

DOC A

I begged and pleaded and nagged, and eventually my mother gave in and allowed me to travel to away games. Back then I was jubilant; now I'm indignant. What did she think she was doing? Didn't she ever read the papers or watch TV? Hadn't she heard of hooligans? Was she really unaware of what Football Specials, the infamous trains that carried fans all over the country, were like? I could have been killed. [...]

In those days there were no restrictions on travelling in the way there are now (British Rail eventually abandoned the Football Specials, and the clubs make their own travel arrangements): we could roll up at St Pancras, buy a dirt-cheap train ticket, and pile on to a dilapidated train, the corridors of which were patrolled by police with guard dogs. Much of the journey took place in darkness—light bulbs were shattered at wearily brief intervals—which made reading difficult, although I always, always took a book with me and spent ages finding the carriages which contained middle-aged men who would have no interest in attracting the attention of the alsatians.

At our destination we were met by hundreds and hundreds of police, who then escorted us to the ground by a circuitous route away from the city centre; it was during these walks that my urban hooligan fantasies were given free rein. I was completely safe, protected not only by the law but by my fellow supporters, and I had therefore been liberated to bellow along in my still-unbroken voice with the chanted threats of the others. I didn't look terribly hard, in truth: I was as yet nowhere near as big as I should have been, and wore black-framed Brains-style National Health reading glasses, although these I hid away for the duration of the route marches, presumably to make myself just that little bit more terrifying. But those who mumble about the loss of identity football fans must endure miss the point: this loss of identity can be a paradoxically enriching process. Who wants to be stuck with who they are the whole time? I for one wanted time out from being a jug-eared, bespectacled, suburban twerp once in a while; I loved being able to frighten the shoppers in Derby or Norwich or Southampton (and they were frightened—you could see it). My opportunities for intimidating people had been limited hitherto, though I knew it wasn't me that made people hurry to the other side of the road, hauling their children after them; it was us, and I was a part of us, an organ in the hooligan body. The fact that I was the appendix—small, useless, hidden out of the way somewhere in the middle—didn't matter in the slightest.

Nick Hornby, *Fever Pitch*, 1992.

DOC B

The bartender placed a pint before him. He paid one-and-eightpence and drank it almost in a single gulp. His strength magically returned, and he shouted out for another, thinking: the thirteenth. Unlucky for some, but we'll see how it turns out. He received the pint and drank a little more slowly, but halfway through it, the temptation to be sick became a necessity that beat insistently against the back of his throat. He fought it off and struggled to light a cigarette.

Smoke caught in his windpipe and he had just time enough to push his way back through the crush — nudging his elbow into standing people who unknowingly blocked his way, half choked by smoke now issuing from mouth and nostrils, feeling strangely taken up by a fierce power that he could not control — before he gave way to the temptation that had stood by him since falling down the stairs, and emitted a belching roar over a middle-aged man sitting with a woman on one of the green leather seats.

'My God!' the man cried. 'Look at this. Look at what the young bogger's gone and done. Would you believe it? My best suit. Only pressed and cleaned today. Who would credit such a thing? Oh dear. It cost me fifteen bob. As if money grows on trees. And suits as well. I wonder how I'll ever get the stains out? Oh dear.'

His whining voice went on for several minutes, and those who turned to look expected him with every word to break down into piteous sobs.

Arthur was stupefied, unable to believe that the tragedy before him could by any means be connected with himself and the temptation to which he had just given way. Yet through the haze and smoke and shrill reproaches coming from the man's lady-friend, he gathered that he was to blame and that he should be feeling sorry for what had happened.

He stood up straight, rigid, swaying slightly, his eyes gleaming, his overcoat open. Automatically he felt for another cigarette, but remembering in time what his attempt to smoke the last one had caused, gave up the search and dropped his hands by his side.

'Look what yer've done, yer young bleeder,' the woman was shouting at him. 'Spewed all over Alf's bes' suit. And all you do is jus' stand there. Why don't yer do something? Eh? Why don't yer't least apologize for what yer've done?'

'Say summat, mate,' an onlooker called, and by the tone of his voice Arthur sensed that the crowd was not on his side, though he was unable to speak and defend himself. He looked at the woman, who continued shouting directly at him, while the victim fumbled ineffectually with a handkerchief trying to clean his suit.

The woman stood a foot away from Arthur. 'Look at him,' she jeered into his face. 'He's senseless. He can't say a word. He can't even apologize. Why don't yer apologize, eh? *Can't* yer apologize? Dragged-up, I should think, getting drunk like this. Looks like one of them Teddy boys, allus making trouble. Go on, apologize.'

From her constant use of the word apologize it seemed as if she had either just learned its meaning — perhaps after a transmission breakdown on television — or as if she had first learned to say it by spelling it out with coloured bricks at school forty years ago.

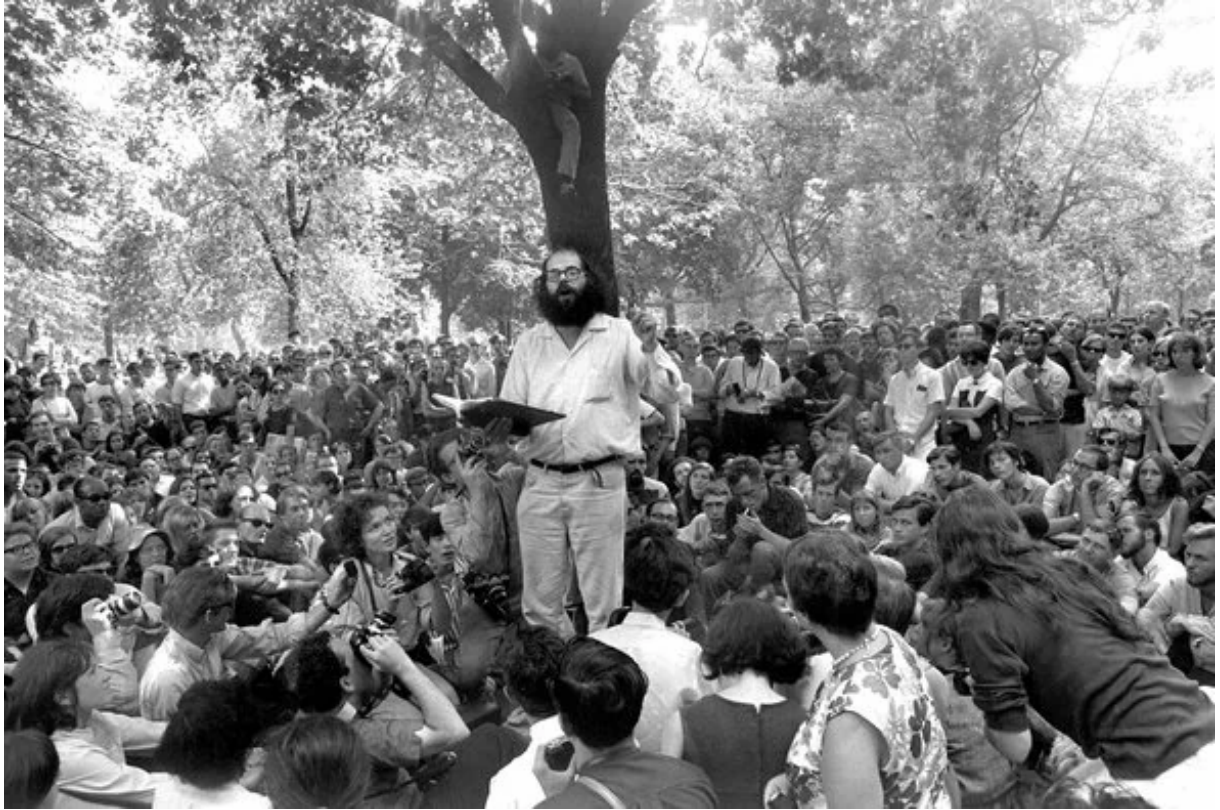
'Apologize,' she cried, her maniacal face right against him. 'Go on, apologize.'

The beast inside Arthur's stomach gripped him again, and suddenly, mercilessly, before he could stop it or move out of the way, or warn anybody that it was coming, it leapt out of his mouth with an appalling growl.

She was astonished. Through the haze her face clarified. Arthur saw teeth between open lips, narrowed eyes, claws raised. She was a tigress.

He saw nothing else. Before she could spring he gathered all his strength and pushed through the crowd, impelled by a strong sense of survival towards the street-door, to take himself away from a scene of ridicule, disaster, and certain retribution.

DOC C



Allen Ginsberg Reading His Work in Washington Square Park, NYC, 1966.