle classes are very often the sons of workers. When compared with basketball, rugby, cricket, tennis or Formula One racing, football has a much more popular base.

The gender base of football crowds has also been gradually modified. Surveys conducted in the 1980s and early 1990s indicated a modest feminisation of the football public (from 7 to 14 per cent, depending on the location). More recent statistics demonstrate a significant increase in the number of female spectators: they currently represent around 20 per cent of the total. If it is now possible to meet many passionate women supporters in the stands, it is still rare to find women who go to the game on their own. More often than not, they accompany fathers, husbands, sons or boyfriends, and this commitment to the game is temporary. It is during the period of adolescence that this type of leisure is preferred. Young female fans are keen to take their places alongside their male friends in the stands behind the goals as part of a common rite of passage. Adult women, on the other hand, especially housewives, are rarely seen at the match. Only those wealthy enough to frequent the executive boxes are likely to attend as part of what is essentially a social gathering. The recent refurbishment of stadiums, the 'Disneyfication' of the spectacle and the willingness of clubs to expel the rowdiest elements from the stands have permitted a feminisation to take place and a more family-orientated public to participate. This change can also be identified if we examine the behaviour of men and women during the broadcast of matches on the television. The image of groups of men watching the match together while drinking beer and eating pizza needs to be treated with caution. According to a recent survey conducted in France, 62 per cent of those watching football matches on television are men, 38 per cent are women and in 35 per cent of the cases they watch the match as a couple. However, the intensity of interest varies, with women being less likely to give their full attention to the action or to make commentaries on technical aspects of the game.

Football stadiums can also present a useful barometer of the extent to which minority groups are integrated into the life of a city. The presence in the stands of immigrants or ethnic minorities can be interpreted as a form of initiation into local society and citizenship. Thus, in the stadium of Olympique Marseille, the presence of young people of Arab descent is an indication of a process of identification with the city. On the whole, however, football stadiums, where a local sense of belonging is often pushed to extremes, are not particularly welcoming to either newcomers or minorities. The stands resound, here and there, with anti-Semitic slogans, in particular at clubs such as Tottenham (in London), Ajax (in Amsterdam), Austria (in Vienna) and MTK (in Budapest)

that were either founded by Jews or are popularly believed to have been so. To this can be added the invective against Gypsies in Hungary and Romania and the insults directed at black players or supporters throughout the Continent. Since the 1990s, there have been many initiatives – sponsored by a variety of groups, including European institutions, football associations and supporters groups – designed to stamp out these expressions of racism and xenophobia (Back, Crabbe and Solomos 2001). However, with one or two remarkable exceptions, it is difficult to believe that football is an effective vehicle for integration, especially in states or cities dominated by *communautarisme*, or separation between ethnic or religious communities. In Germany, for example, Turks organise their own competitions, and only very rarely do they support the professional team in the city where they live.

The different backgrounds of spectators can be read within the stadiums as can the forces that unite and divide modern societies. Each part of the ground, which is divided into stands, ends, boxes, curves, etc., forms in itself a sort of territory with a sense of common belonging that expresses itself as being a part of the collective effervescence rather than dissolving itself within it. This process of identification is organised by more than a simple question of ticket prices, and at times the stadium can appear like a map of the town in microcosm or like a mirror that accentuates the lines of division marking our societies. The warm, well-fed and wealthy occupants of executive boxes that dominate the skyline of the stadium look down on the young supporters braving wind and rain from the stands behind the goals to support the team. In all the great stadiums, one of the sections behind the goals provides the rallying point for the most organised and ardent supporters: at Liverpool, it is the famous 'Kop'; in the ground of Standard Liège, 'the Hell side'; at Marseille, the *virage sud*; in Naples, the *curva B*, etc. These macro-spaces, where it is possible to express and to read differences of status and of fervour, can be broken down into subgroups defined by ties of sociability: workmates, regulars of a bar, employees of the same company (whose seats are paid partly or entirely by the company). The row of seats in the stadium is a classic means of cementing ties of friendship, and 70 per cent of the spectators come to watch a match as part of a group, usually with friends (for two-thirds of them), more occasionally as a family (for the other third). Does this mean that those who come alone remain isolated? More often than not, they rejoin other regulars of the same haunts or strike up a conversation with a neighbour in the stands, where it is easier to socialise than in a bar.

Supporters

Today groups of football supporters make their mark very forcibly in urban social life. They can be divided into two broad categories: firstly, associations (with an official status) bringing together mature men on the basis of local or social affinities; secondly, combat groups (associations or loosely formed

groups of more or less ephemeral status) of young supporters that have formed in the stands behind the goals.

The associations of mature, respectable supporters first developed in Great Britain at the end of the nineteenth century, becoming sufficiently numerous by 1913 to form a federation. A similar movement, based on the British model, emerged on the Continent slightly later, first in Belgium, where no less than 46 supporters clubs for the one team of Charleroi existed in 1929, and then spreading to other European countries in line with the growth of the professional game. Today, most major professional teams are backed by one or more of these respectable supporters clubs. The phenomenon is particularly strong in Latin countries, especially Italy. At the beginning of the 1990s, the Italian Association of Supporters of Naples could claim 96,000 members, divided into 526 sections, and it is not the largest in the peninsula. Juventus of Turin has more than double that number, while AC Milan is supported by 1,350 sections. Each one of these sections plays the role of a social centre, hosting games, acting as a recreational centre and organising activities, some of which are not even connected to sport, such as family excursions. The associations and many of the sections are administered by local notables (small businessmen, members of the liberal professions, etc.) who have proved their competence and their authority outside as well as inside the football ground.

The battalions of young supporters, who first appeared in England at the beginning of the 1960s (the hooligans), in Italy in the 1970s (the ultras) and in Eastern Europe at the end of that decade, present another face altogether. It is possible to distinguish two main types at both extremes, in the middle of which are a whole variety of groups: at one extreme are frequently short-lived groups of bellicose supporters, while at the other extreme are veritable associations which bring together as many as several thousand members with a clubhouse, membership cards, subscriptions and individual roles carefully divided amongst members who are subject, in theory, to a degree of central control. These two-distinct types of organisation are not spread evenly across the European football spectrum. England was the birthplace of the 'crews', a model that has spread to many of the Northern European nations and to the Latin countries, where the associative model remains overwhelmingly predominant.

What are the characteristics of these often violent young supporters, who follow their teams from one side of Europe to the other and appear to consider themselves exempt from the normal rules of partisanship? The conventional image is that of young men from the 'lumpen proletariat', victims of unemployment or social alienation, easily seduced by the ideologies of the extreme-right. Behind the stereotype is a much more complex reality. The only common traits uniting these supporters are their masculinity (to be a violent supporter is interpreted as a stage in a 'virile career'), their age (between 15 and 25 years, occasionally older amongst those who follow the English national team), their fanatical attachment to and support for the team, and their tendency to mass in a particular part of the stadium – behind the goals, on a bend (a *curva* in

Italy), the terraces in England, the sides in Belgium and Holland – which they consider to be their own. That said, neither their social background nor their behaviour or political orientation allows us to create a prototypal portrait of these young supporters.

Sociologically, what is there in common between British hooligans – the young men of the 'rough working class' from depressed former industrial cities – and the Italian, Spanish and French ultras who are recruited from across the social spectrum? Several surveys have demonstrated that these young ultras are ordinary young people. Even amongst the British hooligans, it is difficult to see the link between the skinheads of the 1970s, from the poorest neighbourhoods of the East End, and the 'casuals', who are older and better off, dressed in the latest fashions, infiltrating the stands to launch sudden sophisticated outbursts of violence. With so many national and local variations, even amongst those supporting the same team, the social profile of the violent young supporters cannot be reduced to a single portrait. At most, it is possible to claim that the social origin of these zealous fans is more diversified in the Latin countries than those of Northern Europe, where a working-class identity in crisis continues to reject the prospect of 'embourgeoisement' (trend towards a middle-class outlook) proposed from above.

The behaviour of these militant supporters also varies considerably. In the majority of cases, support for a team and animosity towards an opponent are expressed through a series of highly codified and ritualised forms which only occasionally degenerate into out-and-out violence in a specific context of the game (incidents in the match or the outcome of a decisive game). These sporadic outbursts contrast sharply with the premeditated pursuit of violent confrontations either within the stadium or in the surrounding area, where the sporting context is only a pretext for conflict. Thus, in Germany, it is possible to make a clear distinction between young fans, who passionately support their team, and 'hools', who are in search of a fight, even at matches where their own team is not playing. These forms of gratuitous violence, whose connection to the natural partisanships of sporting confrontation is only tangential, developed strongly during the 1980s in the northern hotbeds of football, but also in the Latin countries, notably Italy.

Given the diversity of their social origins and modes of behaviour, can these groups of football extremists share the same ideology? Xenophobic chants, shaved heads and fascist salutes would appear to suggest that the stands have been infiltrated by the extreme-right. An aggressive, often hateful presence cannot be denied: the ultras, followers of Real Madrid, were nostalgic for *francoisme*, while the skinheads, supporters of East End clubs, attacked the cosmopolitan hippie culture with an exaltation of old community values and hatred of foreigners. In Belgium, Holland, Germany, Italy (especially Lazio of Roma), Greece and France (notably Paris), numerous groups of young fans proclaim racist and anti-Semitic sentiments. They have discovered, on the terraces of the stands, one of the rare public spaces for the expression of 'values' that are not tolerated

in society at large. Yet these highly visible and noisy demonstrations can hide much more complex, fluid and ambiguous patterns of behaviour. We can, for example, draw attention to the great variety of ideological claims associated with these ultras: the promotion or defence of a local and regional identity (as in Barcelona, Marseille or Naples), and even the leftist or extreme left-wing protest (the use of the term 'ultras' is born out of the 1968 social movement). It is also important to note that these affiliations, political slogans and gestures are often specific to the context of a football match. Such aggressive symbols are brandished with the aim of provoking or intimidating rival supporters rather than promoting an ideology. In other words, these young supporters are using politics as much as they are being used by politicians, with the exception of the cases cited above of those whose actions are given brutal expression outside the confines of the stadium. So if neither social deprivation nor political ideology can explain the behaviour of these extreme football fans, where should we look for an explanation?

The ultras claim, first of all, the right to be considered as actors and not simply spectators or consumers. They reject the status of consumer which is promoted with ever-greater vigour by the clubs and the football federations, whose motto might best be described as 'Pay up, sit down and behave yourself'. In contrast, these supporters assert through their actions a right to act and react. They are also motivated by a burning desire for recognition: to be seen, they are eager to show off and have to show off, to borrow the apt definition of Alain Ehrenberg (1986), which is at the base of this juvenile subculture. Moreover, these young enthusiasts, with their scarves and banners displaying their names, colours and affiliation, celebrate their own group as much as they do their favourite team, if not more so. Like all enthusiasts, they are tireless collectors, but they cherish press cuttings illustrating their own presence and exploits above all other documents. To be seen, recognised and identified – even through the medium of violence – is the ultimate accolade for this sort of supporter, which goes against the conventional frontiers of representation. Rather than being invisible and anonymous figures watching the exploits of stars, they have succeeded in attracting the attention of the media, in winning the badge of celebrity.

These common characteristics – a passion for football and a particular club, a sense of local pride, the search for excitement and strong emotions, and a desire to demonstrate virility, to do something to be recognised and to conquer the most visible space in the stands – take diverse forms. Such aggressive groups are looking above all for the maximum amount of excitement through violent clashes. Fights take place less often now within stadiums, which are increasingly closely policed; trouble mainly occurs outside in railway stations and on trains or other forms of public transport, where the 'firms' or 'crews' have come to the fore in England, Holland and Germany, as well as ininternational matches staged in Europe. The majority of groups of young supporters, especially in the Latin countries, have an alternative structure and have been transformed over the years into small businesses with their own employees and often sophisticated

equipment. (The largest bring together several thousand members and specialise in selling seats for matches and football merchandise.) Some of these groups have gone even further, adopting a project that goes beyond sport or management whereby social participation is transformed into a form of political militancy. These *bachelleries* (a name given in earlier times to groups of young single French men) play a role as independent *maison des jeunes* (youth clubs), offering their members an alternative form of socialisation, with its own rites and ideals captured in 'fanzines' that are deliberately anti-establishment or libertarian.

When looked at as a whole, these ties and solidarities that are born of a common devotion offer evidence of a quest for a meaningful life and new forms of social relationships. It is clear that the terraces behind the goals are an excellent position from which to observe the re-emergence of youth as an autonomous age group and new rites of passage to adulthood, as well as existing patterns of sociability which form around a shared passion. In the past, major religious, lay and political institutions, under the control of adults, sought to organise the free time and leisure activities of young people, while shaping their expressions of militancy. The organisation of young football supporters is testimony to the changes that have occurred. The desire to run their own affairs and to act independently, the sense of solidarity and the emergence of leaders from outside institutions characterise these groups that the clubs fear, on account of their unruliness and autonomy.

Today, modern groups of organised supporters, both young and old, wish to be more directly involved in the running of the clubs that they support and for which they agree to make important sacrifices. While many clubs are transforming themselves into public companies floated on the stock market and are moving away from their public, the fans have organised a counter-offensive by becoming shareholders (as was the case at Manchester United, albeit with mixed results, and elsewhere in England) and henceforth making their opinions known within the company and not simply from the stands. This participatory model is particularly understandable if we take into account the evolution of the role of stadiums, which are now replete with shops, cinemas, nurseries, restaurants and even venues for weddings and receptions. They are becoming a *lieu de vie*, or social centre, that recalls, without too much exaggeration, the confraternities of the past.

Between the Ritual and the Show

The fervour of supporters, the cult of star players, the space taken by the stadium as an urban monument and the sentiment of community which is expressed therein make it tempting to draw parallels between a key football match and a religious ritual. It is somewhat of a paradox that a modern secular sport, which flourished in the great industrial cities, arouses and reactivates the grand ceremonial forms. What, then, are these affinities between a big match and a ritual?

For a start, one could highlight the spatial similarities. The large urban stadium has often been presented as 'the sanctuary of the industrial world' (Bale 1993). It has become an essential element of contemporary patrimony. The division of the public in this enclosed space brings to mind the rigorous distribution of different social groups in major religious ceremonies. Indeed, there is a strong bond between spectators and their stadium, as there once was between the peasantry and its church bells. For the most committed fans of a football club, the pitch has all the qualities of holy land (the turf, when acquired, is preserved preciously). We can also identify certain temporal and rhythmic similarities: competitions follow a regular and cyclic calendar which culminates at certain times of the year and mirrors the ineluctable cycle of the seasons, while the linear time frame with its promotions, relegations and uncertainty is combined with the ritual time and its repetitions.

It is also possible to highlight behavioural similarities. The 'faithful', of whom the most fervent are grouped together in what resembles confraternities (such as supporters groups), express their emotional excitement through a form of intense choral and physical participation – collective singing is an inseparable part of the ritual – through highly regulated collective gestures and attitudes or even sometimes by a state that is close to that of a trance. Clothes and other accessories contribute to this metamorphosis of appearance and behaviour that characterises ritualised time. Such practices symbolise the sense of community that one feels (the changing emotional state on arriving in the stadium). The accolades and warm conversations with unknown fellow fans, meals taken together before, during or after a match – these sudden, ephemeral transformations of ordinary social relations result in social cohesion and solidarity.

There is also something about the game and spectacle of football that conjures up a belief in the active presence of supernatural forces, which is the backbone of religious ritual. Football appears, in fact, as a world of refuge, a creator of magical religious practices, a means by which one can believe in the possible efficiency of symbols. The most fervent players and supporters engage in propitious rites to ensure good luck. The former pay particular attention to the choice of their boots, to the way they tie their laces; the latter sport a diverse group of symbols (scarves, badges, etc.) to summon good fortune. The big stadiums also appear as a site for the collection of rites, a place where a variety of customs are performed to avoid bad luck. This fragmented religiosity attests that for those who subscribe, the sense of place and the chain of cause and effect are at least partially beyond the powers of man. Is it necessary to underline the fragility of these beliefs? Not everyone shares them, and those who respect them remain sceptical about their efficiency. 'I know, but one never knows', they say, 'it's better to have everything possible on our side', thus testifying to the ambiguous status of belief today.

It is again the similarities to religious rituals that mark the practices of consecration or veneration in the world of football. Objects such as the cups,

shaped like a chalice, which are sacred after being filled with wine, and attitudes of devotion – half-serious, half-parody (in relation to the star players) – testify to the affinities between a big match and a religious ritual. We need only to recall the Maradona mania of the Neapolitans, the 'canonisation' of the star during the celebrations of the Scudetto (the badge symbolising the title of champion of Italy) of 1987 and his transformation into Saint Gennarmando, a cross between the patron saint of the city and that of the star. We could also invoke the pious example of the most devoted supporters who have transformed their homes into a kind of domestic altar, where photographs of players and team emblems take the place of relics.

Whatever the individual nuances, all of these attitudes bear witness to a form of minor religiosity which borrows from the model of conventional devotion and varies in intensity from one set of fans to the next. There exists in the stadium, as in the church, a scale of devotion, from the fanatics ready to employ violence and to risk their lives if their clubs are put in jeopardy to the occasional supporter whose fervour is only lukewarm.[6] Some go to the match as if to a mass; others assist at a religious ceremony as if it was a spectacle. But what is actually being celebrated? In contrast to the great religious festivals, big football matches offer no answers to the key existential questions of where we have come from and where we are going. But they do consecrate and theatralise in a form of dramatic fiction the basic values that shape our societies: individual merit and collective solidarity, competition and performance – the kind of classification that is esteemed in societies obsessed with exam results. Sportsmen have thus become the heroes of our time, a cross between stars and saints, the incarnation of contemporary ideals at the head of which is that of physical perfection. Is it not noteworthy that the fashion model–footballer couple is the pinnacle of the imagination of popular culture?

As we have seen, the different competitions also exalt different allegiances and territorial loyalties, something that is recalled by national anthems and by the flags unfurled on the terraces. They provide a means for a fragmented society to attest to and to reaffirm a sense of continuity and collectivism that is missing from the daily lives of many. The football match illustrates that the gravity of a great ritual, as in a religious ceremony, is never far from derision: tragedy mixes with comedy (there is plenty of laughter in the stands), belief with scepticism, membership with distance, the moral and collective obligation to support one's side with the individual desire to have a good time.

The people's game appears today as a form of hybrid, balanced between ritual and spectacle, between ceremony and entertainment, between the fervour of a believer and the leisure pursuit of a consumer, between passion and the market, with its contracts and its intermediaries. Neither a simple show nor a recognised ritual, it constitutes a new genre, a reflection of the contradictions of our times.

– Translated from the French by Julian Swann

Notes

1. For a British perspective on French football, see Dauncey and Hare (1999) and Dine (2000).
2. This is the date of the creation of the English Football Association and the beginning of the standardisation of the rules of the game.
3. For an introduction on nation and sports, see the following publications: Blain, Boyle and Donnell (1993), Bromberger (1994, 1995, 1998b, 2005), Duke and Crolley (1996) and Holt (1996).
4. See the text of the Fédération sportive du travail, quoted by Wahl (1989: 193).
5. For works done on the media and sports, see Rowe, McKoy and Miller (1998), Wenner (1998), Rowe (1999) and Crolley and Hand (2002).
6. See also the works of Brown (1998), Colomé (1998) and Connelly (2000).

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PART III

Challenges to Existent Forms of Belonging and Cultural Values