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## **Confessional Tales from Former Football Hooligans. A Nostalgic, Narcissistic Wallow in Football Violence.**

The purpose of this paper is to review the background context, content and contribution of the so-called 'hoolie-lit' auto/biography in the study of football hooliganism.<sup>1</sup> For Giulianotti a major problem in researching football hooliganism is the lack of worthwhile data on which to found a realistic explanation due, in part, to long-standing methodological considerations.<sup>2</sup> Whilst cognisant of limitations in using auto/biographical works as reliable sources of information, the possibility exists that auto/biographies written by ex-football hooligans might prove profitable historical resources in furthering our understanding of hooliganism. Given how, under certain conditions, the auto/biography (along with other personal documents) can offer a rich seam of data for a researcher it was decided to collate and assess 44 auto/biographical 'hoolie-lit' books which recount the exploits of British football hooligans.

Throughout history the prevailing forms of auto/biography have been those written by a powerful and affluent elite, but with the democratisation of society Plummer suggests of other kinds of stories are emerging from the margins.<sup>3</sup> The growing and productive use of the auto/biography in social sciences offers an additional dimension, with feminist and

‘black’ writers being particularly successful in this area.<sup>4</sup> The auto/biography can in certain circumstances contribute to greater understanding and make possible the link between the ‘academic and the everyday’ as demonstrated by Wacquant’s excellent recent autobiographical account.<sup>5</sup>

The paper begins with the emergence of the ‘hoolie-lit’ genre and the trend of ex-hooligans publishing ‘their diaries’. After a brief explanation of the methodology used, the paper identifies 44 books, the clubs with whom the authors (ex-hooligans) identify themselves and the dominant period covered within each book. This is followed by an exploration of similarity and difference in their content. An assessment is made on the contribution of these books and their usefulness in studying football hooliganism, with some concluding thoughts on the possible future of the ‘hoolie-lit’ genre. It should be noted at the outset that this paper is not a review of football hooliganism in any wider sense as this has, with varying success, been done elsewhere adopting variously anthropological, sociological and psychological approaches.

At the outset, it is worth recalling King’s observation that the fighting activities of the football hooligans actually constitute a negligible length of time and yet many, many hours are spent talking about it.<sup>6</sup> The irony of this is not missed in that King’s observation can be extended to incorporate the ever-increasing number of books on, and by, hooligans. Does this recent deluge of auto/biographical accounts offer any fresh insight into what many now regard as an over-researched area?

## Marking Out the Territory

It is generally accepted that the period from the early 1960s through to the mid-1980s saw the peak in football-related hooligan activity, with the appearance of the first ‘first-hand’ accounts of these violent activities, written by ‘real-life’ hooligans, appearing at the end of the 1980s.<sup>7</sup> These two initial narratives were followed by intermittent accounts written by ex-hooligans, with the late 1990s seeing a sudden increase in the number of auto/biographical books being written by former football hooligans.

It is unclear when or who first used the term ‘hoolie-lit’, but there is little doubt that this description is increasingly recognised in the minds of both the publisher and the reader. For this paper a distinction is made between a fan’s account and when an account is considered as belonging to the ‘hoolie-lit’ category. It is suggested that when an auto/biographical account places football violence at the centre of the text then it can be considered as ‘hoolie-lit’. This is a somewhat artificial distinction, however, with Redhead suggesting a shared ground between journalistic, novelistic and academic accounts.<sup>8</sup> A useful distinction can be made between a fan’s account and the hoolie-lit if one considers the actual content of the book and how it is marketed. The shared theme of all the books reviewed here is their auto/biographical format and the centrality and glorification of football related violence. Whilst there is debate as to what actually constitutes an auto/biographical text, it is useful to locate the (memory-based) auto/biography ‘hoolie-lit’ within the field of literature on football hooliganism:

1. ‘Hoolie-lit’ (auto/biographies, memoirs).
2. Fictional novels (with football hooliganism as a central theme).
3. Fan’s accounts (in which football hooligan-related violence is peripheral or absent).

4. Academic studies of football hooliganism (including sociological, psychological and anthropological explanations).

At the time of writing there exist 44 hooligan-focussed auto/biographical accounts. These are predominantly club-based accounts although some follow the (English) national team. The majority are straight-forward auto/biographical accounts, although many contain contributions from fellow hooligans. As noted above there are important theoretical issues in defining auto/biography, with a range of terms available to describe the books being considered here (including auto/biography, life story, memories, diaries, narratives, life history, and telling tales).<sup>9</sup>

Accompanying the rise of the hooligan's memoirs is the emergence of the fictional novel on hooliganism with two authors being particularly active in writing this type of book.<sup>10</sup> Such novels are marketed by the publishers as *fiction* with an important distinction being that these books are being accurately described (i.e. as fiction). This is unlike much of the auto/biographical 'hoolie-lit', which is marketed as factual but which, as will be discussed later, is a highly questionable claim.

There have long been available the (non-violent) fan's account with this category epitomised by Davies' *All Played Out* and Hornby's *Fever Pitch*.<sup>11</sup> These accounts typically offer a fan's travelogue in which they follow their team's games home and abroad.<sup>12</sup> Whilst such fan's accounts often include mention of hooligan activity these accounts are not built around the theme of violence and, importantly, are not marketed by the publisher as hooligan accounts. The non-violent fans do appear in 'hoolie-lit' and are usually described as 'shirters' or 'christmas trees' due to their wearing of club colours

(e.g. scarfs, team shirts). The hooligan quickly dropped such overt displays of club allegiance with their attention turning to clothing labels and particular brands of trainer (e.g. Stone Island, Aquascutum, and Adidas).<sup>13</sup>

The original and varied academic contributions to this field were followed by sustained and significant contributions from Eric Dunning and those identified with the Leicester School.<sup>14</sup> Since then much of the subsequent debate on hooliganism has, according to Giulianotti, given rise to a ‘rancorous and highly unproductive’ atmosphere (‘football wars’).<sup>15</sup> The varied academic explanations for hooliganism (e.g. expressions of masculinity, tribe, class, territory) will be revisited in this paper by considering the hooligans own explanations.

As Crawford has noted there is increasing commodification of most things sporting, including fan-related material and consumables related to spectating.<sup>16</sup> One might thus suggest that the popularity of this particular written genre is that it offers an opportunity to re-live an imagined past by voyeuristic (‘wannabe’) hooligans, with the consumers of the ‘hoolie-lit’ auto/biography seen to mirror the rise of the ‘Lad Culture’ and its central, yet problematic, use of irony.<sup>17</sup>

### **Sifting Through**

The criteria upon which the books are considered for inclusion in this review is that are publicly available and published by a recognised publisher. The books included here have a clear focus on hooligan activity and are marketed on the basis of their violent content,

with prominent statements on many of the book's covers claiming '*This Is The Book They Tried To Ban*' and '*The Book They Couldn't Ban*' and so on. Some of the authors make great play of the fact that they have a police record for football related violence with a number of them appearing to have secured publishing contracts on the basis of their notoriety, such as '*Confessions of a Category C Football Hooligan*.'<sup>18</sup>

The use of the auto/biography and life story has an established track record especially in History, Literary Theory and Cultural Studies, although there has been a more cautious approach to their usage in the social sciences.<sup>19</sup> Despite this hesitancy, Sociology's interest in individuals' lives has seen increasing use of the life-history approach and oral history primarily by ethnographic researchers. This process has moved what was seen as a marginal method towards one with greater acceptability, in the process making it more theoretically sophisticated.<sup>20</sup> However, the use of the auto/biography still asks important epistemological and ontological questions,<sup>21</sup> with Prior noting how few social scientific research manuals concentrate on the written word and how,

the content of a document is never fixed and static, not least because documents have to be read, and reading implies that the content of a document will be situated rather than fixed. In any event, the analysis of content, production and use form three of the corner points around which we can consider the development of a research strategy.<sup>22</sup>

Historiography, that is the undertaking of historical research through the use of recollections, such as with the auto/biography, places emphasis on the written word on paper.<sup>23</sup> It allows for inferences to be made on the intent, motive and character and acknowledges the wider temporal context in which the work was written. This approach

contrasts with the more common methodological approach of a Content Analysis, which does not allow for inference to be made on the motivation or intent as analysis is contained to what is in the text. Importantly, Clements has discussed how what we believe to be ‘true memories’ can in fact be false or re-creations through an author’s own perspective and interpretation.<sup>24</sup> Consequently the auto/biography is a source of data and interpretation *by the author*. With Harrison, Miller and Powell stating that the ‘self as a story is not an historic truth – rather it is a narrative truth’, one is cognisant that the auto/biography does have shortcomings, with the concluding stages of this paper reflecting upon such limitations.<sup>25</sup>

Drawing on the work of Sandelowski, Sparkes suggests that ‘artistic truths are often more true to life than scientific ones because they are able to provide us with visions of human nature more resonant with our own experiences than any psychological, sociological, or other conventionally scientific rendering’.<sup>26</sup> Sparkes goes on to discuss differences between academic and popular writing and argues that were auto/biographical writing to be judged, it would be too simplistic to make an over-arching claim for consistency and agreement on the criteria used, with tensions and contradictions very likely to remain. Therefore he suggests judging different types of writing using different criteria of assessment, identifying terms such as coherence, verisimilitude, evocation, empathy, authenticity and believability.<sup>27</sup> He concludes by proposing an on-going task is required to create new criteria for choosing the criteria, but that it is ‘credibility’ that lies at the heart of making a judgement on writing.<sup>28</sup>



## The Hoolie-lit Titles

\* Insert Table 1 here

The above table shows Chelsea and West Ham are well-represented, with these two teams considered as possessing the most infamous hooligan followings (also known as ‘firms’ or ‘crews’ – respectively the ‘Headhunters’ and the ‘ICF’). The ‘hooligan memoirs’ table, whilst dominated by English clubs is not exclusively so, with Wales (Cardiff) and Scotland (Hearts, Motherwell, Aberdeen) each making contributions. Most football clubs have a well-known hooligan firms, yet there are some noticeable omissions from the above table with Leeds yet to chronicle their hooligans history, and with the two accounts of the Birmingham City F.C. *Zulus* firm having been written by an ‘outside’ female journalist.<sup>29</sup> With the rise of hooligan activity in the 1960s and running though to the early 1990s one can identify a clear time-lag from the hooligans’ activities to their chronicling of these activities - a delay identified by the ex-hooligans as principally due to their ‘growing up’ and moving away from direct involvement in hooliganism.<sup>30</sup>

As Giulianotti has noted the UK remains the dominant international influence in terms of financing and researching into hooliganism.<sup>31</sup> Whilst hooligan activity is no longer recognised as purely an ‘English disease’ Britain does lead the way in terms of ex-hooligans publishing ‘their diaries’. The periods covered in these books span the high-water mark of British hooliganism and with other countries continuing the trend of football related violence it remains to be seen whether the Italian ‘Ultras’ or South American ‘barras bravas’ will turn to pen and paper (or keyboard) to record their

exploits. In the meantime British writers are filling this void by turning their attention to overseas.<sup>32</sup>

### **Wallowing in the Past**

The central theme in these books is their prioritisation and celebration of violence with the vast majority following a hopelessly predictable format of ‘Went there by train / van, had a fight, wrecked their pub, took their end, came home’. Typically the book follows the author’s own life, with an almost exclusive focus on ‘spectacular matchday events’, with these episodes informed by vignette contributions from fellow members of the firm, presumably to lend a sense of veracity to the events being described. One of the disappointments when reading most of these accounts was their unashamedly biased approach –few of the individuals or their firms ever seem to have lost a fight. Whilst one should not be surprised to find vanity within an auto/biography, such levels of (unreflected) egotism and narcissism are a disappointment for the reader. If the author does actually admit to ‘defeat in combat’ it is usually couched in terms of making a ‘tactical withdrawal’ or of being ‘heavily outnumbered’. One can only surmise that those who were on the losing side have yet to write their account. Some of the more readable books contain sections in which they admit to losing fights, suggesting that the authors have moved on beyond the machismo self-aggrandisement that dominated their youth.<sup>33</sup>

Unsurprisingly all the books discussed here are written by men (for men?) with, for the majority, it being their first (and to date only) book. From the information given in the text it is not always possible to identify their socio-class position; however where

information is presented most of the accounts suggest the authors come from a working class background and have an average to low level of formal education, leaving school to work in skilled and unskilled manual forms of labour. The reader is usually provided with the author's route into the hooligan culture, typically starting by going to games with their father or elder brother then 'teaming up' with friends. In general, other areas of their lives (childhood, family, school, and work) make only the most fleeting of appearances and are usually accompanied by the briefest of attempts to explain their predilection for violence.

How was it that these particular authors came to be the ones to write the events of the firm with whom they ran? One might suggest it is the author's (egotistic) desire to be known, seeking a sense of self-importance and even notoriety (or possibly that they think they can write!). Being a 'top boy in a firm' required the individual to be at the front and centre of any fights (*to 'front up' and be ready to 'ave it'*). It is the relentless sense of narcissism and repeated assertions of 'how great we were' which quickly becomes tiring and clichéd for the reader. Giulianotti suggests that masculinity is a way of achieving status and therefore most of these books can be seen as crass attempts by the individuals to establish (or reinforce) their status as a senior member in the hooligan firm.<sup>34</sup>

If these accounts are written purely to appeal to those actually involved in the fighting they would not have secured a book contract but would have remained part of an 'oral culture' found down the local pub. However at times it does appear that they are actually writing for a very small audience given the number of meaningless name checks of their friends and fellow 'firm' members, the roads down which they chased opposing firms, the pubs in which they drank or smashed-up, the service stations they 'destroyed' and so

on. Such detail, whilst presumably included to lend a sense of veracity to the re-telling holds little meaning beyond those immediately involved.

Many of the authors claim that their main motivation for writing these accounts was to counter the media's mis-representation of their activities. Whilst many dismiss what they see as the media's misunderstanding of their activities at the same time they describe how they often looked forward to reading about themselves in the following day's newspapers. In terms of author motivation, Tordoff's explanation is somewhat confusing when he states that "for those who have been involved, no explanation is necessary, for those who haven't, no explanation is possible".<sup>35</sup> If Tordoff genuinely believes this, then it begs the question why exactly did he write the book? Clearly some authors have earned income from their books (although the niche market and modest sales suggests this is very limited) but does raise the question of whether these people are profiting from their crimes?

Given the range of academic explanations of football hooliganism one can find within these books evidence to support all such reasons. The early ethnographic research which suggested that the violence was innate (rather than socially learnt), does find an echo in many accounts, indeed it is the favourite 'explanation' offered by the ex-hooligans for their behaviour.<sup>36</sup> But as was noted at the time by the academics putting forward such explanations, such an approach is ahistoric and asocial and contradicts the socialisation process advocated by the majority of social scientists when explaining social behaviour.<sup>37</sup> With regard to hooliganism being explained in relation to territory, evidence was found to substantiate this proposal with numerous examples found on the importance of defending

their ground's home end or 'invading' (dominating) the opposition's terracing, pub or town's high street.

In terms of the violence being ritualistic, the hoolie-lit accounts are less clear.<sup>38</sup> Within these books some very violent encounters are recounted, especially when weapons were used. The use of weapons (e.g. knives, blades, axes and machetes) often raised a sense of indignation amongst authors from 'the old school' who preferred to follow unofficial rules of engagement and rituals of behaviour which constituted a 'perverse code of honour' and thus allowing them to 'fight fair'.<sup>39</sup> Isolated glimpses of reflection (and occasional apologising) for certain events can be found, for example when random acts of violence were committed against property or small groups of opposing fans. In some confrontations, intervention by the Police was welcomed, a situation echoed by King's citation of Armstrong's discussion on Police interventions 'saving face' for certain hooligans.<sup>40</sup>

There is a common perception, supported by some evidence, that hooligan culture was infused with elements from the far-right of the political spectrum. Many of the authors describe how small sections of the wider fan-base were involved with the far-right, with the authors claiming organisations such as the National Front alighted on football due to the opportunities for violent behaviour. Far-right fans were typically dismissed as 'a few odd nutters' with the majority of hooligans just wanting to fight.<sup>41</sup> A reading of this sub-genre suggests that political activity did not appear to be the central issue some have might believed, and if there was a relationship, this was not deeply-rooted. This suggests far-right recruitment was opportunist rather than seen as tapping into core racist beliefs,

thus endorsing the explanation offered by Taylor that the vast majority of hooligans were apolitical.<sup>42</sup>

As noted earlier, the use of auto/biographical sources can present serious difficulties due to problems of veracity and presentation of narratives which can and often do run counter to many traditional academic values. It is therefore somewhat ironic to find that many of these hooligans-turned-authors cluster *all* academic theorists and their explanations and treat them as offering a singular explanation which is then subsequently dismissed. Whilst it might be more understandable for them to be contemptuous towards and to dismiss media miss-reporting, less awareness is shown on the range of academic explanations offered for their behaviour. Although it is unknown whether they had actually read any academic explanations one might hazard a guess! An exception to this proposal is King who suggested that that only academic ‘worth reading’ was Gary Armstrong.<sup>43</sup>

### **Telling the Truth?**

A central issue in reviewing these auto/biographical accounts is the extent to which they can be considered accurate accounts from those directly involved (as they all purport to be). Whilst it might be agreed that these people were centrally involved and have produced primary sources the problem remains on the extent to which these written accounts be verified. Can it ever be known if what they describe actually took place, in terms of personal biography and the violence? Ribbins usefully highlights this tension as to whether one treats the auto/biography as essentially objective or subjective accounts.<sup>44</sup>

Are such accounts best seen as falsifiable facts or personally created fictions?

Ribbins suggests how “We may (at times at least) want to view auto/biographical material as providing us with a factual account of real events in times past. In such a case, we may be concerned that the auto/biography is flawed by errors of concealment or fabrication, or inaccuracies of memory.”<sup>45</sup> One might attempt to cross-reference the events described in the text with media reports at that time, although, it is widely accepted that the media exaggerate incidents of football hooliganism.<sup>46</sup> It might be possible to check the claims with other hoolie-lit accounts with each subsequent hooligan auto/biography making reference to previous accounts. Where two accounts of the same incident are to be found the problem remains as to which of the accounts is to be believed, thus highlighting the partial nature of recall and consequent inconsistency.

An auto/biography from an ex-football hooligan has the potential to offer an insight into a partly hidden world, but unfortunately most of the authors do not engage in any form of self-reflection. It was the (in some cases wholesale) lack of reflective discussion within these books which was a disappointment. The authors are very poor at offering an explanation of ‘why’ they were involved in football hooliganism – rather the books describe an amorphous mix of masculinity, class culture, social environment and a psycho-physiological ‘love of fighting’. Despite their claim of not wanting to glorify or condone the violence (‘they just want to be understood’), whole sections can be found which adopt a celebratory style, glorifying and wallowing in descriptions of fighting. Typically the authors then moralise and complain (with absolutely no sense of irony) how they have been misunderstood and misrepresented by others, particularly the media and academics.

Very few of these books actually include any mention of the game of football, and when a narrative does move away the violence and broaden out to include reference to the wider social environment (music, drugs, clothing, and politics), greater insight is generated. However, the majority of the writers fail to recognise Giddens' process of self-reflection and its role in leading to better forms of auto/biographical writing, with a similar non-engagement of Ribbins suggestion that 'the moral stance the writer and reader may take towards the material is important. The possibility of moral evaluation may in itself provide a strong motivation towards a particular sort of self-presentation within auto/biography'.<sup>47</sup> Ribbins draws upon Hoggert's observation in relation to his own auto/biographical writing in that 'self-consciousness is essential or there is nothing to say, but can soon slide into self-justification'<sup>48</sup> with Plummer suggesting that 'the reflection made by the writers in this genre (i.e. the auto/biography) is minimal whereas the self-absorption is maximised'.<sup>49</sup> Given that the majority of ex-hooligans state that no (academic / reasoned) explanation is needed for their actions, the door is left open for others to offer an understanding, even if the ex-hooligans do not approve of such attempts. It is this absence of self-reflexivity that is a missed opportunity and consequently a substantial weakness found in most of the books reviewed here.

It would be unfair to expect an academic treatise on the topic of football hooliganism (others have written these), as this is not the purpose of these books. It would therefore be inappropriate to utilise these books for something they are clearly not designed for (i.e. academic study) - one cannot criticise something for what it is not. Whilst acknowledging the popularity of relativism in some academic circles, and the inclusive approach proposed by Sparkes in assessing different kinds of writing, a review of hoolie-lit does raise a number of questions. Even with a contextualisation of each text within its field



one might, at minimum, expect a more credible account of ‘what happened’ to be offered.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately a significant majority of these books ‘fail to deliver,’ too busy are the authors in self-aggrandisement, leaving one with an overall written style as fantastical, fiction masquerading as fact. It would be a woeful state of affairs if these accounts were treated as accurate reflections of what actually happened, because as King has shown, hooligans attempt to establish the dominance of collective memory over individual memory.<sup>51</sup> Many of the books are clearly seeking to do this, not least through the inclusion of interviews and vignette contributions from fellow hooligans.

Individual memories are ontologically susceptible to re-interpretation in line with emergent collective accounts because memories exist only at the level of the imagination. ... Memories can be recalled only in the light of present circumstances which necessarily alter their significance. ... Even if the original image remains, it will be impossible to recover its original significance.<sup>52</sup>

In terms of recommendations, few accounts can be singled out for praise. Amongst those identified as offering insight and understanding are Armstrong and Robson, both of whose PhD theses have been turned into accessible and successful books aimed at a wider audience.<sup>53</sup> Both studies demonstrate a verisimilitude and credibility identified by Sparkes in combination with academic rigour (Robson’s work was nominated for the Abrams Sociology Prize the following year).<sup>54</sup>

In terms of assessing the *success* of books in this category one might use the criteria of how well the author conveys a sense of ‘being there’, of how well written it is, and whether it offers new insight. It might be suggested that the very first books, being innovative, do deserve recognition.<sup>55</sup> Ward’s account in particular remains fresh, well

written and reflective, justifying its short-listing for Sports Book of the Year. Amongst the more recent contributions Brown, Nicholls and Thornton each make insightful contributions.<sup>56</sup> What distinguishes this small minority is their retention of a sense of perspective, their reflective nature and the lack of self-promotion. It is no coincidence that these recommended include wider social and cultural factors in their accounts. It is because so few books successfully manage to do this is why so few can be recommended.

### **Assessing the Contribution**

With a decline in the incidence of football hooliganism, these auto/biographical accounts are worthy of consideration in a study of this topic. However, the usefulness of most of these texts is very limited to due a substantial lack of verisimilitude. The accuracy of the content is extremely dubious with extensive levels of self-absorption, bias and narcissistic self-indulgement. Clearly the overwhelming majority of books identified here have been written through rose-coloured spectacles describing ‘halcyon days’ in which never a fight was lost. It is a great pity that the majority are so poorly written, as there was potential to offer genuine insight, but which ultimately yield very little. On a personal level, reading these books did recall instances of travelling to games, of terracing and periods of boredom (especially at national games!). However, whilst there were moments of familiarity, much of the reading was underpinned by a sense of futility to the actions and descriptions offered.

The stated reason given by many an author was ‘tell it like it was’; however even on this basic level they are found wanting; it is therefore the task of others to offer an

explanation for the behaviour of the football hooligan. In considering the reliability and significance of these books as historical documents, one can conclude that whilst some offer insight, the vast majority are little more than a poor attempt to 'cash in' and establish a (higher) level of notoriety.

Stanley has suggested how 'the past, like the present, is the result of competing negotiated versions of what happened, why it happened, and with what consequence', whilst for King,

it is through this re-creation of past memories within the horizon of the present that the future is formed for the future is the outcome of those action which individuals perform in the present informed by shared understandings, embedded in memory. The future of hooligan gangs and the form which their violence will take is substantially determined by the common values upon which they agree and which they establish through their public affirmation of shared memory in their interactions with each other.<sup>57</sup>

It is noted that the football hooligan is an exceptional character and therefore analyses which focuses on the (by comparison) 'mundane' spectators gives a more accurate account of modern-day fans and fandom.<sup>58</sup> With hooliganism peaking in the 1970s and 1980s and the auto/biographies appearing some 10 to 15 years later what will today's youngsters be writing about in 20 years time? With a burgeoning gang culture in the UK, will we in 20 years time be reading the memoirs of a gang member and their clothing, music, and drug culture infused with random acts of violence? Alternatively we could find ourselves reading memory-based accounts of the alcohol-fuelled violence found on city centre streets.

There can only be so many books written about this phenomenon and we are now at saturation point. The popularity of *blogging* and internet ‘chat-rooms’ might be seen as new forms of auto/biography with the question arising of how to access the sheer amount of data filed away on internet servers? Plummer usefully summarises the challenge increasingly facing researchers in his reflection on how ‘the ancients’ had to dig around in the earth to find out about past lives whilst,

the ‘moderns’ by contrast ‘drown in documents’ (Vansina, 1985: 158). To this we may now add the ‘post-moderns’ ... we have reached new levels of ‘saturation’. We can now be overwhelmed with the numbers of lives and tellings. Almost everyone can have their Warholian 15 minutes of fame. The problem may now be to devise the best ways to simplify, sift and select from such a cornucopia.<sup>59</sup>

In conclusion, the significant majority of the books identified here are contrived, very poorly written, thoroughly formulaic and consequently a huge disappointment. However, despite the number of hoolie-lit auto/biographies currently available, there is still room for better written, innovative, insightful and reflective accounts.

Table 1: **British ‘Hoolie-lit’: 1989 – 2005.**

<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>	<b>Football Club</b>	<b>Date pub.</b>	<b>Period Covered by the book</b>
All Quiet on the Hooligan Front.	Ward, Colin	Various	1997	1980's →
Among the Thugs.	Burford, Bill	Man Utd	1991	1980's and 1990's
Armed for the Match.	Ward, C; Hickmott, S	Chelsea	2000	1970's and 1980's
Blades Business Crew.	Cowens, S	Sheffield	2001	1980's and 1990's
Bloody Casuals.	Allen Jay	Aberdeen	1989	1980's →
Bovver.	Brown, C	Bristol Rovers	2001	1970's →
Bring Out your Riot Gear – Hearts Are Here.	Ferguson, C.	Hearts	1999	1980's
Cass.	Pennant, C	West Ham	2002	1970's
Casuals.	Thornton, P.	Various	2003	1970's and 1980's
City Psychos.	Tordoff, S.	Hull	2002	1960's →
Congratulations: You Have Been A Victim Of Casual Violence.	Rivers, D.	Aberdeen	2005	1980's →
Congratulations – You've Just Met the ICF.	Pennant, C	West Ham	2003	1970's and 1980's
England's Number One.	Dodd, P McNee, I	Carlisle	1998	1985 →
Football Hooligans – Knowing the Score.	Armstrong, G.	Sheffield Utd.	1998	1980's →
Flying with the Owls Crime Squad.	Allen, P. and Naylor, D.	Sheffield Wed	2005	1970's →
Gilly: Running With a Pack of Wolves.	King, M. & Shaw, G.	Wolves	2005	1970's →
Good Afternoon Gentlemen.	Gardner, B. and Pennant, C.	West Ham	2005	1960's →
Guv'nors.	Francis, M and Walsh, P	Man City	1997	1970's and 1980's
Hoolifan.	Knight, M and King, M	Chelsea	1999	1970's and 1980's
Inside the ‘Forest Executive Crew’	Boatsy, G. & King, M.	Notts Forest	2006	1970's →
Naughty.	Chester, M	Stoke	2004	1980's →
Red Army General.	O'Neill, T	Man Utd	2004	1980's →
Rivals.	King, M.	Various	2005	1970's →
Rolling with the 6.57 Crew.	Pennant, C and Silvester, R	Portsmouth	2004	1980's and 1990's

Saturday is Service Day.	Bell, C	Motherwell	2002	1980's →
Sally.	Nicholls, A	Everton	2004	1970's and 1980's
Sex, Drugs and Football Thugs: On the road with the Naughty Forty	Chester, M.	Stoke	2005	1980's →
Soul Crew.	Jones, D and Rivers, T	Cardiff	2002	1970's →
St George in my Heart.	Johnson, C	National Team	2000	1970's →
Steaming In.	Ward, C	Arsenal	1989	1970's and 1980's
Suicide Squad: The Inside Story of a Football Firm	Porter, A.	Burnley	2005	1970's →
Terrace Legends.	Pennant, C and King, M	Various	2003	1960's →
The Boys from the Mersey.	Allt, N	Liverpool	2004	1970's →
The Brick: A Hooligan's Story	Debrick, P.	Middlesborough	2005	1980's →
The Frontline.	Theone, J	Middlesboro	2003	1960's →
The Men in Black: Inside Manchester United's Football Hooligan Firm	O'Neill, T.	Man Utd	2006	1980's →
The Naughty Nineties.	King, M and Knight, M	Various	1999	1990's →
30 Years of Hurt: A History of England's Hooligan Army	Pennant, C. & Nicholls, A.	National Team	2006	1970's →
To the Terrace Born.	Denton, T	Chelsea	2003	1960's →
Top Boys.	Pennant, C	Various	2005	1970's →
Tottenham Massive	Tanner, T.	Tottenham	2006	1980's →
We Fear No Foe.	Johnson, C	Millwall	1999	1980's →
Want Some Aggro.	Pennant, C and Smith, M	West Ham	2002	1960's and 1970's
Who Wants It?	Ward, C and Henderson, C	Chelsea	2000	1970's →

## Notes

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- 1 L. Stanley used *The Auto/Biographical I* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) to highlight the complex distinction and relationship between the two.
- 2 R. Giulianotti, *Football. A Sociology of the Global Game* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999).
- 3 K. Plummer, *Documents of Life 2. An invitation to a critical realism* (London: Sage, 2001).
- 4 L. Stanley, *The Auto/Biographical I*; S. Smith, and J. Watson, *Women, Autobiography, Theory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001); S. Smith and J. Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); P. Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (London: Harper Collins, 1990).
- 5 'the academic and the everyday' see K. Plummer, *Documents of Life 2*; L. Wacquant, *Body and soul: notebooks of an apprentice boxer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- 6 A. King, 'Violent pasts: collective memory and football hooliganism', *Sociological Review*, 49, (2001), 568-585.
- 7 C. Ward, *Steaming In* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1989). J. Allen, *Bloody Casual* (Scotland: Northern Books, 1989).
- 8 S. Redhead, 'Hit and Tell: a Review Essay on the Soccer Hooligan Memoir'. *Soccer and Society*, 5, (2004), 392-403.
- 9 S. Smith and J. Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, identify 52 possible genres of 'life-narrative'.
- 10 The Brimston brothers (Dougie and Eddie) are amongst the most prolific of writers on football hooliganism. Their output falls outside the genre discussed in this paper as they offer neither an ex-hooligan's nor academic's perspective, preferring to write from the perspective of a 'true fan'. As with the ex-hooligans they are less than complementary about academic contributions, whilst they themselves have clearly been stung by doubts and criticism regarding their speculative claims of being ex-hooligans. Their work is worthy of consideration in that they try to explain the 'why' of hooliganism but their, at times, highly opinionated style is unnecessary - see Stephen Waggs review of Dougie Brimston's 'Barney Army. The Changing Face of Football Violence' *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. 35, (2000) 405-407 for a short, eloquent summary of their oeuvre. D. Brimston, *Hooligan* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1998); *The Crew* (London: Headline, 2001); *Top Dog* (London: Headline, 2002); *Eurotrash* (London: Headline, 2003); see also J. King, *Football Factory* (London: Vintage, 1996); *Headhunters* (London: Vintage, 1998); *England Away* (London: Vintage, 1999).
- 11 P. Davies *All Played Out* (London: Heinemann, 1990) N. Hornby, *Fever Pitch* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1992).
- 12 J. Mash, *Toulouse or not To Lose* (London: Janus, 1998). J. Mash and M. Bazell, *Invasion and Deportation* (Lockerbie: ST Publishing, 2000). C. O'Callaghan, *Red Mist: Roy Keane and the Football Civil War. A Fan's Account* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004).
- 13 P. Thornton, *Casuals* (Bury: Milo, 2003), offers a useful introduction on the importance of fashion and music to the 1980s football hooligan (aka 'the casual'). The 'casual scene' and associated drug culture, which runs through a number of the hoolie-lit accounts, will certainly be of interest to those studying (sub) cultures.
- 14 I. Taylor, 'Hooligans: Soccer's resistance movement', *New Society*, August 7<sup>th</sup>. (1969); I. Taylor, "Football mad" - a speculative sociology of football hooliganism. In E. Dunning (Ed.), *The Sociology of Sport: A Reader* (London: Cass, 1971), p352-377; J. Clarke, *Football Hooliganism and the Skinheads* (University of Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1973). S. Hall, 'The treatment of football hooliganism in the press' in R. Ingham (ed.) *Football Hooliganism: The Wider Context* (London: Interaction, 1978); P. Marsh, 'Life and Careers on the soccer terraces' in R. Ingham (ed.) *Football Hooliganism: The Wider Context* (London: Interaction, 1978); P. Marsh, E. Rosser and R. Harre, *The Rules of Disorder* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); E. Dunning, P. Murphy, I. Waddington and A. Astrinatis, (eds.) *Fighting Fans: Football Hooliganism as a world problem* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2002).
- 15 R. Giulianotti, *Football*, p.47.
- 16 G. Crawford, *Consuming sport: fans, sport and culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.5.
- 17 B. Carrington, 'Football's coming home' but whose home? And do we want it? In A. Brown (ed) *Fanatics! Power, Identity and fandom in Football* (London: Routledge, 1998); G. Crawford, *Consuming sport*, p.135. It is not only football hooligan literature that has emerged to cater for the reading of 'the lads'.

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- Magazines ('lad-mags') such as FMH, Maxim, Stuff and Loaded remain popular whilst their literary needs are catered for by authors such as Nick Hornby, Irvine Walsh, Tony Parsons, Howard Marks, Haslam and Kevin Sampson.
- 18 A. Nicholls, *Scally* (Bury: Milo, 2004). Category C is a Police categorisation used for the most serious offender.
- 19 K. Plummer, *Documents of Life 2*; B. Harrison, N. Miller and H. Powell, 'Uses of Auto/biography in Assessment', in E. Harrison and R. Mears (eds.) *Assessment Strategies in Sociology* (Bath: Bath Spa University College, 2000).
- 20 K. Plummer, *Documents of Life 2*.
- 21 L. Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).
- 22 L. Prior, 'Doing Things with Documents' in D. Silverman (ed.) *Qualitative Research. Theory, Method and Practice* (2nd Ed) (London: Sage, 2004), p.91.
- 23 E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (With a new introduction by R. Evans). (place: Palgrave, 1962 / 2002); M. Bentley, *Companion to Historiography* (London, Routledge, 1997).
- 24 Peter Clements, 'Autobiographical Research and the Emergence of the Fictive Voice'. in J. Soler, A. Craft, H. Burgess, (eds.) *Teacher Development: Exploring Our Own Practice* (London, Paul Chapman Publishing and The Open University, 2001);
- 25 B. Harrison, N. Miller and H. Powell, 'Uses of Auto/biography in Assessment'.
- 26 A. Sparkes, (2002) *Telling Tales in Sport and Physical Education. A Qualitative Journey* (Leeds: Human Kinetics, 2002), p.207.
- 27 A. Sparkes, *Telling Tales in Sport and Physical Education*, p.217.
- 28 A. Sparkes, *Telling Tales in Sport and Physical Education*, p.223.
- 29 C. Gall, *Zulus: A Football Hooligan Gang* (Bury: Milo, 2005); *Zulus: Black, White and Blue: the Story of the Zulu Warrior Football Firm* (Bury: Milo, 2006).
- 30 N. Lowles and A. Nicholls have compiled a two volume A-Z encyclopaedia of the football firms with such details on their size and fighting record. *Hooligans: A-L of Britain's Football Gangs v.1* (Bury: Milo, 2005); *Hooligans: M-Z of Britain's Football Gangs v.2* (Bury: Milo, 2006).
- 31 R. Giulianotti, *Football*, p.39.
- 32 D. Brimson, *Eurotrash*; G. Goodhead, *Us V Them: Journeys to the World's Greatest Football Derbies* (London: Viking, 2003). E. Dunning, et al, *Fighting Fans* for an academic perspective.
- 33 D. Jones and T. Rivers, *Soul Crew* (Bury: Milo, 2002). M. Chester, *Naughty* (Bury: Milo, 2004)
- A. Nicholls, *Scally*.
- 34 R. Giulianotti, *Football*.
- 35 S. Tordoff, *City Psychos*. (Bury: Milo, 2002), p.5.
- 36 P. Marsh, *Aggro: The Illusion of Violence* (London: Dent, 1977); 'Life and Careers on the soccer terraces' in R. Ingham (ed.) *Football Hooliganism: The Wider Context* (London: Interaction, 1978); P. Marsh, E. Rosser and R. Harre, *The Rules of Disorder* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).
- 37 R. Giulianotti, *Football*, p.43.
- 38 P. Marsh, *Aggro: 'Life and Careers on the soccer terraces'*; P. Marsh, E. Rosser and R. Harre, *The Rules of Disorder*.
- 39 A. King, *Violent pasts*, 573.
- 40 A. King, *Violent pasts*; G. Armstrong, *Football Hooligans. Knowing the Score* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).
- 41 J. Kerr, *Understanding Soccer Hooliganism* (London: Routledge, 1994).
- 42 I. Taylor 'Class, violence and sport: The case of soccer hooliganism in Britain'. In H. Cantelon and R. Gruneau (eds.) *Sport, Culture and the Modern State* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1982); 'On the sports violence question: soccer hooliganism revisited' in J. Hargreaves (ed.) *Sport, Culture and Ideology* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982). For a more recent consideration of racism in English football, see L. Back, T. Crabbe and J. Solomos, *The Changing Face of Football: Racism, Identity and Multiculture in the English Game* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).
- 43 M. King and M. Knight, *Hoolifan. 30 Years of Hurt* (Edinburgh, Mainstream, 1999) recommends G. Armstrong's *Football Hooligans*.
- 44 J. Ribbins, 'Facts or Fictions? Aspects of the use of auto/biographical writing in undergraduate sociology. *Sociology*, 27, (1993), 81-92.
- 45 J. Ribbins, 'Facts or Fictions?'
- 46 M. Weed, 'Ing-Ger-Land at Euro 2000. How handbags at 20 paces was portrayed as a full-scale riot'. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 36 (2001), 407-424.
- 47 A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991). J. Ribbins, 'Facts or Fictions?' p.85.



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- 48 J. Ribbins, 'Facts or Fictions?' p.85, drawing upon R Hoggert's 'The uses of memory', *Weekend Guardian*, June 9-10<sup>th</sup>, pp14-16 (1990).
- 49 K. Plummer, *Documents of Life 2*, p.81.
- 50 A. Sparkes, *Telling Tales in Sport and Physical Education*.
- 51 A. King, 'Violent pasts'.
- 52 A. King, 'Violent pasts', 581.
- 53 G. Armstrong *Football Hooligans*; G. Robson, *No One Likes Us We Don't Care* (Oxford: Berg, 2000).
- 54 A. Sparkes, *Telling Tales in Sport and Physical Education*.
- 55 C. Ward, *Steaming In*; J. Allen, *Bloody Casuals*.
- 56 C. Brown, *Bovver* (London: Blake, 2001); A. Nicholls, *Scally*; Thornton, *Casuals*.
- 57 L. Stanley, *The Auto/Biographical I*, p.7. A. King, 'Violent pasts', 583.
- 58 A. Brown, (ed.) (1998) *Fanatics: Power, Identity and Fandom in Football*. (London, Routledge, 1998).
- D. Wann, M. Melnick, G. Russell and D. Pease, *Sport Fan* (London: Routledge, 2001). G. Crawford, *Consuming sport*.
- 59 K. Plummer, *Documents of Life 2*, p.99.