Tales from the Fifth Green Field: The Psychodynamics of Migration, Masculinity and National Identity amongst Republic of Ireland Soccer Supporters in England

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Based on qualitative research on Irish soccer supporters in England in the 1990s it is argued that these supporters' substantial devotions of time, emotion, imagination and money were psychic investments through which international soccer became a symbolic means of negotiating the contingency and vicissitudes of emigrant Irish national identity. However, this projected symbolism was inevitably contradictory. While collective gathering and drinking created a 'liminal' space through which individual lives' spatio- temporal coordinates and uneven migrant biographies temporarily dissolved in rituals of national identification, these were inextricably intertwined with the construction and reconstruction of masculine identities, entailing occasions for both 'bonding' and internal mutual differentiation and disputes arising from disagreements regarding supporters' origins and commitment. These were particularly significant for 'second generation Irish' supporters whose 'Irishness' was predicated on unambiguous masculine identity and continuity despite familial histories of migration, but whose 'credentials' as such were repeatedly questioned.

Introduction

The Republic of Ireland's qualification for soccer's 1988 European Championships and 1990 and 1994 World Cups inspired arguments that it symbolized a progressively inclusive, less monocultural national identity in post-Independence Ireland. The team's British-based players (often British-born, having qualified via parentage

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or grandparentage) as national heroes represented Ireland's emigrant history while these tournaments' global reach facilitated the diaspora's participation in a symbolically inclusive, geographically complex national identity unhindered by cultural nationalism's exclusivity or British colonialism's psychic legacy. [1]

Prompted by these arguments, the qualitative research underpinning this essay aimed to examine how 'Republic' supporters in England, through 'international' match attendance, informal gatherings and discursive interactions concerning soccer developed collective senses of national identity; and to examine their relationships with the general experiences of personal (for 'first generation Irish' emigrant supporters) and familial emigration (for English-born, 'second generation Irish' supporters). Conducted from 1994 to 1998 the research primarily involved interviews with two networks of male supporters, predominantly in Birmingham, concerning their experiences at 'home' games in Dublin and 'away' games at various locations, and concerning their personal or familial experiences of emigration. [2] All were 'first generation' Irish emigrants or described themselves as 'second generation Irish'. Most were committed English soccer club supporters who described these trips as rare opportunities to openly and collectively express their national identity.

Hypothetically these 'internationals' were 'liminal', [3] 'in-between' spaces which temporarily suspended quotidian time-space coordinates in an 'imagining' of Irish national community enhanced by the corpo-reality of 'being there'. However, the research identified considerable heterogeneity amongst supporters in background and affective and cognitive investment in this symbolic cultural form. The paper relates this heterogeneity to the varied personal or vicarious experiences of emigration and experiences as 'Irish' men in England.

The essay focuses largely on second generation supporters' particular problematic of national identity. Their identification with Ireland enhanced their sense of 'authenticity' as such but was repeatedly challenged by Ireland and England supporters alike. And their expression of national identity was inextricably connected to their expression or performance of masculine identity as 'Irish men'. Moreover, there was a psychic dimension to their affective and cognitive investments in this cultural form which related variously to familial emigration experiences, reflecting a struggle to express an integrated self and collective identity persistently challenged by the contradictions and contingencies of identity, made inherently unstable by articulation through difference, and by the tensions between the ecstasy of collective gathering and identity and the messier experience of everyday life.

These propositions lead to the metaphorical 'fifth green field' as the interpretative frame. Supporters' affective, cognitive, temporal and financial investments made this cultural form a 'space of imagination' within which to express their Irish emigrant identities, but which highlighted their contingency and contradictoriness. 'Fifth green field' is a pun on Tommy Makem's song's metaphor for the four Irish provinces, the 'Four Green Fields', and the 'Fifth Province', Irish folk culture's imaginary province and Kearney's [4] aspirational metaphor for a contradictorily post-nationalist identity which would acknowledge internal differences within the nation and the multiple

articulations of sub-national local identities with global social and cultural currents. Supporters sought here to simplify a national identity complicated by emigration or a British nationality afforded by birthplace, but their experiences often highlighted their own identities' complexities, contradictoriness and specificity to Irish emigrant experience in England.

The essay also stresses these supporters' heterogeneity, ranging from 'second generation Irish', self-styled committed soccer supporters and their obstacles to expressing that identity, to those whose motivations were found to lie in their profound senses of personal loss and displacement in their accounts of personal or familial emigration. The 'fifth green field' was a liminal space periodically crystallizing their 'Irishness' through a vehicle for ritual collective gathering and celebration, allowing them to be straightforwardly 'Irish', but without cancelling their contradictory biographical experiences. The discussion intertwines several theoretical strands which will be developed through the data analysis.

'Your own way of being Irish': 'Second Generation Irish'/First Generation Soccer Supporters

The second generation Irish supporters encountered in this research repeatedly stressed their 'authenticity' through their identification with parental origins and 'genetic', 'racial' or 'cultural' continuity despite parental emigration and birthplace. Yet their biographical narratives often suggested an uneven, 'processual' and gendered route, displaying Oedipal ambivalence and oscillation between paternal identification and distance. This oscillation, typically intertwining stories of paternal challenge and identification with the imagining of national territory, difference and hierarchy, is in keeping with the findings of recent scholarship which stresses the historical heterogeneity of emigrant Irish and 'second generation Irish' identities in Britain.

In particular, the post-Second World War generation of Irish emigrants has faced racialising discourses, reduction to a class and gender specific stereotypical presence or, in the context of the Northern Ireland 'Troubles', been classed as dangerous and potentially 'terrorist'. [5] Yet it has contradictorily been rendered 'invisibly' different through its 'whiteness', such that claims for 'ethnic' difference and monitoring via census questions foundered, until 2001, on ethnicity's persistent equation with race and skin colour. Qualitative research and reviews of 'second generation Irish' autobiographies [6] have highlighted both the second generation's sense of invisibility in Britain and its multiple positioning regarding 'Irishness' as ethnic or national identity. This work suggests a complexity irreducible to either/or classification, rendering untenable the notion of the 'Irish in Britain' as a uniform emigrant and descendant 'ethnic' population.

As an exemplary instance of second generation ambivalence giving way to parental identification, one supporter, Bob, recalled his childhood response to his father's negative comments about Birmingham in the 1970s, 'if you don't like it here you can

fuck off back to Ireland'. Making this challenge to paternal authority and assuming personal superiority Bob used his British birth to goad his father as an implicitly inferior immigrant. Kevin's biography was comparably ambivalent: 'My Dad played all this Mary O' Hara, magic of the Celtic harp stuff and I'd be laughing. He chased me up and down the house for that. But when you get older you find your own way of being Irish.'

In addition to deriding their fathers' immigrant origins and tastes, these narratives exhibit distinctly psychic and gendered dimensions whose analysis might be enhanced by recourse to psychoanalytic concepts, given psychoanalysis' concern with the interactions between conscious and unconscious, projected symbolism and imagined personal, familial and collective biographies. While there is insufficient space here for elaboration, the analysis below is principally informed by the psychoanalytic tradition originating with Melanie Klein, which was concerned with how infants imaginarily locate parts of the psyche without and within, through processes of 'projection' and 'introjection' in their earliest relations with parents, leading to resistance, often extending into adulthood in recognizing others as 'whole' rather than psychically symbolized as 'part-objects'. [7] Kleinian psychoanalysis has been seen by some to bridge psychoanalysis and sociology [8] through its focus on interactions between imagined and actual environments.

In Kleinian terms Bob, above, was 'psychodynamically' introjecting an 'English' social and cultural superiority as a rhetorical weapon, fantasizing his own fledgling, independent masculinity while diminishing his father's. But now, like Kevin, a 'Republic' supporter, Bob is romantically attached to his father's home county in Northern Ireland and repeatedly resentful of other Irish supporters' '26 county mentality' (their exclusion of 'the North' from 'Ireland'), claiming to be 'more Republican' in his political stance on 'the North' than his Irish parents. Bob's transformation illustrates the gendered coding of national territories in the cultural imagination of Irish immigration to Britain. Sensing his father's economic vulnerability as a migrant labourer (still manifested now in joking about implied compensatory boasting in his 'claims' to have 'built Spaghetti Junction and half of Birmingham') enabled a cheeky Oedipal assertion of British masculine and territorial superiority. Later identification with his father's Irish masculinity was a nuanced localization of his avowed 'Irishness' inextricably connected to a personal narrative of identity as masculine becoming, exemplifying Mac an Ghaill's proposition that Irish nationalism itself is 'a form of sexual politics which has specific implications for the construction of young Irish masculinities' [9]: Bob's Oedipal paternal resistance becomes an identification with Irish national-cultural Oedipal resistance to British colonial incorporation.

Bob's and Kevin's accounts of their fathers and their own transformations also illustrate Grinberg and Grinberg's [10] analysis of how emigrants routinely engage in forms of conscious and unconscious 'splitting' of their geographical origins and destinations, denigrating or dismissing the other through 'regressive' oral acts like refusing certain foods, or repressing origins by idealizing the 'new'. Emigrants also

become symbolic 'part objects' to 'host' country natives, negotiating their felt, but not necessarily consciously or verbally expressed projections. And they must negotiate the projections of the society left. Many male post-war Irish emigrant labourers in Britain defined themselves through their labour power, as economic units, and so were willingly conditionally valued. [11] Such conditional self- and external (de-)valuation suggests a long established introjected low self-worth forged in Ireland's 'emigrant nursery' [12] prior to, but heightened by, emigration itself, particularly to Britain whose historical relationship with Ireland has been seen in literary cultural studies to carry a complex psychic baggage of (post)colonial projections and counter-projections. [13] Bob's remark and Kevin's laughter may well have been particularly hurtful by combining Oedipal ambivalence with geographical and generational splitting.

For Kevin a specific experience motivated his change. Following the IRA's 1974 Birmingham pub bombings, Kevin's Irish father and English mother experienced verbal abuse and Kevin was assaulted: 'instead of making me anti-Irish, that made me more pro-Irish because I resented that'. His 'white, English' appearance offering no guarantee against scapegoating, Kevin now identified with his parents as innocent victims of 'retaliatory' violence, but gendered his narrative of becoming protective towards a father first associated with a laughably feminine cultural form, then externally cast as a dangerously hyper-masculine, violent, alien presence and a mother rendered 'suspect' by marrying an Irishman.

But the concept of 'second generation' was often contested in Ireland itself. Like Kevin, on childhood trips 'home' Bob was 'slagged' as 'the English cousin. When you're small, no-one says anything but when you're older and you've got the accent it's "the English cousins"'. Bob experienced this particularly pejoratively in the context of a northern Republican border county and his emerging 'Republican' political credentials. These experiences reflect an official and popular historical ambivalence in Ireland towards emigrant descendants. Despite the recent romantic conceptual- ization of emigrants as 'diaspora', (exemplified by President Mary Robinson's celebratory Irish team reception following the 1994 World Cup), but which elides variations in emigrant experiences, [14] increased Irish post-war emigration to Britain, driven by domestic economic stagnation and growing restrictions on emigration to the US, has been ignored or progressively sanitised as inevitable, necessary or even positive by successive Irish governments. [15] The 1950s emigrants' children's negative perception as 'English' reflects the historical construction of Irish/English national identities as mutually exclusive, the absence of 'racial' or linguistic/cultural markers of heredity and the growth in Anglo-Irish tensions post- 1969 with the eruption of the 'Troubles'.

Becoming a 'Republic' supporter symbolized both identity as a 'second generation' Irishman and individuated masculine identity through multiple forms of differentiation, from England supporters to other Ireland supporters, even including his parents as indicated in his playful Oedipal gibes. Psychodynamically, it involved the imaginary placement of part of the self and the imagined 'native land' in symbolic

form and, dialectically, the psychic re-internalization of that symbolism. They sought their 'own way of being Irish' by embracing a 'British', masculine cultural form whose team composition both legitimated their 'Irishness' and was distanced from the daily geo- and micropolitics of being from Irish or mixed parentage and the conflicting projections that entailed. These were also narratives of masculine becoming similar to other respondents' accounts, retrospectively narrativising their transcending geographical and symbolic binarisms and doing so independently. There were elements of both Oedipal identification and distancing since this cultural form was 'theirs', but not necessarily their parents' – they were 'second generation Irish' but 'first generation football supporters'.

This process also entailed two dimensions peculiar to the spatiality of Irish emigrant 'second generation' identities. First, it was an escape from Irish identity's negative connotations in Britain during the Troubles. Thus many 'second generation Irish' supporters felt personally validated as Ireland fans, stressing their positive reception abroad and friendships formed with fellow supporters, including fans travelling from Ireland. 'Away' trips, particularly, offered opportunities to 'be' unproblematically 'Irish'. Hugh refers below to the advantages of being Irish (but not English) abroad while Declan expresses the freedom from projected guilt by association Irish immigrants experienced in Birmingham in the 1970s and 1980s.

> Hugh: Because they don't know the different accents, English-Irish, if you say you're Irish they're that bit more friendly.

> Declan: The Irish, they're made welcome 'cause people aren't scared of you, they love you. They don't watch News at Ten and think every Irish person is a terrorist.

Second, travelling to games was proof to potential doubters of commitment, that they were 'real', since sport is a cultural commodity over which supporters can experience a sense of symbolic 'ownership' because – uniquely - spectators are 'supporters' in that they contribute materially to the commodity they have purchased through admission, but which is produced while in progress. [16] In disputes over 'authenticity' and 'legitimacy', 'being there' provided significant rhetorical support to 'second generation' supporters who could 'prove' their credentials by effectively being part of this commoditised form. Moreover, narratives of travelling, particularly willingly endured discomfort, were variants of quintessentially masculine narratives of becoming, demonstrating physical toughness by overcoming geographical obstacles:

> Mark: We went to Denmark, thirty hours on the coach, and met these lads [from Dublin] and these heard the accents. We were worried about how we might be received and this one fella goes, 'if you've come thirty hours on a coach to support Ireland, you're more Irish than either of us'.

These variants on 'finding your own way of being Irish' men were geographically specific versions of the theme of collective rebirth in contemporaneous celebrations of Ireland's newfound football success. [17] But whereas texts like Christy Moore's celebratory song about Ireland's Euro '88 participation, 'Joxer Goes to Stuttgart'

humorously transformed the potentially negative and demeaning Irish stereotype of a comic Irishman abroad into a signifier for 'new' masculine and national self-confidence, for second generation Irish supporters becoming and remaining supporters stemmed from the spatio-temporal dynamics of their emigrant background and difficulties in expressing Irish identity in Britain or visiting Ireland.

On the other hand, identity articulated through such a mode of consumption is fundamentally unstable because it requires constant reiteration. That second generation supporters regularly encountered suspicion, hostility or rejection from Irish-born non-migrant supporters or England supporters suggests that these 'internationals' were sites of internal identity contestation and differentiation despite outward appearances of collective identity and celebration, echoing difficulties experienced domestically in expressing their 'Irishness'. They particularly disliked the 'plastic paddy' insults encountered in various settings and from many quarters (including 1980s 'new wave', 'first generation Irish' emigrants), a term which dismissed their claims to Irish identity as imitative and false. [18] Mac an Ghaill and Haywood [19] found that some male second-generation respondents were ironically appropriating this pejorative (and gender-coded) term as a means of rhetorically emphasizing both their collective authenticity and difference from British/English and non-emigrant Irish alike. Some of the supporters resorted to comparable, distinctly gendered tactics, but with some difficulty.

Arthur had long abandoned open expressions of 'Irishness' in Birmingham, fearing verbal attack:

> If I go to an Irish pub and watch Ireland play, I can see the looks – 'What's he fuckin' doin', he's no Paddy' – and I kinda think 'what's goin' on here?' Some of the young kids can do it, but I couldn't sit with all that carry on. I go 'up the Republic' and it's 'shut up ya bollox, I'll lift you'.

Seeking affinity with his deceased Dublin-born father he was aggressively cast as an 'Englishman' by that generation. But he invented a paradoxical inter-generational game of masculine pre-emption on trips to Ireland to gain conditional acceptance in pubs:

> [They ask] 'Where're you from?' 'I'm English. Me oul' fella's Jimmy Kelly over there.' 'Ah, you're a Kelly, you're fuckin' Irish.' I go 'Well . . . ' 'Don't say you're fuckin' English, son, you're Irish.' That'll get me a result. In five minutes I've made these big fuckers say I'm Irish. Whereas I walk in there, [exaggerated Birmingham accent] 'Awroight.' 'Where're you from?' 'I'm Irish.' What's their reaction? 'You're not fuckin' Irish, you're fuckin' English!'

Illustrating the contingent indeterminacy of lived and ascribed identity, Arthur becomes a symbolic object in his interlocutors' articulation of identity while in his they alternate between aggressors and dupes, quasi-paternal and childishly idiotic – contradictory dimensions of the Irishness he craved and resented because he couldn't simply be a 'Kelly'.

Indeed many supporters found their 'credentials' more frequently questioned at 'home' matches. Unsurprisingly, Ireland-England contests generally (five from 1988 to 1995) brought heightened risks of 'mistaken identity' for English-born supporters. Here, Bob and Liam explain their 'no win situation' regarding the 1995 'home' Ireland-England match which, like many 'second generation' supporters they purposely missed (and which was abandoned due to unsegregated England fans' violence):

> Bob: Irish people who've never grown up in the Irish community in England, they can't understand why people with English accents are coming over to support the team.

> Liam: We wouldn't go because if you say you support Ireland to an Irish person they might hassle you or say 'fair enough' but you never know. Then you're in a bar and England fans come up and you're ordering beer in an English accent, then they're gonna hate you.

> Bob: You get it both ways then.

Being Ireland supporters could equally spell unwanted conflicts with England fans accusing them of being 'traitors'. For 'away' England-Ireland matches the linkages and contradictions of mutual masculine differentiation, imagined national territory and local acquaintance could be more complex. Peadar described how, on crutches en route to a 1991 match at Wembley an England fan (of Irish parentage!) from his local pub almost pushed him into traffic, possibly incensed by an acquaintance expressing an embedded Irish identity he himself denied. So bizarre were the disjuncture between local acquaintance and national affiliation and the vicissitudes of such masculine relationships that years later, now a friend, the same fan defended Peadar with a broken bottle when his British National Party colleagues headbutted him! 'Your own way of being Irish' in the 'fifth green field' was, thus, an adventure in developing and expressing a masculine national identity subject to contestation due to their supposedly visible and audible Englishness.

One way of legitimating their own identities was through their intellectual and affective relationships with 'second generation' players in the Irish team. In particular, by scrutinizing players' biographies, credentials and performances, supporters positioned themselves and constructively refined their own masculine national identities. But because some players, like Michael Robinson, who uniquely qualified for Ireland through great-grandparentage, having persuaded his 'third generation' Irish mother to acquire an Irish passport, [20] could be classed as 'mercenary', players could be contradictory symbolic objects: psychic containers, objects in which collective fantasies and anxieties of national identity might be placed and safely contained through international competition; elusive containers which, through their ambivalence or technical inadequacy, undermined these fantasy projections; and because male athletes' labour power was temporarily commoditised for the national cause they were dispensable as representatives. Players come and go, but supporters are constant (some described their attendance records as 'caps'). In supporters' conceptualizations, players could occupy all, simultaneously or over time.

Paul McGrath, possibly Ireland's most popular player in the 1980s and 1990s despite occasional alcoholic binges, which led him to occasionally miss key games, exemplified fans' romantic investment in players as psychic containers. The 'London Irish' supporters' fanzine, On the One Road (No.25, 1994) review of his 'autobiography' [21] concentrated on his unhappy Irish childhood following 'illegitimate' birth and orphanage upbringing after his mother 'was forced, through the social make up of Ireland in the late fifties to go and have Paul born in London'. The review related McGrath's childhood trauma and alcoholism to multiple displacement as the British-born child of Irish and Nigerian parents, then raised as a black Protestant in Ireland. Such empathy with McGrath's unhappy migrant biography (though involving re-migration to Ireland following birth) recurred in the author's research, suggesting his symbolizing British birth through forced migration, a symbolism also involving a critique of Irish society. For Peadar the parallel was personal. He enthused that: 'You have to hand it to the man, after all he's been through, he's a fantastic player. I always feel nervous when he's not playing, he just reads the game so well. I'd still have him in the team, I don't care what anyone says.' Peadar was himself born in London, but conceived in Ireland 'out of wedlock,' so precipitating his parents' speedy, unplanned emigration. In his 40s this still preoccupied him, remaining such a family secret that he regularly received birthday cards on his real and 'invented' birthdays: 'I'm like the fucking Queen […] I'd give anything to have been born in Ireland, you don't have to keep explaining what you are to people.' Placing McGrath hermeneutically in a semantically framing context, such supporters indirectly placed themselves within a particular geographical, historical and cultural context of 'forced' emigration.

However, such romantic recontextualization and empathising with emigrant narratives was not universal. Mercenary but 'performing' players could always outclass 'authentic' but under-achieving players in the ultimate measure of symbolism, 'results.' Second generation supporters' own identity indeterminacy and vicissitudes were rather 'homologous' with the team's composition and fortunes – in Willis' [22] sense that a social group can infuse objects of consumption with meaning because in 'structure and content [they] parallel and reflect the [group's] structure, style, typical concerns, attitudes and feelings. [Homology] is the continuous play between the group and a particular item which produces specific styles, meanings, contents and forms of consciousness.' Players reflected the spectrum of descendant Irish identities by ranging from very close to tenuous Irish connections. Less obviously, their identities' intermittent materialization for international matches and their expression through masculine competition were homologous with the team's intermittent materialization and need to repeatedly prove itself in competition, being otherwise notionally existent. Requiring constant reiteration to be consistently meaningful it was evanescent, inconsistent and enabled the expression of 'second generation identities' as 'first generation football supporters' by providing opportunities for supporters to 'prove themselves.'

Sideline(d) Masculinities: Contesting Supporter 'Authenticity' and Boundaries

This homology was practically manifested in supporters' expressing this 'second generation identity' competitively in group behaviour at match gatherings or with friends in pubs, either directly confronting other groups or verbally invoking them in internal discussions. Just as team identity requires opponents' presence and resistance, gain oscillates with concession, wholeness and solidarity with fragmentation and dissolution, so supporters forged 'second generation Irish', distinctively masculine identities through interaction but with fluid, shifting 'in'/'out-group' boundaries. [23] This could extend to internal differences amongst 'second generation' supporters, focusing on 'authenticity'. This section examines how this occurred.

First, collective gatherings provided opportunities to rehearse comparable experiences of Irish identity in England, giving concrete, communal form and present tense to the otherwise fragmented, evanescent, remembered. A recurring feature that was recalled was experiences involving the intertwining of inter-group masculine competition with conceptualizations of national identity. In an exemplary instance, at a Brussels pub gathering for a 1997 Belgium-Ireland game two former schoolmates at a Catholic school in Margaret Thatcher's London electoral constituency were pondering their school's relative 'Irishness' given its high 'second generation Irish' numbers, recalling one significant episode. When British army soldiers visited for publicity/recruitment purposes during the 1981 IRA Hunger Strikes, some lads wore balaclavas in the schoolyard while others wrote IRA in reverse on their palms, imprinting them on the soldiers in handshakes. Highly amusing to those present, this incident is significant in several respects.

Obviously it reflects some identification with militant Republicanism among second generation Irish Londoners. But the boys were also responding to the school's failure to acknowledge their Irish background and presence there due to their Irish parents' Catholicism. This ludic resistance to institutional authority, rigidity and ignorance or denial of potential political sensitivities entailed playing the violent (Irish) 'other' to the British army (the balaclava being a quintessentially metonymic 'terrorist' symbol). As an exclusive in-joke amongst the lads it expressed a peculiarly second generation Irish masculine identity, aggressive in intent and unambiguous in meaning, but difficult for the school authorities to police because it masqueraded as friendly handshaking. The recounted story facilitated that shared identity's later reiteration, including mates from similar backgrounds and prompting extended discussion of comparable English educational experiences. Contextually, the 'away' match's contested space itself inspired this collective identity's temporary crystallization around the recalled contested space of adolescent experiences of masculine and national becoming.

It also illustrates a 'second generation' humorous play with identity's paradoxes and plasticity, though the humour is angry, frustrated at the erasure of complex self- and collective identities which becoming an adult supporter could reverse, symbolically if not actually. A key element was the expression of 'doubleness', paradoxically combining overt, externally ascribed and covert, 'real' identities in unilaterally devised games

of physical disguise, 'piss take' and 'wind up'. Such paradoxical, physical play on identity's plasticity recurred in second generation supporters' behaviour which, specific to the 'second generation', created their own bounded 'fifth green field' which excluded others, including Irish-born people ignorant of, and unwilling or unable to understand, the contested space of second generation experiences. For example, two supporters from this group, avid wearers of 'official' Ireland team merchandise, regularly tried to impersonate named players, through vague physical resemblance, in bars and nightclubs. Both Londoners, they chose two Irish born, heavily locally accented players, so inevitably inviting challenge, once by a player's grandfather, on another occasion by a player's cousin. This 'wind-up', an absurd double game of impersonation which both embodies and caricatures the naivest consumer (the logic that buying merchandise equals direct identification with players) once again illustrates a peculiarly second generation Irish masculine identity. While impersonating British-born players might vicariously legitimate their identities, this highlights the plasticity, flexibility, non- identity of 'identity', revealing difference within outward identification, through the joke's exclusivity (virtually inconceivable amongst Irish-based fans) separating the 'second generation' from other supporters. And it could provoke equally exclusive responses, accusations of being 'plastics'. Following such a denouncement, one of them rhetorically joked, 'what, they think I'm going to turn my Irish tracksuit inside out and have an English one on the inside?'

Indeed, such angry humour was often aggressively employed in confronting non-emigrant supporters. Travelling to an 'away' Portugal game on Lisbon's Metro, hearing English accents some Dublin fans sang BBC soap EastEnders' theme tune, then used mock cockney accents and expressions to signify the second generation supporters' 'alien' presence. The latter retorted that all 'Dubs' were Manchester United fans and were talking in 'Dick Van Dyke' cockney (referring to the Mary Poppins film), implying an unacknowledged contradiction and ontological insecurity in their favouring United's global brand over domestic Irish football, and a quasi-'provincial' ignorance. The response also implied that they 'knew' their would-be tormenters better than the latter could ever understand their historical and geographical complexities. Again, this incident constituted a quintessentially masculine, both playful and aggressive inter- group rivalry signifying difference rather than shared identity. Second generation supporters frequently ironically labelled such opponents 'master racers', the Nazi allusion suggesting their rigid, aggressively defensive post-colonial insecurity regarding the boundaries of national identity. Indeed their frequent critical appraisal of Irish-born fans' implicit or explicit casual racism implied their own superior liberalism acquired through their experiencing and exemplifying multicultural life in Britain.

Second generation groups' fifth green field boundaries could also involve masculine tensions and conflicts between friends, further complicating gendered spatial contestation. Thus Bob complains below of Irish-parented England fans and friends using 'Irishness' as a 'wind up' through banter – mutually exchanging mock insults and cutting remarks – and feigning Irish identity on trips to pursue sexual conquests:

> If there's an Irish woman on the scene they'll start 'oh I'm Irish descent, my family's
> …' All of a sudden they're on about their families … Frank does that, doesn't he, he
> can't order a beer from an Irish girl without asking her where she comes from. We're
> there to support the team, they're there to chat up women. When you see him doing
> that you think 'couple of nights ago you were giving us hassle in the pub, now you're
> using that shit to chat up women?'

Key to Frank's successful wind-up was his sexually motivated masquerade, a masculine competition where he was never more 'English' to them than when cynically 'playing the Irish card'. Frank added another dimension through his bizarre gendering of football and Anglo-Irish politics. He identified with a 'hard' masculinity associated with being 'English', but also identified with a northern Irish Sinn Fein militant Republicanism (personified by Gerry Adams and mediated by identification with his parents' northern origin and Republican views), supported Glasgow Celtic because of its northern Irish associations but despised a 'soft' masculinity associated with the 'Republic', thus articulating 'hard' masculinities with geographical space in an imaginary gendered geopolitics. Reducing national identity to a gendered game, such behaviour also highlighted the indeterminacy and fluidity of 'second generation Irish' masculine identity for fans like Bob.

The guarding, negotiation of and play with the boundaries of 'second generation Irish' identity by supporters in these various practices reflect the indeterminacy and fluidity of their identities generally. Their ludic dimensions, involving a constant interplay between the corporeal, spatial and linguistic, are especially significant in illustrating how various aspects of this cultural form, from clothes to players, together with fellow football supporters, Irish and otherwise, became symbolic objects in individual and collective identity formation and negotiation in the 'liminal', imaginary fifth green field of 'away' games.

A key feature of these supporter groups was their internal mutual reinforcement and boundary maintenance, including their differentiation from other, supposedly less 'serious', supporters. In his ethnography of Republic supporters in the 1990s Giulianotti observed the growing phenomenon of 'fan tourism' amongst the expanding Irish support base – vacationing fans determined to celebrate irrespective of results. Hence the emerging ritual of Irish fans celebrating performances even following defeats, a ritual which might signify 'faithful, hardcore football fans', [24] but was intensely irritating to many self-professed 'committed' supporters in this research who were visibly distressed by defeat. Thus, while awaiting a train following Ireland's 3-0 drubbing by Portugal in Lisbon in 1995, many Irish fans playfully competed and simultaneously merged with Portuguese chants of 'Portugal' with the quasi-homophonic 'Paul McGrath'. However, self-styled 'real' supporters were glumly silent.

Some supporters encountered during this research ostensibly typified this 'fan tourism' and were quite distinct in significant respects from those discussed above. However, shifting focus to these supporters, the following section explores how, through biographical contextualization, such behaviour in the 'fifth green field' may be seen to articulate in often complicated ways with Irish emigrant experiences.

The group discussed below, which included both first and second generation supporters, was outwardly uncritically celebratory, but their hedonism was inextricably connected to associations of Ireland with profound feelings of sadness and loss, and their friendships, crystallized by collective 'away' trips, offered a means of limited mutual support.

'A mask to hide behind': 'Fan tourism' in Biographical Context

This discussion concentrates on Brian, the core of this group. A regular 'away' match visitor, he freely admitted that he was 'not a football supporter'. He self-consciously epitomized the clichéd image of colourful Irish supporters abroad in appearance, hedonistic behaviour and good humoured engagement of 'locals'. A Dubliner in his 50s (whose picture adorned his Birmingham 'local'), he sported a huge belly, shaven head and handlebar moustache. He wore various hats, from a beret to a Stetson, and a long overcoat resembling Western cowboy outfits. Waddling around, confidently puffing a cigar, he attracted locals' and fellow fans' attention on these trips, many stopping to photograph or be photographed with him. He was a Falstaffian dancer to Eurotrash pop in tourist bars, led the terrace chanting, told limitless jokes and was a self-conscious quasi-'ambassador' for his country as he good-naturedly chatted with locals.

Brian said, 'I don't eat when I'm away and I don't change the time on my watch 'cause I savour every moment, because I know who I am, I also have the reinforcement of who I am by being with my own'. Suspending meal rituals and temporal organization in favour of continuous drinking, often through the night, deliberately broke with his everyday life in favour of a masculine collective identity with 'his own' fellow Irishmen through alcohol consumption. For fellow supporters he was a 'character' central to the 'liminal', liquid spaces created on these trips: piss-takes, wind- ups and practical jokes were common, masculine working-class humour varieties which play on masculine identity's routine construction through mutual differentiation, creating a shared identity and defusing any potential tension by signifying without equating to the 'reality' signified. [25] Thus in chaotic karaoke sessions the lads nominated each other, chose songs to cause embarrassment but actually increased embarrassment by lining up different songs. Brian described this as being 'in the net', a democracy of potential humiliation made bearable by its universality, a 'net' specific to gatherings for matches 'away' from Birmingham and Dublin 'home' matches because:

> Being away as a nation we find who we are. In Birmingham the divisions - the jacks will go to a certain pub, the redneck and culchie will go somewhere else, he'll be wary of us, we'll be wary ... whereas we go away as a nation. And that's the beauty.

But 'it's also the sorrow and the sadness, in that we can live with each other abroad, can't live with each other at home'. A complex, somewhat contradictory relationship between these liminal episodes and Brian's emigrant experiences became evident during fieldwork. Brian was a police officer, alienating him from some Irish contemporaries because the West Midlands police was notorious for the wrongful

arrest and conviction of the 'Birmingham Six' for the 1974 IRA pub bombings. He also felt slightly out of place within the police, recalling a Home Office interview question, 'what's it like being a minority race and also being a minority policeman?', the 'connotation', as Brian suggested, being that they were contradictory. Conspicuously visible, as an Irish emigrant, within both the 'force' and the 'Irish community' he 'couldn't' visit certain pubs in Birmingham or Ireland.

Brian was also personally ambivalent towards Ireland. He described estranged family relationships, particularly with his now deceased mother, estrangement exacerbated by being 'granny reared – couldn't get on with my mother'. On occasional Irish holidays he immediately visited his grandparents' graves. Never having seen his grandfather alive, he modelled his appearance on a photograph, recalling a neighbour's confirmation that 'your grandfather will never be dead as long you're alive, son'.

Psychic splitting seemed to pervade Brian's personal and professional life. He constantly negotiated forms of 'projection', cast by others as potentially endangering 'copper' while himself being potentially endangered. But he idealized an Ireland dominated by inaccessible, dead figures, particularly men, including his father- in-law whose grave he regularly visited alone. Impersonating his deceased grandfather kept a borrowed memory alive as an introjected 'good object' despite the potentially dangerous Ireland of the present. But Brian knew his contradictions. He proudly stressed his concern for his bizarre apparel's 'kosher' credentials, yet intimated that his grandpaternal moustache, the 'genetic' link, 'like all facial hair' was 'a mask to hide behind'. He had twice 'seriously contemplated suicide'. Brian's self-consciously theatrical bricolage of diverse cultural components, central to his integrating self and national identity as an emigrant, nonetheless masked underlying fragility.

'Away' matches afforded symbolic opportunities, impossible at 'home', to validate this investment. In a strange circuit, fellow fan tourists' photographs materially recorded an imaginary identity modelled on a photograph. And his police badge smoothed relations with potentially hostile local police abroad, so affording his professional identity some cultural validation. On the Algarve, for instance, he defused potentially inflammatory confrontations with police and located and returned stolen goods from bars to preserve fans' positive collective reputation. Performing this role as a protective, shadow policeman, Brian sought restored vitality and communal value to his 'copper' identity. But he was perhaps defending against the acute sense of his identity having been constructed elsewhere, earning his masculine authority as a policeman, though the 'reality' of his multi-dimensional identity became clear at USA '94 when he was 'kicked in the balls' by Dublin fans who discovered his profession. He was later found 'crying in his room'.

These details show how emigrant experience intertwines and complicates personal, professional and national identities and how Brian – an unusual but distinctly Irish emigrant – could simultaneously embody multiple masculinities, from 'hegemonic' to 'subordinate'. [26] He dealt ruthlessly with unruly police subordinates, amongst 'his own' was the projected embodiment of anti-Irish corrupt British policing, played a Falstaffian buffoon and avuncular 'private eye' on trips, and was a physically

vulnerable middle-aged man. He was also casually homophobic, and – his internally contradictory phrasing – 'racist, but not a bigot'. Being 'Irish' in the 'fifth green field' afforded some simplification of his emigrant identity but he nonetheless continued to embody these contradictory masculinities.

While his supporter friends appeared to share Brian's extravagant behaviour it became evident that their affinity lay in a shared underlying sadness and sense of loss. Two, both late 30s and 'second generation Irish' were clearly heavy drinkers, possibly alcoholic. Simon, whose serious, alcohol-exacerbated illness resulted in hospitalisation on several trips, intimated: 'I'm gonna die in a few years anyway so I don't care [. . .] I nearly died anyway a couple of years ago, collapsed in [a public toilet] and split my head open.' These trips were potentially lethal 'escapes' from a highly paid professional job, concealed from family and employer for fear of censure and dismissal. Denying personal material needs through resignation to premature death he purchased a house for his working-class parents. Brain damaged in a building site accident Joey's drinking and poor hygiene were renowned (arriving wrapped in a flag but ticketless, with 'piss and food stains down his shorts', he was once 'walked onto' a return flight). Both were exuberant drinkers and revellers, but Simon was repeatedly rescued from self- provoked fights while Joey was 'disappointed' if he hadn't 'started' drinking by 9a.m., having already drunk all night. His physically abusive father had abandoned his family, making Joey a de facto parent when younger. He described his drinking as 'inherited – my old man was an alcoholic and his old man too'. Their mates treated them as comical, childlike 'characters' needing protection from themselves. These 'second generation' biographies echo stereotypical stories of first generation emigrants living a ghostly, unsettled existence in their 'host' country. Their 'away' trips seemed to both constitute and symbolize suspended forward momentum and personal and familial settlement. This masculine sub-network, occasionally crystallized in the fifth green field of 'away' matches, was grounded in personal or familial emigrant experiences. Brian, Simon and Joey's gravitation towards each other combined the loose friendship of collective drinking with publicly unstated mutual affection and a sense of each other's underlying sadness. Brian was particularly conscious of how this attracted other men towards him.

Another, Peadar, had numerous funny anecdotes from trips, particularly enjoying incidents of mistaken identity and misunderstanding. At USA '94 when, in Ireland jerseys, they were asked by a flight attendant if they were the Irish team, they jokingly replying 'yes', fellow passengers applauded them. This story illustrates a peculiarly 'second generation' enjoyment of paradox, play and flux in identity formation and manifestation. But such stories acquire nuanced significance when contextualized by his unhappy domestic life, which Peadar explained in terms of 'two types of Irishmen in Birmingham, respectable men with families and bachelors like me who've never married or settled and go to pubs like [his "local"]'.

A middle-aged son of immigrant parents, unable to 'afford my own place because of my crap [low level clerical] job' (his parents, having worked in secure factory occupations, had 'done well'), Peadar was chronically insomniac and suffered

an alcohol-related illness which he downplayed, but deeply concerned his family. He self-deprecatingly contrasted his lack of life 'direction' with 'respectable' men. These trips offered respite from his anxiety, which heightened as his parents planned to leave Birmingham on retirement, a constructive opportunity to be unproblematically 'Irish', albeit, like occasional sporting contests themselves, spatio-temporally bounded.

For Peadar, Ireland's associations were contradictory, ranging from paradoxical humour, play, family secrets (his own emigration-triggering scandalous conception in Ireland), to being 'well brought up', 'having a good family' and 'having manners'. 'Away' trips suspended normality, offered validation as a welcomed visitor and the loose, unquestioning coalescence and company of 'blokes' which he could enjoy without personal consequence but which could not relieve his acute sense of an unfulfilled life.

Such men were considered 'characters' among fellow travellers. This term might be seen as a 'sensitising concept', an ethnographic formulation of a social group's ways of conceptualizing its world. [27] 'Characters', invariably male, were outwardly 'colourful' in drinking and other behavioural exploits, but characterized by a somehow fractured biography, some details of which circulated amongst friends. The fractures might be temporal, spatial, corporeal or all three. For others they were symbolic 'objects', embodying a contradictory 'Irishness' combining hedonism, cartoon-like qualities and profound sadness which limited humour at their expense because it constituted versions of an emigrant narrative trajectory involving familial loss, geographical and psychic splitting and sadness. Comparable figures were visible in many informally emigrant 'Irish pubs', quasi-'avuncular' middle-aged men without partners or children, often disconnected from Irish families and relatively permanent fixtures in the pub's 'third place' between home and work, where other men's company but lack of intimacy compensates inner loneliness. 'Characters' like Brian, Simon and Joey were clearly ambivalent objects to others: amusing, perhaps 'acting out' repressed aspects of self through appearance or behaviour varying from hedonistic to depressive and self-destructive, but equally capable of irritating, embarrassing and drawing unwanted attention.

Occasionally renewed friendships in the 'fifth green field' connected them in shared imagining of national identity, temporarily connecting diverse biographical trajectories which nonetheless resonated in their shared sense of 'unsettlement', neither 'integrated' Irish men in Britain nor simply temporarily displaced from a straightforward sense of 'home' in Ireland.

Conclusions

Although these fans differed significantly from many 'second generation' supporters discussed earlier in the nature of their personal investment in this symbolic cultural form, the brief biographical contextualization here indicates that their 'fan tourism' and celebratory behaviour were dialectically and psychodynamically related to their fractured experiences of emigration and Irish identity. Though distinctive, their

investment in this cultural form was no less affective and meaningful than the personal investments of self-styled more 'committed' supporters for whom their support was a self-conscious expression of second-generation Irish and (implicitly) masculine identity.

The various cases discussed here illustrate the heterogeneity of this emigrant supporter culture, how 'being there' variously constituted inevitably contradictory and contingent efforts to simply 'be' 'Irish' men in 1990s Britain, and how the meanings of the 'fifth green field' varied according to supporters' direct or indirect experiences of emigration. Ruing or celebrating despite defeat were not necessarily mutually contradictory or matters of degree of investment, but are indicative of the heterogeneity and unevenness of 'Irish' migrant masculine identities.

Finally, they illustrate the general plasticity, malleability of sport as a symbolic cultural form, and more specifically how sports like soccer can be imbued with distinctive symbolic value across and within generations of people who outwardly share the same national and gender identities.

Notes

[1] See Free, 'Keeping them under Pressure: Masculinity, Narratives of National Regeneration and the Republic of Ireland Soccer Team', 266.

[2] Contacted via the London Republic of Ireland Soccer Supporters Club in 1994 these exclusively male networks consisted of supporters who were locally acquainted or met periodically for international games. Mostly resident in Birmingham, one network consisted of supporters aged mid-20s to mid-30s, the other early-30s to late-50s. Unstructured interviews and follow-ups were conducted with individuals and pairs. Participant observational fieldwork involved trips to 'home' (Dublin) and 'away' matches and informal meetings with supporters in Birmingham to watch televised 'internationals', usually at Birmingham's Irish Centre. No real names are used in this paper.

[3] Turner, The Anthropology of Performance, 101.

[4] Kearney, 'The Fifth Province: Between the Global and the Local'.

[5] Mac an Ghaill and Haywood, 'Young (Male) Irelanders: Postcolonial Ethnicities – Expanding the Nation and Irishness', 388.

[6] Hickman et al., 'The Limitations of Whiteness and the Boundaries of Englishness: Second-generation Irish Identifications and Positionings in Multiethnic Britain'; Arrowsmith, 'Plastic Paddy: Negotiating Identity in Second-generation "Irish-English" Writing'; Harte, 'Migrancy, Performativity and Autobiographical Identity'.

[7] Klein, Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921–1945 and Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946–1963.

[8] Frosh, Identity Crisis: Modernity, Psychoanalysis and the Self, 51.

[9] Mac an Ghaill, 'What about the lads? – Emigrants, Immigrants, Ethnics and Transnationals in late 1990s Diaspora', 52.

[10] Grinberg and Grinberg, Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile.

[11] Greenslade, 'The Blackbird Calls in Grief: Colonialism, Health and Identity Among Irish Immigrants in Britain', 52.

[12] MacLaughlin, Ireland: the Emigrant Nursery and the World Economy.

[13] Cairns and Richards, Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture.

[14] Gray, 'Unmasking Irishness: Irish Women, the Irish Nation and the Irish Diaspora', 228.

[15] MacLaughlin, Ireland: the Emigrant Nursery, 30–49.

[16] Free and Hughson, 'Common Culture, Commodity Fetishism and the Cultural Contradictions of Sport'.

[17] Free, 'Keeping them under Pressure'.

[18] Hickman et al., 'The Limitations of Whiteness and the Boundaries of Englishness', 176. [19] Mac an Ghaill and Haywood, 'Young (Male) Irelanders', 394–5.

[20] Rowan, The Team that Jack Built, 55.

[21] McGrath and Dervan, Ooh Aah Paul McGrath.

[22] Willis, Profane Culture, 191.

[23] Tajfel, 'Experiments in Intergroup Discrimination'.

[24] Giulianotti, 'Back to the Future: an Ethnography of Ireland's Football Fans at the 1994 World Cup Finals in the USA', 337.

[25] Willis, 'Tekin' the Piss'. [26] Connell, Masculinities, 77.

[27] Blumer, 'What is Wrong with Social Theory?', 7.

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