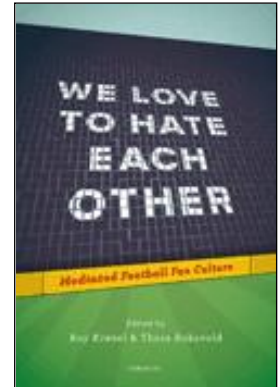


Roy Krøvel and Thore Roksvold (Eds.), **We Love to Hate Each Other: Mediated Football Fan Culture**. Göteborg: Nordicom, 2012, 323 pp., €30 (paperback).

Reviewed by
Travis Vogan
University of Iowa

Football (soccer) fans are among the world's most notorious—and perhaps most misunderstood—sports supporters. Popular representations of football fans, such as Bill Buford's sensationalistic *Among the Thugs* (1990), often stereotype them as violent, brutish, and at times, even xenophobic. Nick Hornby's autobiographical novel *Fever Pitch* (1992) partly strove to disabuse this image by praising the "95 per cent of the millions who watch [football] games every year [who] have never hit anyone in their lives" (p. 12). While Hornby's novel depicts football fans more humanely than does Buford's journalistic account, it persists in characterizing them as obsessively and uncritically devoted to their favorite teams. Despite the differences that mark them, these popular representations tend to suggest that football fans are, if nothing else, fanatical.



Scholarship in communication, cultural studies, and sociology has usefully pointed out the naiveté of imagining fans as cultural dupes. To the contrary, fandom is a complex and productive process through which active consumers build and assert identities. It is a participatory phenomenon wherein fans share in the creation of texts' cultural meanings and provide feedback that can shape those texts' production and circulation.

Academic discussions of sports fans have done well to address their cultural and economic productivity. They have not, however, been as quick to address how media figure into fandom. A host of geographic, economic, and temporal factors make it impossible for all but a fraction of fans to witness their favorite teams' matches in person. These fans use a combination of media, often simultaneously, to follow their teams and to converse—sometimes rather antagonistically—with other fans and journalists. Furthermore, media compose key vehicles through which sports organizations and sponsors capitalize on fans' devotion. Quite simply, media enable, facilitate, and constrain contemporary sports fandom.

Roy Krøvel and Thore Roksvold's edited collection, *We Love to Hate Each Other: Mediated Football Fan Culture*, investigates the centrality of media to contemporary sports fandom. The anthology includes theorizations and case studies of mediated football fan culture that engage a variety of national contexts, including Norway, Australia, England, Israel, Scotland, South Africa, and Sweden. The subject matter's diversity attests to the degree to which media have fostered increasingly globalized football fan cultures. Furthermore, it illustrates how the wealthiest and most powerful sports organizations, such as the English Premier League, have used media to cultivate communities of fans across the world. In addition to examining how media have facilitated and commodified football fandom, the collection's

chapters usefully explore how media provide vehicles for fans to build, articulate, negotiate, and contest identities along national, gender, and ethnic lines.

Krøvel and Roksvold divide the book into four intersecting parts that define football fan culture and address its relationship to different media. The first section constructs a theoretical framework for the subsequent three by considering the particularity of football fandom and its shifting relationship to media. Hans K. Hognestad's "What is a Football Fan?" builds upon Richard Giulianotti's typology, which divides football fans into four categories ranging from most to least committed: supporter, fan, follower, and flaneur. Hognestad suggests that examinations of fans that employ Giulianotti's typology ought to consider the contexts in which those fans operate and how certain fans might occupy different or multiple categories in specific circumstances. "It is imaginable," he argues, "that the same football spectator could call himself (or herself) a supporter during a domestic league match, a fan of the club watched most often on TV, a follower of the national team, and a flaneur during glamorous mega events such as the world cup" (p. 41). Raymond Boyle builds upon Hognestad's discussion by investigating how sports journalism practices shift in different historical contexts, along with the introduction of new communication technologies. Boyle indicates that while the emergence of the Internet and social media have forced sports journalism to adjust, this transition has by no means eradicated its presence.

The volume's second section deals specifically with print media's relationship to mediated fan cultures. Peter Dahlén investigates two Bergen, Norway newspapers' nostalgic coverage of the Brann football club's 2007 Norwegian Football Championship. Dahlén suggests that narrations of the championship by the newspapers and other sources in Bergen illustrate the "cultural and religious significance of football as an arena for the regenerating of local identities and local community" (p. 63). Also focusing on a Norwegian context and expanding upon Boyle's analysis in the previous section, Thore Roksvold examines how the introduction of new media has forced national newspapers to make changes to their football coverage over the course of the last century. Rune Ottosen, Nathalie Hyde-Clarke, and Toby Miller consider these shifts' economic dimensions by probing how the Johannesburg, South Africa newspaper *The Star* used consumerism as the dominant frame through which it represented fans during the 2010 World Cup. Their analysis suggests that fans are increasingly imagined primarily as consumers and that their images provide valuable commodities for sponsors, which often use images of football fans in their marketing. The section ends with Hugh O'Donnell's examination of the vast differences that separate Scottish newspapers' representations of the Tartan Army—a famously animated group of fans that support Scotland's national football team—from the coverage generated by newspapers outside of the group's home country. While addressing a wide range of subject matter, the second section's chapters all support Boyle's assertion that the role of newspapers in contemporary football fandom is changing but by no means vanishing.

We Love to Hate Each Other's third section outlines how social media has reconfigured football fandom. Focusing on Norway, Harald Hornmoen considers how fans' identities are created through their sometimes contentious contributions to and interactions on web forums; Aage Radmann examines the differences between online and tabloid press representations of hooliganism; Andreas Ytterstad investigates how various blogs' representations of footballers construct and negotiate understandings of the sport's relationship to national identity; and Roy Krøvel analyzes how fans use websites and blogs to

debate about and form understandings of the connections between football and ethnic identity. In the collection's only study that focuses specifically on female fans, Deirdre Hynes interviews 16 women who participate in online fan forums. She considers how these virtual spaces enable female fans to construct new and genderless personas while theorizing the political implications of the online selves they create. Hynes reminds readers that although online spaces enable participants to create different and multiple identities, they are still gendered and enmeshed in dominant hegemonies. Similarly, Steen Steensen analyzes a conversation between fans and a journalist on a CoveritLive application hosted by the online Norwegian newspaper *VG Nett*. CoveritLive allows journalists and fans to interact as football matches progress. While this technology seems to promote a more democratic relationship between fans and journalists—illustrating the increasingly porous division between media producers and consumers that often characterizes discussions of new media—Steensen shows that the journalist still dictates how the conversation unfolds. Together, the third section's chapters demonstrate how social media enable fans to create and assert their identities in ways that were previously impossible and showcase how these media sometimes reinforce traditional hierarchies. Moreover, these chapters suggest that social media have brought an increased degree of self-consciousness and reflexivity to football fans' performances of their fandom.

Television (defined broadly) comprises the third section's focal point. Alina Bernstein, Lea Mandelvis, and Inbar Shenhar provide a comparative narrative analysis of two 2006 documentaries—*Sakhnin Cha'yai* and *Echad Ba'Regel Echad Ba'Lev*—that examine the cultural and national significance of the Arab football club Hapoel Ichud Bnei Sakhnin's 2004 Israeli National Football Cup victory. While Jewish-Israeli filmmaker Ram Loevy directed *Sakhnin Cha'yai* and Arab-Israeli documentarian Suhu Arraf helmed *Echad Ba'Regel Echad Ba'Lev*, both documentaries are critical of the role that football plays in articulating understandings of ethnicity and national identity in Israel. Along vastly different lines, Britt-Marie Ringfjord's article considers how the Public Service Television program, *Little Mirror of Sports*, targeted at Swedish children, nurtures the youngsters' mediated and commodified football fandom while engaging dominant attitudes surrounding gender, age, ethnicity, and sport.

Krøvel and Roksvold conclude their anthology on a provocative note with David Rowe and Stephanie Alice Baker's "Truly a Fan Experience? The Cultural Politics of the Live Site." Focusing on a live site in Sydney, Australia, during the 2010 World Cup, Rowe and Baker theorize how these alternative spaces for consuming mediated football reimagine the spatial, temporal, commercial, and political dimensions of football fandom and sports spectatorship in general. Furthermore, their useful analysis expands upon Ottosen, Hyde-Clarke, and Miller's investigation of *The Star's* World Cup coverage by examining how these live sites encourage spectators to participate in sponsored social media activities and how they use staged footage of impassioned fans reveling at the live sites to market the World Cup across the globe.

We Love to Hate Each Other provides an excellent resource for academics interested in the culture, politics, and business of mediated football fandom—and sport fandom in general. It reminds readers that while Internet and social media technologies have blurred the line between those who produce and those who consume sports media, the entire history of football fandom is marked by fans' engagement with and use of various media. Furthermore, the book encourages readers to imagine football

fandom as a phenomenon that is not simply mediated, but also mediated in different ways and for different purposes. *We Love to Hate Each Other* offers a starting point from which to analyze these dynamics and tease out their political and commercial implications. I look forward to reading the additional, cross-cultural work on mediated football and sports fandom that this volume promises to precipitate.

References

Buford, B. (1990). *Among the thugs*. New York: Vintage.

Hornby, N. (1992). *Fever pitch*. New York: Riverhead.