

Mocking Others, Parodying Ourselves: Chants and Songs Used in Swedish Football

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Abstract: This article's aim is to investigate the creative use of parody and sense-/nonsense-making visible in the Swedish football scene by looking into football chants through the lens of parody. The three examples selected (a song, a chant, and a music video) give a glimpse of possible folkloristic investigations in that context, as possibilities to work on varied and extensive material are profound. Theoretically, the article's argument builds on Susan Stewart's notion of sense and nonsense as connected, ongoing practices that structure our understanding of the world. The intertextual maze of chants is exemplified by musical creations from Swedish football clubs.

Résumé : Cet article se donne pour objectif de comprendre l'usage créatif de la parodie et de la fabrication du sens et du non-sens que l'on peut percevoir dans le monde du football (soccer) suédois, en examinant les chants de supporters sous l'angle de la parodie. Les trois exemples sélectionnés (une chanson, un chant de supporters et une vidéo musicale) nous donnent un aperçu du potentiel pour des enquêtes ethnologiques dans ce contexte, car il existe de très nombreuses possibilités de travailler sur ce matériau varié et étendu. Sur le plan théorique, l'argument de cet article se base sur l'idée émise par Susan Stewart que le sens et le non-sens sont liés, et qu'il s'agit de pratiques toujours actuelles qui structurent notre compréhension du monde. Le labyrinthe intertextuel des chants de supporters est mis en valeur par des exemples de créations musicales des clubs de football suédois.

English football fans of various clubs sing a chant addressed to police officers:

We paid for your hats, we paid for your hats!
What a waste of council tax, we paid for your hats!

The chant is accompanied by waves and laughter. In Sweden, fans of Malmö FF,

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when attempting to insult their opponents from Helsingborgs IF, sing a simple verse “Tina cooks disgusting food,” to mock the famous Swedish TV chef Tina Nordström who comes from the city of Helsingborg. Football arenas in Europe are often filled with banter, humour, and sometimes surprising social commentary.

Chants in football do not exclusively express happiness or success, although there are quite a few songs that glorify clubs, fans, and players (for an example, see Herd 2018: 253-256). Chants are also used to mock clubs, other supporters, players, security, etc. Curiously, fans sometimes use chants in an ironic way, mocking themselves (one can easily find compilations of self-derogatory English football chants on social media¹). The words include statements like, “We are fucking shit,” “We lose every week,” “We never win,” or “Let’s pretend we scored a goal.” A lot of laughter typically accompanies the chanting. The tunes are usually well-known, such as “The Lion Sleeps Tonight” by The Tokens and a plethora of children’s songs. Similar expressions of self-deprecation, as well as other kinds of parody, are likewise found in Swedish football.

This article’s aim is to investigate the creative use of parody and sense-/nonsense-making visible in the Swedish football supporter scene by looking at football chants through the lens of parody. The three examples selected are a song from the club Gefle IF telling the fans to stop dreaming, a music video suggesting two rival clubs from Stockholm (Hammarby IF and Djurgårdens IF) are to join forces, and an AIK chant mocking MFF that branded a player as a pedophile.²

These examples offer the opportunity for folkloristic investigations into the context of parody as the possibilities for working on varied and extensive material are profound. We build our theoretical argument mainly on Susan Stewart’s notion of sense and nonsense as connected, ongoing practices that structure our understanding of the world (1979).

Football in Europe has a long tradition of crowd engagement, as well as crowd unrest. As early as the first decade of the 20th century, angry supporters expressed their disappointment in various ways (c.f. Andersson 2001) and a vast repertoire of football chants and songs gradually developed. In her PhD thesis, Joanne Luhrs conducts an ethnographic study linking English football chants to much older traditions of village tunes and banter (2007). Luhrs argues that they help articulate and shape local identities once they are sung on football terraces (2007). Supporters in Sweden are heavily influenced by English football, frequently travelling to the British Isles to watch games (see Hellspong 2013). Hammarby IF (a Swedish football club) is credited with developing singing culture and the first chants on Swedish soil (Andersson 2016: 262-265).

European football (known in North America as “soccer”) is a popular field of study when it comes to both the sport itself and the cultural processes surrounding it. It attracts substantial economic investment as well as media interest,

and even triggers political debates. Among the different creative engagements to be observed, the various songs and chants performed during matches constitute a stable and predictable element of football support. Many European leagues, including those from Sweden and England, have long traditions of songs and chants that represent different genres and are used for varied purposes. Studies of musical engagements during matches often concentrate on musical qualities such as the tunes themselves or the technology used in stadium PA systems (in the Scandinavian context Sandgren 2010; Ahlsved 2017) as opposed to the function of the performance, the commonality, or the meaning of the chants. This article's aim is to investigate songs or chants through their meaning and function, focusing on the chants as textual entities and on the social context in which they are performed, rather than solely on the tune or its musical formalities. That, in turn, can shed some light on the individuals engaged in football and their understanding of this context.

There is extensive scholarly attention to European football³ in which an ethnographic approach to studying fans has been used (Bromberger 1995; Rosengren 2005; Schwell et al. 2016; Herd 2018). The cultural manifestations of fans' musical contributions during matches, understood as a form of folklore with its own common sense and meaning, is the focus of this investigation. Football fans have their own forms of communication, consisting of specific intra-group behaviours (singing, chanting, celebrating goals), as well as their own values. This article frames the cultural displays of the football stands as folklore. Specifically, we view the chants of football supporters as a form of folksong in that they circulate predominantly orally, exist in many variants, and their authors are unknown (Winick 2012: 467). Indeed, sporting chants have been published as part of folklore collections, such as Michael Green's *Why Was He Born So Beautiful and Other Rugby Songs* (1967).

Existing literature on football songs and chants addresses the creation of soundscapes and "acoustic communities" (see Kytö 2011), chants as a genre for expressing issues surrounding migration, identity, and diaspora (e.g. Schoonderwoerd 2011), sexism and sexual abuse (e.g. Serrano-Durá, Serrano-Durá, and Martínez-Bello 2017; Magrath 2018), or symbolic violence (Waiton 2016). In Sweden, archivist and musicologist Patrik Sandgren analyzed a football chant based on the White Stripes song, "Seven Nation Army" (2010). The aim of Sandgren's analysis was on the transmission of a particular tune, rather than on the texts set to it (2010). Musicologist Kaj Ahlsved focused in his PhD dissertation on the soundscapes created in different sport disciplines by DJs playing music during sporting events (2017). Ethnologist and folklorist Alf Arvidsson studied soundscapes and different relations between music and various sports (2005). Sociologist Stuart Waiton's study focused on so-called "criminalized" songs and

symbols that expressed elements of sectarian violence in the context of Scottish football (2016). Danish historian Niels Kayser Nielsen (1995) analyzed stadiums as modern urban spaces, and briefly engaged with football songs sung in arenas. Kayser Nielsen's examples focused on themes of sexual humiliation and "machismo" present in lyrics (1995: 40-41). Although issues concerning European football (like racism, violence, abuse, and sexism) are present in football songs and are important to study, a sole focus on problematic areas can overshadow their creativity, complexity, and playfulness (c.f. McKay et al. 2000; Brabazon 2006; Herd 2018). A prime example is Joseph Bradley's study of the ethno-religious identity of Glasgow football clubs (2002).

Ethnography, Parody, and Nonsense

We have decided to limit our study to three examples from Swedish football, but they are framed within the broader European context. The reason for this demarcation was dictated by the limited scope of the article, and further by the focus on Sweden. In other words, we chose to place Swedish football in the setting of other European leagues, rather than comparing them. We are familiar with a vast variety of chants through our studies of Swedish football clubs (Herd 2017, 2018) and the cultural expressions of fandom (Löfgren 2013, 2017, 2018). The three cases discussed below draw on ethnographic research in the form of interviews, observations, and internet ethnography (netnography). The interviews discussed in this article were conducted with football supporters in 2015. The observations for this article are a conglomerate of several observations done between 2013 and 2018 in the Swedish cities of Stockholm, Malmö, and Gävle. The observations were conducted in the standing sections of several different clubs, including Malmö FF, Djurgårdens IF, Hammarby IF, AIK, and Gefle IF. The netnography was collected during 2018 and consisted mainly of browsing through social media, chat rooms, and YouTube channels that contained remarks, reflections, or actual chants.

The ethnographic methods used here present a backbone of folkloristic and anthropologic work (see Davies 2008). This research into the modern fandom highlights the importance of digital methods and the "digital footprint" that allows for individual engagement and creative expressions. This form of folklore (c.f. Blank 2013) is in tune with our understanding of it being "artistic communication in small groups" (Ben-Amos 1971: 3-15). This definition of folklore provided by Dan Ben-Amos has been applied to football in general (Herd 2018). Theoretically, we base our understanding of parody on the writings of Simon Dentith (2000) and Susan Stewart (1979). Parody, as Dentith has demonstrated, is connected to

intertextuality and the *reading* that the audience is able to do based on a given material. Stewart's study of nonsense points out that social situations can be treated in an intertextual manner. This is done by contemplating the relationship between common sense and nonsense. Stewart views common sense as an organization of the world stemming from experience and tradition, a way to share commonality based on a common stock of knowledge (1979: 17). Nonsense, in turn, is the re-writing of that organization of the real world, by intertextually borrowing and repurposing the common stock of knowledge within a society (36). Stewart describes the relationship between nonsense and common sense as two discourse universes in a perpetual state of borrowing from each other to create meaning. The borrowing and lending back and forth between the two universes of discourse is what we call an intertextual relationship (Stewart 1979). Further, Stewart's analysis into the classification of stages of realism provides a productive approach to studying the complex and multi-dimensional context of football. We based our understanding of social situations as textual on Stewart's analysis of intertextual aspects in folklore and literature:

Social events can be seen as "textual" in that their borders, contents, and results are a matter of convention and interpretation that are themselves subject to the ongoing social process. The interpretive work that we accomplish in "reading" any given social situation is analogous to the interpretive work associated with reading any other text.... I am therefore interested in social events as texts and texts as social events: in the event as accomplished through members' interpretive work and in the text as a product of social interaction, contingent upon social process. Again, the social world is assumed to be an interpreted world. (Stewart 1979:13-14)

Although we are not concerned with semiotic analysis in this article, we are aware of the complex connections between irony and parody. According to Linda Hutcheon, "irony's edge gives parody its 'critical' dimension in its marking of difference at the heart of similarity" (1994: 4). Our take on parody is instead focused on the function it plays in a social context rather than in a text. As the intertextuality in a social setting becomes a whirlpool of written, oral, and visual *texts*, parody is fed by ironic hints that have varied social functions. As we shall demonstrate, parody in European football seems to operate in a similar fashion in that singing songs during matches can differ in function and interpretation. A plethora of publications are devoted to the study of parody in literary and artistic forms (see, for example, Hutcheon 1994, 2000; Majewski 1989; Rose 1993; Glasco 2015; Müller 1997). This article augments that literature by providing an

account of another field of artistic expression — football — analyzed through the lens of parody and irony. The following analysis includes three chants chosen to exemplify flexibility and boundary-making among Swedish fans.

Let's Just Stop Dreaming...

The 2018 season was a dismal one for the Gefle IF (GIF) club (from the Swedish town of Gävle) and their fans. The season saw the club relegated to the second-tier league (Superettan) in the Swedish system and it was therefore excluded from the ranks of professional football. The season's last home game was marked by 45 minutes of silence from supporters, a "loud" protest against the mismanagement of the club (Carrickläktaren n.d.). The second half of the game, however, was full of songs of hope for the future. Since Gefle IF only won four games the entire season, their fans developed a new repertoire of chants in response, using parody as a defence mechanism, pointing out the absurdity of the situation at hand: a losing home team (c.f. Denith 2000: 33).

On June 16, 2018, Gefle IF was playing a home game against Östers IF (ÖIF from Gothenburg). At that point in the season, Gefle IF fans recognized that their team had performed poorly but believed they could still turn things around. As the match progressed, however, and ÖIF was seen to outplay GIF, fans began to interpret the match ironically, expressing that irony mainly in jokes. One supporter remarked: "*Det är ju skönt att dom åtminståne spelar division 2 klass*" ("It is nice to know that they can play division 2 class football"⁴) (observations, June 16, 2018). Division 2 was, at the time, two divisions under the tier in which Gefle IF was playing. This joke was met with laughter. When Östers IF scored their third goal of the match, virtually ensuring they would win the game, the engaged GIF supporters, who usually occupy the standing section in the stadium at one of the short ends, decided to take their joke public with the following chant:

*Det är lika bra att sluta drömma, det går åt helvete i alla fall.
Vi kommer aldrig vinna guld men vi ger ändå aldrig upp
och vi följer vårt Himmelsblå.*

Might as well stop dreaming, everything is going straight to hell, no matter what. We will never win the gold, but we will never give up on following our Sky Blues.
(observations, June 16, 2018)

These words were chanted for about 15 minutes straight without a break, followed by the English language chant, “We lose every week, we lose every week, you are nothing special, we lose every week.” The “Might as well stop dreaming” chant was reprieved after the full-time whistle while the home team made their way to the locker room.

One can understand this chant as parodic by way of irony’s “critical dimension” stemming from (and strengthening) the commonality of the supporters (Hutcheon 1994: 4). The irony lies in the act of home supporters criticizing their own team and mocking their efforts. Thus, they shift the common sense of football fandom. Curiously, even as the “Might as well stop dreaming” chant was used to critique the team, the chant simultaneously shifted the meaning of what was understood to be common sense versus nonsense in the situation. To understand this, we need to analyse the chant’s intertextual components.

The chant is set to the melody of the humorous Swedish song, “*Pessimist konsulten*” (The Pessimist Consultant), written by (North) Swedish comedian Ronny Eriksson and popularized by Swedish folk band, *Östen med Resten* (Östen and the Rest) (Östen med Resten n.d.). In their show, the song was performed as part of a stand-up routine on the subject of pessimism being the defining cultural trait of the people of Norrland (the northern parts of Sweden). Gävle is considered the gateway to Norrland, as it straddles the north-south border. The lyrics advise the audience that they always have the option of giving up on life, and they might as well do so because life will not turn out as anyone dreams it will anyway. The melody can be described as a jolly tune, played on fiddles and guitar with a style that brings to mind Appalachian bluegrass music. The chorus is the part on which the supporters’ chant is based:

*Så det är lika bra att sluta drömma
det går åt helvete i alla fall
för om man drömmer om Paris
hamnar man på något vis
lik förbannat i Hudiksvall*

Might as well stop dreaming
everything is going straight to hell, no matter what
cause if you’re dreaming of Paris
you will somehow still
end up in Hudiksvall
(Östen med Resten n.d.)

Thus, the chant is intertextually connected to the notion of pessimism both in the form of the actual text and in the tune. The Östen med Resten audience and GIF supporters share a common sense of the tune due to a shared intertextual understanding (for more on an intertextual common sense, see Löfgren 2018, 2013). The original song mocks the supposed utterly pessimistic outlook of northern Swedish people, ironically musing over pessimism to a jovial tune (the joke being that hope is useless).

The song is well-known throughout Sweden, which is necessary for its melody to work effectively as the model of the football chant. Its popularity means that the melody will call the original words to mind for listeners, making it ripe for textual variation. This shared knowledge of not only the tune but also the original lyrics and their humorous intention, makes the original song an intertextually shared commonality (or intertextual common sense). Since the parody is entrenched in specific common sense understandings of the north and the knowledge of the original song, which is intertextually applied as a part of the intertextual common sense (Löfgren 2018: 75, Löfgren 2013), it can be used to convey the ironic critique from the engaged supporters. The irony was directed to the audience in the stadium, as well as to the players on the pitch.

Concurrently, the chant can be interpreted as a parody of self (c.f. Stewart 1979: 36), based on a common sense understanding that the role of a fan is to support their team, not critique it. For supporters, a degree of affective investment is necessary to express feelings for the team (Löfgren 2018: 66-67). The term affective investment refers to the investment of one's feelings, moods, and affections into something that is (together with affective play) a hallmark of fandom (c.f. Grossberg 1992; Hills 2002; Löfgren 2018). In fact, the chant does declare support in the latter part of the text. More importantly, it makes a parodic nonsense statement by proclaiming that one might as well give up, while at the same time not wishing the home team to do so; the common sense of the fans is that one never stops supporting the local team. At the same time, it alludes to the stereotypical pessimism of northern Swedes. The qualia,⁵ or the particular feeling of the subjective experience expressed in the text (Herman 2009; Löfgren 2017), conveyed in the performance of the chant can be described as: "We are bad, we know it, we'll keep fighting despite knowing that it won't lead anywhere, and it is ok because we are from the north, we are Gefle IF supporters, we are used to it"; this reflects a feeling of pessimism.

This is the strength of parody, as discussed by both Dentith and Hutcheon. For Dentith, parody uses "resources to adopt an evaluative attitude" (2000: xii), while Hutcheon remarks that parody's function is "self-reflexive technique" (1989: 101). Both point toward a self-reflexive function of parody that seems well established in the Gefle IF stands.

The performance of the chant also blurs the line between what can be understood as common sense versus nonsense in the match context. The common-sense construction of reality occurs constantly in everyday life. Interpretations of everyday situations depend upon the immediate situational context, on such features of the interaction as “settings, participants, ends, act sequences, keys, instrumentalities, norms and genres” (Stewart 1979: 27). Common sense both underlies and is an outcome of the interpretations created in and by these situations; it is rooted in the reality of the everyday world.

The match itself can be understood as contributing to the construction of common sense. In everyday interpretations of a home game, it makes sense to assume that the home team has the advantage, as they have the bigger fanbase, are on home turf, and (in this case) are playing against a middling opponent. All these factors lend themselves to a particular common sense interpretation of the June 16th match: it would make sense if we win this one.

The interpretation relies on “the immediate situational context” that provides the frame for making sense of everyday reality (c.f. Stewart 1979: 27). As Susan Stewart observes, “manufacture of common sense and the transformations by which nonsense is made out of common sense belong to the same social universe” (1979: 7). A situation will be interpreted as an “unreal situation” only if one agrees that it contradicts what would be considered likely or “proper.” When the opponent made a goal, bringing the score to 3-1 in their favour, after what was already deemed to have been an appalling display from the home team, the common-sense understanding of home team advantage needed to be re-interpreted as an “unreal situation.” What was proper was the idea of “home team wins”: but this was not how the match was turning out; the match had become an “unreal situation” (Stewart 1979: 7).

The chant’s performance is an example of the self-reflexive (and self-guarding) technique used by football supporters worldwide. The purpose of irony and parody, when used in this fashion, is in part to help with the re-interpretation of a severe defeat from common sense to nonsense, achieved when irony and parody function as critique. By conveying the qualia or what-it-is-like experience of the supporters at times of utter despair, voicing the chant helps express, to both the team and the audience, that the situation is nonsensical. By making nonsense out of common sense by the means of parody, the chant can be considered a form of self-defence on the part of the engaged supporters.

Conveying the qualia of “everything is hell bound, we might as well stop dreaming of grandeur” is an intertextual interpretation of the immediate situational context (c.f. Stewart 1979: 27) that needs to be conveyed in order to strengthen the supporters’ own morale after defeat. At the same time, it sends the message to the players and team officials that “you are shit but we like you

anyway.” It underlines a point made often by supporters that winning means both everything and nothing at all. As such, the chant is a prime example of an expression of the affective investment one makes as a football supporter: One stands by a losing team although common sense says that one should not.

Laughing at Pedophiles in Rag Tunes

In her PhD dissertation, Herd (2018: 245-252) presents a chant about a player accused of sexually abusing a minor as an example of “reflexive anti-reflexivity,” following Khan-Harris’s analysis of the metal music scene (2006: 145). However, Herd does not consider elements of parody and both parody and irony further open up the example as creative, productive, and ironic.

The chant in question refers to a player, Miiko Alborno, from Malmö FF (MFF) in southern Sweden, who was allegedly having sex with a minor. The case was far from straightforward and it was widely discussed by various media and fans. The player was suspended, but not thrown out of the club, and he was eventually allowed to play again, which drew criticism from not only other clubs but also MFF’s own supporters (interview with Theo, February 2, 2015; focus group with members of supporter group Kärnan, February 16, 2015; Åkesson 2013). A football chant emerged that combines the well-known tune of Scott Joplin’s “The Entertainer” with grave and serious lyrics about a pedophilic player; it has been chanted by the supporters of other teams since 2013:

*Miiko är pedofil
Och han våldtar små barn i sin bil
Alla vet att han är, alla vet att han är
Alla vet att han är pedofil*

Miiko is a pedophile
And he rapes small children in his car
Everybody knows, everybody knows
Everybody knows he is a pedophile

Malmö FF is currently the most successful Swedish club, winning titles in the national league and making progress on the European level. Other clubs find it difficult to challenge MFF, as MFF is usually expected to win and they have little to fear from their opponents. Miiko’s supposed pedophilia, however, gives the supporters of other clubs something they can legitimately critique.

There are several videos available online that capture the chanting, accompanied by drums;⁶ they show the crowd shouting and jumping, using a well-known tune, and delivering a grave message. It is confusing on many levels. The case of Miiko Albornoz was nuanced but it was definitely not a laughing matter. Further, the chant hurt not only the one player, but also insulted the entire club (Herd 2018). The same chant was used again when another player from the same team, Kingsley Sarfo,⁷ was accused of sexually assaulting a minor in 2017: the name was simply changed from Miiko to Sarfo and the chant was sung again at MFF's stadium, provoking the home crowd (observations, April 9, 2018).

The Albornoz case stayed in the media for months; the gravity of the situation was mitigated by emerging details and the local media did not want to brand him as a sexual predator. Carefully chosen words and phrasings used in official news outlets contradicted the harsh and straightforward evaluation delivered in the chant. Folklorist and media researcher Trevor J. Blank, writing about expressions of humour in disastrous situations, points out that dark humour can be used to counteract all-too-serious messages from the media:

The jokes were an act of rebellion against the media's coverage of the event, with sordid punchlines aimed at the "unspeakable" dimensions of the tragedy ... Indeed, many forms of humor (including those pertaining to race, ethnicity, or regional/national identity) do not arise out of aggression, conflict or threat, but for playful purposes. (2013: 35-36)

The chant's performance in the stands was definitely playful, but we maintain that it could also be described as parody. As Susan Stewart remarks, "parody is a matter of substituting elements within a dimension of a given text in such a way that the resulting text stands in an inverse or incongruous relation to the borrowed text" (1979: 185).

Putting together a classic piano rag with such a sorrowful subject creates a cognitive dissonance for the listening audience. Sense is broken and "nonsense" is produced. The piano rag, a happy tune typically performed with dancing by an enthusiastic and engaged crowd, appears in the alien setting of a football stadium. It becomes a tune out of place and out of context. Its entertainment values are used to mock, hurt, and deliver a harsh judgement. It is not entertaining for the MFF crowd.

The very image of the pedophile became ironic, in a way, as well. When chanting, the term "pedophile" is used in an unreflective manner by the crowd, providing more shock value than real judgement. The term assumes a common

knowledge understanding of such an offence: the sexual abuse of a minor. Applying Hutcheon's analysis of parody, one can say that it is a "postmodern ironic parody, using the conventions of realism against themselves in order to foreground the complexity of representation and its implied politics" (1989: 99). Fans did not wait for the official judgement; they were not interested in a problematized and complex picture of Albornoz's case. The term was swiftly used as an insult, parodying the grave offence by applying it rather light-heartedly and carelessly in a football context, without legitimate grounds for doing so.

The intertextual qualities of parody are also revealed here. Hutcheon uses the term intertextuality as another way to describe parody (1989: 93). Texts are borrowed, slammed together, and produce a specific and limited "universe of discourse" while providing a "relationship between the universes of discourse" (Stewart 1979: 48). The contrast between tune and lyrics would not be as effective if the audience was not familiar with "The Entertainer." The audience also has to be familiar with the case against Albornoz and the general discussion that branded him as a pedophile.

To drive the argument further, one could ask if the situation described should be understood as sense- or nonsense-making. Parody works only on sense. One cannot make a parody of nonsense, as Susan Stewart explains:

Parody can only survive so long as there is common sense, so long as there is discourse that takes itself seriously. From this comes the contention that nonsense, as the outer space of the intertextual universe, cannot be parodied.... So long as nonsense remains a closed field, a surface that refers to itself, any attempt to parody nonsense will result in imitation, in the generation of more nonsense. (1979: 186)

The socially constructed nature of football means that it has many heterotopic and liminal qualities (c.f. Herd 2017, Herd 2018). Heterotopia, a Michel Foucault term, refers to a place outside of the everyday, following its own pace, laws, and logic. Foucault gives as examples graveyards, ships, or fairgrounds (Foucault 1984 [1967]; Herd 2013). Liminality, a concept developed by ethnographer, anthropologist, and folklorist Arnold van Gennep (1960) and later used by Victor Turner (1996 [1969]), refers to an ambiguous state that people can be in, "neither here nor there," "betwixt and between" the normal classifications of positions, laws, or responsibilities (Turner 1996 [1969]: 512). The concepts of heterotopias and liminality can be used when analyzing the space created collectively during a football match (Bromberger 1995; Bale and Gaffney 2004; Herd 2013, 2018, 2019). Football provides

the possibilities of emotional engagement and affectional response traceable in other fields that also involve fandoms (Löfgren 2018), strengthening the game's specific logic and turning it into "sense." As Stewart puts it, "Nonsense can only be parodied when its hermeticism is broken, when it shows some attachment to everyday life" (1979: 186). What would normally be considered as nonsensical behaviour in football stands can become a norm with which one can play. Football chants make sense because of their established, ritualistic structure and the performance that is regularly repeated and accepted — even expected — as an ideal way of engaging with football and being a fan. A very sharp, moral judgement performed during the observed matches resulted in the parody of an expected behaviour.

Shameful Union in Song Form

So far, the examples highlighted in this article have been parodic expressions communicated in the stands on game days. Expressions of support and parody are, today (of course), also displayed online (c.f. Herd 2018: 253). Our last example is a music video specifically made for and shared on YouTube (HIF DIF video, accessed November 22, 2018).

During one interview, a supporter of the Stockholm club AIK described a curious campaign that took place in 2009 and concerned three big clubs from the Swedish capital: AIK, Djurgårdens IF (DIF), and Hammarby IF (HIF):

There was this page ... hifdif.se and people spread the rumour that they were supposed to merge, and some journalists bought it. The video is so funny. DIF supporters all stuck up and in suits and then Hammarby hobos, singing together. The media bought it and it was just a big joke. (interview with Martin, January 25, 2015)

The web page mentioned by Martin existed in 2018, and the video can be found on YouTube.⁸ It is in the style of charity videos where different artists sing together for a common cause. In short, the video is a mockery of DIF and HIF, and their apparent attempt to become bigger and stronger than AIK. Territory and colours were merged together; the established symbols were used to produce a mock identity and mock history.

The song was first uploaded in 2009 and suggests that Hammarby IF and Djurgårdens IF are very good friends, while in reality their rivalry is deep and bitter. Extra meaning to this campaign was added years later when the two teams were forced to share one stadium as their home ground

(Herd 2018). In this music video, one finds a production of history based on “common sense” references that are contrasted with “nonsense.” Their duality is a construction in which they feed each other (c.f. Stewart 1979: 7). This is an “unreal situation” only if one agrees that it goes against what would be considered “real” or “right.” Football fans of opposing teams hugging each other seems odd. The football history does not support such evaluation. The “mock-friendship” between Hammarby IF and Djurgårdens IF is used to ridicule those two teams since different “universes of discourse” — different sets of interpretation of what is normal or abnormal in the football world (Stewart 1979: 48) — appear here. Two rival teams should not appear to celebrate together with love in the common sense of many football fans, yet the song depends on a common sense understanding of unity and compassion (15).

Due to decreasing interest in football, a group of AIK fans decided to send a fake press release to Sveriges Television, the Swedish public television broadcaster. The press release stated that HIF and DIF had launched a joint campaign called “Tillsammans kan vi” (Together We Can). The purpose of the supposed campaign was to end supporter rivalry between HIF and DIF, and together beat the attendance of AIK’s first game of the season. Stickers, campaign T-shirts and a webpage (hifdif.se) were made to market the campaign.⁹ To understand the depth of the video’s insult and its parodic elements, one has to share a common sense understanding with the Stockholm football fandom. This understanding is expressed through intertextually connected elements in the performance of the participants in the video.

Elegant, stylish, and clean-shaven DIF supporters embrace hippy-looking Bajen fans who have long hair, hold beer cans in their hands, and wear sweat jackets. The song, accompanied by ringing bells, warm smiles, and emotional hugs, features a refrain with the text:

*Blått och blått och grönt och vitt
tillsammans ska det gå.
Tillsammans ska vi bli fler
än AIK.*

Blue and blue, green and white
together we shall go
together we will be bigger
than AIK
(HIF featuring DIF – TILLSAMMANS KAN VI)

The colours refer to the stripes on their shirts, two shades of blue for DIF, and green and white for Hammarby. In the video, local lore about people interested in football has been combined with a particular video genre and type of music. Borrowing a term from folklore studies, one could see this as a process of “re-situation”: a process of taking elements from their socio-cultural context and using them within an artistic one, which might have a playful dimension (de Caro and Jordan 2004). The established mythology around the Stockholm clubs lent itself to the parodic video, creating a chain process in which references are transferred from reality to fiction and back to reality again.

That which is borrowed, parodied, and played with is partly a common sense understanding of HIF and DIF being bitter rivals: HIF and DIF supporters would never be seen together. In part, it plays with allusions to clichés, jargon, archetypes, stereotypes, and the style associated with each of the two teams’ supporters (c.f. Dentith 2000: 5). It also uses the well-established form, function, and intertextual understanding of the charity rock concert genre (cf. Garofalo 1993). The text, setting, music, and performance blends into one fantastic insult.

To exemplify the parodic content and intertextual elements, we will here consider the first few lines of the song:

DIF supporter: *Livet känns rätt tomt på Östermalm, som om vi redan torskats, när det nalkas premiär.*

HIF supporter: *På Söder är det Folkfest, i vår fantasi. För det största laget i Stockholm det kan vi aldrig bli. Det hörs ett rop från Söder!*

DIF supporter: *Och ett svar från Övremalm!*

Both: *Tillsammans ska vi kämpa! In i kampen hand i hand!*

In English:

DIF supporter: Our life feels quite empty on Östermalm, as if we had already lost, when the premier is on.

HIF supporter: On Söder, the folk are celebrating, in our imagination. For the biggest team in Stockholm, we can never be. There is a call from Söder!

DIF supporter: And an answer from Upper-malm!

Both: Together we will stand! Into combat hand in hand!

The names Östermalm and Söder refer to the geographical neighbourhoods in Stockholm where HIF and DIF are located. Söder (or Södermalm) is an old working-class district in Stockholm, whereas Östermalm is an upper-class area. HIF is the club identified with Södermalm and therefore claims a working-

class identity, whereas DIF is widely recognized as the team of the upper classes. These connections are furthered by the use of the Swedish words *folkfest* and the pun *Övremalm*. A folkfest is a festival, a celebration of the common people; the term is usually used to refer to a mass celebration in which an entire town or country is out having fun. Here, the “folk” in “folkfest” simultaneously and parodically refers to the working classes. The joke can be roughly translated as: we have a common (working-class) identity in HIF, and when HIF plays, it is a celebration — at least in our imaginations.

Similarly, Övremalm is a compound of two words: *överklass* and Östermalm, the name of the borough. Överklass means “upper class,” and combining it with the borough name parodies DIF’s upper-class identity. Furthermore, when sung in the song by DIF fans, the ‘v’ in Övremalm is pronounced with a distinct ‘f’ sound (making it *Öfremalm*). This alludes to the older spelling of the word *övre*, which for modern Swedish speakers sounds mockingly upper class when pronounced. Both the text and the attributes of the two singing supporters in the video, the longhaired hippie beer drinker and the sleek upper-class prat, as well as the distinctive pronunciation of the Swedish language, all emphasize and exaggerate the two club identities, making the parody work.

To drive home the insult, the common sense understanding of the rivalry between the Stockholm clubs is highlighted:

*Vår ensamhet i skuggan av en mäktig
konkurrent.
Kanske nu kan brytas, då vi går hop
som en!*

Our loneliness in the shadow of a mighty
combatant.
Might be broken when we go together
as one!

Here, the common-sense understanding that each football club would have its own supporters is parodied and turned into nonsense by having them come together. The “mighty combatant” is AIK, and both DIF and HIF share the common experience of “loneliness in [AIK’s] shadow.” Allusions to Live Aid make it all the funnier, as though the football situation in Stockholm is a crisis worthy of global attention.

To increase the parodic nonsense, these lyrics are sung together by the supporters of both teams with their arms around one another. The music itself

creates an ethos of “cheesiness,” consisting as it does of bell ringing, piano chords, an electric guitar solo, and an obvious modulation, all typical of the style of music performed at Live Aid. In short, both the music and the text play on a common sense construction: the function and musical style of 1980s charity rock.

The video is a prime example of how “[p]arody is both deconstructively critical and constructively creative” (Hutcheon 1989: 98). As parody, this song serves as an insult to AIK’s rivals in the Stockholm region, mocking them for being too insignificant to compete with AIK even if amalgamated with one another. DIF and HIF’s territories and colours are merged together to create symbols for the newly amalgamated team, proudly displayed in the video. The video’s scenario is nonsensical in that it is not possible, in reality, to imagine DIF and HIF merging and their fans becoming friends. Its nonsensicality clarifies, by contrast, what is understood to be common-sense within the supporter community.

Although the song was uploaded first in 2009, the joke became reality when DIF and HIF announced they would be sharing the Tele2 Arena starting in 2013. People were quick to upload funny pictures and comments, especially on Facebook. Terms like DHIF, HIFDIF, or South Brothers (*Söderbröder*) became common. During the derby match between AIK and Djurgården IF in 2015, a favourite chant was “Söder family — Djurgården and Hammarby” (observations, August 10, 2015). In theory, making two established clubs, each with strong support, share an arena had been unthinkable. It was inconceivable, a joke. But once the pragmatic decision was made, the Swedish football scene manipulated the story creatively to re-establish its faith in the common-sense ideal: each club owning its own arena.

Concluding remarks

Football is a creative and diverse field with many different expressive forms available to supporters. Songs and chants are used constantly during matches. They frame games by establishing the tone and the atmosphere, while also conveying different messages rooted in a variety of discourses.

The selection of the three case studies presented here exemplifies some of the different possibilities for making and performing football songs/chants. Parody operates on different levels. It is used as a coping mechanism, a way to deal with tension. It can be also useful to poke fun at opponents or social categories and structures. As Hutcheon puts it, “parody signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive

from both continuity and difference” (1989: 93). Such signals and ideological consequences, invested with a strong sense of irony and laughter, are definitely present within football.

An analysis of parody’s intertextuality helps to provide an understanding of football as a field of folklore with its own folk and its own lore (expressing behaviours and ideas in practice), as well as an understanding of some of the range of practices and functions of chants. To what extent does parodic creativity suggest that football chants should be considered artistic expressions? The point is perhaps not to contest “our humanist assumptions about artistic originality and uniqueness and our capitalist notions of ownership and property” (Hutcheon 1989: 93) but rather rely on the assumption pragmatically, in practice. We believe that there is artistic value in the lore of the football folk. Investigating it through parody is one way of showing the diversity of form and meaning in Swedish stadiums. 🍀

Notes

1. For example, there is a compilation called *The Most Self-Deprecating Chants In Football History w/Lyrics*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiWYPMVwww8> (accessed June 14 2020).

2. The football clubs included in this article are Malmö FF (MFF) and Helsingborgs IF (HIF) from the region of Scania; Djurgårdens IF (DIF), Hammarby IF (Bajen), and AIK from Stockholm; and Gefle IF from Gävle, a city north of Stockholm.

3. The Taylor & Francis journal *Soccer & Society* is solely devoted to football phenomena around the globe (<https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fsas20>). A rather recent European research project called FREE (Football Research in an Enlarged Europe: <https://eu-asia.essca.fr/projects/free>) was conducted in several European countries between 2012 and 2015, and resulted in 11 book publications about different issues surrounding European football (the list is available here: <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/14987>). Historian Torbjörn Andersson has written extensively on the history of various Swedish football clubs (2001, 2002, 2011, 2016).

4. The translations of all supporter songs have been done by the authors.

5. The term “qualia” here is derived from cognitive narratology and is a basic function of stories. Qualia should here be understood as “the sense of what it’s like for someone or something to have a particular experience” (Herman 2009: 144). It is understood as the prime function of any narrative text and as “an unfamiliar term for something that could not be more familiar to each of us: the ways things seem to us” (Dennet 1997: 619).

6. For example <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQ7cstu7J3E> uploaded in 2013 (accessed November 11, 2018).

7. That case was more serious, and the player was sentenced for raping a minor. The case was reported in mass media, for example: <https://www.aftonbladet.se/sportbladet/fotboll/a/XwLVMn/kingsley-sarfo-doms-till-fangelse-for-valdtakt-mot-barn> (accessed November 3, 2018).

8. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhTOVGg90SA>

9. The page became inactive in 2020.

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