

“When light turns into darkness”: Inscriptions of music and terror in Oslo 22 July 2011

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The objective of this article is to examine the links between music, terror and gender through the politics of right extremism. Six hours before the bombing of Oslo’s centre and the massacre on the island of Utøya on 22 July 2011, a sinister YouTube video was released. This would be the precursor for the dispatchment of the manifesto of the Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik. Music would contribute significantly to his chilling message. An interpretation of the role of music in this attack on Norway addresses critical questions of white masculinity, ethnicity, nationalism, and the function of music in war games.

Staging the Act

Breivik would turn to the Norwegian female singer Helene Bøksle and her tracks “Ere the World Crumbles” and “The Dreaming Anew” from the multiplayer online role-playing game *Age of Conan: Hyborian Adventures*.¹ Her voice supported Breivik’s personal account of ‘actions of martyrdom’. “It is an angelic voice that strengthens one’s resolve in battle,” he has claimed.

¹ Developed by a Norwegian computer game company, Funcom, this game profiles players in roles of conflict.

“When your time is up, this voice is all you hear as your light turns into darkness and you enter the Kingdom of Heaven. With this voice in your ears it must be the most glorious way to claim the honor of martyrdom in battle.” Also the international hit, “Lux Aeterna” by British composer Clint Mansell was a favorite of Breivik: “I’ve listened to this track several hundred times and I never seem to get tired of it. The track is very inspiring and invokes a type of passionate rage within you [...] I will put my iPod on max volume as a tool to suppress fear if needed—and to dampen the noise of people screaming as they are being shot!”²

By 6.34 pm on the 22 July 2011, in one of the worst single-handed massacres in modern times, seventy-seven people had been murdered by a single white male with hundreds left seriously injured and bereaved.³ Having bombed the government quarters in Oslo’s centre and disguising himself as a policeman Breivik arrived at the small island of Utøya, north-west of Oslo. The Labour Party, he knew, was holding its annual summer youth camp there. Gathering young people around him, he would explain that he had arrived to inform them about the Oslo bombing. Quickly changing his tack, he targeted his gun at one of the youths, shouting: “You will all die. You’re all going to end up dead.” With this the shootings commenced.

In the space of hours it dawned on an entire nation that the perpetrator was someone from within. Contrary to what many first believed he was a white, softly spoken, middle-class Norwegian from the affluent west side of Oslo and not a Muslim, an illegal immigrant or asylum seeker. Before Breivik’s identity had been confirmed, there were assumptions that the terrorist had to be a Muslim. This was apparent in social media, such as Facebook, and it is known that foreign-looking people were even harassed in the streets (See e.g. Zondag, 2011). Describing himself as a conservative Christian, staunchly opposed to multiculturalism and the Norwegian Labour Party (whom he held responsible for the influx of people of non-European descent into Norway), violence was his only choice for exterminating the ruling social democrats and clearing the path for a full ethnic cleansing of Norway and Western Europe. According to his manifesto the master plan was to eradicate 200,000 people in, what he termed categories, A and B that

2 All quotes taken from Breivik’s written manifesto — 2083: *A European Declaration of Independence* (2011). Available online.

3 See Kjetil Stormark’s *Da terroren rammet Norge* (2011) for a detailed account of the events of 22 July.

identified ‘traitors to the nation’. Tangled up in ideology, mass murder was politically and ethically justifiable. Support for this, he would argue, could be achieved by establishing networks with likeminded individuals in Norway and Europe.

We now know from his manifesto that popular music had a huge impact on Breivik, which is of prime relevance in this study. To date numerous studies have linked music to all kinds of forms of social and political activity, where subjectivity is positioned alongside musical taste and preference.⁴ For the purpose of this inquiry we pursue the Internet’s link with music through gendered subjectivity and nationhood. Given that music is an active agent in determining one’s cultural surroundings and sense of belonging, it possesses a powerful motivating quality. In a rapidly changing world the influence of music is profound and ubiquitous and there is sufficient evidence in his manifesto that online war games had a bearing on the 22 July attacks.⁵ How the game industry intersects with the music industry raises important issues of musical agency. Breivik’s own musical preferences therefore need to be examined alongside the actions he executed. In what ways, then, did music contribute to form an ideology against the Norwegian Labour Party coalition government under Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg?

Amongst the numerous tracks named in Breivik’s manifesto is ‘Lux Aeterna’. The version of ‘Lux Aeterna’ he preferred originates from a battle scene in *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, where all the ingredients of epic cinematic drama are in place. Something foreboding lies in the deep-layered density of textures in the music; the score is rife with passionate rage and menace. Inspection of this eerie track reveals a blend of synthetic breathy sounds, atmospheric orchestral scoring, and highly charged, jagged rhythmic up and down string bowings. This cinematic soundscape offers up all the codes for heroism, battle and victory. With full sonic force, the listener or shooter is bombarded by a flood of powerful gestures, all of which build up into a feeling of anxiety that verges on the frenetic. Combat and war are sensationalized by the musical clichés of the scoring—lush, sweeping strings, glossy production, and intense musical processes that include pompous and

4 See for example Johnson and Cloonan (2009).

5 See Klevjer (2008) for an in-depth study of the cultural significance of games. Specific attention is given to an evaluation of a range of computer game aesthetics and the cultural importance of the interactive media in Europe. Also see Ludes (2008).

gradual crescendos, fast-paced rhythms, and rich harmonic devices. These are the musical codes imported directly into computer video games.⁶

The solitary experience of playing war games posits many questions. Addressing the role of the passive listener and the link between listening patterns and violence, Mark Thorley (2011) has scrutinized the psychological and physiological aspects of passive listening, exposing the stress levels aligned to varying states of stimulation. Different responses, he argues, are elicited through the action of the parasympathetic nervous system, which relate to the state of homeostasis (the way in which the body's cardiovascular system adapts to various demands). When other stresses are already present, "and homeostasis is not facilitated through the action of the parasympathetic system," there is a likelihood of long-term damage to the subject's health (Thorley, 2011, p. 89).⁷ Thorley maintains that passive listening in itself has often constituted act of violent expression, highlighting not only "how often incidents occurred, but also the circumstances and possible elements of the music which may have been contributory" (Thorley, 2011, p. 94). Certainly, Thorley's study is crucial for understanding the sonic manifestation of violence in a range of contexts. Given that the stimuli of sound blaring out of an MP3's earphones lead to an arousal of the autonomic nervous system (with definite alterations in heartbeat, pulse-rate, breathing and sweat levels), music can invoke aggressive responses, which, in certain extreme cases, result in physical violence (Stansfeld & Matheson, 2003).

Emerging technologies have altered our listening processes and responses to music. It is now well recognized that an overwhelming sense of empowerment is established by the activation of musical idioms, genres and styles in a range of new media forms. Take the import of musical associations that are present in countless films into social media and computer games, where music affords a great sense of functionality⁸ in any type of audiovisual experience. One might say that a sense of logic is produced through sound within the specific network it operates; for instance, in fast-paced body-action games sensations are conveyed in a musically charged space. In his plan-

6 For a detailed study on the role of interactive sound and music for creating emotional identification, see Collins (2013).

7 See Cusick (2008) for a study of this phenomenon, where she investigates the use of music and violence in US detention camps. Plenty evidence is forthcoming on how music and sound were systematically being used to discipline, torture and break-down detainees during the 'global war on terror'.

8 See Kassabian's study of ubiquitous music (2013).

ning the terror attacks of 22 July 2011, Breivik has admitted that music and computer games played a decisive role. His favorite music not only helped motivate, but also fortified him in realizing the crimes committed at Utøya.

Understanding the conditions of Norway’s recent political and economic developments is relevant at this point. One of the most recent evaluations of Norway’s definite shift to the popular right in politics is provided by Øyvind Strømme (2011). In his research he accounts for the rise in hate of Islam by many Norwegians, as well as detailing the parallels between right radicalism and the terror attacks of 22 July 2011.⁹ This nation-state, founded on valued citizenship, continually strives for freedom of expression. Subtle distinctions exist in how one defines nationhood and social democracy. In recent times a shift towards roots and cultural fixity, marked by a fragmentation of larger national, regional and district identities, constitutes both the liberating and oppressive side of nation-building. Significantly, the evolution of a greater dynamism in the constant transformation of a society in a globalized context has shifted from the problematics of class conflict to those of ethnicity and right-extremism; and along the way ideals of masculinity have conformed due to the advances in feminism.

Identifying patterns of hybridity in any society is an elaborate affair. This is because it involves the blending of people and cultures with mixed origins. In recent times, with a marked increase in immigration, ethnic differentiation is traditionally relegated to immigrants from non-Western countries. The official use of the term *ikke-vestlig* (non-western) in Norway stresses the anxieties around the “immigrant situation” that falls outside the borders of the EU and the EFTA states.¹⁰ Categorizations such as *ikke-vestlig* are rooted in an ideological construction of Otherness, with a tendency to reject that

9 Significantly, Strømme (2011) also dwells on the role of the Internet and the ‘lone-wolf’ phenomenon that made these events possible. The ‘lone-wolf’ refers to an extremist individual who acts alone, but who nonetheless belongs to a community, or pack, from which s/he appropriates ideas and beliefs inspiring violent behaviour. Breivik’s ‘pack’ exists in online forums such as document.no and Gates of Vienna.

10 The European Free Trade Association (EFTA), established and initiated by Norway and Switzerland in 1960, is affiliated to the EU through the European Economic Area (EEA). While the four member states of EFTA include Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Norway, the EEA, which came into force in 1994, only includes Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

which is foreign and not “ethnically us.”¹¹ Norwegian social anthropologist, Thomas Hylland Eriksen, notes:

(...) in everyday language the word ethnicity still has a ring of ‘minority issues’ and ‘race relations’, but in social anthropology it refers to aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive» (Eriksen, 1993, p. 4).

Yet, as Eriksen insists, “majorities and dominant peoples are no less ‘ethnic’ than minorities” (Eriksen, 1933, p. 4). To confound this, the majority of white Norwegians are officially referred to as *etnisk norsk* (ethnic Norwegian), notably a way of describing ethnicity that is not implemented in other Scandinavian countries. Although gender is not constitutive for ethnicity per se, as implied in the notion of ethnic Norwegian, there exist a broad range of normative assumptions about what it means to be a Norwegian male and female. As our study has observed, Breivik entertains a nostalgic vision of fixed gender roles, and what they should look and behave like in the Western European and Nordic countries. And notably, his perception of gender surfaces in his musical preferences.

Whiteness and masculinity—Knighthood

Ideals of individuality and collective identity inevitably seep into any consideration of music. One way to understand this is through the structures of gender display in the context of VR (virtual reality) and RL (real life).¹² For many the Internet operates as a channel for encountering whatever political relations one desires. It has become more and more clear during the lengthy trial of Breivik in Oslo that delusions of his status within a VR existence provided the impulse for staging the event of 22 July. His narcissistic positioning would be facilitated by a patriarchal justification of ruling (or better exterminating) the Other in all sorts of dubious guises. An ideological mish-mash

11 For one of the best critiques of this, see Bhabha (1994), especially Chapter 3, ‘The other question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism’ (pp. 94–120).

12 We acknowledge that the relationships and distinctions between virtual reality (virtuality) and reality (actuality) are elusive and difficult to pin down. Media scholars are anxious to accept any strict binary division between the two, and recognize how they overlap in many ways. For our purposes we define VR as the digital life-world one occupy while navigating online through a computer, and RL as the life-world perceived through physically interacting with non-digital social reality. For a comprehensive study on the issue of virtuality, see Grimshaw (2014).

of right-wing conservative ideas would underpin sentiments of revenge and rage in a personal adaptation of the Templar knight, known from the medieval Christian military order.

Foucault’s account of the exercise of power relations is useful when framing the disciplinary technologies of the body. In the knight, practices taken to an extreme often conform to the gendered norms of idealized masculinity. In conceptualizing the “technologies of the Self” (Foucault, 1988), Foucault vents his concern with the Christian ethic of purifying the Self. Consequently, his insights involve a problematization of the restrictions placed on us by the normalization of identity categories. Breivik’s political resistance might well stem from this, manifested in the self-obsessed, narcissistic male hungering after fame, fortune and celebrity status. In rejecting the feminization of Norwegian culture, Breivik scorns ‘men’ who are not men anymore. Weakened metrosexuals, they have buckled under the weight of the “new age feminist woman goddess” (Simpson, 2011).

Keeping up appearances is a prime strategy of Breivik. In his early 20s he underwent cosmetic surgery to improve his looks. In addition, steroids, vigorous gym participation, and regular self-tanning formed part of a package. Mark Simpson has described him as a “Christian warrior, mass murderer who clearly desires to be desired” (Simpson, 2011). Turning to violence, in the name of political justice, Breivik highlights the limitations and frustrations placed on males by the normalizing categories of gendered and sexual identity. Indeed the norms that govern his adoption of the Templar knight bring to light what Butler describes as a “set of repeated acts within a highly regulatory frame” (Butler, 1990, p. 33). Thus, Breivik’s brand of masculinity replicates stereotypical dominant gender norms by establishing moral authority; nationhood and gender norms are the repeated acts of repressive patriarchal conditioning.

Traditionally, patriarchal masculinity is buttressed by a bewildering array of myths and conventions, and through the ages technology has been part of this. Computer games, such as *World of Warcraft*, *Anarchy Online* and *Age of Conan* contribute to the virtual space of the boy’s room. Enter the popular warrior knight whose call of duty it is to take on ‘other’ knights in combat mode. Regularly, this entails a plan of full extermination in mind to save the nation and even the world. Gender theorist, Tod Reeser suggests that “the idea of the knight as definitional masculinity did not disappear at the end of the middle ages, but remains as one aspect of modern masculinity” (2010,

p. 84) . On masculinity and ideals of appropriation, Reeser states: “So while men do not go around acting like Sir Lancelot all the time, elements of a knightly definition of masculinity might still be a part of how one’s masculinity operates” (Reeser, 2010, p. 84).

If the illusion of the Templar knight translates into a desire to be the ‘perfect knight’, Breivik’s self-image is an attempt to verify this. Uniforms, medals, badges, ribbons, freemasonry symbols, Lacoste, and, music are the components of self-identification. It is worth mentioning that his high self-conceit was borne out by his comments at the last court hearing before the trial on 6 February 2012, when he demanded that he be awarded the ‘Cross of War’ medal of honour, a military distinction for personal bravery and exemplary leadership. He maintained that he deserved this recognition from the State because of his strike having been an act of self-defence on behalf of ‘his’ indigenous people (‘urfolk’),¹³ who were being subjected to ethnic cleansing (Buan, 2012).

As we have mentioned, music helped fortify Breivik for the bombing of the government quarter in Oslo and the massacre at Utøya. It has emerged that in the preparation for this event rigorous daily exercises consisted of a programme of self-indoctrination aided by specific musical choices. Amongst the artists and groups he promotes is Saga, a Swedish right wing nationalist female singer. Hailing Saga as the best and most talented patriotic musician in the English speaking world Breivik deplores the fact that she and other similar patriotic heroes and heroines of Scandinavia have had to endure political demonization for years (because of their struggle of prevention against the demographical and cultural genocide of the Scandinavian and European tribes!). Notably the tracks that incited him are “One Nation Arise,” “Black Bannered Legion,” “Ode to a Dying People,” and the “Nation’s fate.”

How then could the unthinkable happen to a nation that prides itself as a peace-loving nation-state? And what about the rational calculation of a political genocide? Perhaps one clue to this lies in an over-abundance of anti-empathy.¹⁴

¹³ It is important to note that the discourse around ‘urfolk’ in Norway, traditionally refers to the Sami people, a population of Scandinavia protected under the international conventions of indigenous peoples.

¹⁴ By anti-empathy we mean the inability or unwillingness to ‘put oneself in the Other’s shoes’, denying the possibility for intersubjective understanding (Copland & Goldie, 2011, p. 302).

Breivik’s own self-aestheticization and his macabre racist rantings—the hatred of the ‘outsider’, the ‘insider’, the foreigner, the non-European, the feminist, the Other—are the incentives used to cause irrevocable harm and bloodshed. Knowing full well that he would gain high media attention, he explicitly mediated the ‘rules of his game’, a game where he would become master of his own subjection.

***Call of Duty*—Internet and combat systems**

Part of this study involves an inquiry into the interactive domain of computer-designated games through Xbox or PlayStation, which bypass many of the more passive entertainment features of TV, mp3, or radio. Always a direct sense of control prevails through the optional dimensions of a content provider.¹⁵ Gradually, since the 1990s, the video game industry has won market shares from other audiovisual media due to its ability to activate consumer interaction. On this note, it is worth stressing that music’s contribution is crucial for a video game’s success, enhancing the aesthetics of VR.

In his research into computer-generated games, Alf Inge Wang points out that similar technology is used for training and recruiting soldiers, arguing that there is proof enough that simulations can help make players more accurate shooters in real life (Brustad, Meland, Krokfjord, Hansen, Johansen & Gilbrant, 2011). Debates concerning the detrimental aspects of such games, and their impact on civilian players, are in abundance. The Norwegian lawyer, Eirik Vinje, has observed how military contingents use computer-simulated scenarios to train combat reflexes, and to help erode any natural aversion against killing.¹⁶ He emphasizes that the evolution of computer games since the 1990s has coincided with an increase in school killings

15 We have borrowed the term ‘content provider’ from telecommunications terminology. Here, it refers to services that are adding value to the core service of voice calls, such as SMS, MMS, GPRS. Used in this context we mean content that add value to the basic infrastructure of the Internet, i.e. various products and services that online businesses, private people and organisations might provide; games, music and video streaming, downloads, news media etc.

16 Strategic use of war simulation games is used by the military to desensitize and cultivate a sense of warfare. Although the effects on civilians might be similar, everyday war games are more directed towards fine-tuning on-screen eye-hand coordination, coupled with a cultivation of “detachment and spectacularly quick reflexes” equivalent to military simulations. Our thanks to Steven Feld for these useful observations. Also see Trend (2007), and Johnson and Cloonan (2009).

(Meyer, 2011). Yet, much skepticism arises from arguments asserting direct causal links between games and violence. Wang explains the polarized positions in scholarly approaches: “On the one hand you have psychologists who have found that violent games cause increased aggression and less empathy, while on the other hand you have the game researchers, who themselves are players, who have found games hardly having any effect whatsoever” (Stuestøl, 2011). A similar discourse surrounds the problematic debates concerning the effects of exposure to violent music, music videos, and lyrics in various metal genres. A fitting example of this is in the accusations waged against ‘shock rocker’ Marilyn Manson after the Columbine school shootings in 1999. A Nordic parallel is found in Finland and the Jokela High School massacre in 2007, which reignited the discourse against metal. Notably, the Norwegian metal artist Sturmgeist (Cornelius Jakhelln) was deemed by some to have instigated the massacre, given the shooter’s Internet pseudonym, Sturmgeist89, and his declared musical preferences. In this context, Breivik’s appropriation of a softer musical style for motivation is notable, and contradicts a simple homology between violent music and violent behaviour.

There is plenty evidence of Breivik’s obsession with war games and the roles he assumed while playing them; we know that he chose to call himself “Andersnordic” at a point when he was a combat leader for a number of fellow-players. It has emerged that right from the outset he did not care for ‘first-person shooter’ games, although he considered *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* as part of his training in terms of simulating battle and conflict scenarios; he has also claimed that he learned to love the multiplayer mode as a major part of simulating specific operations.

Notwithstanding the problems concerning claims of direct causality, the matter is worth pursuing. In computer games of a violent nature the player’s own situation and levels of engagement need to be taken into account, not least when it comes to considering aspects of anti-empathy within a social, cultural and familial context. And when music fuels the sociopath, allowing him or her to be submerged in the world(s) they enter, its function needs to be understood at an emotional level that visuality alone cannot achieve. Symbiotically, visuality and music intensifies all forms of emotive response, and this is meticulously regulated in all audiovisual artifacts: games, commercials and movies, music videos and YouTube manifestos. While music might help induce empathy, it can equally assist in creating anti-empathy.

The music for *Modern Warfare 2* is created by the German Oscar-winning film composer Hans Zimmer, whose résumé includes *The Dark Knight*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Gladiator*, *The Lion King*, *Sherlock Holmes* and *Inception*. Zimmer’s style is influenced by the Western classical canon, which has been central to the golden age of Hollywood film scoring, stretching from roughly the 1930s to the 1960s. Since then this has become institutionalized as a standard strategy for inducing empathy in large-scale productions. Eurocentric universalism is defined by what it is not, and this easily feeds into musical preferences and judgments. Breivik’s personal leaning towards traditionalist cinematic scoring, well suited for war drama, is about white male heroism. The *Modern Warfare 2* soundtrack carries titles such as “Extraction Point,” “Guerrilla Tactics,” “Siege,” and “Infiltration,” all interrelated stylistically with Mansell’s “Lux Aeterna.” Notably, in heavy combat scenes music is absent, providing space for shouted out commands and sounds of firing and bombing that help cue the player aurally when pinpointing the enemy. Music then enters as missions are summed up or introduced, characterizing the different emotional structures that designate a range of operations within the game’s overarching plot. *Modern Warfare 2* is based on the well-known East versus West narrative (cf. the Cold War and the War on Terror), where conflict ensues between an unstable, ultranationalist Russian terrorist, Vladimir Makarov, and the heroic Western multinational “Task Force 51”—an efficient military machine put together by the United States Marine Corps, the British Special Air Service, and other NATO countries. In the plot this global squadron is set up as the last line of defense for “democracy, freedom and peace,” and has as its mission the task of liquidating the sinister Makarov and other rebels and militias around the world, who are thriving in a politically unstable world (Kruger, 2010).

Produced by the American game developer Infinity Ward, and published by US publisher Activision, for Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, and Microsoft Windows, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* is a sequel to *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare*. Since its release in 2009 it has had enormous commercial success, and has been highly acclaimed by game communities around the world. However, *Modern Warfare 2* has been criticized for its high level of graphic violence, and particularly its infamous operation, “No Russians,” where the player controls a CIA-agent incited to slaughter as many innocent civilians as

possible at an airport.¹⁷ From his media statements, there is sufficient evidence that this game would have a significant bearing on Breivik's preparations for his terror attacks on 22 July 2011. Playing *Modern Warfare 2* quite likely developed his accuracy and psychology for killing. Clearly, the hyper-reality of *Modern Warfare 2* empowers and boosts the player's confidence. In combat one is rendered powerful through the mastery of a combined use of weapons (assault rifles, machine guns, sniper rifles, shotguns, hand guns, launchers), different accessories (grenades, C4, mines, shields, throwing knives, battle clothing), and attachments (red dot sight, silencer, extended mags, full metal jacket ammo, advanced combat optical gun-sight, thermal sight, holographic sight) (*Modern Warfare 2*, 2009). Designed for engaging and killing the enemy in multiple ways, these options require a high level of skill, which, once mastered, mould the player into a highly accurate killing machine. In the extreme speeds and chaotic heat of battle, the individual and his team are propelled forward, struggling to survive the rain of bullets from the enemy, who is bent on exterminating one's team once and for all. Surviving such a hostile environment infuses the players with an ecstatic sense of mastery as they accumulate "experience points," which unlock the rewards for successful "killstreaks."¹⁸ Thus, by reaching "a set amount of kills without dying" the players are awarded with new weapons, radar technology, care packages, EMP, and different air-strikes (predator missile, precision air strike, harrier strike, attack helicopter, tactical nuke etc.). In addition, "deathstreaks" are used to prevent newcomers and beginners from becoming discouraged by the sheer scale of difficulty they face, providing them with incentives to stay alive and slay more enemies. These become activated when the player dies a set amount of times without making a kill themselves, which involves copying the "loadout" of your killer, gaining health boosts, committing martyrdom ("drop a live grenade just after dying"), and being allowed to take a final stand (gaining 10 seconds of additional life to fully recover) (*Modern Warfare 2*, 2009).

17 Notably, Svein Olaf Olsen, a father of a surviving Utøya participant, felt compelled to report the game to the Norwegian Police in October 2011, for breaching criminal code article 382, concerning sales or rentals of "film, video, or the like, where crude and improper depictions of violence are used for entertainment purposes" (Refseth & Hinsch, 2011). However, since *Call of Duty* was already government approved, the police had to dismiss the case.

18 Killstreaks are incentives aimed at "giving the experienced players something to aim for" (Kruger, 2010).

While first-person shooter games like *Modern Warfare 2* might be problematic in terms of their high level of graphic violence, role-playing games like *World of Warcraft* and *Age of Conan* have been criticized for de-socializing their players (Mauren, 2012). To succeed in role-playing games requires vast amounts of time, with the objective to ‘hook’ more ambitious players who are willing to forfeit their social life for a virtual existence. We know that Breivik has claimed he enjoyed online role-playing more than first-person shooter games, even taking an entire year off to role-play *World of Warcraft*. Massive(ly) Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) comprises different virtual realms where players create a character with certain skills and characteristics to cooperate or fight with up to several thousand other players worldwide (Blizzard Entertainment, 2014). The person versus environment mode (PvE) is “the player-controlled character (you) competing against the game world and its computer-controlled denizens, as opposed to Player vs. Player” (wowwiki.com, 2014). Breivik makes the claim that some of the benefits of this game increased his motivation and heightened his morale, as well as providing a cover for his many years of preparations. In his research into *World of Warcraft*, Wang has noted that its learning effects are related to effective communication as well as coordination and leadership (Brustad et al., 2011). The leader of ‘guilds’ organizes 10 to 12 people that are cooperating to solve missions, which develops and sharpen administrative and organizational skills attractive for businesses. *World of Warcraft* is a more slowly paced game than *Modern Warfare 2*, and is very similar in style to *Age of Conan*. Both are non-realistic fantasy games with little graphic violence, where players are given missions that require strategic planning and organizing.¹⁹ They are considered more intellectually challenging than *Modern Warfare 2*, which is more oriented towards motorics, speed, and brutal force. Breivik would call his *World of Warcraft* characters “Andersnordic” and “Conservativism”, and an Irish fellow gamer, in an interview on an Irish radio station, would claim “he was always very tactical (Brustad et al., 2011).” Anonymous ‘Frank’, so he was called, would also explain that for him the murders at Utøya reminded him of Breivik’s playing style: “He was very cool, very calm, very together and behaved as if

19 It is worth pointing out that *World of Warcraft* and *Age of Conan* are not intense high-tempo-action-games like *CoD*, with more time to calculate strategies and decisions while working on increasingly difficult quests. These role-playing games set out to introduce the players to adventure worlds much like those found in Tolkien’s *Lord of The Rings* universe. These digital role-playing games are based on earlier board-games, which were ‘manual’, where the players use dices, pens and paper, e.g. *Dungeons and Dragons*.

they were not human beings. He acted as if it was a job he had to do, like a mission in the game” (Brustad et al., 2011).

During his massacre of 69 people on Utøya, Breivik entered a similar psychological mode as if solving missions or committing slaughter online, where his gaming experiences benefited him in various ways due to nine years of experience. Finally he would confront his victims. In a staged act of ‘martyrdom’, his virtual life of gaming and heavy involvement in far right ‘echo-chambers’²⁰ (VR) was instantly mapped onto his real life (RL), elevating him to the status of ‘hero’, eliminating the borderline between reality and hyper-reality. We know that in the preparation for this ‘heroic’ performance, the music from *World of Warcraft* and *Age of Conan* shaped his resolve, providing him with the strength to execute an operation on such a gigantic scale. Music is highly influential and implicated in creating a fantasy-universe with cinematic realism. And as Karen Collins has pointed out in her in-depth studies of these games, music operates to localize players in specific cultural, physical, social and historical environments (Collins, 2008, p. 132).

Unruly Stereotypes through the Politicized Body: Bøksle’s Act

At this point we will direct our attention to national stereotypes where music is of critical importance (Biddle & Knights, 2007). Significantly, the Internet has emerged as the source of Breivik’s extreme romanticization of nationhood, and, moreover, has formed the basis for his ‘cut and paste’ manifesto. For him, the popular Norwegian singer, Helene Bøksle, is a prototype of Nordic identity. Breivik has cited her track, «Ere the World Crumbles», as important during his physical and mental preparations for the attacks. The visual imagery of Bøksle at the Spellemann’s Awards 2009, televised to the entire nation in prime time viewing, provided an array of powerful symbols.²¹ In no uncertain terms, the iconography references classic Western beauty ideals, while her sound connotes an idealized sense of feminine sensuality.

20 In Media Studies the concept of ‘echo-chambers’ refers to the process of reinforcing ideas and beliefs in particular media milieus, effectively drowning out opposing and critical views (See e.g. Jamieson & Cappella, 2010).

21 For viewing and listening: www.youtube.com/watch?v=-g5KYv2oqXk (last entered 04/06/2013).

Entering centre stage, Bøksle, poised statue-like, is flanked by two well-built male drummers. The glitter of white snow falling contrasts with a blue, cold light, profiling her draped in a long, antique pink dress, illuminated by gentle lighting from above. A sudden shift in camera angle re-directs our attention to her face. The camera zooms in with slow focus on Bøksle’s long, blond hair and blue eyes, which is matched by the purity of a voice that starts as a solo and then becomes drenched in a chorus, feeling as if it is sung from a mountain top. Once the first phrase has subsided, a high-pitched, low-volume, synthesized sound enters the audio image, filling a void left by Bøksle’s voice. A few seconds later, this solitary sound is accompanied by strange, squeaky noises that build up a sense of suspense and mystique. As a counterpart to Bøksle, a chilling haunting atmosphere is established that gives way to an icy digitally synthesized sound. Imitating her phrasing, this motif heralds in dancers who are positioned in the background in preparation for the climax.

The foreboding mood is now enhanced by a low bass-drone as Bøksle re-enters with her voice accompanied by mid register, acoustic (though amplified), warm strings. Notably, the lyrics are sung in *norrønt* (ancient Norse), believed to be the written and spoken language used by Vikings and other Nordic peoples in the Middle Ages. This must be perceived in light of the central role paganism has had in Norwegian far-Right ideology.²² As the song progresses, Bøksle repeats a new melodic phrase, with the second repetition slightly altered in its cadence, producing a tension in the lines: “Ere the world crumbles, Not ever shall men each other spare” (Haugen, 2008).²³

At this point in the performance the strings become more prominent, imitating the double phrase in higher register. Introducing a dominating 3+3+2 quaver pattern, the drums syncopate the melody’s 4+4 pattern by accentuating the second, third, and final quaver offbeat. Masking the downbeat, the ambiguous meter provides the sensation of floating. With the drumming and string section intensifying, the dancers move into position, forming a circle around Bøksle. The percussion becomes increasingly intense. The drums resemble over-sized snare drums. Historically, this has had a central position

22 For instance, the Norwegian far-Right organisation Vigrid’s leader Tore Tveit calls himself ‘the prophet of Odin’ (Hauger, 2003). See also Tveito (2007).

23 According to composer Knut Avenstroup Haugen, the lyrics for ‘Ere the World Crumbles’ are taken from the Poetic Edda. These lines are originally from verse 45 of the poem Voluspá: “áðr veröld steypisk; man engi maðr öðrum þyrma” (Bugge, 1867).

in military parades and in Norwegian folk music (cf. *trommeslått*), with their exaggerated size and military slant conjuring up in phallic associations of a traditional masculinity depicted by physical strength and violence. The drums control the musical processes, and during the build-up towards the climax, there is an asymmetrical shift in the drum pattern that grounds the first beat, causing the strings' accents to finally coincide with the beat. Effectively, this propels the music forward, from which point on there is a dramatic crescendo over 5 measures. The first beat of the three last measures is heavily accentuated while the asymmetrical grouping of measures anticipates release one measure earlier than expected. This sense of delayed gratification has a chilling effect as an antecedent to Bøksle's crystal-clear soaring voice: "Fighting Vanir tread the field of battle. Shields are sundered. Feed on the flesh of doomed men."²⁴ In moments like these it is difficult not to imagine Breivik's perception of the terrified youth at Utøya, as much as the extremities of Breivik's gall to execute a plan of such magnitude? Music's tumultuous force during the climax of this song functions as a steroid for the mind. Indeed, Bøksle's voice, now at its loudest in the mix, penetrates both body and mind, uplifting the spirit, as it drives the recipient forward. The grandeur of the heroic visions of mythical battles is manifested in the strength of her vocality. The topography of Utøya from the helicopter's perspective, from the media's eye, becomes focused on the hero's territory, which needs to be defended from the threatening hordes. For Breivik, mobilizing the crusader army becomes a main objective in preparing oneself for defending one's motherland, one's culture, one's religion, and one's ideology; the aim being to protect one's own race, one's family and women from the invasion of the Other. Insistent, the marching rhythms of tribal drums force the army forward, over majestic mountains, valleys and fjords.

As we have indicated, Breivik's perceptions of music certainly warrant close attention.²⁵ In his manifesto for the 400-year anniversary of the 1683 Battle of Vienna, Breivik appropriates an historic drama, indeed re-enacting it by

24 The Vanir: God inhabitants of Vanarheim in Norse mythology, associated with fertility and wisdom.

25 Martin Stokes has pointed out that music not only represents notions of social identity. Music constitutes all forms of communal activity "that brings people together in specific alignments [...] these alignments can provide a powerful affective experience in which social identity is literally 'embodied'" (Stokes, 1994, p. 12).

attacking an internal enemy.²⁶ Through music, then, he connects with the past in order to make the necessary alignment with that which he envisaged as a brave European army that once heroically defeated ‘the oriental threat’. In this sense, music’s affective experience would provide a visceral sense of authenticity that legitimated a gruesome act of violence. In other words, music helped him reposition himself as ‘savior of hope’ rather than terrorist.

Following the 22 July massacre, Breivik’s manifesto was spread across the Internet through a propaganda video introduced by one of four tracks from Age of Conan, “The Dreaming Anew.” The sound quality in the production conjures up a sense of nostalgia—a deep drone is introduced before Bøksle’s wordless voice enters and fills the texture. The main melody, based on an undulating ‘ooing’, lies in the high register, while the organization of pitches has a folk-like feel, reminiscent of *kulokk*,²⁷ traditionally sung by peasant women tending to the livestock on summer mountain pastures (*sæter*). This form of singing style features long notes combined with rapid downward melismatic movements. A high reverb chorus in Bøksle’s mix is added, conjuring up notions of sparsely populated mountain regions, reifying ‘authentic’ Norwegian pastoral life.

The first two sections of the song are distinguished by separate melodic phrases. The calm and soothing nature of Bøksle’s voice comes across as ‘maternal’—a voice that comforts her infant through a lullaby (*bånsull*).²⁸ Strongly connoting nostalgia, Norwegian lullabies have held a central position in everyday pastoral life for centuries, and have been part of the nation building process since they were collected and arranged in the nineteenth century. In its flirt with the ancient Phrygian modal scale, the minor-oriented melody oozes out sentimentality. Situated high above the E drone, Bøksle’s voice starts on the dominant pitch B, before moving a semitone up to C, to D, and then down to C. With ornamental dexterity she reaches for a long note on the dominant once again. This creates an open fifth harmony with the drone—a well-known feature in Norwegian folk music as much as classical music where the low fifth accompanies melodies sung or played on top. Her crystal clear voice begins to move around in a high register, grounded

26 It is important to note that the battle of 1683 was more nuanced and not as simple an East vs. West conflict as Breivik makes it out to be. Thanks to Derek Scott for this very useful observation.

27 For listening: www.youtube.com/watch?v=l44PUvoL7ow (last entered 04/06/2013).

28 For listening: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tcpa59OhvL4 (at 1:30) (last entered 04/06/2013).

by open fifths. In the second section, the melody—sustained pitches C, B, D, back to C, then resolving with an ornamental D-C-B—is joined by a second bass line, shifting between C and B, emphasizing the I-V harmony. At this point a second bass line enters, alternating with a semitone between the low fifth and the more dissonant sixth—such instances of intervallic movement can indeed seem menacing.

The whole of the first section, including the string melody, is played out on the dominant B7 of the E harmonic minor. This modal ambiguity is shaped by a Mixolydian chord (b9 b13). While an E harmonic minor chord is clearly discernible, it gradually becomes evident that this is actually E7b9b13 in bar 29—a new Phrygian dominant that functions to release the A drone in bar 31. Subtly, the song’s modal slipperiness is fashioned by an oscillation between two Phrygian dominants—B7b9b13 and E7b9b13. Although the modal centre is E harmonic minor for a substantial duration of the song, its shift to an A is significant. Thus, in music analytic terms, it is the presence of two Phrygian dominant chords on B and E that achieves an aura of intrigue and arguably uncertainty.²⁹

There can be little doubt that Bøksle’s soundtrack for Breivik’s YouTube manifesto abstract is intended to lure the viewer.³⁰ The words, “Part 1. The Rise of Cultural Marxism in Western Europe,” appear against the eerie atmosphere in an attempt to convince us that ‘Cultural Marxism’ will facilitate the doom of Western Europe. For Breivik, Bøksle’s reassuring but melancholic voice urges the subject to mobilize and retrieve the past in order to expunge all impurity. Undoubtedly, music has had multiple roles in Breivik’s project, motivating his actions, symbolizing his ideals, and spreading his message. All in all, it has legitimized his construction of a white masculinity that is destined to rule. In this part of our study, we have considered how gendered and ethnic stereotypes are musically buttressed through inscriptions of the body. Bøksle’s voice and her performance at the Spellemanns Awards are intertwined with musical features and processes that weave a vivid texture of associations that idealize a mythical identity. One might posit

29 We are in debt to Susan McClary for astute readings of the harmonic underlay of Bøksle’s music and for pointing out the Phrygian flavours of modality that run throughout songs such as “Ere the World Crumbles”.

30 For viewing and listening: www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0044dfgoVw (last entered 04/06/2013).

that in Breivik’s case music is used to reinforce anti-empathy, which resonates with his notions of Norwegian cultural memory and identity.

Conclusion

Pondering over the link between music and terrorism in the wake of one of Norway’s darkest days, we have attempted to uncover music’s propensity for sentimentality and patriotism. There is sufficient evidence that Breivik’s terror campaign maximized popular music as a symbolic tool in contexts of political hostility. Disturbingly, the inauspicious terror attacks are a harrowing reminder of the male narcissist at work; his perception of the Templar knight discloses the complexities of social mediation and the male’s ability to morph into new subjectivities. What seems relevant here is how narcissism triggered rage and engulfed the nation in a way that smoothed over the creases of staunch nationalism and racism. The figure of Breivik at Utøya, captured by a helicopter in the moment of his last shootings at the Pump House, graphically depicts a white Norwegian blonde male captured in the act of killing.. Towering over his victims on the shoreline of an idyllic island in the middle of a deep blue fjord, this photo poses one of the most troublesome propositions for years to come.

Having emphasized how the acts committed on the 22 July 2011 drew on many sources of inspiration, we acknowledge that music can induce feelings that prompt human beings to perform in unpredictable ways. On this note one is obliged to pause and reflect. Without music Breivik’s motivation and strength of conviction would not have been the same. Could then such a large-scale plan of destruction have been carried out without the highly charged emotional build-up of specific types of music? Many alternating positions can be drawn up when it comes to considering music’s role in violence and aggression. Yet one thing is certain: new forms of technological mediation, wherein music is an active party, have afforded a vast repertoire of possibilities for enhancing our notions of ourselves as we access landscapes that bridge the virtual with the real.

Technological tools afford a vast repertoire of possibilities not only for altering one’s physical features, but also for providing an imaginary landscape for self-aggrandizement. As the ten-week trial of Anders Behring Breivik drew to a close, it would be apparent that he found it harder to play along in his

real world than in the virtual spaces of social interaction where he sought solace and gratification. In our final prognosis, his strategies signify a conditioned response to a range of social and political dilemmas facing Norway today. This we map against a general tendency in Europe to suppress and denigrate individuals and groups of disadvantaged people attempting any form of immigration. Breivik selected a sombre space for contravening ideas of social progress, cultural integration, and freedom of the individual. Ultimately he rejected the future by hanging on to the past.

The lesson to be drawn from this is that ethnocentric rantings can never be dismissed in any context. Rather, they compel us to face the demands of democracy and justice.³¹ Therefore, we need to critically interrogate the social and cultural imaginaries of nationhood that have steadily built up in Norway since the end of the Second World War, aided by the wealth of oil production in the North Sea.³² The stark reality is an attack was waged on territory that prides itself on being tolerant, peaceful and inclusive. In the course of one afternoon Breivik unleashed an act of terror that would disavow everything most human beings stand for. And, lest we forget, popular music was a principal constituent in the composite of this patriotic vehemence.

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31 See Per Fugelli's relevant critique of 22 July 2011 (Fugelli, 2012).

32 The oil industry has secured Norway's wealth, with positive and negative side effects. It poses important questions about the country's international responsibilities, and, more significantly, how such an affluent nation could spawn a terrorist of Breivik's magnitude.

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