

English Football and Its Hong Kong Television Audience

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**"English Football and Its Hong Kong Television Audience"**

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**Abstract:** In his paper "English Football and Its Hong Kong Television Audience," Victor Fan applies Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's thought in their *Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure* to map the relationship between the English Premier League of football (soccer) and its Hong Kong television audience/spectatorship. Fan first introduces the background of the English Premier League in relation to its increasing subjugation under Thatcherite and post-Thatcherite consumerist economy. He then examines how the Premier League as televised image transforms the game to hyperreality. Fan argues that these are conditions under which the subaltern would appropriate the hyper-sign as an individuated mental screen, which, in turn, triggers the process of becoming-animal. This allows the subaltern to form a contiguous relationship with the exaggerated diabolical power, rewrites the codes of signification, and claims, finally, ownership to her/his own virtual game and virtual desire. Fan proposes that this process leads to the dismantling of the major game to the nth degree and a true deterritorialization of all forms perceived.

## Victor FAN

### English Football and Its Hong Kong Television Audience

In the present study, I apply the theory that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari propose in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (*Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure*) to map out the relationship between the English Premier League football (the British term for soccer in North American English) and its Hong Kong audience/spectatorship. Francis L.F. Lee argues that national identities coexist with "postnational identities" in the age of the Premier League and concludes that "soccer fandom has not been totally deterritorialized" (198). I argue that it is precisely the coexistence of competing identities that characterizes the process of becoming, which deterritorialization entails. By choosing the English Premier League football (in soccer, England is considered a separate nation from Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Each isle has its independent Premier League) as my point of entrance, I acknowledge its moment of formation as a strategic nexus that connects other points in the rhizome. Anthony King's analysis would allow us to locate some of these interconnected conjunctures: King posits the game within the emergence of a post-Fordist socioeconomic environment in the 1970s. He argues that "despite its claim of being the 'first industrial nation,' Britain was, ironically, never fully industrialized," its economy "rel[ie]d more on the relatively easy wealth which its Empire provided and which the 'habitus' of its ruling class ... regarded as an appropriate method of accumulation" (27; see also Weiner; Landes). Such economy "oriented" itself "towards the City with its bias towards immediate financial reward through foreign investment in the Empire rather than long-term investment in indigenous British industry" (King 27; see also Nairn 23; Gamble 3, 23, 60, 85, 112; Landes 326-58; Hutton 111-31). When the British economy confronted globalization in the 1970s, its reaction was to reinvent itself along the same line through the implementation of "policies which favoured the City at the expense of the manufacturing sector" (King 27). This led to a "radical decline in manufacturing employment" and the division of the British society into the "'underclass,' the new affluent manual and white-collar workers, the professional middle-class ... and the entrepreneurial capitalists" (King 30; see also Edgell and Duke). The post-Fordist economy exchanges a commodity according to its "sign value," i.e., the value of the commodity's ability to create "identity" and to "endo[w] its consumer with meaning, rather than [to] provid[e] that consumer with a tool which has a function" (King 27-28; see also Lash and Urry 4). Based on Andrew Gamble's argument, King believes that Thatcherism operated on two poles: the extension of the free market economy and the achievement of such goal with the socio-ideological and legal control of a strong state (see King 31; Gamble 121; on Thatcher and her government's impact on culture in the United Kingdom, see also, e.g., Trimm <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol7/iss2/8/>>).

King propounds that every gambit in the transformation of English football was an attempt to subjugate football under the socio-ideological and economic project of Thatcherism. The abolition of the maximum wage in 1961 officially ended the Corinthian ideal of amateurism and fair competition between clubs (39-47; the Corinthians were the most successful amateur team between 1882 and the early 1900s, see Mason 216-217). As Tony Mason's study shows, the concept of the maximum wage in the 1880s and 1890s came from the thinking that "it would be much healthier if [professional footballers] also did a proper job of work" (95). It was also an attempt to cool down the "intensified competition between the elite clubs" through their offering of high wages and the "increasing willingness on the part of the public to pay to see the play" (96). The abolition of the maximum wage opened the floodgate for club elitization. It surrendered football to the free-market principle and facilitated the rise of the star system. The Bosman ruling in September 1995 supported the free transfer of labour within the European Union provided "under Articles 48, 85 and 86 of the Treaty of Rome" and it abrogated the transfer fee system and UEFA's (Union of European Football Associations) "three-foreigner rule" (Redhead 27). According to Robert Matusiewicz, the clubs are no longer in positions to train young players as their competitiveness depends solely on their financial ability to purchase star players. They need to place investments not on the actual, but the predicted, ability of these players by the end of their contracts. Since players are now free

to accept or refuse their proposed transfers, the clubs find their financial plans unsettled (166-67). In theoretical terms, clubs buy and sell footballers according to their sign values. The physical performance of a player is no longer an index for his ability to help the club in the League's competition. His sign value affects his monetary exchange value as a commodity between clubs. In 1982, the League permitted "32-square inch advertisements on team shirts" when big city clubs threatened to resign. Advertisements formalized the marriage between corporate capital and the elite clubs, while the success of the elite clubs' threats aggrandized their negotiating power in the League itself (King 49-53). These elite clubs included the Big Five: Arsenal, Everton, Liverpool, Manchester United, and Tottenham Hotspur; and the "Bates-Noades axis" between Chelsea and Crystal Palace (King 55-67). These clubs played essential roles in the negotiations of television deals with ITV and the BBC throughout the 1980s and they were strategically responsible for the formation of the Premier League in 1992 under the blueprint and administration of the Football Association (hereafter referred to as the FA) as a package for the BSkyB satellite television network. The Premier League was therefore born as a televised image for consumers who were financially "free" to purchase it as a commodity. The club administrations, newly corporate, no longer see football spectators as "fandom." The fans are now a highly selective group of consumers who have the financial capability to consume identities attached to their clubs and star players (King 90-95). King's analytical framework sheds light on our understanding of the implications of the football disasters and the subsequent Taylor Report and he argues that these physical incidents occurred precisely at a time when the British public was re-negotiating a "moral panic," which was part of "wider anxieties about changes in British society" (the three most cited incidents among scholars were Bradford, Heysel, and Hillsborough, see King 74-97). King believes that the public attention on the pitch as a site of moral and physical crisis was "attributable to the fact the game is a ritual" and he argues that the pitch "is a charged arena in which meanings and values are debated and relations re-negotiated" (75-76; on ritual and English football, see e.g., Armstrong 13, 306; Dunning, Murphy, Williams 19-23; Marsh, Rosser, Harré; Taylor, "Football" 352-57; Taylor, "Soccer" 134-64; Clarke 37-60; on ritual and French and Italian football, see Bromberger 319-346; Armstrong's argument relies on Geertz 1-37; on ritual and US-American football, see, e.g., Axelrod

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol3/iss1/2/>>; see also Sehmy on wrestling and popular culture <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol4/iss1/5/>>). King agrees with Eric Dunning that the Hillsborough incident proved that the caging of spectators as a means of crowd control was a direct cause of the disaster. This forced the government to shelve the "Part 1 of the Football Spectators Bill," which initially proposed a tighter control of the crowd with fences. The necessity to reinvent a crowd-control system, "the Government's support for re-entry into Europe and the more optimistic mood regarding the English game" resulted in a general "under-report[ing], particularly in the national press" of football-related violence (Dunning 133; King 76).

The recommendations of the Taylor Report in 1990 physically and legally transformed the Premier League. They include "the introduction of all-seat accommodation," the instalment of closed-circuit television (CCTV), limitation of fencing to a height no more than 2.2 meters, criminalization of "obscene and racist abuse, the throwing of missiles and pitch invasion," attraction of female spectators and families to make the atmosphere "less conducive to violence," and establishing "better relations" with fans. King observes that the Taylor Report has created a "panoptic arena" (97-99). The cost of installing seats in the new stadia and the new consumerist identity that the club administrations intend to produce necessitate a drastic increase of admission fees and a subsequent change of spectator composition. According to King's finding in the Football Trust's statistics, the average admission for Manchester United in 1988-89 was £4.71 (King 135; see also Football Trust 28). The average admission for the 2004-05 season is £25.44 (Manchester United

<<http://www.manutd.com/news/fullstory.sps?iNewsid=43269&type=1020&bPreview=true>>). The percent increase is 440.13%. Chelsea offers a Shed End Family Lower Tier season ticket at £480.00 for renewed subscribers and £530.00 for new subscribers. These prices are about 37.66% less than the cheapest season ticket for an individual subscriber (Chelsea

<<http://www.chelseafc.com/article.asp?article=103487&Title=Season+Tickets&lid=Navigation++Tickets&sub=Season+Tickets&nav=&sublid=>>). According to a survey by the University of Leicester Centre for the Sociology of Sport, attendants earning below £30,000 dropped from 81% of the total in 1997 to 67%. Simultaneously, attendants earning above £30,000 rose from 19% to 33% during the same period (University of Leicester, "Fact Sheet 13"

<<http://www.le.ac.uk/so/css/resources/factsheets/fs13.html>>). In 2001, another report shows that "around 15% of respondents ... were female" and it claims that "women across a variety of ages" comprised this "new" group of spectators (University of Leicester, "Fact Sheet 5"

<<http://www.le.ac.uk/so/css/resources/factsheets/fs5.html>>). King divides the new spectator formation into three groups. First, there are the Lads, i.e., "masculine fandom," who generally feel that the clubs have disowned them. The clubs exclude them from live participation by imposing high prices on tickets, creating a "feminized" atmosphere, and commercializing club identities through global sales of merchandise. The second group consists of the producers and consumers of new football literature. These spectators mostly come from "professional middle classes," who write and read fanzine articles or fiction. They identify themselves with a "past," "authentic" and "English" experience that belonged to an imagined "working class." The third group consists of the new consumer fans, who are generally in compliance with the financial, ideological and social changes of the Premier League (King 148-203).

If the fans believe there was an "authentic" game that dwelled in a historical past, one could argue that the Premier League is an "inauthentic" experience. The Premier League is, first and foremost, a televised image. Steve Redhead borrows Jean Baudrillard's idea in his analysis of a European Cup match between Real Madrid and Naples in 1987. UEFA penalized the two teams by disallowing the admission of a live audience. Baudrillard argues that the game has become a "pure event ... devoid of any reference in nature, and readily susceptible to replacement by synthetic images" (Baudrillard, *Transparence* 80, qtd. in Redhead 43). We should pay attention to the term, "natural reference" (*réf rence naturelle*), which Baudrillard distinguishes from "referent" (*réf rent*) (Baudrillard, *Transparence* 87). What the televised image loses is not the referent itself but the "reference": the very codes that allow signs to "designate" things. The disappearance of these codes causes the disappearance of the "referents" (the actual signs with material substances). In an earlier passage, Baudrillard claims: "Within the space of communication, words, gestures, looks are in a continual state of contiguity, yet they never touch. The fact is that distance and proximity here are simply not relationships obtaining between the body and its surroundings. The screen of our images, the interactive screen, the telecomputing screen, are at once too close and too far away: too close to be true ... and too far away to be false ... They thus create a dimension that is no longer quite human, an excentric dimension corresponding to the depolarization of space and the indistinctness of bodily forms of expression" (*Transparence* 55). Baudrillard's notion of disappearance (*disparition*) therefore refers to the death of the physical intervals between signs and things, or between two non-physical signs (see Baudrillard, *Transparence* 4; *Transparence* 12). If we follow Saussure that *langue* is a system of intervals or differences without any material "referents," the disappearance of such intervals resists signification (Saussure, * crits* 64-66). This process deterritorializes physical reality. In Peircian terms, hyperreality replaces physical reality as a virtual sign that points towards a virtual interpretant, which in turn becomes "a [virtual] sign, and so on ad infinitum" (Peirce 169). Therefore, according to Baudrillard, "things disappear through proliferation or contamination, by becoming saturated or transparent, because of extenuation or extermination, or as a result of the epidemic of simulation. Rather than a mortal mode of disappearance, then, a fractal mode of dispersal" (Baudrillard, *Transparence* 4; *Transparence* 12). Redhead's argument helps us understand the subaltern's relationship to the televised image of the game; the spectators, through the virtuality of the screen, have transformed the televised image into individual "mental screen[s]" (Baudrillard, *Transparence* 80; Redhead 44). Each spectator is responsible to "write" his/her own minor game out of the language of the major game. A major language disappears and gives rise to sites of individuated minor Spurs. A Spur, according to Jacques Derrida, is a pre-linguistic and pre-morphological moment when signification yields to the conflictual and orgasmic effervescence of the procreative libidinal operation and the self-negating

death drive. According to Derrida, football would "advance in the manner of a spur of sorts (*éperon*). Like the prow ... of a sailing vessel, its rostrum, the projection of the ship which surges ahead to meet the sea's attack and cleave its hostile surface" (39). It is an invincible force, a "means of protection against the terrifying, blinding, mortal threat (of that) which *presents* itself" (39; emphasis in the original). It serves the function to "protec[t] the presence, the content, the thing itself, meaning, truth -- on condition at least that it should not *already* (*déjà*) be that gaping chasm which has been deflowered in the unveiling of the difference" (39; emphasis in the original).

Televised images of major English football events such as the FA Cup or League matches between major city clubs have always been accessible to spectators in Hong Kong. Nonetheless, the formation of the Premier League has transformed the relationship between television spectators in the colonies and the game. For the first time, a single televised image gives rise to a cacophony of individuated games. Traditionally, identification with English clubs manifested two desires. First, the fans longed for an authentic English identity through an experience that would never permit them to participate because of ideologically constituted racial differences. Second, the English experience functioned as a "stand-in" for the absence of a national identity both in football and in the geopolitical sphere. In the 1970s, Hong Kong spectators had a strong sense of belonging to their local First Division. Literary representation of Hong Kong football reveals the more complex issue of the predetermined impossibility of its recognition as an authentic experience. In Xi Xi's *My City*, Merry Mak imagined himself as Pelé, although he would fatalistically confront a "goalkeeper" who would catch "the ball with perfect ease every time" (Xi 49). Entering football, therefore, entailed a racial or national borrowing, or a moment of trans-raciality. Mak also remembered that there was a team called "Foul Play. They won every match they played, yet technically they were not that brilliant" (Xi 50). Although Xi Xi's representation of football carries a metaphorical function, such a description does not lose its metonymic value to designate the "second-class" status of Hong Kong football. This sense of racio-national complex had its most unbridled manifestation in the hooligan riot after a 2-1 victory over China in the qualifying match for Mexico 1986 (the "5.19 Incident"; see FIFA <<http://fifaworldcup.yahoo.com/06/en/t/team/overview.html?team=hkg>>; Zhang 157-160). Hong Kong's victory infuriated Chinese supporters as football consecrated a "national" or even "racial" difference between the mainland and the colony with players who were biologically and historically related. From China's point of view, Hong Kong football bears the wound of colonial defeat. In response to China's first World Cup final qualification, the editors of the web journal *Sina* <<http://www.sina.com>> lament that football history in China has always borne an "eternal wound." They write, "Soccer ... arrived at China in the company of opium and finally evolved to today's Marlboro Chinese Football League Division A" (*Sina* <<http://cul.sina.com.cn/s/2001-10-31/5689.html>>; my translation). The editors regard Hong Kong as the "first place in China that was under football's spell; time: the 1880s; reason: Hong Kong formally began its hundred-year long life as a colony. China's 'modern football' is a by-product of being conquered" and they reject the view that Hong Kong's football identity could potentially form a dialectically symbiotic relationship with the "national" football identity of China (*Sina* <<http://cul.sina.com.cn/s/2001-10-31/5689.html>>). They believe that "Chinese football history ... has failed to prove the material commonality frequently mentioned in dialectical materialism. You would like to treat it as a bifurcated phenomenon. Very difficult. Its history was simple failure. It is cadaverous, fatigue and covered with injuries, because Chinese football refuses victory" (*Sina* <<http://cul.sina.com.cn/s/2001-10-31/5689.html>>). Yang Qun, the ex-captain of the Beijing team, Guo'an, finds that Chinese football administrators have accepted the colonial stereotype that local players are inherently "indolent, lazy, devoid of spirit and perseverance, physically and strategically backward" (58; my translation). The Premier League, however, no longer serves as a vehicle for local identity. The televised image is no longer an analogue transmission. It is a representation of scrambled digital data for individual consumption. It is a commodity. The spectators do not purchase the product as a physical event, but for its sign value, i.e., its ability to create an identity specific to the need of each spectator's unique psyche. The screen allows the spectator

to live up to his/her own hyper-authentic identity. The English identity that a "national" club like Manchester United represents does not replace a real English identity that Thatcherism has long illegitimated by Nationality Act 1981 (Anwar 8-16). "Englishness" is a fashionable commodity that one can consume through televised matches, merchandise, and most importantly, betting. Dressing-up, watching the matches on television and gambling are not signs that refer to the physical game itself. They generate highly independent perceptions of consumable and individually malleable identities. For example, on 22 January 2006, *Google* counted 7,310,000 football-related sites in the Chinese language ("Zuqiu," *Google* <<http://www.google.com/search?q=%E8%B6%B3%E7%90%83&sourceid=mozilla-search&start=0&start=0&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official>>) and the majority of these sites devote themselves to reporting on and discussing the Premier League. They contain translations of current news from England in highly colloquial tones, links to gambling sites and analyses of footballers and matches for betting purposes. Boards around major pitches feature advertisements in Chinese to attract gamblers. Through the televised image of the Premier League, the fans "re-write" minor games in a major virtual language. Inadvertently, the fans have "escaped" (not resisted) the colonization of their identity by consuming and complying with the very process of alienation that estranges their identity from the real. They have created fissures, egresses and a sense of "ownership" of their games. According to Jacky Law, a Hong-Kong fan told a TV reporter after the Hong Kong vs. Liverpool game, "I am certainly happy after Liverpool has scored six goals against Hong Kong. I'm looking forward to a twelve goal record against Hong Kong by Real Madrid next time" (Law <<http://hk.geocities.com/chikei1984/hkfootball.html>>; my translation). Underlying this disturbing statement is a line of escape. The fan has escaped the domination of the need of a national or regional identity as his mental screen has replaced and sated this need by hyper-identities.

In contrast, extreme right-wing hooligans insist on a form of resistance that acts upon the real. Current debates between hooligan leaders reflect a conscious disdain towards a "tendency" of the hooligan culture to "disappear" and to "become ... 'hyperreal' in the process" (Redhead 3). On 4 October 2004, Will Browning wrote a statement on behalf of Andy Frain (a.k.a. Nightmare of the Chelsea Headhunters). He claimed that "5 wankers" had spread rumours that Frain was "going to start fight [*sic*] with mates that he's known for years and that Chelsea C18 [Combat 18] supporters [were] going to beat themselves up" (Browning <<http://www.bloodandhonour.com/forum/statement.php>>[inactive]). In reply to Browning, Andy of *Razors Edge Blood & Honour* England wrote, "we thank you for keeping the faith, to the genuine people who have ended up on the other side, wise up because you are being tarred with the same brush as this tiny group of oddballs" (Andy <<http://www.bloodandhonour.com/forum/statement.php>> [inactive]). Andy's reply employs a rhetoric of "real" versus "fake," and his description of the "buzz" of being a B&H/C18 member is physically grounded as the phrase "being tarred with" invokes. Echoing Redhead's theory that hooliganism has disappeared into popular music culture, Max Hammer from Blood and Honour Scandinavia recalls the splitting up of B&H into a "political section -- allied or friendly to Combat 18, and a 'music' section -- allied to petty fame and hard cash" (Hammer <<http://www.bloodandhonour.com/forum/statement.php>>[inactive]>). This latter group is what Browning calls the "'wankers' among those who put true ideology before the latest music craze" (Browning <<http://www.bloodandhonour.com/forum/statement.php>>[inactive]). Hammer makes a solemn statement to distinguish the "real" political fighters from the "music wankers": "The real, political Blood & Honour, is made up of true bravehearts, people who have sacrificed all (including family, job, freedom and even life itself). They are not hiding behind scene curtains and giving infantile rock lyrics as their political agenda ... They are true, tried and tested. Not on the pop charts, but in streetfights, media exposures and dungeon visits ... And if you love your white race, join your brothers and sisters in the one and only true Blood & Honour and go out fighting!" (<<http://www.bloodandhonour.com/forum/statement.php>>[inactive]). Hooligans believe that they would physically fight for a "real" identity and a "true" religion. They resist the process of "becoming," but insists upon a moment of "already become" in the process of identification. The power of

their physical action is a way to act upon the real even though what they try to hold onto is their disappearing imaginary relation with a collapsing geo-biological space. The process of "becoming" is the key to the subaltern's line of escape. The rhetoric of the Hong-Kong fan after the Hong Kong vs. Liverpool game corresponds to what Deleuze and Guattari call the "Exaggerated Oedipus." The fan "moves from a classic Oedipus of the neurotic sort, where the beloved father is hated, accused, and declared to be guilty, to a much more perverse Oedipus who falls for the hypothesis of the father's innocence, of a 'distress' shared by father and son alike" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward 9*). However, the fan makes this "slide" only in order to "engage in an even more extreme accusation [*au nième degré*], a reproach that is so strong that it becomes unattributable to any particular persons and unlimited" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward 9*; Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka 18*). In other words, the disappearance of the subaltern's identity through the presumed innocence of the colonizer glides towards a larger and more paranoid disappearance of identities that is common to both England and its ex-colonial subjects. Deleuze and Guattari believe that this innocence of the Father must lose its boundaries and expand to all directions. The televised image of the Premier League literally "expanded beyond all bounds [*démesurée*], will be projected onto the geographic, historical, and political *map* of the world" (*Kafka: Toward 10*; *Kafka 18*; emphasis in the original). It extends itself beyond its ex-colony and becomes a deterritorialized phenomenon. Deleuze and Guattari reverse the cause-and-effect between the "primal guilt" and the neurosis: "it's not Oedipus that produces neurosis," e.g., it is not the "eternal wound" in the Chinese psyche that produces the Chinese neurosis, it is the neurosis, "that is, a desire that is already *submissive and searching to communicate its own submission* -- that produces Oedipus" (*Kafka: Toward 10*; emphasis in the original). The Oedipus complex has been, therefore, exaggerated. It is "diabolical" but non-threatening, from which the hyper-fan escapes by participating in the neurosis itself. This is the process of "becoming-animal." According to Deleuze and Guattari, "to become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of nonsignifying signs" (*Kafka: Toward 13*). The subaltern replaces the diabolical powers with an innocent Father, through whom the diabolical powers themselves expand in the process of deterritorialization of the virtual image. The subaltern partakes in the pre-morphological (linguistically unformed/pre-formed) Spur, the pure continuum of intensities, and shares the anxieties with the Father by becoming animal. This is to produce a much stronger and larger accusation against the now Exaggerated Oedipus.

Football as a "major literature" has therefore deterritorialized itself through the Premier League and given rise to "minor literatures." According to Deleuze and Guattari, a minor literature has three characteristics. They are "the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing [in a major language], the impossibility of writing otherwise" (*Kafka: Toward 16*; *Kafka 394*; see also the commentaries in Wagenbach 84). According to the editors of *Sina*, the English game has always made a history of modern Chinese football "impossible," although history has made it impossible for the Chinese not to play the game. A minor game therefore renders visible the "bar" that makes football inaccessible to Hong Kong/China. This is the Lacanian bar that simultaneously resists signification and necessitates the need to signify (see Lacan 512-13). The importance of this "first characteristic" is that "in any case ... language [*langue*] is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization" (*Kafka: Toward 16*; *Kafka 29*). The minor literature is like a virus that attaches itself to the cells of the major literature, which by now only exists as a hyperreality. It has the power to strangle the life out of its host by re-writing the *langue* through *paroles*. Through consuming the sign-image of major English clubs, spectators in the ex-colony re-write the agencements of the game through individual *paroles* (in her translation of Deleuze and Guattari's book, Dana Polan translates *agencement* to "assemblage": I prefer keeping the word *agencement*. While an assemblage implies the intervention of an author, or "an eye of a cyclone" -- which co-exist and vibrate on a mobile map of a landscape (see Lyotard, *Discours 13*) -- towards which configurations and elements are drawn, *agencement* connotes a more rhizomatic growth of organic elements, both functional and dysfunctional, which co-exist and vibrate on a mobile map of a land-



scape). Hence, the second characteristic is that everything in a minor literature is "political." The third characteristic of the minor game is that "everything takes on a collective value." It is a game that "finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation" (*Kafka: Toward* 17). The spectator purchases the televised image as a sign value. The spectator therefore consumes the image's capability to exchange itself for hyper-collective-identities. More importantly, what the spectator consumes is not a system of signification. It is a process of "becoming signification" through a libidinal event: the hyper-collective Spur. The spectator buys the hyper-spatial and hyper-temporal chiasma where he/she posits him/herself at the cross of non-signification and self-negation. Hence, in the minor game, "there isn't a subject; *there are only collective assemblages* [agencements] of enunciation" (*Kafka: Toward* 18; *Kafka* 33; emphasis in the original). As the minor game rewrites the major language, the subaltern partakes in a collective enunciation in the process of becoming, deterritorializing the major *langue* through *paroles*. The subject is "a sort of stranger *within* his own language" (*Kafka: Toward* 26; emphasis in the original). The hyper-fan does not struggle against the colonial power to host ideology in his/her own home language. Instead, the hyper-fan disappears in the process of becoming, while the "language [*langue*] remains a mixture, a schizophrenic *mélange*" between the empowered and the subaltern (*Kafka: Toward* 26; *Kafka* 48). Deleuze and Guattari's model therefore corresponds to Baudrillard's notion that the intervals between two virtual signs disappear in a pre-morphological hyperreality. Let us recapitulate Saussure's idea that what gives the word a form is not a material substance or a sound, but the very "différences phoniques qui permettent de distinguer ce mot de tous les autres" (Saussure, *Cours* 163). Deleuze and Guattari argue that a minor game constantly self-dismantles and self-reterritorializes the morphological configurations of the machine: "we find ourselves not in front of a structural correspondence between two sorts of forms, forms of content and forms of expression, but rather in front of an *expression machine* capable of disorganizing its own forms, and of disorganizing its forms of contents, in order to liberate pure contents that mix with expressions in a single intense matter" (*Kafka: Toward* 28; emphasis in the original). The Spur "transfers movement onto the subject of the statement [*sujet d'énoncé*]; it gives the subject of the statement an apparent movement, an unreal movement [*un mouvement de papier*], that spares the subject of enunciation all need for a real movement" (*Kafka: Toward* 31; *Kafka* 56). What Deleuze and Guattari describe is therefore a virtual movement or a hyperreality produced by the process of becoming wherein two virtual signs do not have any physical interval between them. The Spur in hyperreality is only an apparent movement that spares the need of a real movement.

By escaping into hyperreality, the subaltern realizes that he/she is at an impasse where both the subject of enunciation and the subject of the enounced are "caught up in a choice that from both sides condemns them to defeat" (*Kafka: Toward* 36). The minor game is only a "*line of escape, and not freedom. A vital escape and not an attack*" (*Kafka: Toward* 35; emphasis in the original). Therefore, we cannot regard the minor game as a form of resistance, although there is hope for a slow revolution. The limitation stems from the fact that the "becomings-animal have values only in terms of the assemblages [*agencements*] that inspire them ... where the animals function like pieces of a ... machine" (*Kafka: Toward* 40; *Kafka* 73). Here, Deleuze and Guattari regard the relationship between ideology and subjects as inter-participatory in the form of *agencements*, instead of a dialectical structure. In this participatory model, the subject has the power to make a "[minute] dismantling [*démontage minutieux*]" of the law through its partaking of the *agencements* (*Kafka: Toward* 45; *Kafka* 82). More importantly, such participation is in hyperreality "*where one believed there was the law, there is in fact desire and desire alone*" since what makes up the game is nothing but desire (*Kafka: Toward* 49; emphasis in the original). The *agencement* is a virtual network of "*machinic indexes*," they "are the signs of an assemblage [*agencement*] that has not yet been established or dismantled because one knows only the individual pieces that go into making it up, but not how they go together" (*Kafka: Toward* 47; *Kafka* 86). Deleuze and Guattari make the distinction between "index elements," which are organic characters, "index objects," which are inorganic materials, and "index configurations," which are the inter-relationships between index elements and index objects. "There is thus a machinic index each time a machine is

being built and is beginning to function, even though one doesn't know how the disparate parts that make it up and make it work actually function" (*Kafka: Toward* 47). In other words, "abstract machines surge into existence by themselves, without indexes," although they may not function. The machinic *agencements* "sto[p] being reified and isolated," as they are virtual *agencements*. They "[only] exist outside the concrete, socio-political assemblages [*agencements*] that incarnate [them]" (*Kafka: Toward* 47-48; *Kafka* 87-88). The machinic *agencement* "diffuses into [the socio-political *agencements*] and measures their machinic degree" (*Kafka: Toward* 48). Most importantly, the *agencement* works "only through the dismantling (*démontage*) that it brings about on the machine and on representation" (*Kafka: Toward* 48). The Premier League creates individual mental screens as index elements and index objects. These index elements and index objects operate in their own index configurations as a driftwork. Lyotard explains that the drift involves "a collection of fools, each fool being an exaggerated part of the normal subject, libido cathected in such and such a sector of the body, blocked up in this or that configuration of desire, all these fragments placed next to each other ... for an aimless voyage" ("Adrift" 10). The machinic indexes participate in the dismantling of the *agencements* once the abstract machine is built. Each machinic index does not know how the individual parts of the machine work and how they function in relation to each other. The fuel of the machine is the dismantling of the law through the Spur. The *agencement* does not reify the index's socio-ideological relations with concrete socio-political *agencements* since it exists outside of them. However, it is the concrete socio-political *agencements* that incarnate the abstract machines themselves. The only outlet for the subject is to re-write the law through desire. It is a limited but powerful outlet, because the abstract machine is a tank of desire itself.

The Premier League as an abstract machine is not a vertical and dialectical model that maps the master-slave relationship from top to bottom as a form of continuity. In this model, "repression, for both the represser and the repressed, flows from this or that assemblage [*agencement*] of power-desire, from this or that state of the machine ... in a strange harmony, in a connection more than in a hierarchy" (*Kafka: Toward* 56; *Kafka* 102-03). The empowered and the subaltern are both drifting in the same mercury tank, connected by their libidos (the analogy of the mercury tank comes from Lyotard: "le sensible ... semble justement le référentiel absolu de tous les analogas: là, nous bougeons, recherchant la composition, constituant l'espace du tableau, appuyés sur l'étendue plastique où l'œil, la tête, le corps se déplacent, baignent, portés comme dans une cuve de mercure" *Discours* 9). The relationship between the colonial drive and the subaltern's is not a form of "power as if it were an infinite transcendence in relation to the slaves or the accused" (*Kafka: Toward* 56). In this case, "power is not pyramidal ... it is segmentary and linear, and it proceeds by means of contiguity, and not by height or farawayness (hence, the importance of the subalterns)" (*Kafka: Toward* 56; Deleuze and Guattari also compare their notion to Foucault's thesis in *Surveiller et punir*). The subaltern therefore has as much power as the colonizer in relation to the creation and possession of the mental screens, through which they arrange the indexes within the abstract machine while their vibrations build the machinic *agencements*. Any change is a transformation not of any form of transcendental power, but of the *agencement* of relations. Compare this idea with Saussure's analogy of the chess game: "Si je remplace des pièces de bois par des pièces d'ivoire, le changement est indifférent pour le système: mais si je diminue ou augmente le nombre des pièces, ce changement-là atteint profondément la 'grammaire' du jeu" (Saussure, *Cours* 43). With the "oppressors" and the "oppressed" indistinguishable from each other, "one has to seize all of them in an all-too-possible future, hoping all the while that this act will also bring out lines of escape, parade lines, even if they are modest, even if they are hesitant, even if -- and especially if -- they are asignifying" (*Kafka: Toward* 59). This "seizure," or "carrying-away (*entraînement*)," is the carrying-away of the desire itself (*Kafka* 108). In my view, the danger of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of desire is that it can easily fall onto a dichotomized sexual economy between heterosexuality and homosexuality, which I would like to expound. Deleuze and Guattari identify a form of "schizo-incest (*inceste-schizo*)" (*Kafka: Toward* 66; *Kafka* 120). They propound that "Oedipal incest corresponds to the paranoiac transcendental law that prohibits it, and it works to transgress this law, directly if it can bear to do so, symbolically for want of any-

thing better" (*Kafka: Toward* 67). With the absence of any form of transcendental paranoia, the post-fan is now constantly in a state of schizophrenia between conflicting identities. There arises a form of "schizo-incest." It "corresponds ... to the immanent schizo-law and forms a line of escape instead of a circular reproduction, a progression instead of a transgression" (*Kafka: Toward* 67). Incest ceases to transgress; it allows the post-fans to dwell in the Spur with the oppressors in which they would progress together and find further lines of escape. It is a form of effervescence, which Deleuze and Guattari believe to be incomplete without "a sort of homosexual effusion" (*Kafka: Toward* 68). By seeing homosexuality as a complement of schizo-incest, the two philosophers seem to presuppose that homosexuality is a form of moral and sexual perversity. However, our case of football could tease out the complexity of their argument. In the ritual of football, the desire for women is simply absent. Football is a ritual that men celebrate and achieve solidarity through/within a state of effusion. Homosocial bonding is the source of the Spur among football spectators. In *Male Impersonators: Men Performing Masculinity*, Mark Simpson criticizes Nick Hornby's account of his passion for football in *Fever Pitch: A Fan's Life*. Simpson notices that Hornby expresses an enthusiasm for football maleness. It comes from the fact that the game "provides the boy with an answer to the problem of how to reconcile his homoerotic desire, his feminine love of manliness, with his desire to be manly" (Simpson 72, qtd. in Redhead 89; see also Hornby 15-23). Following Simpson's argument, I would read that football serves as an agent of mediation between his incestuous desire for his emasculated (a suburban, taciturn, divorcé) father, who became masculinized in the homosocial Spur. Such desire finds its re-mediation in Hornby's (Nick) conflicting identities between his desire for men and for being a man who desires women among other heterosexual men, all conflated in the homosocial Spur in the pitch. Simpson theorizes that "football is an activity and an object which literally mediates between the men, taking the place of 'women'" (Simpson 72, qtd. in Redhead 89; see also Hornby 15-23). In other words, Deleuze and Guattari's concept on the relation between schizo-incest and homosexuality is only meaningful if we see that these two forms of schizo-sexuality are constantly in the process of becoming, dismantling and self-dismantling, in rhizomatic directions and deterritorialized dimensions. We can further complicate this problem by reading such schizo-sexualities against the post-Fordist economy and "post-culture" of football. Redhead argues that we are living in a "post-culture" where the process of deterritorialization of sexuality in relationship to football has already reached a stage at which "everything is sexualized, eroticized and desired" (100).

Redhead's argument finds its support in the image of David Beckham. The July 2004 issue of *Vanity Fair* features a tanned, lean and muscular Beckham with his shirt off and his jeans pulled down to his hipline. He wears hip-hop necklaces that accentuate the contour of his chest. Photographer Annie Leibovitz highlights his tattoos. In one photograph, he reclines on a luxurious leather seat of a Ferrari convertible against an old empty stadium. The second photograph features him in the suspended action of kicking an invisible ball, highlighting his musculature. Two more photographs contrast his body against rough but sensual wooden walls with his arms stretched and eyes downcast. Beckham's image is not one that the reader would associate with a masculine heterosexual man you would find in a local pub. These are images designed for the eroticizing gazes from gay men and heterosexual females. This is what the British vernacular discourse calls "metrosexuality": it is a form of deterritorialized sexuality that traverses the boundaries between institutionalized sexualities and connects dispersed geopolitical spaces by a common and globalized capitalist metropolitan sensibility (on Beckham, see Cashmore; on sexual discourse, desire, and queer theory, see, e.g., Vasvári <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol8/iss1/2/>>). A quote from Beckham adorns a corner of one of these photos: "I just woke up one day and I'd been voted the gay style icon of the year or whatever" (qtd. in Daly 104-09). Beckham's "new man" image is one that embraces a fluid sexuality and a "becoming one" with glamorous popular culture where everything is "sexualized, eroticized." Beckham's image informs us a desire that is both effusive and commodified. The fan consumes desire not as a physical excitation, but as a sign-value in exchange for other hyper-desires. Desire becomes "hyper-desire" through the virtualization of the game in the form of a televised image, and the becomings-animal ride on hyper-Spurs. Desire no longer transgresses because hyper-desire is only a means to maintain a Spur in which the op-

pressed and the oppressors would progress together, and through which their contiguous movements would carve out further lines of escape. King argues that the Taylor Report implements a panoptic topography for the Premier League. Deleuze and Guattari propose that this is only the stage-one of the virtual game. At the second stage, "the blocks, instead of being distributed themselves around a circle in which only several discontinuous arches are traced, align themselves on a hallway or a corridor: each one thereby forms a segment, which is more or less distant, on this unlimited straight line" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward* 73). The idea is that all these blocks arrange themselves contiguously. They drift together, assume the same position and perspective of all phenomena in the world. Only the machinic elements within each block adjust the perspectival positions while the entire *agencement* of blocks stay in contiguity. "Since [the blocks] persist, it is the blocks themselves that have to change their form, at the very least by moving from one point of view to another." It follows that "if ... each block-segment has an opening or a door onto the line of the hallway -- one that is usually quite far from the door or the opening of the following block -- it is also true that all the blocks have back doors that are contiguous" (*Kafka: Toward* 73). Each site in the rhizome therefore has an *agencement* of blocks in perfect contiguity. Each block changes its perspectival position, and their changes send vibrations through the entire *agencement*, and through the relations between *agencements*. Deleuze and Guattari's model therefore synchronizes itself with Baudrillard's notion of "the space of communication" wherein "words, gestures, looks are in a continual state of contiguity, yet they never touch" (Baudrillard, *Transparency* 55). Such model also finds its echo in Lyotard's driftwork and mercury tank (Lyotard, "Adrift" 10; *Discours* 9). In all three models, there is a common tension. The virtual signs and the virtual/hyper-realities that their intervals beget exaggerate and dissipate the Oedipus, which takes the sensible form of a globalized and deterritorialized *agencement* with a diabolical power of totality. Within such seeming totality, individuals assume limited power. Nonetheless, by exercising such limited power to make minor perspectival adjustments, individual subjects send out vibrations that could potentially dismantle the *agencement* with a subtle, but revolutionary, power.

If we enter the pitch at the formative moment of the Premier League, we are recognizing that it is an inaugural moment. It is a chiasma where the *agencement* of enunciation, the *langue*, constitutes the ideological difference between football as a physical event and as a televised image. The Premier League is, first and foremost, an orgasmic effervescence that marks the nexus between the libidinal and the death drives. It is pure desire: the Spur. The subject negates itself in the Spur, which gives sensible form to the phenomenon in the being as the world. The *agencement* consists of contiguous sites that vibrate with each other. There are concrete socio-political *agencements* that incarnate the machinic *agencements* of the Premier League outside of themselves. King theorizes that the Premier League is a product of post-Fordist Thatcherite effort to reinvent the English economy through a free-market system and the support of such system by a strong state. Redhead's study through the eyes of Baudrillard informs us that the Premier League vibrates with the general deterritorialization of physical reality and the disappearance of the intervals between physical signs into virtual intervals between virtual signs. This facilitates the wholesale deterritorialization of desire into hyperreality. In the Premier League, the major physical game disappears and gives rise to a cacophony of minor games. Through the creation of minor games in the subaltern's mental screens, the ex-colonized subject carves out a line of escape that is not dependent on the constitutive power of language upon the real, but solely on desire itself. Desire is the machine. The fan consumes a hyper-desire for its sign value in exchange for other hyper-desires. This close-circuit hyper-reality is a hyper-impasse, which is constantly in the process of becoming, dismantling and self-dismantling, breaking the close-circuitness in the process of exaggeration and deterritorialization. It is precisely because of its seemingly impregnable, but self-dismantling, nature that it can continue to enlarge and expand. By identifying with the Exaggerated Oedipus, the subaltern is in the same mercury tank as that of the colonizer. The boundary between them disappears and they continue to vibrate in contiguity, and to re-write the *langue* through *paroles*. It is a form of accusation nth degrees larger than the classical Oedipus: an Oedipus truly deterritorialized, dismantled, and disempowered.

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