

Taylor, Rogan. *Football and Its Fans: Supporters and Their Relations with the Game, 1885-1985*. Leicester, England: Leicester University Press, 1992. Pp. viii, 198, Notes, index. \$22.50.

Redhead, Steve. *Football With Attitude*. Manchester, England: Wordsmith, 1991. Pp. 116. Photographs. 9.95 (sterling).

The field of popular culture represents a fluid space within which particular cultural products and practices become either appropriated, adapted, or ignored, at specific historical moments, by specific historical agents, in such a way as to either substantiate or oppose (most realistically shifting elements of both) dominant power relations. Rogan Taylor's *Football and Its Fans* and Steve Redhead's *Football With Attitude*, although focusing on different historical periods and loosely borrowing from contrasting theoretical traditions, both demonstrate how English football is part of what Antonio Gramsci referred to as the "compromise equilibrium" of popular culture.

The photographic frontages of both *Football and Its Fans* and *Football With Attitude* graphically illustrate the contrasting experiences of English football fandom within the historical conjunctures with which these projects are respectively concerned. Firstly, the black-and-white photograph fronting Taylor's work, taken from the renowned Hulton-Deutsch Collection, captures a banked mass of predominantly working-class male football supporters (most probably from the immediate post-war era), displaying the kind of collective enthusiasm for the game that administrators of English football have habitually and shamelessly exploited. It is exactly this abusive power relation which Taylor exposes in his genealogical treatise.

Interestingly, Rogan Taylor occupies a unique place in the history of English football. Motivated by the cumulative national epiphany that developed out of the cadaverous ashes of the Bradford Fire disaster, and the equally macabre rubble of both the Heysel Stadium and Birmingham City riots, in 1985 Taylor was instrumental in setting up the *Football Supporter's Association* (F.S.A.). The goal of this progressive addition to football culture was to *Reclaim the Game* for the ordinary football supporter by challenging the condescending, neglectful, and dismissive mismanagement of football by its controlling hierarchy. In other words, the F.S.A. sought to provide football's much maligned, and at times fatally exploited, silent masses with a legitimate forum for representing *their* collective concerns for the future well-being of what they historically considered as *their* game.

As the first chairman of the F.S.A., Taylor raised a well-publicized and well-respected voice of reason in the midst of the post-Heysel media carnival. After stepping down as chairman of the F.S.A. in 1989, Taylor subsequently became actively associated with the Sir Norman Chester Centre for

Football Research at Leicester University. To date, this book represents the most concrete fruit of his intellectual labor. Given his prior involvement with the F.S.A., Taylor's book predictably focuses on the relationship between football supporters and the game itself. More surprisingly, perhaps, Taylor ignores the turbulent conjuncture with which he was so crucially involved, preferring to chronicle the century-long "terminal decline" (p. 3) in the relationship between *Football and Its Fans*; a tortuous relationship characterized by the constant Machiavellian maneuverings of administrators and owners resulting in the persistent exploitation of the goodwill and unswerving loyalty of organized supporters. Although seeming to ignore his own experience, Taylor's brief of exposing the prolonged experience of football's internal sociopolitical divisions unearths a problematic which unquestionably contributed to the tragic denouement of 1985, and thus ironically, to Taylor's own emergence as one of the game's leading organic intellectuals.

Borrowing more from the "Leicester School's" attention to historical data than its occasionally dogmatic adherence to Eliasian theorizing, Taylor embellishes his narrative throughout with the engaging use of primary and secondary sources. He eloquently attributes the roots of football's fractured existence to the acute embarrassment felt by the industrial bourgeoisie (who inherited control of the game from the ranks of an increasingly disinterested aristocracy at the turn of the century) toward the ebullient commandeering of the game as their own by the English proletariat. This deep-rooted disdain continued to manifest itself in the exploitive usage of supporters' organizations as lucrative avenues of fund raising, by club administrators who had no intention, or indeed saw any need, of granting supporters any sort of meaningful representation in the running of the club. Taylor then goes on to demonstrate how even when organized into a national federation, football supporters failed to gel into any sort of coherent body that could seriously challenge the hegemony of the game's administrators. All this created a chasm between the interests of administrators and supporters which was merely widened by the reactionary responses to the minority "hooligan element." Thus during the course of this troubled century-long engagement, a climate of mutual distrust, disinterest, and hostility was created which rendered the tragedies of 1985 (and indeed Hillsborough 1989) wholly predictable, if not unavoidable, occurrences.

In his stirring concluding remarks, Taylor voices his belief that a history of football supporters' relation with the game needed to be written, in order that the post-Heysel world of English football (with which he was so actively concerned) could be fully understood. As he states, "It is a story that needed telling, if only to help us understand better the developments, that have flowed from 1985" (p. 191). Later, he continues:

To my mind, the events in the football world since 1985 represent the beginnings of a new stage in the history of the game;

one which includes the rise of the FSA, the “independents” and the fanzines, Hillsborough, ID Cards, Italy '90, League restructuring, TV influence, the return to Europe and future cross-cultural developments between supporters. These subjects are all part of the “football revolution” through which we are now living. They deserve a book to themselves (p. 194).

Although we still await Taylor’s commentary, it is possible to turn to Steve Redhead’s *Football With Attitude* which is precisely an exposition of various manifestations of the “football revolution” alluded to by Taylor. In recent years, and especially in his capacity as director of the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture (located, within the Manchester Metropolitan University), Redhead has been instrumental in developing a body of critical research which provides an important counterpoise to the “detached” sociological analyses of English football, for which the “Leicester School” has become so rightly renowned.

Football With Attitude represents a thoroughly accessible introduction to Redhead’s ongoing project. Once again the visual aesthetic of the book’s cover provides a telling precis of its contents. Richard Davis’ wrap-around photomontage juxtaposes a myriad of signs, drawn from the collective memory and consciousness, created by the interconnections made between English football, popular music, and youth culture during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Redhead’s text similarly points toward this hybridized popular culture, and a more active, oppositional generation of football consumers than those described by Taylor; a generation of cynical yet committed, ironic yet involved, *football fans with attitude* seeking to construct their own alternative to the sensationalist and reactionary representational practices which had come to dominate the mass media’s coverage of English football.

Football With Attitude cogently captures the changing patterns of participation and consumption associated with football as a cultural product, which emerged as conditions of postmodernity blurred the distinctions between the various domains of popular existence. Although providing an informative historical backdrop to the vibrant state of English football fan culture at the end of the twentieth century, *Football With Attitude* is at its most incisive when illustrating the originality and creativity of the contemporary cultural practices associated with the new generation of supporters. Displaying an enviable grasp of popular practices, styles, and movements, Redhead guides the reader through the evolution of the crossover between football, popular music, and youth culture, which by the end of the 1980s had spawned the phenomenal growth ‘of football fanzines (or fan magazines) and the related emergence of new patterns of participation within football’s frequently misunderstood terrace culture.

In summation, whereas Taylor thoughtfully documents the historically exploited experiences of organized football supporters, the seductive mix of

Redhead's text and Davis' images actually contributes to the more informal and expressive resistant cultural space under their critical gaze. However, despite these substantive and epistemological differences, both of these works represent important contributions to the growing body of sophisticated research involved in the critical sociohistoric analysis of sport as a central aspect of the complex and dynamic field of popular existence.

University of Memphis

David L. Andrews