**Football Fandom and Authenticity: A Critical Discussion of Historical and Contemporary Perspectives**

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Many debates within the sociology of football fandom allude to the ostensible lack of authenticity, or the idea that all forms of football fandom in the present day are merely different forms of post-fandom (Redhead, 1997; King, 1998; Crabbe et al, 2006), and are categorised as such (Giulianotti 2002, Crabbe et al, 2006). It is stated by scholars that to consider one football fan being more authentic than another is problematic. This paper will critically discuss the relevant football fandom literature indelibly linked to fan typologies and authenticity to consider the implications of football support for shaping football fans identities and what this tells us about what it really means to be an ‘authentic’ football fan, in what Bauman (2000) calls a liquid modern society underpinned by consumerism.

Keywords: *Football; fandom; supporter; authenticity; community.*

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**Introduction**

This paper seeks to consider the implications of football support for shaping football fans identities and what this tells us about what it means to be an authentic football fan a contemporary society. The focus of this paper is to provide a critical discussion and review of a range of football fandom literature to gain an understanding of whether specific fan typologies are truly the way to define a football fan’s passion for their club. The introduction of this paper will seek to define fandom and authenticity, before the main section of this paper critically discusses the key football fandom literature of which was most relevant to the themes described in the abstract and subsequent basis of the subject within the introduction, discussing (chronologically) Marxist approaches to fandom, the emergence of post-fandom and the twentieth-first typologies of fandom which focus on the challenges from fans to the rise of consumerist fandom first evident in the 1990s and the new forms of supporting a football club.

Primarily,one must define the term *authenticity* to gain an understanding of the concept of the term and what it means to be an ‘authentic’ football fan. For the principal theorist of authenticity, Martin Heidegger (1962), authenticity is understood as that mode of human being-in-the-world (Daesin) of interest to those who, to paraphrase Blackshaw and Crawford (2009: 13), wish to explore the existential qualities and possibilities that are uniquely their own as individuals, and recognise that their existence has a certain distinctiveness that transcends simple analysis, description or perception. Charles Guignon (2004: 1) defines the ideal of authenticity as a project of *becoming* the person you are. Citing modern philosophers such as Taylor, Williams, and Calhoun, Guignon (2004: 82) argues that authenticity should be understood as a social virtue rather than purely a personal one when stating that ‘if authenticity is essentially a social virtue, then the authentic person must have a valuable role to play in society’. Ideally for Guignon, the quest for authenticity would lead to ‘the ability to be a reflective individual who discerns what is genuinely worth pursuing within the social context in which he or she is situated’. He makes a credible argument that this type of authenticity is an essential social virtue for modern democracies. With regard to this paper, to be authentic, linked to Heidegger and Guignon’s work, is to associate one’s self in the world of football supporting on differing levels to gauge one’s depth of authenticity in a contemporary fandom landscape.

Playing football is commonly defined as a sport or form of physical activity. Football fandom conversely, can be defined as a form of leisure. Leisure, as a social phenomenon, is a place where a person can pursue activities to gain feelings of joyfulness and belonging. The leisure pursuit of supporting a football team at the home ground of the club was a place where as a collective the fans could express themselves; support their team, identify with the club, as it feels like home, and place passion into something less restrictive than the place of work. To paraphrase Blackshaw (2010), leisure is one of the most important places we find home nowadays. For Blackshaw (2003: 102), the yearning for a feeling of belonging, of ‘home’ manifests itself in forms of togetherness.

Fandom, in the sport of football, is a major component of the way the game is played, displayed and sold aesthetically to the prospective audience across the globe. Crabbe et al. (2006) stressthat it is not straightforward to define ‘football fanaticism’. By definition, fandom is a term used to refer a subculture composed of fans characterized by a feeling of sympathy and camaraderie with others who share a common interest. Ferris (1995, cited in Redhead 1997, pg 29) defines fandom as over-determining as a concept, focusing on the obsessive ‘fanatic’ (Ferris 1995) rather than focusing on the ordinary supporter or casual viewer of sport. Crabbe et al. (2006) believe that ‘football’s capacity to include, through the provision of opportunities to share in a collective experience and communal visual and oratoral displays, is what makes it ultimately so seductive’. For the traditional fan according to Crabbe et al., football was (and to some still is) one of the few remaining spaces in which it is still possible to have a sustained sense of shared collective experience.

As stated previously, this paper discusses football fandom and what it means to be a ‘real’ football fan. Many football scholars have collectively dismissed the idea of the real fan; in recent years, authenticity has seen to become discommodious and rather unfashionable, and has been replaced by debates regarding post-fandom (Redhead 1993, 1997). Football pre-1990 can be said to have been a site for claims to authenticity. Marxists, such as Ian Taylor (1971) and Chas Critcher (1979) located this within class. Football to them, and the majority, was the ‘people’s game’. It is an inescapable fact that fandom is immersed in class. Taylor (1993) references links to class when explaining that a person’s relationship with sport goes deeper towards sources of consciousness and experience alluding to a ‘deep connectedness to social background’. This is very pertinent within a sport such a football. Crabbe et al (2006) highlight that term 'fan' actually derives from the word 'fanatic' which is used to describe someone whose enthusiasm or passionate fervour for something-in this case football-is extreme, or way beyond what is usually seen as normal. Hills (2002: xi) argues that "fandom is not simply a 'thing' that can be picked over analytically". Following Hills, it can be argued that being a football fan is not just a label or category, it is also tied into individual and group identities and social performances, which seek to reinforce the passionate fervour through support for one's football team.

The main section of this paper is split into three parts; the first part of this paper discusses Marxist approaches that locate authenticity in the working class. This entails a discussion of the works of Taylor (1971), Critcher (1979) and Robson (2000). The second part of this paper discusses the range of studies (namely from Redhead, 1997 and Giulianotti, 2002) which emerged through the emergence of post-fandom, and consumerism; the overall agreement of these studies seems to be that football is now a site of post–fandom which is indelibly linked to consumerism and the disappearance of authenticity. The third and final part of this paper discusses Adam Brown’s (1998) which move ‘*back to the future’* so to speak to consider the relationship between challenges to consumerism and the rise of what might be termed post-consumer accounts which are suggestive of ways which mark the return of authenticity in football in new forms**.** This paper will conclude with suggestions for further research surrounding this area and pose questions that may need to be asked in future research linked to fandom typologies and classifications of fandom.

Although there are various teams discussed within this paper, one must elucidate the rationale for the leaning towards Manchester United FC to explore the fan typologies, and authenticity discussions within this paper. Given that the author is a keen away supporter of MUFC, it is this club that will be primarily discussed in the paper to allow the author’s personal experience to inform the debate.

**Marxist Approaches to Fandom: Authenticity and the Working Class**

To form a coherent critique of the literature regarding football fandom and authenticity, one must begin with the work of Ian Taylor and Chas Critcher. One is in unequivocal agreement with Richard Giulianotti (2002) when he statesthat the work of sociologists Ian Taylor and Chas Critcherprovide a ‘crucial starting point for any analysis of football from the 1960s onwards’ (2002: 27). From the late 1960s onwards, Taylor (Soccer Consciousness and Soccer Hooliganism, 1971) and Critcher (Football Since The War, 1979) researched and analysed football from a Marxist theoretical angle, analysing the ‘apparent corporate-driven transformation that had been under way since the early 1960s’ Giulianotti (2002: 27).Critcher (1979), developing Taylor’s themes regarding Soccer Consciousness (1971), utilised the essential works of Raymond Williams (1961) to, as Giulianotti (2002: 27) states ‘elucidate the changing cultural relationships of spectators to football clubs’. In early football studies theorists were trying to conceptualise fandom. For sociologists such as Critcher and Taylor, fandom is clearly shaped by class. For Critcher and Taylor, traditional fans were working-class fans. Critcher (1979: 170) states that traditional fans ‘viewed themselves as “members”, an identity rooted in an unbreakable reciprocal relationship between fan and club’. This is a key point, as the traditional fan, which was perceived as the authentic fan (especially pre-1990) was indebted to their club-the club from their hometown, the one which their borough was associated with.

For the majority of working class fans, football and the club itself was a part of their culture; Giulianotti (2002:27) confirms this assertion, arguing that ‘working-class fans during the 1930s might have seen themselves as members within a participant culture at football clubs’. When exploring these pieces of research, the debate regarding football at this time was directly concerning the working class ‘game’ and the exploitation of the working class. According to Taylor (1971: 359), ‘the old working-class supporters with their soccer consciousness that centred on the local team masculinity, active participation and victory were being squeezed out’ in the post-war years, which accelerated in the early 1960s with the abolition of the maximum wage for the working-class footballer.Over thirty-five years later,when analysing fandom, Crabbe et al (2006) believe that ‘a central source of interest within these their studies have been the concern that working–class fans are being excluded economically from attendance at matches’ (pg 17).This significant change may have has an impact in the way the men who owned football clubs marketed their club to the 'middle-class spectators and their presumed interest in family football, spectacle, skill and performative efficiency' Taylor (1971: 364). Critcher (1979) ultimately believed that football had ‘lost its partial autonomy as a form of popular culture from the economic and cultural forces in the rest of society’ (pg 240) in terms of a symbolic displacement aspect. Critcher still alludes to the working-class ethics and origins of the sport at this point but forebodes football becoming a ‘likely fate as one of a number of uniformly packaged spectacles presented by capitalist business’ (1979: 240). An unequivocalconclusion of the Marxist perspective is that football is a working-class game and real football fans are working-class.This type of research, from the 1960s and 1970s, although an effective starting base to evaluate the origins of fandom, are essentially rather limited, as they are fundamentally wrapped up in class analysis, resistance to capitalism and resistance to commodification. Poignantly, as early as the 1970s, Taylor and Critcher had alluded to football beginning to lose its authenticity due to the consumerist ideals that were becoming increasingly prominent.

From Taylor’s theoretical narrative regarding the origins of football hooliganism (1971), sociological interest became overwhelmingly directed at the violent social phenomenon which is hooliganism; from the 1970s to early 1990s a significant amount of literature encapsulating the firsthand accounts of both fictionalised and non-fictionalised football fandom (with a penchant towards autobiographical tales of hooliganism) explained the rudiments of the mania that dogged British football during the 1970s and 1980s, and this literature became very popular and sold impressively. Duke (1991) questioned the concentrated efforts by authors on the aspect of hooliganism, arguing that sociologists should look for other important areas of investigation. He, alongside Moorhouse (1991), was somewhat prescient in sensing an imminent change. The sociology of football, until the 1990s, tacitly assumed that football was a working class game, and truly believed it was; however this position became principally untenable, with the advent of the FA Premier League in 1992. With the new formation, football gained a new constituency – thanks to high priced entrance fees to stadia (see Brown 1998); stricter policing; how the ground became *managed* as a venue; also the emergence of middle class surveillance, during the advent of the Premier League. The *new* fans, began policing working-class supporters, whose behaviour was turned from the norm in the mid 1980s to be being perceived as something ‘odd’ by the early 1990s - linked to Stanley Cohen (1972) and Stuart Hall’s (1978) work regarding *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* whereby the person or group which emerged in the 70s and 80s to then become defined as a threat to [societal values](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society) and leisurely interests, were phased out by this type of surveillance by the outset of the 1990s. To embody the working class supporting mannerisms and aesthetes became seen as abnormal and deviant. It was this transference of normal supporter behaviour by the middle classes, or those who paid an inflated price for their seat, along with the new regulations (following The Taylor Report) which began to suppress the ‘traditional’ fan.

A more sophisticated way of analysing the working class fandom within football is evidenced within Garry Robson’s publishing *No One Likes Us, We Don’t Care* (2000). Robson provides empirical research into the myth and reality of Millwall fandom, which is a welcome break from the traditional theoretical methods of dissecting fandom. Robson utilises the works of Pierre Bourdieu, specifically regarding the concept of embodiment and the corporeal self and applying these works to areas such as class, habitus, masculinity and deviance. In comparison to modernist scholars such as Taylor and Critcher, Robson is, by using Bourdieu's works, offering a more nuanced football analysis, and does this with a proficient set of tools and theories to develop his ideas from into the body of his work, and is fitting to a contemporary consumer British landscape.

Initially Robson alludes to certain societal classes viewing Millwall fans as deviant, working-class, loud, white males. As his work develops, Robson suggests that the football landscape has changed but actually those traditional fans inhabit a habitus that has deep historical roots. When drawing on the theories of Bourdieu (1984), Robson stresses that habitus and embodiment are essential to original fandom and collective imaginary. He sees modern football as a struggle over permissible forms of bodily practice due to the restrictive nature of the new era essence of the post-stadia (The New Den). Robson applies the concept of the body and its role in which the habitus engraves meaning and identity into the body itself, resulting in class based specific orientations towards the body. Robson utilises the works of Christian Bromberger (1993) to explain how supporters utilise the match day rituals to symbolise their collective existence and so not just be placed as an indicator of an arbitrary belonging**.** It is through this way of the transformative process of ritual that, in what Robson explains as the collective imaginary, fans actualise their identity within stadia, which further complements the uses of football merchandise such as kits and apparel purchased from the megastore and supporter groups in the external locators close to the stadia. For Robson, the changing landscape of terrace culture and behaviour of a supporter in the 1990s can be theorised as an area of class struggle regarding the justifiable uses of the body and the ever changing nature of the definition of a football fan, which as described earlier was a white, working class, deviant male.

Essentially, now that football is contingent – and Millwall is a moving habitus which has deep historical roots – although there has been a change in habitus, the football club still has its roots in the docks and within *Millwall* itself.For Robson, it is accepted now that one can work in the city, immerse themselves in a different social space, but can become a man or learn the values of being a true ‘male’ at a football ground-to Robson this (the football experience) may be the only place that one can be a real man in the 1990s and 2000s.

It is evident when dissecting Robson’s literature that when he analyses the club (Millwall) he holds so dear, Robson is trying to explain a sense of what it means to be an authentic Millwall fan in a world in which the antecedents of authenticity no longer exist. The era in which he supported Millwall FC from a boy to a young man in the south-east London surroundings at The Den have ultimately shaped the way he views football as a working class domain for the club (Millwall) that he supports and feels to be a true ‘fan’ one must be part of this culture to embody the tangible virtues and values of the club. Robson does not explicitly say that this is the authentic fan, but there is an indelible link between locale, club and what it means to *be Millwall.* This extreme engouement with Millwall is what makes Robson identify Millwall (and more specifically Millwallism) as a whole concept, a natural habitus that is totally incorporated. What we gain from Robson’s literature is that football fandom has changed, and that society is increasingly consumerist, but when one attends a football match one can still be a real football fan.

**The Emergence of Post-Fandom**

Robson’s suggests that football fandom had changed by the time he began to conduct his research (early 1990s) and the final publishing of his book (2000). This article must now source the emergence of the changing nature of fandom, which is identifiable in Robson’s work. Steve Redhead (1997) suggests that by the 1990 World Cup (Italia ’90),football fandom had ceased to be a ‘real’ activity and had effectively ceded to media representations. When citing Italia ‘90 as one of the defining moments signifying change, Redhead believes that ‘in many senses, it could be said that we are all post-fans now’ (pg 31), and coined the seminal phrase: post-fandom. Redhead’s idea of post-fandom has parallels with Eric Hobsbawn’s (1995) *Short Twentieth Century* concept: we see the end of one world and the start of another-in this case, we see the end of football as it was once perceived, and a new type of football emerge-or, linking to Francis Fukiyama’s (1984) *End of History* -whereas Fukiyama sees the end of history, Redhead proclaims the end of football fandom as we used to know it.

Within postmodern football there has been a blurring of social classes which has taken the central working-class aspect away from the terraces to the extent that all classes, in a postmodern stadium, integrate. As Redhead states, the ‘policing of the boundaries between high and low culture has partly broken down’ (pg 31)demonstrating the fact that like society, where it is now common for working or lower middle classes to go the theatre or opera for example, can integrate with the higher classes in and within the higher echelons of culture. This has only been possible (and evident) since ‘soccer hooliganism became less fashionable and more effectively marginalised in fan culture from the mid-1980s onwards’ (pg 25), and the fusing of opera with the Three Tenors singing prior to the Italia ’90 FIFA World Cup Final was the first clear signal of the mixing class cultures within football. Flynn, quoted in Redhead (1997: 26), places culpability on the bourgeoning postmodern football industry changing their attitude from upholding sporting traditions and ethics to focus on the importance of short-term financial gain and on partnerships and liaising with the media and various authorities.

Redhead argues that football supporters are now ‘manifestly born into post-fandom’ (1997: 29) and whilst stressing that the concept of fandom has not come to a specific end, the reflexive notion of what it means to be a fan of soccer, music or fashion ‘has always been present and is now more pervasive’ (pg 30). Redhead makes parallels to John Urry’s (1988) notion of the *post-tourist* in the way linking to the tourist gaze, that there is no authentic football fan experience, but that pleasures are in the multiplicity of attending games. Redhead argues that the *accelerated hyper-modern culture* of post-fandom is very similar to this theory. The apparent commodification of fandom is a central theme within Redhead’s work to ascertain why the ‘post-fan’ has emerged. Redhead alludes to the way in which ‘soccer culture has become privatised and marketised’ (1997: 29), or even *Americanised*, which has altered the appeal of the experience for the masses and attracted a mixture of types of fans who attend matches, or simply support their team in other formats, which has been heralded since the inception of football on Sky Sports in 1992, which Redhead refers to engulfing the British game when stating that:

‘the satellite take-over of soccer on British television by Sky in the 1990s’ has taken many ‘traditional’ fans into pursuing their authentic traits of fandom in a variety of other modes, such as supporting their team from afar, or at the public house, where they can uphold the largely male working class traditions cheap alcohol, camaraderie, standing up, singing unregulated songs, being loutish, being surrounded by friends or people from their local area of region rather than the ‘threatening smaller all-seater stadia, steeply rising prices of admission and embourgeoisement of the sport’

(Redhead 1997: 30)

Redhead believes that participatory and passive fans are often the same people, not different categories of spectator (Redhead 1993, quoted in Redhead 1997, pg 30). Richard Giulianotti, in his publishing *A Taxonomy of Spectator Identities in Football* (2002),supports this theme by creatingfour ideal types of fan identities in a postmodern society: Supporters, Followers, Fans and Flaneurs. Giulianotti argues that the overall trend in football fan identification has moved away from the traditional supporter model and towards the more detached, *cool*, consumer-orientated identification. One cannot discuss the changing face of fandom without recognising that football was transformed by the Hillsborough disaster in April 1989 and that these changes help usher in a new type of fan and a McDonaldization of the game. Following Justice Taylor’s report in January 1990, which stressed the imperativeness and urgency to implement all seating within all stadia at the 92 football clubs in the Football League (the removal of open free standing terraces) restricted the traditional fans’ access to be a collective within the football ground. Giulianotti (1999) believes the structured ordering of the fans through the concept of seating has restricted the original fan practices of vastly itinerant celebration and carnivalesque rituals, which reflects that wider changes in society theorised by the likes of Bauman. Giulianotti (2002: 29) alludes to football’s contemporary commodification-its hypercommodification as he succinctly states, has been driven by the ‘volumes of capital that have entered the game from entirely new sources: satellite and pay-per-view television networks’ other modern forms of technological innovations that have attracted that sport’s attention. In his 1999 article, Giulianotti believes that the transformation of football’s political economy is now not classifiable as modern - but it is now a postmodern phenomenon. These changes, linked to Lash and Urry’s work (1994), clearly shows that Giulianotti sees all football fans today as essentially consumers. To reach this assertion, Giulianotti offers an in depth fan typology to understand how the commodification of the game has led to differing types of fans rather than just the traditional fan in a post-fandom world of football.

When analysing Giulianotti’s four-quadrant analogy of fans (supporters, followers, fans, flaneurs), Giulianotti begins by defining the *Supporter* as the traditional fan, stating that they having a ‘topophilic’ relationship towards the club’s core spaces, primarily the home ground, making direct links to the works of John Bale (1993), which I will discuss later. According to Giulianotti (2002), to the *Supporter,* supporting their chosen club is ‘a key preoccupation of the individual’s self, and attending home fixtures is a routine that structures that supporters free time’ (pg 33). This type of fan can be most identifiable with Robson’s work in *No One Likes Us, We Don’t Care,* in the way that supporting the club is a lived experience, and ‘rooted in a grounded identity that is reflected in an affection to the regularly visited ground’ (2002: 33), and that ‘new generations of supporters should be socialized into the core sub-cultural values by their parents or by older peers’ (Giulianotti 2002: 34). This is the type of fan most clearly aligned toward the former traditional, authentic fan in Giulianotti’s view.

*Followers* however, are the spectators who align themselves to a certain club but have no need for an itinerant attachment to the club-they sometimes only support that club due to a certain player or manager being employed therein at that specific time. Giulianotti believes that ‘the *follower* arrives at such identification through a vicarious form of communication, most obviously the cool medium of the electronic media’ (2002: 35). The ease of accessibility and the instantaneous communicative means in the 21st century such as the mobile smartphone (iPhone, Android, BlackBerry) in the way a person can utilise the internet to demonstrate their knowledge of the club (i.e Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and previously Myspace) and also the way they can convey their support of being anti-consumerist by showing their allegiance to such movements as the non-megastore purchasing *Green and Gold* campaign (for example) in 2009/2010. Giulianotti suggests the *follower* would ‘define themselves against consumerist values to authenticate traditionalist motives’ (pg 35). Paradoxically, by wearing Green and Gold scarves and buying into the movement trying to stop the owners (Glazer family) at Old Trafford, those fans themselves are playing within the game of consumerism.

*Fans*, (the term being one of Giulianotti’s fan typologies) are the modern fans who align themselves with the club for a certain player of celebrity status-those who attach themselves to clubs like Manchester United FC via players such as David Beckham or Cristiano Ronaldo, and then have continued to follow and attach themselves to these specific players as they have moved onto their next football club and as fans aligned themselves as followers of that players subsequent club (i.e. Real Madrid). Giulianotti stresses that these ‘fans’ are the ones who identify themselves or authenticate their allegiance through consumptive practices, such as buying the latest United kit from the club megastore, or the subscribing to the United monthly magazine, or MUTV. Giulianotti (2002) states that ‘the consumer relationship to the club is thus at its strongest among the wealthiest of clubs’ (pg 37) so being very relevant for Manchester United, the club in question. The former United midfielder and captain, Roy Keane, defined this type of ‘fan’ in an interview with BBC Radio Five in 2000 when explaining that some people went to Old Trafford just for ‘the prawn sandwiches, and don't realise what's going on out on the pitch’, to say to their peers that they had been to Old Trafford, rather than to actually watch a match of football or support the team in question. Keane stated that some fans didn’t even know the names of the United players even though they attend the stadium every week-it was just about the ‘coolness’ of following Manchester United. These were the ‘fans’ which Giulianotti defined whom arrived when the success began to consistently occur, as it was seen as fashionable.

Finally, the *Flaneur,* according to Giulianotti (2002: 38), as a spectator typology, is the ultimate ‘postmodern spectator who identifies one’s self through a depersonalized set of market-dominated virtual relationships’, utilising the modern forms of technology mentioned previously, but supporting the team in this way alone, from afar, from cyberspace, from the armchair, and specifically that the *flaneurs*’ social practices are increasingly orientated toward consumption. Giulianotti alludes to the *flaneur* seeking their authenticity ‘through direct and unfavourable representation of spectators that possess traditional characteristics’ (pg 40), which may be now outdated in an era of social media where the *flaneur* can access the traditional song or semantic in the same way that any other fan could consume.

It is all very well to say that fans choose to be supporters, followers, fans and flaneurs – but what about the ways in which that choice impacts on fellow fans and how others choose to support their team? The consumer names of supporters, followers, fans and flaneurs have left a permanent mark in the recent studies of football fandom. These names are unarguably persuasive because football fandom has increasingly become consumerist. These taxonomic descriptions ignore the reflexive fluidity of fan communities and how supporters, whether at the live match, in a public house, or within their own home, perceive themselves as authentic despite many theoretical propositions to the opposite. Different perceptions amongst fans about the changes brought about in the early 1990s makes it complex to define what ‘fans’ are nowadays. It is clear that Giulianotti’s four types of fans have emerged due to the changes in the sport in a postmodern society, but to link all four to consumerist ideals alone is a bold assertion by Giulianotti.

Bale (1993: 86) states that topophilia is generally ‘regarded as the expression of love or affection for a place’. Within the early 1990s John Bale argued that Football was centrally about Topophilia – love of place, and that place attachment is a human emotion that is a significant contributor to ones quality of life (Eyles 1985, cited in Bale 1993: 86). The football stadium for Bale, provides a potent source of topophilia, due to its ‘homely’ character, scenery, and being part of our British heritage (pg 64). However in an era of a changing football landscape such as ground/club relocations, the rise of television, the business approach to running a football club, and wider societal changes linked to many facets of globalization; there was the need for deeper insight than just the stadium being the place where football was topophilic, as this could not work primarily through a ground change, i.e. Manchester City’s move from Maine Road to the Etihad Stadium-could call the basic of fandom into question. Furthermore, the widening catchment area created true and pseudo fans (1993: 63) of which the pseudo fans were glory hunters because they were not from the locale near that specific stadium. In contemporary society there has been a widening on the catchment area of lifestyles even as simple as for the place of work, and the opportunity to relocate to various parts of Britain and across the world means that this concept is not as valid in a contemporary society**.** Therefore oikophilia, also known as the ‘love of home’, is a more pertinent concept because the essence of Manchester United is not physically the ground itself, but the supporters that create home as a collective-at Old Trafford or elsewhere.

In 2000, Anthony King discussed football fandom and post-national identity in the new Europe, (after the fall of the Iron Curtain and communist dictatorship circa 1989-1991 and the re-forming of many eastern European countries) focusing on the fans of Manchester United FC, in the late 1990s. Within his *Fandom in the New Europe* book, King focuses upon a specific network of Manchester United fans who travel away to support the team in various stadia. He argues that fans emphasise the locale of Manchester in demonstrating their ‘authenticity’ as supporters of the club. Drawing on Hobsbawm and Rangers’ (1983) idea of invented traditions and to a less extent Anderson’s (1991) idea of imagined communities, King argues that locale is utilised as ‘the symbol of the social network’ and is a shared understanding developed by a particular set of people which is employed to maintain and regulate their relations with each other and to denote appropriate forms of conduct. The ‘locale comes to embody the central understandings of the group and acts as a common cultural resource by which members of the group are ‘called to order’. King alludes to the sense that to be from the locality of Manchester was the only way to portray your acceptance within the United away supporting community, headed or regulated by fans from Manchester. Appadurai (1990) expands Anderson’s concept of the imagined community and discusses the ‘significance of the concept of locality in relation to the creation of imagined communities in this globalized world’ (cited in King, 1998: 421). King uses this concept to stress that the locale is vitally important in being accepted into the community he focuses upon and ‘embodies the central understandings of the group’ (pg 422). One could question if this is always the case in the present day, and question the assertion that not being from Manchester is seen as inauthentic-has this dissipated as the game has become more globalised rather than localised? Do the local fans really not let any other fan from another region into their imagined community? For King, the group of United fans he focuses upon ‘are drawing on a re-invented notion of Manchester in their social practice’ (pg 437). They are making a community out of a collective belief, and trying to oppose capitalistic virtues that have enveloped football since in early 1990s. Linking to Blackshaw’s (2010: 137) analysis of imaginary communities, when citing Wegner (2002), these communities are ‘not so much real’ but ‘shape the ways people understand and act in their worlds’. The United fans who travel to away matches make their own community in the way that they are somewhat different to those who go to Old Trafford, and have a fraternal instinct about their being and place in the European football landscape. This then allows them to act out the Mancunian ideals and notions that are seen as part of that community, such as singing certain songs about the Lancastrian *River Irwell* to Sicily, fighting for Manchester as others cannot perceivably do it for them.

One of the key starting points within King’s discussion is that football is no longer a regional game, and in analysing Manchester United, King tries to say that we need to understand football on its global context rather than its regional ideals as these are no longer pertinent. With a club like Manchester United, as the biggest club in Britain, which has a truly global fanbase, King sees the playing out of authenticity on a European stage, so to become more United, one feels more united away from home rather than in a setting where fans are singing ‘Do you come from Manchester?’ (pg 428). When United are playing in Germany, Italy, or Russia for example, one’s authenticity becomes more palpable and that is when the Mancunian mannerisms and stereotypes are shown and being Mancunian is vitally more important. King believes that it makes one’s authenticity more palpable in another sphere (such as another country). Ultimately, King arrives at the conclusion that this is just another form of performance, Manchester United away fans are consumers in authentic clothes with authentic sounding accents - to be a real Manchester Untied fan you have to be a ‘Manc’, and dress like an away fan – not wearing the replica shirts etc, or what we can come to conclude as performativity, in a postmodern sense.

**Going ‘Back to the Future’**

To gain a balanced perspective on fandom, one must consider the challenges to the rise of consumerism within football in what may be termed as post-consumer accounts, suggesting the return to authenticity in football in new forms: essentially going back to the future. There was a response to the deep level of consumerism that was seeping into the game within Adam Brown’s *Fanatics!* (1998) regarding what Brown calls the ‘unequal struggle between club and supporter’ and how this was ‘vividly illustrated by events at Old Trafford in recent seasons’ (circa 1991-1997). More specifically within the chapter regarding Manchester United, titled *United we stand: some problems with fan democracy*, Brown explores the changes in fandom stemming from the 1990 Taylor Report and how, throughout the 1990s, the traditional fan became priced out of the experience of watching ‘their’ club at Old Trafford. Brown (1998: 59) confirms this by stating ‘there were many people who were becoming priced out of participation in the game and their club’, before analysing the damning economics of price rises across the stadium. The chapter comes to the conclusion that the club took the tradition and authentic, aesthetic feel of supporting Manchester United away from the traditional fan by embracing the Taylor Report and introducing the highly priced, all-seater ‘*Theatre of Dreams’*. The commodification of the club is highlighted with concern displayed to the ever-increasing sponsors and merchandise such as football replica shirts being reproduced year upon year in a range of styles.

Brown (1998: 63) believes that the economic power of the governing forces have left them ‘carte blanche to exploit the loyalties of the supporters in their commercial policies’, hence where Giulianotti’s (2002) typologies can be formed and established by the turn of the millennium. Brown believed that fan democracy, trying to keep the game in their grasp, is only motivated by supporters who want to ‘to protect a democratic ethic in football’ which has weakened since the capitalist ethics which have spread across British society, have become prevalent-the fans want to keep football ‘participatory, a peoples game’ (pg 63). Brown (1998: 64) believes that the supporters unions, set up to campaign against these changes, such as IMUSA, argue that ‘the clubs are corporatizing, commercialising and greedily’ carrying out the blueprint of the Taylor Report and are only ‘marginalising fans and bringing about the exclusion of some constituencies in football’ which seems to refer to the traditional, more authentic fan being priced out for the new consumerist follower of a club such as Manchester United.

Although not entirely clear in *Fanatics!*, Brown’s critique implies that you can only be a real fan of Manchester United by leaving the club and exiting the consumer game. In the mid-2000s, as a continuation of this theme and in a response to an ownership change, Adam Brown evaluated his sense of fandom at Manchester United with regards to the Glazer family takeover in 2005 and how some fans have taken their allegiance into their own hands, left the club and made their own club (FC United). Arguably this is a nostalgic way of keeping authenticity within a club, one which although borne through Manchester United, can never be Manchester United, but something different altogether it is the most radical response to the commodification of the game: ‘we’ll set up our own club-this is ours (FC United) not yours’ to the consumerist powers that be.

**Conclusion**

In summary, Marxist approaches assume that authentic football fans are working class fans, and that football is the people’s game. Although the theorists discussed in the first section of this paper are not explicitly stating it, in essence they are alluding towards football belonging to the people and football being a predominantly working class game. According to the historians, the football ground was the place where you learned to be working class – it was the place where you learned your subservient role in society. Both Taylor and Critcher allude to football losing its authenticity due to the pervading and increasing consumerist nature of the game.

Focusing on authenticity, it would appear when reviewing this literature that we are trapped in a reductive dichotomy of authentic versus inauthentic. What we are left with, according to scholars such as Redhead (1997) and Giulianotti (2002), is the conclusion that there are no real fans anymore, there is no such thing as authentic fans, and that all fans are now consumers; those fans who are authentic are either working class and so to keep this authenticity as Brown (1998) suggests, they must opt out of supporting a professional football club altogether. The emergence of post-fandom, for these scholars, suggests there is no such thing as a real fan anymore; the scholar against this, suggesting that there are still real fans today is Adam Brown, who suggests that the only way to be a real or authentic is to set up your own football club a la FC United or AFC Wimbledon.

Some of the theorists discussed within this paper lacked a full understanding of authenticity. Scholars such as Giulianotti seem to work with, or buy into the postmodern assertion that a fan cannot be authentic. Most football scholars are actually working with a particular definition of authenticity which is rather weak. Most definitions are weak in two ways: firstly, they assume that authenticity is something individual, that you as an individual show that you are a real fan. The second weakness of their definition of authenticity is that it assumes a postmodern position that nothing can be authentic in a postmodern world and many scholars work with that assumption, that we now live in a consumerist postmodern world, and in that world nothing can be authentic or ‘real’. It would appear from the discussion of the literature that authenticity hasalmost disappeared from football-and that we have seen the end of the working class and the emergence of consumerism. For some of the scholars discussed (Brown, 1998), the best that Manchester United fans can do is to simply leave the club. Is this a satisfactory theoretical perspective? Have the scholars discussed utilised the correct theoretical tools to really understand Guignon’s (2004) definition of authenticity? To understand authenticity there is the need to define the term in a different way and therefore we may require a different theoretical framework. Heidegger’s (1962) assertion of being-in-the-world can be identified in how fans within the sport of football are searching for a passion, point of being and a place in society, and a fan supporting for example, Manchester United finds that following United assigns them a role that they can follow in a less restrictive or constraining way than in other areas of their life such as the workplace. In other words, fans not only find their freedom but *themselves*, and what it means to truly belong to something like a community in football.

Majoribanks and Farquharson (2012) allude to sport becoming an all-encompassing aspect of a fans everyday life, while for others it is more peripheral. For many fans whether a certain sport encompasses one’s life is the truest test of how authentic a fan really is. However, it is clearly evident that the people who are authentic Manchester United fans originate from all corners of the globe, and that their authenticity is borne out in many different ways, primarily for some within a basic commitment to United to turn up every week and attend games, and the ability to welcome other fans is a key virtue that has to be employed by authentic fans whether at Old Trafford or a in an away setting. What Majoribanks and Farquharson’s dichotomy overlooks is the changing world outside of football - it focuses on sport specifically instead of looking at the wider society.

The post/liquid modern debate can explain the changing nature of fandom, which Sandvoss (2003) suggested mirrors the phenomenon of the postmodern life. When society changed during the postmodern turn in the 1980s and 1990s, football irreversibly changed with it, and cannot go back to what it was. Akin to today’s society, people are now able to make individual choices offered by the liberal market, and the fact that fans can choose to throw themselves into a club or walk away from the club they love (FC United/AFC Wimbledon etc) due to the apparent disappearing of traditions means that the postmodern world has given them a choice to as an individual, have the ability to choose what they wish to pursue and when. In today’s society, with so many other leisure/sporting pursuits available other than football one can link Bauman’s (2000) concept of cloakroom community to this thesis in the sense that today we are all individuals first and foremost, and so we might tentatively conclude that scholars such as Guignon (2004) are correct within their theories, but they place too much focus on the basis of the collective in such an individualistic world.

Rather than a seismic shift in fandom, Redhead’s idea of post-fandom and Giulianotti’s idea of a four way fan typology become apparent, suggesting that all fans in one sense or another are consumers of football, perhaps this paper offers a third way-a *continuum of fandom*, where the typologies offered by scholars such as Giulianotti, Crabbe et al. and Majoribanks and Farquharson can be referenced or placed along the scale, but in a more fluid sense of identifying or placing fandom rather than categorising each person into a specific fan typology-this is evident from the fact that a person can go from Giulianotti’s *Supporter* to leaving the club altogether and falling ‘off the radar’ altogether. The most ardent fan may have to sit or stand next to the *Flaneur*, but all fans are at the ground for the same reason-to support their club. The more authentic fan can place themselves in certain areas of the stadium which lets them exude their ‘true’ fandom, be it through flags, older replica shirts or song, but in a liquid modern world they still have to share that stand or ‘community’ with the flaneurs, whom they may never see again, but for that ninety minutes they are supporting the club in the same locale.

Evidently, linked to my suggestion of a continuum of fandom, in today’s football landscape would this not just be a comparison of consumer identities? The symbolic rivalry that accompanies displaying your true fandom to rival fans and fellow fans is centred around consuming-whether spending capital on replica shirts or flags, the fan is still buying to the plc that is your personal football club in some form or another, and maybe, if one really wants to become an authentic fan, they have to opt out of following a club (such as Manchester United) and stop playing the consumer game. Bauman (2001) succinctly states this when implying that in a liquid modern world it is impossible not to be a consumer. This review of the literature on football fandom raises a number of questions that require further investigation: what does it *mean* to be an *authentic* fan? Has the impact of consumerism had an effect on supporter identity?There is the definite need to further explore the relationship between clubs, supporters and supporters attitudes as we move through the 2010s.

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