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GLORIFICATION OF VIOLENCE IN BRITISH FILMS DEPICTING FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM

Scholars and social scientists have been trying to elucidate hooligans' motivations for violence for years. At the same time the press, radio and television have been attempting to raise the public awareness of the hooligan phenomenon. Out of the three media it is the film, "medium that has produced the most brutal, macabre, bloody and excessive scenes of violence, and to which controversy about such representations inevitably returns" (Carter and Weaver 2003: 42) seems to be the most popular tool for the depiction of hooligans. It is also film that seems to remain rather equivocal both in the approach to the phenomenon and in the assessment of its ramifications. As a result, productions which rely heavily on bona fide, gory and hooliganism-related scenes were born as an answer to both the huge concern and fandom provoked by football hooligans.

The aim of this paper is to show that British films depicting football hooliganism have a tendency to glamorize violence or lend justification to some forms of violent behaviour. This propensity and its instances which I am going to take under scrutiny are analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively in films such as *The Firm* (1988), *I.D.* (1995), *The Football Factory* (2004) and *Green Street Hooligans* (2005). These are feature film productions that deal with the hooligan culture per se, with none or hardly any instances of football-playing scenes, thus putting the sports aspect into the shade or even getting rid of it completely. Since hooligan-related films are different in their construction from sports films, the talk about *hooligan genre* is fully justifiable here and so is the exclusion of films such as *Fever Pitch* (1997), *Mean Machine* (2001), *Goal* (2005), and other sports productions from my analysis. The shared structural backbone of the hooligan films (which will come in sharp focus after scrutinizing the content analysis), the majority of which concentrate on various aspects of hooligan rivalry and omit saccharine scenes typical of sports films, provides a framework for the research; a vantage point from which analyses can be carried out and conclusions drawn.

What is *violence* and *glorification of violence* ?

Any discussion on “glorification of violence in British films depicting football hooliganism” should begin with the definition of terms such as *violence*, *glorification of violence* and *football hooliganism*. The task proves to be quite complicated as “attempts to define what we mean by violence have long been the source of fierce debate in media and cultural studies” (Carter and Weaver 2003: 2). One of the suggestions that I am I going to apply in this paper is that “violence is a violation of a character’s physical or emotional well-being. It includes two key elements – intentionality and harm – at least one of which must be present” (Carter and Weaver 2003: 2).

Thus *Glorification of violence* is an act of giving glory to violent behaviour, where glory should be understood as “the importance, honour, and praise” (The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language) or “great honour, praise, or distinction accorded by common consent; renown.” (The Free Dictionary). To glorify hence means to present something better than it de facto is. The statement is enhanced by the statement that “what is being glorified is being glorified as conduct that should be emulated in existing circumstances” (Terrorism Bill 2005-2006). Moreover, to paint a fuller definition of *glorification of violence*, it should be added that it also covers all kinds of aggressive behaviour which bring palpable benefits or just do not bring any harm to its agent(s). Hence, glorification of violence in films concerns the way violence is represented and the results it has on the characters. Here, according to Carter and Weaver (2003: 3), there are four media representations of real human violence that could have strong glamorizing overtones : unpunished violence (“feature[s] villains who are not punished”), painless violence (“violence does not result in serious injury, pain or death”), happy violence (“this type of violence often occurs in children’s cartoons, where characters who are repeatedly hurt become the points of humour”), heroic violence (“violence used by a good guy for a positive reason (to protect someone or save the world)”. The four film productions that I analyze in this paper rely on the aforementioned representations of real human violence, with the exception of happy violence.

Having established the terms *violence* and, clarification should be provided with regards to the concept of *football hooliganism*, especially when there are frequent misconceptions in this area. This is expressed by one of the West Ham United supporters: “I don’t think the authority really know what a football hooligan looks like or what he thinks or what he does. They think that a football hooligan is someone who walks down the road, with a skinhead haircut, a pair of Dr Martens boots, a pair of braces and a beer can in his hand, throwing bricks. This

is nothing like that” (Hooligan 1985). Although much of the conceptualization of a hooligan is stereotyped, it is difficult to generate a precise definition of *football hooliganism*, a complex, widespread and thus heterogeneous phenomenon. As Dunning, Murphy and Williams (1988) observed, this phenomenon lacks a legal definition, and the concept is used to cover a variety of actions which take place in more or less directly football-related contexts. Nevertheless, to subsume all kinds of violent behaviour initiated by football fans under the umbrella term of football hooliganism seems to be a simplification of the problem. “In search of a more precise conceptualization of football hooliganism, an ideal typical distinction can be drawn between spontaneous incidents of spectator violence and the behaviour of socially organized fan groups that engage in competitive violence, principally with fan groups of opposing football clubs” (Ramón Spaaij 2005:1, Giulianotti 2001:141, Stokvis 1989:148-152). Murphy Dunning (1994: 136) states that “the distinction between spontaneous violence and more socially organized and premeditated forms of spectator violence is historically observable in a shift from a pattern in which attacks on match officials and opposing players predominated over attacks on rival fans, to a pattern in which inter-fan group fighting and fighting between fans and the police became the predominant form of spectator disorderliness”. The shift found a reflection in the systematic formation of *hooligan firms*, organized gangs that, in general terms, support a football team and engage in fights with supporters of other clubs. The degree of social organization of firms involved in football hooliganism tends to vary substantially, which is confirmed by the National Criminal Intelligence Service:

The amount and quality of this organization varies greatly between groups, from a highly disciplined, hierarchical criminal group that associates continuously throughout the week to a more casual grouping that comes on the occasion of a football match with the intention of committing violent acts (Spaaij 2006: 5).

Galvani and Palma (2005) claim that although football hooliganism consists mainly of competitive violence between rival fan groups, hooligans’ violent behaviour is not restricted to inter-group fighting but may also include missile throwing, acts of vandalism, attacks on police or non-hooligan supporters, and racial abuse. Furthermore, Dunning (2000:142) observes that “the violent behaviour of hooligan groups takes places not only at or in the immediate vicinity of football grounds, but also in other contexts, for example city centres, pubs, clubs or railway stations”. Finally, realizing that, according to Marsh (1978), “football hooliganism involves a great deal of symbolic opposition and ritualized aggression which is easily confused with ‘real’ violence”, we seem to get a panoramic view of the phenomenon, which will help to carry out a content analysis of the problem.

Content analysis

A content analysis will be used to count the instances of violent behaviour, dissected and codified into distinct and detailed categories, which appear throughout the analysed films. It is aimed at getting a precise number of scenes, where “scene” should be understood as “a shot or series of shots in a movie constituting a unit of continuous related action” (The Free Dictionary), and a precise amount of time that was assigned by a director to a particular presentation of violent behaviour. With this information I will endeavour to demonstrate that the productions rely heavily on violence-involving scenes, which will serve as a springboard to a qualitative analysis, aimed at exposing violence-glorifying aspects and implications of those scenes.

Various instances depicted in the films need to be split up into separate categories in order to realize the spectrum and intensiveness of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the compartmentalization of violent behaviour will allow swift comparisons to be made between the films. The categories, in line with the theory on football hooliganism, are following: acts of vandalism (damaging things and properties, usually cars, window displays, furniture etc.), verbal abuse (strong language directed chiefly at members of an arch-rival gang), aggressive quarrels (usually between members of the same group, or between a hooligan and his spouse), domestic violence (violence in a family, from a husband to his wife), violence fomenting (provocative, aggressive behaviour that does not directly result in a fight or bodily harm, e.g. a kamikaze Buccaneers car charging at the ICF hooligans in *The Firm*), assaults (carried out by an individual on another individual), fracas and brawls (short noisy fights involving several people and fights among a bigger group of people, especially in a public place) , climactic battle (the final, ultimate and most brutal fight, involving the most number of hooligans and frequently culminating in grievous bodily harm).

Apart from the instances of violent behaviour, I also deem it appropriate to count its repercussions, thereby providing exact numbers of people who have been arrested, injured/wounded (suffering bodily harm, in the form of evident scrapes, cuts, bruises, abrasions etc.), killed

	The Firm		LD.	
film duration	4020 seconds		6182 seconds	
	scenes	seconds	scenes	seconds

acts of vandalism	3	181	8	256
verbal abuse	4	383	5	231
aggressive quarrels	1	125	4	228
domestic violence	1	13	1	92
violence fomenting	2	99	4	145
assaults	2	206	2	56
fracases and brawls	1	93	5	121
scuffles with the police	0	0	1	27
climactic battle	1	76	0	0
TOTAL		1176		1156

Table 1. Violent scenes in the films The Firm, I.D., in terms of number of scenes and seconds.

	The Football Factory		Green Street Hooligans	
film duration	5227seconds		6134 seconds	
	scenes	seconds	scenes	seconds
acts of vandalism	2	20	1	15
verbal abuse	3	185	6	194

aggressive quarrels	1	34	2	186
domestic violence	0	0	0	0
violence fomenting	1	3	1	32
assaults	9	157	5	80
fracases and brawls	10	288	7	464
scuffles with the police	1	85	0	0
climactic battle	1	97	1	293
TOTAL		869		1264

Table 2. Violent scenes in the films *The Football Factory*, *Green Street Hooligans* in terms of number of scenes and seconds.

		The Firm	I.D.	The Football Factory	Green Street Hooligans
NUMBERS OF	people arrested	0	1	1	0
	people injured/ wounded	5	5	6	20
	people killed	1	0	1	2

Table 3. The consequences of violent behaviour in the films *The Firm*, *I.D.*, *The Football Factory*, *Green Street Hooligans*.

To sum up the data, it turns out that, time-wise, *Green Street Hooligans* is the “most violent” film (1264 seconds of violence depiction), with *The Firm* (1176 seconds) and *I.D.* (1156 seconds) being almost on a par, and *The Football Factory* ‘lagging behind’ with its 869 seconds of violent scenes. However, if the data is

arranged in percentage terms (the amount of time devoted to the violent scenes in relation to the film duration), it is *The Firm* that emerges as the “most violent” production, with the brutish scenes constituting 29,25 % of the whole film (*I.D.* – 18,69 %; *The Football Factory* – 16,6 % ; *Green Street Hooligans* – 20,6 %). A further, scrupulous analysis of the categories and the numbers pinned to them may cast doubt on such a ranking as it is *Green Street Hooligans* that contains most extensive depictions of physical violence (the umbrella term for domestic violence, assaults, fracasés and brawls, scuffles with the police, climactic battle) which aggregate 837 seconds. Interestingly enough, *The Football Factory* , with its fewest amount of time assigned to violent behaviour on the whole, devotes a relatively large amount of time to physical violence (627 seconds). In comparison, physical violence constitutes only 296 seconds of *I.D.* and 388 seconds of *The Firm*.

Notwithstanding the variety of violence-based rankings of the films, some similarities and regularities can be observed with regards to structural use of violence as the central theme of the film productions. First of all, there are hardly any depictions of violence directed at or triggered by women (domestic violence) since women hardly appear in the plot, and if they do, it is always in a non-hooligan context. This is a corollary of the way the hooligan world is portrayed, namely, as a male-dominated reality with women being guardians of the hearth or objects of men’s carnal desires; both female groups not fully understanding or even realizing the men’s violent preoccupation. Furthermore, the louts’ reality is governed by a rule that may be regarded as a cornerstone of all hooligan-related activity as depicted in the films, that is: “fight only with other hooligans”. This in turn accounts for the scarce presentation of yobbos’ scuffles with the police , although the disdain expressed towards the police is quite palpable. The restraint from violence directed at the police is a multifaceted phenomenon, having foundations in a semblance of lawlessness attached to skirmishes with other hooligans and too much a risk associated with assaulting a policeman.

Having established that the acts of violence pertain mainly to men and that “honour is lost rather than earned when a hooligan formation allows or promotes attacks on non-hooligan supporters or passers-by” (Ramón Spaaij 2006: 24), it may still be interesting to reconstruct the shared structural organization of the inter-hooligan rivalry. The films place characters in the context of a long-lasting war between usually a few groups of thugs and there is a good reason for that as “past events and disagreements between opposing groups can become important reference points in sustaining great hostility and triggering violent responses” (Ramón Spaaij 2006: 23) . Although football plays only a minor role in the films, with football matches being scarcely represented, it serves as a background motif binding the majority of instances of violent behaviour. Thus, disorderly conduct

frequently takes place before, at, or shortly after a football game. Another such a regularity is the scene or rather the sequence of scenes picturing the climactic battle that takes place in the final part of the films (the exception being *I.D.* where the undercover mission is terminated just when the viewer might expect a final fight to occur). This prolonged presentation (293 seconds in *Green Street Hooligans*) is also the most violent one, that is, it results in the greatest number of people being injured or killed as compared with the rest of the film scenes.

Conclusions could also be drawn from the data concerning the numbers of people arrested, injured/wounded, killed. It is striking that hardly any thugs get arrested for their violent actions. While *The Football Factory* features the leader of the Chelsea firm receiving a seven-year sentence, in *I.D.* a hooligan gets caught for stealing a jar of pickles from the factory where he works. The rest of the hooligans do not receive or are not shown to receive any legal punishments for their brutal behaviour whatsoever. Such a presentation of unpunished violence, with hooligans being above the law and the police being helpless, is indicative of violence glorification. The indication is even enhanced by the “painless violence” aspect of the films, with relatively few people being injured or wounded in brutal fights or as a result of fierce assaults. The image of painlessness can be broken few fatalities presented, yet heroic death is frequently a hooligan’s passport to eternal glory (however, *Green Street Hooligans* does not concentrate on this aspect).

Semiotic analyses of the films

Semiotics is an interpretive thus subjective method that aims at generating “thick descriptions”, that is, complex and textured analyses of the texts (Stokes 2003). By means of semiotics I try to disentangle the films into smaller components and through the qualitative analysis locate them in the general-message area of the texts.

The Firm

The main character, an educated estate agent, Clive ‘Bexy’ Bissell (played by Gary Oldman) is a break-off with the stereotype that presents a hooligan as a primitive, uneducated, jobless and bored thug belonging to the lower social stratum. Instead of the common misconception, Clark proposes a picture of a hooligan as a well-off white-collar worker who seems to lead a normal middle-class existence, having his nearest and dearest (a loving wife and a child) waiting for him at home. The terms of endearment such as “darling”, “beloved” used between the spouses can act as a touchstone of the depth of the couple’s

relationship, suggesting that there is nothing missing for the leading hooligan in this sphere of life.

The attempt to redefine the notion of a “hooligan” is expressed even more explicitly by the scene of the ICC group watching a television broadcast devoted to the problem of hooliganism. A media pundit’s words:

We must distinguish between the bovver boy, yobbo type hooligans, so representative of the 1970s, and today’s more sophisticated, more disciplined hooligans. Most of them have jobs, in fact, some of them have quite skilled jobs and quite a comfortable lifestyle. Basically I see it as a kind of search for meaning, an attempt to validate their lives, give it significance (The Firm)

are met with one of the hooligans sharp retort: “Why don’t he just tell them we like hitting people?” (The Firm). The description seems to catch the true essence of hooliganism par excellence yet the hooligans do not come to terms with the proposed ideology, even though the fact that they all spend time together watching TV at Bexy’s house proves that there is something more about hooliganism than just hitting other people. “violent confrontation [...] is not the only source of meaning and identity in football hooliganism. Hooligan formations provide their members with a sense of belonging, mutual solidarity and friendship. Narratives of hooligans reveal how group members claim to *look after one another* and stick together through thick and thin” (Ramón Spaaij 2006: 26). Thus, the firm members form a close-knit community that could be dubbed a surrogate of a family. Hooligans, irrespective of their trade, wealth or status, spend their free time together, socializing in a boozier or meeting in Bexy’s place. The maxim “all for one, one for all” seems to be the guiding principle of their unruly activity, so that when one of the hooligans ends up in hospital after receiving a serious wound, he cautiously assumes a false name and makes up the cause of the deep cut to protect *the family*.

Another aspect that could be regarded as a driving force behind thugs’ violent acts is connected with thrill seeking and emotional arousal. Bexy, in a dialogue with his wife, explains his violence-ridden motifs by claiming: “I need the buzz”, to which his wife angrily replies: “Well buy a bloody beehive then!”. She cannot understand her husband’s violent needs and that “[m]any hooligans perceive conventional lifestyles and careers as boring and unchallenging. [...] Group membership and violent confrontation provide a chance to experience immediate sensation in the form of pleasurable excitement, which is often referred to as an adrenalin rush and ‘better than sex’” (Ramón Spaaij 2006: 18). This theory is confirmed in the scene of climactic battle where sweat-drenched Bexy seems to be drawing orgasmic pleasure from pummeling Yeti to a pulp. And although it is

the former who finally pays the greatest price in the fight, he departs this life in a blaze of glory. In the final scene of the film all the hooligans pay tribute to Bexy's courage and his visionary dream of the National firm that comes true after and thanks to his death. Clive Bissell emerges as someone special, a hero, a "top boy" for the hooligans and consequently "[t]he Football Association, desperately trying to restore the image of English football in the wake of the 1985 Heysel Stadium disaster (which left 39 people dead and led to a ban on English clubs competing in European competition), accused the film of providing "poor role models" to young fans" (Hobday 2003). The God-like reverence attributed to the late Bexy is shown "in an almost documentary-like style, even suggestively crossing the line between drama and documentary [...] when we actually see the camera crew being taunted and cajoled by the firm itself" (Choking on Popcorn 2007).

To conclude, *The Firm*, in spite of a number of scenes which show the serious repercussions of hooligan activity, has a potential to glamorize violence. Presenting hooligan activities as more appealing and exciting than ordinary domestic life and portraying hooligans as a community that is governed by the "one for all, all for one" rule within the firm and the Biblical law "an eye for an eye..." with regards to other firms, thus, does not allow its members to get hurt, helps to create a glorifying effect. The final scene of the film shows hooliganism as a fast track to eternal glory as Bexy's death serves as a catalyst for the unification of hooligans and reinforcement of their sense of belonging.

I.D.

The film tells the story of four undercover policemen purporting to be supporters of Shadwell Town FC (a fictional club) and thus infiltrating the hooligan group in order to track down its ringleaders. John, Trevor, Eddie and Charlie quickly start to enjoy the atmosphere of the games and pick up a few lines of the hooligan anthem. The word "anthem" is entirely appropriate here, as the chant is based on the "Rule Britannia" music and lyrics:

*We are Shadwell, the Kennel is our place.
Shadwell never, never, never shall lose face.
Though you hate us, we couldn't give a toss.
Shadwell always, always, always are the boss. (I.D.)*

Soon afterwards John begins to find himself in the hooligan limelight, receiving drinks on the house and having a great time with the Shadwell comrades who altogether form a family-like community. Further collective experiences seem to strengthen the sense of togetherness of the group and on the

individualistic level the “combination of belonging, recognition and reputation [...] enables the young males to achieve a sense of personal worth and identity” (Marsh et al. 1978). The more alluring the new friendship-based reality becomes, the less exciting the conjugal life is. The hint of the deterioration is noticeable when the four policemen are out for dinner together with their spouses, yet when the conversation turns to the problem of bearing-and-rearing of children, the men desert the table under the pretext of the call of nature and discuss next Shadwell match. John gradually becomes engrossed in the hooliganism life, the tendency which seems to be overpowering the other three policemen as well. All of them listen to the radio coverage of the F.A. Cup draw and joyfully jump in the air when it turns out that Shadwell will face Millwall in the next round, the match being an unwritten guarantee of violent incidents and a chance to experience unparalleled excitement. When Eddie exclaims in the name of the whole police-group that “[t]hese people are our mates. I’m having the time of my life”, it is evident that Shadwell F.C. has become a form of escapism from the real world, a haven of authority-free relationships and a great adventure. The epitome of such a fascination is the Christmas Eve spent by the undercover policemen in a pub with an understanding hooligan family instead of the nagging wives. The scene of a joyful celebration, drinking and merriment, with the club hooligans’ gleeful singing: “Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way. Oh, what fun it is to stay when Shadwell’s on their way” is contrasted with the following scene of John eating a Christmas breakfast with his wife, all veiled in an awkward silence. The inner changes that took place in the undercover policemen’s outlook on the hooligan world are summarized by Eddie’s reaction to the information brought by the supervisor that their mission is bound to be terminated forthwith and that they are not allowed to appear in the Shadwell territory any more. The thing he seems to be concerned most about is the fact that he will miss the next match: “I’ve got tickets for the Oldham game. If we win, we’ll get promoted”. It shows that his sense of identity shifted into hooligan realm, and it offers him more than just a sense of belonging.

Being a member of the Dogs gives John a lot of pleasure and excitement. According to Ramón Spaaij (2006: 17), “[h]ooligans are essentially thrill seekers and fighting is one of their main acts to counter boredom and experience high emotional arousal”. This theory is borne out by John’s words uttered to his wife: “You don’t know me at all. Mind the fuses, fix the car, mow the lawn, it’s all fucking boring. Do you think that’s me? It’s all bollocks. Fucking house, fucking babies. Shit”. John’s and the rest of the hooligans’ masculine identity is based on physical prowess, thus “the fighting group is an arena where these male adolescents can bodily express themselves through physical confrontation” (Messerschmidt

1999: 200). Although fighting is such an important source of expression, its effect is even enhanced by an aspect of overcoming fear. “Overcoming fear is crucial, for example, in confronting a quantitatively superior group, and it precisely this overcoming of fear that generates the greatest pleasurable emotional arousal [...]” (Kerr 2005: 111). Therefore, vastly outnumbered and slightly wounded, the group experiences cathartic gratification and because “[b]eing a good fighter” and being able to “look after oneself” are viewed as major virtues, and the tallest and physically strongest male adolescents are usually talked about admiringly by peers” (Ramón Spaaij 2006: 21) the brave ones emerge as heroes, God-like figures. When victorious John (he makes a symbolic gesture by lifting his index and middle fingers in the air) returns to the Shadwell sector he is welcomed by a cheering crowd, which gives him a standing ovation and lifts him in the air.

Finally, the experience of being a member of the Dogs taught squeamish Trevor a lesson. Initially intimidated and always disappearing the moment a brawl was about to begin he has undergone a positive change, turning into a brave person who finally is able to stand his ground, even if against one of his best friends, John.

To sum up, “I.D.” offers a relatively great number of scenes that deal with positive effects of being a hooligan. From presenting hooliganism as an enticing, arousing phenomenon; through the depiction of Shadwell hooligans as a united community based on values such as friendship, honour and loyalty; to the hero status cherished by the most violent thugs (e.g. John who receives, in the recognition of his unruly achievements, a generous proposal from the ring leader: “Anything you ever want, I’m the man you ask”), the spectrum of the benefits emerging from hooligan activity is wide enough to be referred to as glamorization of violence.

The Football Factory

The Football Factory presents hooliganism as a form of escapism from a boring, working-class day-to-day life. As Tommy Johnson, the main character, introduces himself: “There’s nothing different about me. I’m just another bored male approaching 30, in a dead-end job who lives for the weekend. Casual sex, watered-down lager, heavily cut-drugs. And occasionally kicking fuck out of somebody”, it becomes evident that he is aware of his average lifestyle. Being a hooligan is thus an alternative to the bland way of life and a chance to experience intense emotions in the barren working-class landscape. “What else are you gonna do on a Saturday? Sit in your fucking armchair wanking off to Pop Idols? Then try and avoid your wife’s gaze as you struggle to come to terms with your sexless marriage? Then go and spunk your wages on kebabs fruit machines and brusses? Fuck that for a laugh. I know what I’d rather do. Tottenham away. Love

it!”. Domestic boredom and lack of sexual fulfilment are compensated by an experience of battering other hooligans. What is more, weekend seems to be an important source of meaning, status and pleasurable emotional arousal or as Tommy puts it: “It’s what we do best. It’s not about colour or race, it’s just the buzz of being in the front line. Truth is, I just love to fight”. Moreover, the buzz and excitement that are part and parcel of the fighting work like a double-edged sword – they can be derived not only from hitting others, but from being hit as well. The very first scene of the film which portrays Tommy being beaten to a pulp, together with his ribald voice-over comment: “Getting beaten up by football hooligan is like having VD. The fucking pain goes on forever. But that’s what makes it so excited” highlights the adrenaline-seeking, almost masochistic aspect that underlies violent behaviour. A moment later, bruised and battered Tommy poses a serious question “Was it worth it?” which is answered at the end of the film.

The first traces of the answer lie in a sense of togetherness that characterizes the membership in the firm. The hooligan organisation is based on the idea of camaraderie, yet *The Football Factory* depicts hooligan structures as hierarchical ones and the inter-hooligan relationships as relatively strict ones and not so intimate as in the previously discussed films. The leader and commander-in-chief of the Chelsea firm, Bill, decides when, where and with whom to fight, he is an organizer of hooligan social life which usually boils down to hanging around in a boozier. He acts as a ruthless and fearless general when he orders his army to charge at the rival hooligans. According to King (2001: 574), “Individuals must protect the group’s honour, even at the risk of personal injury, if they are to enjoy the benefits which come from membership of the group”. Yet, this thug-creation is an alter ego to Bill’s meek and mild disposition noticeable at home, especially in relation to his wife whom he seems to obey unquestioningly.

Another example of the enticement behind hooligan camaraderie is the “better-than-sex” aspect of being a member of the firm, especially evident in Rod’s behaviour. Sex is symbolised by a middle class girl whom he meets during court proceedings. Rodney starts to engage in the relationship to such an extent that she asks him to get acquainted with her parents. The date of the formal meeting coincides with the date of the match, or rather ancient rivalry, between Chelsea and Millwall, facing Rod with the dilemma of choosing between his girlfriend and friends. He insists on the latter option, arguing “I’m male”, yet when the future of the relationship is balanced on a knife-edge, he seems to have no choice. Although initially obeying family commitments, he cannot abide the stiffness of the conversation and when asked about the details of his job, Rodney retorts: “Most of the time I just sit around the office, waiting for the weekend. Don’t

get me wrong. I love the money the job pays. But my real passion lies in kicking people's fucking heads in at football. See, I've got to channel it somewhere, and as you can tell by my bulging stomach, I don't participate in too many sporting activities". Then he insists on footing the bill and changes the posh restaurant for a smoke-filled public house, being warmly welcomed by a symbolic hug and kiss by Tommy and being immersed in the common congenial atmosphere. Rod's words: "Wouldn't miss it for the world mate" emphasize the fact that this is the place where he belongs and these are the people who are his family. It is the same people who after the clash with Millwall hooligans go to the hospital to visit Tommy and bring him grapes, a gesture of care and attachment. It is then, lying on a hospital bed, that the question "Was it worth it?" is reposed. After a moment of musing and a series of verbal flashbacks: "kicked half to death, florists, cabbies, nightmares and visions. One of the old soldiers gone forever. Bright gone for a seven, and bollocks so ruptured that the only thing I'll be pulling for months is a chain." the answer comes: "Course it fucking was" (The Football Factory, 2004).

To conclude, *The Football Factory* presents violence and the whole hooligan culture as very appealing to middle-class males. It seems to be a mixture of buzz, pleasure and fun; it provides a sense of belonging and reputation.

Green Street Hooligans

The depiction of violence in the film is greatly influenced by the director's past experiences, e.g. being a member of the City Boys firm in Germany. "Having bought into the "urban myth" about hooligans, she saw them as "honourable cowboys", and convinced them to let her into their crew. [...] So what happened is that when you joined this firm, you had these guys who, one day a week, were at the same pub, at the same time, every single week; it was more of a constant than any of us had in our home lives. There was a certain loyalty, a family-away-from-family that I think we were longing for" (Applebaum 2005). When asked about the features of character that were characteristic of the boys, she enumerates: "Reliable. Protective. Loyal. Consistent" (BBC News 2005) and adds "I have a special place for those guys in my heart, because I know each one of them would literally jump in front of a train for me. Who can say that about one friend, let alone fifty? I feel lucky to know them." (BBC News 2005). The same glorifying schema of hooligan mindset and habits is employed in *Green Street Hooligans*.

Being a part of the firm enables hooligans to experience a fascinating sense of togetherness. "Part of the 'buzz' of football hooliganism seems to lie not in violence itself, but in a transcendent, sensual quality of 'being with the mob'" (Ramón Spaaij 2006: 27). The mob spend most of their time down in their favourite pub, drinking great amounts of beer, having a laugh and chanting aloud, which altogether sometimes turns into an orgiastic party. Outside the pub-life,

“the group is also a source of unofficial protection and remedy for grievances.” (Patrick 1973). When Matthew is attacked on his way home by Birmingham hooligans it does not take long for his newly met friends to protect him and fight off the rivals. The hooligan motto “we don’t leave our mates behind” is beginning to resonate with Matt, who, at some point of the film, reflects: “You know the best part? It isn’t knowing that your friends have your back. It’s knowing that you have your friends’ back. He is fascinated by a new reality of clear-cut rules based on equality and brotherhood, where betrayal is the most despicable vice. Later on, having received fame and status as a hardened hooligan, he admires this style of living: “I’d never lived closer to danger. But I’d never felt safer. I never felt more confident. And people could spot it from a mile away. And as for this, the violence, I gotta be honest. It grew on me”. These words, spoken to the accompaniment of the song “I Wanna Be Adored” by Stone Roses, create a general impression that being a hooligan offers a sense of security and a way of being in the centre of attention. Yet, Matt’s marvellous time is about to be terminated and his affinity with the group put to the test when, after a chat with his father, he is supposed to come back to the U.S. However, he decides to stay in England and take part in an ultimate clash with Millwall hooligans. The scene of the battle is set to the lyrics “one life, one flesh, one blood” which are a part of the refrain of “One Blood” by Terence Jay and which highlight the sense of solidarity driven from group fighting. Pete’s death is an example of the concept of *heroic violence* as proposed by Carter and Weaver (2003). The mastermind of the firm puts his life on the line to protect his brother’s wife and child, thus heroically prioritizing the blood connections.

At the end of the film, Matt has learned a lesson based on the hooligan coursebook. “Pete Dunham’s life taught me that there’s time to stand your ground. His death taught me there’s a time to walk away. [...] I could live a way that would honour him”. The inner change that took place in Matt is evident when he returns to the U.S. with a view to continuing his studies and instead of being complaisant, he behaves in an assertive way.

Conclusions

In this paper I tried to demonstrate that the British films depicting football hooliganism could be viewed as glorifying violence. A considerably great number of scenes and a great amount of time devoted to the presentation of violence, together with the *unpunished*, *painless* and *heroic* aspects of such presentations are just one side of the glorifying coin. The other side is occupied with the deeper meaning of particular scenes or the general overtones of the films which seem to develop a tendency to present a hooligan firm as a family-like community that offers happiness and produces a strong feeling of belonging and solidarity that adds spice to the

boring working or middle class life. Violent confrontations are depicted as a source of pleasurable emotional arousal that surpass other forms of enjoyment. Moreover, confronting other hooligans helps hooligans to construct hard masculine identity based on physical prowess. Finally, being a good fighter is a fast track to earning a reputation that provides hooligans with a sense of power and importance. Real hooligans starring in the films, thus potentially encouraging viewers to become “wannabe warriors”, is also of great importance. However, the way the audiences react to the on-screen presentation of violence with all its aspects is a topic for much broader research

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