

Blurring Boundaries: Music, Empathy, and Anti-Empathy

Ethnicity and Gender in Transcultural Norway



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Introduction

I was on my way to a concert by Battles, one of my favourite bands, at the club Blå in Oslo the evening of August 16th 2011, when I was struck by a profound sadness. I had just seen a documentary on the Tea Party movement by the British journalist Andrew Neil that vividly portrayed the surge of evangelistic, right-wing, anti-government, anti-Obama thinking in American society.¹ This same movement had just forced the Republicans to oppose any compromise in the American debt ceiling debate a mere fortnight earlier, which left the president with no choice but to cut public spending rather than increase government income by raising taxes on the wealthiest members of American society. Since then, Europe has been struck by the worst financial crisis since the 1930s, providing yet more fertile ground for extremist responses, especially in a post-9/11, ‘war on terror’ global political landscape. The Battles concert, in fact, was happening less than a month after the capital of Norway had been one of the sites of a horrific act of terror by the Eurocentric Norwegian nationalist and monoculturalist Anders Behring Breivik. Maybe my sadness was simply a belated response to the terror attack, but it felt as though it had been growing for some time as I became increasingly more aware of the mobilising conservative and extreme right wing in Europe in recent years. On this night, then, I never met my friends in the end; my contemplative mood led me to abandon the concert and return home, to ponder how my scholarly work might contribute to a better understanding of the socio-cultural turbulence that today seems to be challenging Norway’s supposed unity.

At a time when such grave events as terrorist acts and murder can be motivated solely by a fear of ‘the Other’, how can popular music hope to matter, especially when so many see it as a supposedly apolitical vehicle for carefree fun, escapism and self-indulgent excess? Solving this quandary—making my musicological work relevant to society—is something I have worked towards for some time, as I have sought to combine my love of music with my political convictions. The answer, I have found, resides in the critical theoretical realm of popular musicology, where a particular interdisciplinary approach to cultural studies in fact refuses outright to accept music

¹ See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00vv3pl> (last accessed 12.04.2012).

as a politically neutral domain. This approach engages culture and its products by exposing the fissures and breaks in naturalised discourses of identity through its interpretations of performed structured sound. Considering the constant struggles and negotiations over identity that manifest themselves specifically through musical production and consumption, popular musicologists find themselves compelled to construct a *politics of music*, and ultimately engage with its relevance for discourses of power. As Robert Walser points out: “[An] understanding of cultural pleasures is an unavoidable precondition to understanding social relations, identities, structures and forces” (Walser 2003: 22). Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, in his seminal work *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (1979), famously theorised the politics surrounding aesthetics. He looked at French society’s classification of art and ‘cultural pleasures’, concluding that nothing ‘classifies’ people as much as their taste in music (Bourdieu 1995: 63). While his thinking applies best to a French context, he reveals a social pattern that can be generalised to a broader Western context, which in turn forms the cultural frame for this thesis. In the field of musicology, for example, the distinction drawn between classical and popular musicology has long been an area of conflict, and only in the last two decades has popular music studies become completely legitimised, thanks mainly to the impressive efforts of Anglo-American musicologists Joseph Kerman, Susan McClary, Richard Middleton, Steven Feld, Philip Tagg, Robert Walser, Allan Moore, Derek Scott and Stan Hawkins, among others. Their pioneering work has paved the way for a host of younger scholars committed to popular musicology, resulting in a growing body of critical work that also straddles the domains of gender, queer, and ethnographic studies. Notably, from a feminist musicological perspective, Susan McClary has conducted groundbreaking research into gendered and sexualised aspects of (primarily) classical music, exploring the gendered coding of the Western classical-music discourse. Her work has (amid some controversy) challenged the hegemony of classical musicology and the presumed autonomy of musical texts while revealing how musical language can be used subversively; for example through evocative interpretations of pop icon Madonna and performance artist Laurie Anderson (McClary 1991). Significantly, her approach has had major implications for anyone interested in critical musicology and has prepared the ground for feminist and queer musicologies.

Examining the intersection of popular music and the processes through which people are shaped as subjects, my thesis draws on the now established theoretical frameworks of popular musicology. And from these, in essence, my hypothesis derives from the fundamental assertion that music is crucial to understanding human agency. Thus, I see music as integral to all spheres of society, and identity politics as a very important conceptual tool for the critical popular musicologist. However, before moving on to the first major part of this thesis, where I continue by explicating the intersections between identity politics and popular music, as well as introducing a methodology for music analysis and interpretation, I would here like to briefly outline the thesis' structure.

I have chosen to structure this thesis around three main parts, framed by a short introduction and a final section where I sum up and make some final reflections on my findings. Throughout the introduction and the first part, my objectives are; to explain the motivation behind the thesis; present a musicological hypothesis; present my case studies and empirical sources; introduce a theoretical framework based on discourse theory; and to shape a flexible methodology for audiovisual analysis and interpretation. Here I draw on an interdisciplinary approach emphasising musicological, sociological, social anthropological, and philosophical theories dealing with gender and ethnicity, while forming a critique of essentialism and cultural absolutism. This forms a framework for engaging issues of subjectivity, identity, and power through an investigation of the various ways in which audiovisual representational politics resonate with culture and society through intertextual discursive networks. Moving into the second part of this thesis, my aim is to investigate music's empathic and anti-empathic powers, through readings of two contemporary Norwegian male celebrities. Interpreting Breivik and Bernhoft's masculinities through music, I attempt to reveal the arbitrary nature of supposedly fixed identity categories. 'Natural' categories are also blurred by the intersection between music, technology, and subjectivity. Throughout, an emphasis is therefore placed on the effect the Internet as well as live looping technology can have on shaping and critiquing the subject. In this part I have chosen the following pop texts for a close reading:

‘Lux Aeterna’	Clint Mansell	Recording
‘Ode to a Dying Nation’	Saga	YouTube video
‘The Dreaming Anew’	Helene Bøksle	YouTube ‘manifesto’
‘Ere’ The World Crumbles’	Helene Bøksle	Live performance
‘C’mon Talk’	Bernhoft	Live performance

Part three is intended to investigate music’s role for a traumatised nation after the terror attack of July 22nd 2011, while simultaneously excavating the structures and fractures of Norwegian identity. Here I propose that Norwegian identity can be read through a more or less apparent schism between modern and postmodern paradigms, which I see as tentatively mapping onto rural and urban spaces. Targeting Norwegian nationalism and racism I will here take a closer look at various performances and their responses that I feel exemplify nuances and facets of Norwegian identity, which in the last few decades have become increasingly diverse and multicultural. For these explications I have chosen the following pop texts for a close reading:

‘Mitt lille land’	Maria Mena	Live performance and video
‘Mitt lille land’	Vinni, Samsaya, TommyTee	Video
‘Ola Nordmann’	Plumbo	Live performance
‘Stay’	Tooji Keshktar	Live performance
‘Haba Haba’	Stella Mwangi	Live performance

In the final section, from a broad and general perspective, I will pick up on the thesis’ central arguments in an effort to illuminate the main topics I have been involved with, as well as offering some critical reflections on my findings. Taking popular music seriously as a political site of struggle, then, I now continue by fathoming out the main theories underpinning my subsequent analyses, starting with the issue of identity politics.

PART ONE

Popular Music Politics - Subjectivity and Agency

Listening to music is listening to all noise, realizing that its appropriation and control is a reflection of power, that it is essentially political (Attali 1985: 6).

Popular musicology's emphasis on identity politics has grown out of a postmodern paradigm of the humanities that questions the supposedly stable categories of gender and ethnicity. Theories of performativity have been applied to deconstruct normative, rigid notions of identity based on patriarchal assumptions rooted in a history of colonialism.² This has led in turn to a critique of essentialism and biological determinism that has generated more fluid models of identity and subjectivity and opened up for new realms of identification and agency. Among the influences upon this shift have been the intriguing developments in popular music since the 1950s. Identity politics, after all, emanate from the way in which social and cultural attributes are categorised and hierarchised, and specifically the ways in which certain characteristics are valued over others. It is my belief that these patterns are inscribed in the theatricality of 'musicking',³ making popular music a prime site for a scholarly engagement with societal struggles over meaning and belonging. In his work on identity politics and pop music, Stan Hawkins insists that "lineages of styles and genres transport with them sets of assumptions [that] are rife in writings on popular music, where descriptions and discussions promote and legitimise certain trends discriminately" (Hawkins 2002: 2).⁴ Such legitimising practices are informed by the ways in which "identities are performatively constituted by the artist's expression",

² As a poststructuralist strategy for textual analysis, deconstruction was developed in the late sixties by Jacques Derrida (1998). This strategy demonstrates that a text does not inhabit only one meaning rather it contains several irreconcilable and often contradictory meanings. Combined with theories of performativity, this perspective extends to the realm of identity politics where supposedly stable identity categories are seen as constructed around repeatedly staged acts drawing on the discourses they shape (Butler 1990). Thus, popular artists and their performances can be seen as 'texts' that might be read, or deconstructed, through their alignments to audiovisual symbolic repertoires, through which they attach their identities to various sites of gender, ethnicity, 'race', and location (Hawkins 2002: 14). For my purposes, then, this is a strategy highly relevant for inquiries into how popular culture construct social reality, rather than simply reflect or mirror it.

³ Borrowed from musicologist Christopher Small, this term emphasises music as an activity rather than an 'object' (Small 1998). Thus, musicking is coterminous with performativity, which I see as incorporating all of the activities surrounding both the production and the consumption of popular music.

⁴ See also Toynebee 2000: 103.

and by the “important links between music reception and identity” (ibid: 12). In the process of developing these points further, Hawkins partly draws on Even Ruud’s work, which deals explicitly with “the various positions musical identity assumes” (ibid: 15). This positioning occurs through Ruud’s categories of ‘personal space’, ‘social space’, ‘time and place’, and ‘transpersonal space’ (Ruud 1997), which all address a sense of belonging and connectedness. Hawkins picks up on this by considering how identity is “a metaphor for our diverse feelings and sensations” (personal); a mediator for identification with “all facets of identity—gender, race, sexuality, class, community” (social); a mediator for identification with place, for example historically legitimised nation-states (time and place); a facilitator for entering “a larger and more holistic entity”, that is, a religious faith or larger, supra-national communities (transpersonal) (Hawkins 2002: 15–16). Considering Ruud’s categories as a point of departure for my hypothesis, and specifically his ‘transpersonal space’, I intend to follow Hawkins’ perspectives on identity politics to illuminate how judgements of taste in music can produce strong emotional allegiances that are mobilised through political processes of differentiation and identification.

Using these scholarly perspectives, I have worked out the details of my general hypothesis—in short, that human agency is intertwined with popular music, where the creative individual’s ability to assert ideas within socio-cultural structures is either restricted or authorised by hegemonic discourses. I further claim that artists and fans position themselves performatively according to transpersonal (individual) and transcultural (collective) spaces in a search for empowerment that is articulated in diverse ways according to both modern and postmodern paradigms. Thus, to reiterate, in relation to the tensions between hegemony and deviation, popular music forms a salient vantage point for critiquing naturalised and arbitrary power structures by deconstructing otherwise convenient and sometimes even mortally rigid categories. In a poststructuralist sense, I regard musical performances (audiovisual recordings and live shows) as texts to be read against a tumultuous and perpetually changing cultural backdrop that both informs and alters their intended meanings. For its audience, the physiological, emotional, and psychological effects produced by music offer a sense of authenticity, which makes it a highly meaningful and motivational force, primarily through how it is *felt*:

In *feeling* music, there always seems to be a sense that emotional affect helps determine how we function—physically and cerebrally—in our responses to organised patterns of sound. How we experience sound, how we respond to it, how we engage in it through various forms of participation (listening, performing and dancing) is inextricably tied to the question of one’s own identity (Hawkins 2002: 15, original italics).

Hawkins’s incursions into ‘feeling’ help to supply a key to understanding the effects of music on people willing to invest their identities, and even their lives, in music that, in Moore’s words, ‘tells it like it is’ for them (Moore 2007: 220). Surely Ruud would agree, as his ‘transpersonal space’ emphasises feeling and the sense of transcendental authenticity music is able to produce, through emotional experiences that synthesises into a central part of the perception of one’s own identity (Ruud 1997: 176,7).⁵ In his study of music and identity, Richard Middleton likewise emphasises popular music’s compelling authenticity, “since, given homologous systems, honesty (truth to cultural experience) becomes the validating criterion for musical value” (Middleton 1990: 127). Thus, authenticity has become central to my methodology, whereby I investigate modernist and postmodernist authenticity paradigms to produce an analytical framework for my own incursions into gender and ethnicity. Furthermore, understanding how music works in various cultural contexts entails investigating how and why artists are themselves authenticated through the process of successfully inducing empathy in their audience (Hawkins 2002: 66). My approach will also explain how these empathic responses can be transformed into anti-empathy,⁶ as we shall see in Breivik’s case, where the ‘force’ of music, as it were, is used as a motivator for terrorist acts, and for the promotion of an oppressive brand of essentialism manifested through a Christian fundamentalism that mourns the dilution of ‘race’ and national sovereignty. My argument, based on my hypothesis, is that, on the one hand, music can accommodate transcultural dialogue and promote empathy across socio-cultural boundaries. On the other hand, it can serve equally the ‘dark side’, facilitating anti-empathy through its motivational and seductive effects.

⁵ Interestingly, in the intersections between the transpersonal and the transcultural space, a potential arises for identifying with a larger holistic entity that transcends gender and ethnicity boundaries. This can enable a flexible notion of authenticity that in a utopian tack can produce a sense of global community and empathy, through a postmodern dismantling of fixed borders and boundaries, emanating from a modern paradigm of authenticity.

⁶ See Cusick (2008) for a study of music’s directly anti-empathic effects; she investigates the use of music and violence in U.S. detention camps. Plenty of evidence is here forthcoming on how music and sound were systematically used to discipline, torture and break down detainees during the ‘global war on terror’.

This leads me to an introduction of my case studies. In my first study the subject is a white supremacist male, defined by his xenophobia, misogyny, and tendency to violence. With Breivik's music preferences as a vantage point, I am able to pursue a critical reading of a particular type of masculinity that originates in the far-right edges of society, which has now entered the spotlight, thanks to this metrosexual 'martyr' character who used music in very particular ways for his life's project. In times of trauma, music's emotional and political powers sharpen and become all the more evident, which is a main reason why I have chosen Breivik's aesthetics and politics as backdrop for this thesis. My interest here will be to expose, via the power and possibility of music, Norwegian racism and nationalism, which are positions that for white supremacists are intertwined with a uniquely rigid notion of white patriarchy that seems to be a prime source for their justification and empowerment. In his 'manifesto', Breivik expresses strong opinions about the music he used for motivation during a period of mental and physical preparation, including sections dealing explicitly with music under headings such as 'How to sustain your high morale and motivation for years through music'. One of Breivik's favourites, Clint Mansell's 'Lux Aeterna' ('Eternal Light'), demonstrates all of the ingredients of epic cinematic drama, and Breivik reveals that he planned to use this song as a 'soundtrack' for his massacre at Utøya, specifying his preference for the version used in a battle scene in *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*:

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. In *Lord of the Rings*—a good version of this track ('Requiem for a Tower' version, which I think is the best) is performed during the most intense fighting of one of the central battles. Since it has worked for me, it is likely that it will work for you.⁷

He goes on to assert that he intends to put his iPod 'on max volume as a tool to suppress fear if needed', observing, grotesquely, that this will dampen the noise of people screaming as they are being shot. Breivik also suggests that a vocal variation of this song could supply a potential anthem for a new and powerful cultural conservative 'European Federation'. As we shall see, this statement marks out an

⁷ Downloaded 19.11.2011: unitednations.ispnw.org/archives/breivik-manifesto-2011.pdf, p.849. When quoting Breivik I am weary of giving authority to his entirely unscientific 'manifesto'. Therefore I will restrict myself to referencing his document in footnotes, and avoid indexing it in my bibliography. All direct quotes of Breivik are taken from this document.

essential duality in a terrorist who sees himself as a defender not only of Norway but also of Europe; he even signs his ‘manifesto’ with the English version of his birth name: Andrew Berwick.

In the ‘manifesto’ he also celebrates Saga, the Swedish right-wing nationalist singer he deems to be “the best and most talented patriotic musician in the English-speaking world”. Breivik highly recommends “that all Justiciar Knights of Europe and other revolutionary conservatives use [Saga’s] tracks for self-motivating purposes”, urging all to pay attention to her lyrics. Like himself, Breivik would claim, Saga “fights through her music by inspiring the rest of us”, and in my second case study I take a closer look at the video for her sentimental ballad ‘Ode to a Dying People’, with a particular focus on its audiovisual rhetoric. Significantly, Breivik also uses music to help spread his chilling message through a YouTube video abstract that sums up a document comprising 1,516 pages of cut and paste xenophobia, racism and misogyny.⁸ The video is accompanied by music from *Age of Conan: Hyborian Adventures*, a computer role-playing game developed by the Norwegian company Funcom. Relevant to my thesis is Breivik’s stated affection for the Norwegian folk singer Helene Bøksle, who contributes to many of the tracks on the successful *Age of Conan* soundtrack by the Norwegian composer Knut Avenstroup Haugen.⁹ Her voice has an angelic quality that Breivik has claimed would be perfect to listen to while carrying out what he describes as ‘actions of martyrdom’. For my third and fourth case studies, then, I have singled out two tracks sung by Bøksle: ‘The Dreaming Anew—Memories of Cimmeria’ and ‘The Dreaming—Ere the World Crumbles’. Here I will propose that these pop-cultural texts can provide clues to understanding the formation of this terrorist’s subjectivity, as he subverts Bøksle’s empathic efforts into a virulent anti-empathy. Interestingly, the general sound and ‘feeling’ of these songs are not unlike those of ‘Lux Aeterna’, although Haugen’s style has more of a Norwegian folkish flavour than the sensibility of European classical music of Mansell’s style. I suggest that these songs represent a duality that evokes a nationalist and federalist facet of Breivik’s subjectivity.

⁸ See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_A5JN-UHfE&skipcontrinter=1 (last accessed 09.04.2012).

⁹ Winner, ‘Best Original Score for a Video Game or Interactive Media’. (IFMCA, 2009). See <http://knutavenstrouphaugen.com/credits/> (last accessed 09.04.2012).

As part of Breivik's musically expressed nationalism there is also a sense of idealised Norwegian Arcady, which is buttressed by his denouncement of Oslo as a multicultural 'hell'.¹⁰ Throughout the thesis I argue that this schism represents a major part of a supposed unified Norwegian identity. Thus, when interpreting my case studies I will consider how this fracture is expressed audiovisually through stylistic signifiers that negotiate district and urban sensibilities. For example, this becomes evident when reading Breivik's preferences against that of Jarle Bernhoft's cosmopolitan style. As an antidote to Breivik's cynicism, then, I introduce Bernhoft, whose masculinity I read as a more empathic, queered variation that starkly contrasts with the white supremacist's masculinity. Since singing for the rock band Span from 2000 to 2005, Bernhoft has reinvented himself as a soulful funkster in the tradition of Prince and Lenny Kravitz. His performance on the *Ellen DeGeneres Show* in September 2011 impressed an international community, as did his performance at the *Peace Prize Concert* in December 2011. The latter forms my fifth case study, where a close reading of 'C'mon' from the album *Solidarity Breaks* (2011) will shed light on Bernhoft's strategy of empowerment. Staged as an internationally mass-broadcast event intended to promote global humanism, Bernhoft's Peace Prize performance becomes representative of a politics that works against Breivik and his peers' anti-empathic project. Bernhoft inhabits a 'softer' metrosexual and cosmopolitan masculinity that is played out through his polished looks, musical style, technical mastery, beautiful voice, and humble but confident response to his sudden popularity. From my perspective, Bernhoft seems to self-reflectively constitute a transculturalist response to postmodern anxieties,¹¹ spelt out through audiovisual rhetoric, context of performances, themes engaged with on his album, as well as biographical facts. Conversely Breivik's response to postmodern destabilisation is shaped by aggression, self-denial and delusion. Importantly, my readings of these two Norwegian males will draw attention to the ways in which music merges with technology in the dramatisation of masculinity.

¹⁰ See <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/22juli/Eksperter-avkler-Breiviks-enetale-6807278.html> (last accessed 23.04.2012).

¹¹ Sociologists have noted how modern fixity is "gradually being replaced by a floating modernity marked by deregulation, decentralisation, destabilisation and unpredictability" (Giddens in Aakvaag 2008: 279). This have left post-war youth increasingly alienated from the supposed universal meanings and values passed on from preceding generations, becoming anxious and pessimistic about the "twin poles of terror and boredom which they confronted" (Grossberg 1992: 204).

My sixth case study concerns the use of music in the aftermath of the terror attack, and in it I problematise a national response to terror that saw a short-lived outburst of solidarity that seemed to quickly dissolve. Here I am interested in music's therapeutic powers but also its transculturalist potentials and manipulative effects.¹² My point of departure is the event of *Mitt lille land—The Memorial Concert in Oslo Cathedral*, July 30th 2011.¹³ Here I ask questions about the discrepancies between Norway's public image as a peace-loving and inclusive nation and its population's apparently burgeoning hostile and anxious sentiments towards its increasingly transcultural character. Again, I propose that this discrepancy can be read through a fracture between an urban transcultural condition and idealised Arcady. A close reading of Maria Mena's version of 'Mitt lille land' looks at its dialogue with many earlier versions of the song, particularly the version of Vinni, Samsaya, and TommyTee's hip-hop arrangement. Originally recorded in a typical acoustic singer-songwriter style, 'Mitt lille land' (1994) has been used as a promotional tool for the national news programme on TV2 since the mid-1990s. Several of the artists who have contributed alternative versions have transcultural identities, including Haddy N'jie, Mari Boine, Samsaya, and Maria Mena. Here I wonder what it means for artists with hybrid identities to perform a national romantic song on a major Norwegian news show. Does it promote transculturalism, empower immigrants, and advance integration? Or is *TV2 Nyhetene* half-heartedly trying to promote transculturalism for financial gain? The latter possibility gains some currency given the particular ascendancy of Mena's version as a comforting symbol of national unity and pride in the immediate aftermath of the attacks—her recording became a 'soundtrack' to many speeches and arrangements celebrating Oslo's, and by extension Norwegian society's, capacity for love, inclusion and 'more democracy'. Ironically, this media construction soon became tainted by subsequent stories of racism and anti-immigration sentiments in the attack's direct aftermath. Nonetheless, Mena's version became a national hymn of solace, presumably a symbol for the Norwegian Labour government's multicultural and humanist principles. Infused with meaning from the earlier recordings it became representative for a nation standing together against a terrorist's actions. But to what extent are we as a nation really united in refuting his ideas, I ask?

¹² Regarding music's therapeutic effects, see for example Even Ruud: *Varme Øyeblikk: om musikk, helse og livskvalitet* (Ruud 2001). And also Tia DeNora: 'Music as a technology of the self' (DeNora 1999).

¹³ See <http://www.nrk.no/nett-tv/klipp/769010/> (last accessed 24.03.2012).

One of my objectives in this thesis is thus to uncover the circumstances that shaped Norway's cultural and social backdrop to 22/7, and in my seventh case study I make inquiries into the discrepancies between the socialist coalition government's multicultural politics and the increasingly aggressive anti-immigrant sentiments that have been surfacing in public and semi-public Norwegian virtual spaces.¹⁴ How do we reconcile the image of a country that is supposedly leading the way on women's rights as well as equality for the female and ethnic other with that same country's spawning of a terrorist like Breivik? What is the level of responsibility each and every Norwegian must acknowledge for refuting hateful and intolerant attitudes, as well as plain unthinking discourtesy? To answer these questions, I take up the recent controversy over the Norwegian rock band Plumbo's racist joke at black hip-hop duo Madcon's¹⁵ expense at the *Spellemanns Awards 2012*, where Plumbo won the prize for Hit of the Year for their song 'Møkkamann'. The joke involved a racist slur where Plumbo's frontman Lars Erik Blokkhus called Madcon 'mocha men', as a spoof on 'Møkkamann'. Soon after the Spellemanns event, Plumbo competed in the Eurovision Song Contest (hereafter ESC) in February 2012 with its song 'Ola Nordmann', and was deemed the clear favourite based on download and streaming quantities.¹⁶ However, Plumbo finished in fourth place, beaten by, among others, Tooji Keshkhar's performance of the song 'Stay'. By a solid margin, Tooji won the competition, as his Persian twist on eurodance, good looks, and smooth dance moves mesmerised the ESC audience. I suggest that, taken together, Tooji's victory, Blokkhus' joke on Madcon, and Plumbo's popularity describe a fracture between modernist and postmodernist authenticity paradigms that in Norway is aligned to the mentioned schism between districts and the capital.¹⁷ Plumbo hails from the district of Vestfold, and the racism debate sparked by the band quickly morphed into a dispute between rural districts and Oslo. I propose that Plumbo's popularity can be read as an attempt to form a bulwark against those 'urban' voices denouncing racism and anti-feminism, even when these political and intellectual leftists also reside in a district. Are these

¹⁴ Norwegian social anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen has recently noted that the anti-immigration rhetoric has become more aggressive than it was in the 1990s (Eriksen in Skjeldal 2012).

¹⁵ Madcon is the successful Norwegian rap duo of Tshawe Baqwa (b. 1980) and Yosef Wolde-Mariam (b. 1978); see <http://www.facebook.com/OfficialMadcon> (last accessed 09.04.2012).

¹⁶ See for example <http://anderstangen.blogspot.com/2012/02/dagbladets-mgp-barometer-morsomt-men.html> (last accessed 23.03.2012).

¹⁷ As the only Norwegian cosmopolis, Oslo—which from a European perspective is relatively provincial—is generally perceived from the countryside to be contaminated by immigration.

various fractures between urban and rural, diverse and ‘pure’, postmodernist and modernist, indicative of a divided nation that fails to live up to the national romantic cultural memory disseminated by the media?

In my final case study, I extend some of the arguments from the previous section by focusing on the Municipality of Ullensaker, a district just north of Oslo where the Norwegian-Kenyan artist Stella Mwangi has her home. Ullensaker borders to Eidsvoll Municipality where Stella grew up, which incidentally is also where the Norwegian constitution was written and adopted in 1814. Eidsvoll remains a flashpoint for national pride and identity, even as its neighbour Ullensaker in the last decade has become a stronghold for the populist Norwegian Progressive Party (FrP) as well as various neo-Nazi groups. For this study I analyse Mwangi’s winning performance in the Norwegian ESC in light of the effects on her career of both extreme and everyday racism. I find that the negative responses to her victory provide compelling examples of the way in which Norwegian cultural memory, in its modernist cloak, can be used to legitimise indecent and hateful retorts against transcultural citizens who are trying to make their voices heard, and carve out a place for themselves, in Norwegian society. Through my reading of her song ‘Haba Haba’, I engage with the political climate that predated 22/7 and propose that the relative simplicity of this song reveals a naive form of optimism that is further reflected in her interviews. This I read as a defensive act of opposition to those negating her place within Norwegian society and culture. As the Norwegian society has become increasingly complex, ought we to think of Mwangi as a novel type of transcultural Askeladden, one who manages to empower herself despite the odds?¹⁸ Can we then begin, as Norwegian social anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen proposes, to imagine a Norwegian identity based on hybridity and difference rather than purity and sameness (Eriksen 1993: 92)? To sum up, then, I have formulated four questions that draw attention to the main objectives of this thesis:

- What role does popular music play in the constitution and shaping of subjectivities through their acceptance or rejection of socio-cultural alliances?

¹⁸ Askeladden (‘Ash Lad’) is the ordinary but heroic figure who populates Norwegian folk adventures, such as those collected and rewritten by Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe in the nineteenth century.

- How does music work as a motivator and facilitator for both empathy and anti-empathy?
- How does music merge with technology in the dramatisation of masculinities?
- In what ways can musicking be inhibiting or empowering for transcultural subjects in a Norwegian context?

Although I do not supply unequivocal answers to these questions, the following discussions and close readings will nonetheless inform a better understanding of the politics of aesthetics and popular music while further unearthing pressing issues regarding Norwegian nationalism. I pose these research questions in the immediate context of a range of issues concerning both gender and ethnicity and ponder music's 'political economy' in contemporary Norway and Oslo. In this study, popular music is the prism through which I examine the potential of transculturalism, while contributing to a discourse of empathy that might counteract those racist, misogynist, and nationalist voices that paradoxically seem to have grown louder since 22/7. My readings and analyses are informed by fifteen years of experience as an Oslo-based rock musician, which I combine with empirical material from online sources such as blogs, virtual newspapers, YouTube, and various other national, commercial, and organisational web pages (.no, .com, .org). I hope to set up a dialogue among these sources, other musicologists, other disciplines, myself, and the subjects of my case studies, all in all engaging with audiovisual recordings via a rich 'hermeneutics of intertextuality' (Hawkins 2009: 11). In what follows, I introduce the theoretical and historical perspectives that inform my approach to the ways in which different notions of authenticity, structured around gender, ethnicity, and location, politicise popular music. Because identity determines one's access to both cultural and material resources, notions of fixity, legitimised by the concept of authenticity, can have a profound negative impact on human agency. Therefore I continue by fathoming out a critique of essentialism that emphasises the constructed nature and multiple meanings of the subject, in an effort to engage with the politics of representation in a Norwegian context.

Ethnicity and Gender

The theoretical vantage point for this thesis derives from Michel Foucault's discourse theory, which in popular musicology (as elsewhere) has formed the basis for critical deconstructions of hegemonic assumptions about identity and subjectivity. Foucault's social analyses help to unearth how the regularities of 'utterances', which inevitably stress their historicity, establish patterns of knowledge and power that in turn contribute to the new construction and shaping of discourses (Foucault 1972). From this perspective, utterances are to be understood very broadly and would include any social and cultural signifying practices as well as the dialogue between them. Here music has a central role, in that it impacts dominant and naturalised discourses in ways that sometimes question what is possible, normal, right, or 'natural'. Indeed, musicians often specifically disrupt those norms and mores that otherwise impede individuals' prospects for acting as subjects within the structures of society. Thus discourse theory has implications for the way identity and subjectivity are conceptualised. In his theorisation of national identity, John O'Flynn asserts: "If we hold that all forms of cultural identity are socially constructed and yet have real consequences for people's lives, then any such identity needs to be regarded as a dynamic, experiential and ultimately discursive process" (O'Flynn 2007: 24).

Hawkins agrees and draws further attention to subjectivity:

In theories of subjectivity the individual is an actual person, while the 'subject' is constituted by a set of roles constructed by cultural, ideological and aesthetic values. Linguist Emile Beneviste (1971) asserts that the subject only exists within the confines of the 'discursive moment', and therefore is continuously redefined by discourse. Critiquing the subject, then, following this line of thought, challenges notions of individuality per se and that the subject might only possess one meaning (Hawkins 2009: 39).

Indeed, the distinctions between the concepts of identity and subjectivity are blurry, and a clarification is in order. I work from the assumption that identity is characterised *both* by what O'Flynn calls emblematic or 'external identity' (that is, Hawkins's 'roles') and by what he calls 'internal identity' (that is, the experientially and emotionally constituted identity; see O'Flynn 2007: 24). In line with O'Flynn's latter description, subjectivity is in turn characterised by the experiential, emotional, and reflexive dimension, or the condition of being a subject. In the following I will

use the term *subjectivity* when referring to ‘internal identity’ and *identity* when referring to ‘external identity’. Social groups invent identity categories and stereotypes that are naturalised and hierarchised according to socio-cultural expectations about what people should look, dress, talk, and sound like, and how they should act or move their bodies. Thus, recognising that these characteristics are also central constituents of musical performances, it is interesting to note how they intersect with culturally coded musical signifiers to shape ‘pop texts’ that attract or repel audiences based on artists’ and musicians’ positioning within identity discourses. This is of profound importance when considering the political impact of the artists that I have chosen to investigate, since my aim is to understand how their audiovisual rhetoric negotiates with hegemonic identity norms of the Norwegian society.

Importantly, the concepts of ethnicity and gender likewise inform the critiques in this thesis. In terms of the former, insights from the field of social anthropology are particularly useful. In Thomas Hylland Eriksen’s words, social anthropology is occupied with “social life at the level of everyday interaction, where ethnicity is created and re-created” (Eriksen 2002: 1).¹⁹ He also notes that ethnicity is constituted relationally and further that group identities are often “defined in relation to that which they are not [...] in relation to non-members of the group” (ibid: 10). He then insists:

For ethnicity to come about, [two or more] groups must have a minimum of contact with each other, and they must entertain ideas of each other as being culturally different from themselves. If these conditions are not fulfilled, there is no ethnicity, for ethnicity is essentially an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group. [...] Only in so far as cultural differences are perceived as being important, and are made socially relevant, do social relationships have an ethnic element (ibid: 11–12).

Eriksen’s relational perspective is echoed by Hawkins, who, drawing on the philosopher Jacques Derrida, explains how identities are produced through processes of “identifying oppositions of sameness and difference” (Hawkins 2002: 13)—for

¹⁹ Since ethnicity is produced and reproduced at the level of every day interaction it is significant to note the impact of the Internet and how this technology has altered social interaction; I will return to this issue in parts two and three.

example, whereby “a person of ethnic minority will assert herself as part of a group, at the same time that the group will identify itself as different from a dominant group” (ibid). In this sense, ethnicity is dynamic and relative rather than static and fixed, even though the latter notion of it generally dominates common-sense perspectives and fuels political ideologies stressing the value of cultural similarity. The potentially endemic Norwegian repudiation of the ethnic Other is buttressed by the country’s populist politics, mainstream media, and social media, all of which often overdramatise the ‘immigrant situation’.²⁰ This discourse has lately become further saturated with discussions about ‘race’, a term that has been given renewed validity in some circles, mainly as a defensive gesture. For example, cultural studies scholar Paul Gilroy has noted that insecurities over identity in the late modern era have often led to the erroneous assumption that “the hollow certainties of ‘race’ and ethnicity can provide a unique protection against various postmodern assaults on the coherence and integrity of the self” (Gilroy 2004: 6).

It would here be worth dwelling on the concept of ‘race’, which is generally believed to organise the world’s populations into groups systematically differentiated by hereditary physical and psychological traits coterminous with fixed geographical boundaries (Eriksen 2002). Eriksen has noted that modern genetics to a large extent had distanced itself from the term (Ibid.: 4), although today it seems to have become rejuvenated by scholars working with raciological questions.²¹ Countering this trend, Eriksen points to two reasons why the term ‘race’ has been abandoned by modern genetics: (1) “there has always been so much interbreeding between human populations that it would be meaningless to talk of fixed boundaries between races”; and (2) “the distribution of hereditary physical traits does not follow clear boundaries” (ibid). He acknowledges, however, that ‘concepts of race can nevertheless be important to the extent that they inform people’s actions’ (ibid). In

²⁰ See, for example, this article concerning the Norwegian mainstream media’s distorted representation of immigrant youth: <http://www.utrop.no/Plenum/Kommentar/Blogg/21598> (last accessed 08.02.12).

²¹ Note, for example, the work of the controversial American political scientist Charles Murray who was given a voice in Harald Eia’s popular TV show *Hjernevask* from 2010, where the nature vs. nurture debate was reinvigorated. Here, Eia took a stab at Norwegian social sciences that is still lingering. Note also the increase in articles, blogs and comments related to ‘race’ emerging in the Norwegian (social) media since 22/7 - the editor of *honestthinking.org*, Ole Jørgen Anfindsen, has for example advocated for the scientific validity of racial IQ differences – See <http://www.dagbladet.no/2011/12/01/kultur/debatt/debattinnlegg/innvandring/rasisme/19240878/> (last accessed 12.04.2012).

this sense the concept can be meaningful as a cultural construct and may, in “societies where ideas of race are important, [...] be studied as part of local discourses on ethnicity” (ibid: 5). In this thesis, I understand ‘race’ to be one of many criteria that people use to distinguish themselves from others through the social processes that produce ethnic groups. Here I align with Gilroy’s perspective: “[By] ‘race’ I do not mean physical variations or differences commonsensically coded in, on, or around the body. For me, ‘race’ refers primarily to an impersonal, discursive arrangement, the brutal result of the raciological ordering of the world, not its cause” (Gilroy 2004: 42).

Importantly, socio-cultural differentiation also has consequences for gender, and although it is not constitutive for ethnicity per se, gender is nevertheless central to shaping same-other hierarchies within and between ethnic groups. Martin Stokes insists that gender boundaries have become a metaphor for other forms of domination, “constitut[ing] the most intensely ‘naturalised’ of all our boundary making activities” (Stokes 1994: 22). And as Hawkins points out, within a Western context, patriarchy has been further legitimised “through the idea that biology is destiny” (Hawkins 2002: 13). Stokes hopes that music represents an arena for “exploring the border zones that separate male from female” (Stokes 1994: 22), and I further agree with Hawkins that popular music might unearth “the categories of gender, sex and the body as specific formations of power” (Hawkins 2002: 13). My approach is influenced by feminist musicology, which itself has arisen from the three ‘waves’ of feminism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The first was mainly occupied with gaining political influence through an acknowledgment of women’s right to suffrage. The second, normally seen as beginning in the early 1960s, was influenced by the publication of the seminal *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949) by the existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir. This treatise critiques the historical subservience of women to men, and the supposed naturalness of women’s designated position in the patriarchal hierarchy. Her famous assertion that one is not born a woman but rather becomes one, anticipates poststructuralist gender studies and directs attention to the way cultural and social expectations form and direct the female subject through a deterministic ascription of the cultural construct of femininity to the biological female body.²²

²² Feminism has since become underpinned by the terms feminist, female, and femininity, whereby “the first is ‘a political position’, the second ‘a matter of biology’, and the third ‘a set of culturally defined characteristics’” (Moi in Barry 2002: 122).

A third wave of feminism has been underpinned by the work of feminist philosopher Judith Butler and her seminal publication *Gender Trouble* (1990). Here she argues for a conceptualisation of gender as formed and re-formed by performative acts that are themselves regulated by hegemonic discourses. Significantly, Butler's critique evades the distinction between sex and gender by suggesting that gender is a cultural category that legitimises and naturalises a view of sex as a prediscursive biological category (Butler 1999: 9–10). Accepting the collapse of the categories of both female and femininity invites a scenario where popular culture can have a great social impact, since this perspective would mean that a gendered subjectivity emanate as a purely socio-cultural construct, constituted relationally, performatively, and discursively. Butler's theory of performativity has had a major impact on queer theory, which is central for my subsequent theorisation of masculinity, where a central aim is to deconstruct the notion of masculinity as a fixed and stable biological category belonging solely to the male body. Returning to this in part two, I will draw on Judith Halberstam's study of female masculinities to shape my arguments (Halberstam 1998).

Performativity, discourse, and queer theory have implications for deconstructing not only gender but also national ethnicity. In what follows I shift my focus to the nation-state in order to extend some of the central points of the present discussion. The musically performed political body can be contested or confirmed through overlapping notions of ethnicity and gender that, within nation-states, position subjectivities according to hegemonic hierarchies. As Hawkins points out, “[we] know that historically musical expression has involved the communication of categorisations and classifications that are emblematic of national identity” (Hawkins 2002: 89). Here, I continue by explicating some central characteristics and definitions of the nation-state that can help to deconstruct fixed notions of Norwegian identity through music analysis. Notably, in popular music, various genres and styles, such as Norwegian black metal or Britpop, are by artists, fans, and media, shaped into national discourses. This has to do with how “pop stars choose a range of criteria that highlight their cultural and national exclusivity” (Hawkins 2009: 150), which through notions of authenticity sometimes articulate nationalist sentiments that are not always so innocent.

Inscriptions of National Identity in the Pop Score

The invention of the nation-state occurred roughly 250 years ago. Since then, nations, or ‘imagined communities’,²³ have become a vital—maybe *the* vital—symbol for collective identity in modernity; as Martin Cloonan points out, “[n]ationalism is the most successful ideology ever” (Cloonan 1999: 201). Seen as a political concept, national identity is constructed and orchestrated to create a sense of belonging, community, and safety, and attached to it are certain political and civil rights and duties. One’s national identity is bound up by borders and laws, as well as selected narratives and symbolic signifiers such as a flag, a name, a national anthem, and specific canonical figures in art, science, and sport.²⁴ Culturally, we are all taught from an early age the constitutive elements of the hegemonic discourses that shape the nation into which we were born. These discourses form, over time, a nation’s cultural memory that the inhabitants come to identify with. Musically, national identity is most often expressed through national anthems, or those folk and classical musical works that have been canonised and romanticised since the nineteenth century. To revisit my earlier point on external and internal identity, I will here quote O’Flynn: “We can differentiate between domestically produced music which may be employed emblematically (external identity) and that which serves catalytically to promote group cohesiveness and belonging (internal identity)” (O’Flynn 2007: 24). When considering the emblematic and catalytic properties of music in Norway in particular, it is important to put into words exactly what distinguishes national identity from other types. O’Flynn uses Miller’s useful five-point typification to do so:

(1) Nations are conceived as a consequence of shared beliefs (2) national identity [...] ‘embodies historical continuity’ (3) nations ‘do things together’ in symbolic ways (4) national identity [...] links people to a particular geographic area (5) national identity [...] requires ‘a common set of characteristics’ among its people (Miller in O’Flynn 2007: 22–23).

²³ Here I follow John O’Flynn: “[I] adapt Benedict Anderson’s oft-quoted definition of nations as ‘imagined communities’ (1991), arguing that all ideas of community, be they local, national or global, are socially constructed through a range of discourses, beliefs and behaviours. However, such social constructions are contextualized by specific material conditions” (O’Flynn 2007: 21).

²⁴ Martin Cloonan summarises the formal aspects of a nation-state as follows: “[The] Nation-State is a body which claims sole jurisdiction over a given territory and the right to implement particular policies within that territory. In order to legitimise its rule the Nation-State may use certain cultural artefacts and will seek to exercise both cultural and political hegemony. Underpinning the state will be, in Weber’s famous dictum, the monopoly of legitimate violence over a given territory” (Cloonan 1999: 193).

Regarding the fifth point, it must be noted that this should be understood in fact as “a belief in common characteristics in order to avoid assumptions about origin and essence” (O’Flynn 2007: 23). Eriksen would agree with this qualification, because his flexible and relational definition of ethnicity in general overlaps with these facets of national identity. Shared beliefs, historical continuity, common activity, geographic location, and personal characteristics can all be categorised as “cultural differences that in various ways are made socially important” (Eriksen 2002: 11–12). The point to stress here is the discursive and relative nature of national identity, and further in relation to Stuart Hall’s theoretical concept of ‘identification’, O’Flynn states that “although national identity is often imagined as ‘fixed’, in reality it comprises multiple identifications that arise from a plurality of social contexts and subject positions” (O’Flynn 2007: 25). Thus, in order to tease out the diverse relations between music and national identity but avoid essentialism, O’Flynn suggests a tentative structural homology:

‘National identity and music’ can be understood as a general process by which individuals and groups may come to perceive, cognize and articulate associations between [...] specifically musical phenomena and [...] wider socio-cultural formations associated with national culture and/or the nation state (O’Flynn 2007: 25).

To take an example, Breivik’s affinity for dramatic cinematic styles such as ‘Lux Aeterna’, and his appropriation of Bøksle and Saga, represents an attempt to construct a fixed narrative at the intersection of Eurocentrism and nationalism through a musical repertoire that becomes “symbolically identified as anthems or revolutionary songs or as part of a distinct ethnic heritage” (ibid). Thus, my readings of Bøksle’s songs will depend on the identification of musical signifiers that can be interpreted as representative of Norwegianness, in the sense that they contribute to shaping hegemonic discourses about Norwegian music culture. While I do not suggest that these signifiers are part of an essential core of Norwegian music, I do believe “that common-sense views pertaining to essence and identity in music actually do exist” (ibid: 27). These are surely present in the case of Breivik, whose views “must be considered to be at least partly constitutive of that individual’s holistic musical identification(s)” (ibid). Thus, I assume that artists and fans’ interpretations are based on the perceived alignment of musical signifiers to values and subjectivities that can be seen to shape a conditional homology between national culture and musical styles.

The use of the nation-state as an analytical level in popular musicology does not imply a dismissal of either the local or the global level, both of which to some extent disrupt notions of homology. Nation-states and their inhabitants constantly respond to identity discourses produced at global, ‘glocal’ and local levels.²⁵ These intersections are today best exemplified by the Internet, which operates as a conflation of place and space that forms a novel virtual location that blurs reality and hyper-reality. From an anthropological standpoint, this technology has fundamentally altered the patterns of ‘everyday interaction’ that produce and reproduce ethnicity. The Internet has become a site with an enormous potential for intercultural dialogue that at the same time can accommodate oppressive side effects. In recent decades, increased connectivity via the Internet has intersected with an escalating cultural diversity in the Norwegian society, and particularly Oslo. This shift has prompted hostile defensive measures, and fear of the Other has come to dominate a Norwegian anti-immigrant discourse that targets all non-Western immigrants. A telling example of this discourse is found in the responses that are provoked when non-Western Norwegians are chosen by the ESC audience to represent Norway internationally. As O’Flynn argues, “[in] the case of music, the particular ideological constructs obtaining in any nation state are likely to impact on the relative status and/or support afforded to different musical styles” (ibid: 23). The negative responses to Stella’s ESC victory in 2011 and Tooji’s in 2012 arise from a perceived violation of the norms that constitute ‘authentic’ Norwegian culture. A violation that is related to anxieties over the hybridisation of a supposed original and pure culture, triggering anti-empathic responses to performances that are read as incongruent with perceptions of national fixity (related to physical appearance, place of birth, and indeed audiovisual rhetoric). Thankfully, although music can be a powerful mediator for exclusion,²⁶ it can also facilitate intercultural dialogue and empathy. In this thesis’s critique of nationalism, racism, and misogyny, the concept of transculturalism seems like an attractive point of departure for an approach that seeks to emphasise diversity as a valuable resource rather than a threat.

²⁵ Here I work from the premise that the local is a sub-national level, and that the global level starts where the national level ends (Cloonan 1999:194). The ‘glocal’ is a middle level that enables the perspective that ‘globalisation and localisation happen simultaneously in tightly interwoven processes’ (Bjørkås 2005: 433, my translation).

²⁶ See, for example, Andy Bennett, who notes how “the power that can be invested in music as a statement of identity has also led to music becoming an instrument and expression of nationalism” (Bennett 2004:5). For example, nationalistic groups across Europe have appropriated popular styles like OI-punk or GABBA-techno “as a musical platform for neo-Nazism and its radical views on contemporary socio-political issues such as asylum seekers and the use of foreign labour” (ibid).

Transculturalism

In recent decades in many European countries, a public policy of multiculturalism has endeavoured to establish a pluralist fundament based on inclusion and acceptance of cultural differences that today has come to connote instead segregation, ghettoisation, and conflict. This dubious term even seems to have become a ‘Trojan horse’ for left-wingers.²⁷ Borne out of noble intentions, multicultural policies are now being challenged across Europe. This political climate is buttressed by prominent state leaders such as Merkel, Cameron, Sarkozy, and Berlusconi, who have publicly denounced multiculturalism while hardening their rhetoric against immigration. Already in 2004 Gilroy made the following remark about the politically motivated ‘demise’ of multiculturalism:

Of course, the briefest look around confirms that multicultural society has not actually expired. The noisy announcement of its demise is itself a political gesture, an act of wishful thinking. It is aimed at abolishing any ambition toward plurality and at consolidating the growing sense that it is now illegitimate to believe that multiculturalism can and should be orchestrated by government in the public interest. In these circumstances, diversity becomes a dangerous feature of society. It brings only weakness, chaos, and confusion (Gilroy 2004: 1).

Today, global challenges fuel monocultural sentiments across Europe, where economical and political problems affect cultural structures and result in the alignment of a variety of circumstances that undoubtedly serve as an incubator for far-right political convictions. Given the circumstances, it has never been more crucial to think beyond the straitjacket of nationalism and cultural absolutism. However, seemingly emptied of its subversive value and filled instead with negative connotations, multiculturalism has become a problematic critical tool, and the time seems to be ripe for a new paradigm. An intriguing project coming out of the humanities might provide an answer. The ongoing NFR-funded²⁸ research project *Popular Music and Gender in a Transcultural Context*²⁹ is theorising the concept of transculturalism as a response to totalising ideas of culture and Western claims to universalism (Hawkins 2010, 2011: lectures). Since there is limited literature on the

²⁷ Thanks to Stan Hawkins for pointing this out.

²⁸ Norges forskningsråd—The Norwegian Research Council.

²⁹ See <http://www.hf.uio.no/imv/english/research/projects/musicandgender/> (last accessed 15.03.2012).

concept, I have relied on the output from this research project to shape my arguments here. Transculturalism, as I understand it, is founded on a moral premise of empathy and personal responsibility—that is, it appeals for democracy, decency and respect at an individual level to incite change at the collective and structural levels. Empathy, as a moral principle, is predicated upon recognising others through an ability to self-critically see oneself in fellow human beings, thus entering others’ emotions and life situations. Drawing on film theorist Alex Neill, Hawkins points out that “by empathising with another, ‘one imagines the situation she is in from her point of view’ in a way that represents the other’s feelings as if they were one’s own” (Hawkins 2002: 84). Thus empathy is a key for democratic social development, as well as a strategy for interpretation, since a popular artist’s success depends upon the level of empathy s/he is able to invoke (ibid: 83). Certainly the relationship between musical style, gender, and ethnicity is a prime site for constituting empathic connections between performers and recipients.

Notably, a transcultural approach embraces, and seeks to understand, difference, and it can even be imagined “as a new form of humanism”, based on “the recognition of the other” and “a culture of métissage” (Hawkins 2010, 2011: lectures). It questions and seeks to deconstruct “the strong traditional identities and cultures which in many cases were products of imperialistic empires, interspersed with dogmatic religious values” (ibid). As such, “transculturalism is based on the breaking down of borders” (ibid) rather than their reinforcement. One might say that, in a process initiated by multiculturalism, transcultural theory represents the next step, towards a vision of cosmopolitan citizenship that accentuates individual responsibility for global solidarity (ibid):

Transculturalism emphasises the significance of continual interactivity among certain communities as well as individuals. Its aims have been to piece together the separate components of a multicultural tapestry so as to trigger the dynamic potential of cultural diversity. The result is to enable the possibility of fluid exchange between ethnocultural groups, while dismantling divisions based on cultural, racial, gendered, or socio-economic classifications (ibid).

In a response to pressing questions countering recent surges in anti-multicultural and anti-feminist attitudes, transculturalism can help unveil an empathic approach to

diversity and difference that in Norway have been actualised by a terror attack facilitated through online resources and music. Some have argued that a contemporary condition has moved beyond ‘the’ postmodern, and a reinvestment in transculturalism can maybe best be understood as part of a metamodern discourse “oscillating between a typically modern commitment and a markedly postmodern detachment” (Vermeulen and van den Akker 2012: 2). Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker have suggested that the current generation’s optimistic attitude about life and future has replaced a postmodern pessimistic melancholy. This emerging attitude, they argue, “can be conceived of as a kind of informed naivety, a pragmatic idealism” (ibid: 5). Undoubtedly there is a sense of optimism about Bernhoft’s style, and as we shall see from a younger generation, Stella Mwangi and Tooji Keshktar seem to articulate an ‘informed naivety’ and ‘pragmatic idealism’. I will nonetheless retain the postmodern category since this paradigm has always had a modern nuance running parallel to the postmodern. Therefore, metamodernism can be seen as another facet of postmodernism, although one that can be useful. From my perspective, then, transculturalism can be seen as a part of a growing belief that things *do* matter, and that people *can* make a change (‘Yes We Can’, *Occupy Wall Street*, the ‘Arabic Spring’). Thus I see transculturalism not only as a moral foundation for my thesis, but also as a key for a musicological approach that aims to investigate a particular potential of musicking and convivial popular culture, through which music might provide opportunities for individuals to overcome “determinations [of] their own cultural premises” (Hawkins 2010, 2011: lectures). As Hawkins maintains “[t]ransculturalism extends throughout all human culture and it is music that aids this process, especially all the various forms of popular music” (ibid). Thus, transculturalism shapes the fundament for my methodology to which I will now turn.

Methodology

A methodology for dealing with the aesthetics of sound and its relationships to contexts and power structures can be found in the theoretical foundation of poststructuralism. This has consequences for how music as signifying practice is understood and interpreted, entailing a relativistic approach, implying that “all values

are relative and there are no independent standards of truth” (Scott 1990: 407). Popular musicology foregrounds music’s impact on human agency, and here theories of performativity and representational politics can accommodate a relativistic approach to critiquing subjectivity (cf. Butler 1990; Halberstam 1998; Hall 1997). Perceptions of identity “as a dramatic effect rather than an authentic core” (Hawkins 2002: 14) have challenged modernist notions of fixed authenticity. Artists and fans articulate themselves according to genre and style, and a key concern for popular musicology has been how performances attach “to sites of gender, race, class, sexuality and locality“ (ibid), since “musical expression has a performative dimension from the outset” (ibid).³⁰ For example, in his work on gender subjectivities and performance, Hawkins has insisted that “[w]hen we map the musical codes onto that of the performance, what is interesting is how the construction of the artist becomes a process for us to understand our own relationships to musical production and identity”, and furthermore that “it has become more and more evident that pop culture forms a site where identity roles are constantly evolving to fit social needs” (ibid: 12).

Importantly, a poststructuralist approach implies that musical discourses have a part in constructing social reality rather than simply reflecting it. This paradigm is underpinned by several assumptions that have had a crucial impact on popular musicology; orbiting assertions such as “politics is pervasive”, “language is constitutive”, “truth is provisional”, “meaning is contingent”, and human nature is a Euro- and androcentric myth (Barry 1995: 36). Similarly, Susan McClary asserts that musical perception is constitutive and formative for social and cultural subjects and their relationships (McClary 1991: 21). These assumptions enable a critical and deconstructive hermeneutic approach, emphasising the conditions for marginalised social groups in the West. This perspective intersects with feminism, as well as postcolonialism, while paying specific attention to musical detail, dealing with how difference works at a sonic level: “The kind of difference invoked when music, that quintessentially nonrepresentational medium, is employed (paradoxically) so as to represent, through musical figures, another music, another culture, an other” (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000:1). Here I follow Hawkins who works “with various

³⁰ See also the work of social scientist Erving Goffman who published *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* in 1959. Through the concepts of ‘frontstage’ and ‘backstage’ he here presented his theory of symbolic interaction, which unveils the dramaturgical aspects of identity.

representations of music with the intention to offer insights into the ways in which musical codes are manipulated to create expression through invocations of resistance, compliance and pleasure” (Hawkins 2002: 12). An emphasis on musical detail has become a grounding tenet for popular musicology, striving “to understand popular music qua music” (Scott 2009: 21) without ignoring historicised social and cultural contexts. Mapped onto theories of performativity and discourse theory, audiovisual representations can be seen as performances that shape popular music into a vibrant site for excavating vexed issues of identity politics and power, through analyses of “the interaction of the components that constitute the musical gestures of human agency” (Hawkins 2002: 8).

Hermeneutics and Homology

In David Brackett’s *Interpreting Popular Music* (1995) he outlines a spate of important issues to consider for any music interpretation; “the relationship of text to context, of musicians to audiences, of style to history, of artistry to commerce” (Brackett 1995: 1). Focusing on the first of these issues, one of the main challenges for popular music studies has been to sort out how to deal with the divide between textual analysis and contextual interpretation. Moore notes that “in recent analytic work, ‘one common goal has been to seek out a productive synthesis between contextual interpretive and formal analytical approaches’ and that ‘popular music provides a particularly relevant context in which to do this’ (Moore 2009: 412).³¹ Here, I work from a premise in congruence with Robert Walser’s position: “You only have the problem of connecting music and society if you’ve separated them in the first place” (Walser 2003: 27). To clarify, I see music as a language establishing and shaping discourses constantly in *dialogue* with an entire cultural field of meaning production, avoiding any distinction between the ‘congeneric’ and ‘extrageneric’, or in Middleton’s words, between primary and secondary signification (Middleton 1990). For example, cultural theorist and musicologist Lawrence Kramer insists that “works of music have discursive meanings; [...] these meanings are not ‘extramusical’ but on the contrary are inextricably bound up with the formal

³¹ Statement taken from e-mail communication with Giles Hooper (Moore 2009: 412).

processes and stylistic articulations of musical works” (Kramer in Treitler 2002: 50). Following this, I suggest that connotative, or ‘extramusical’ meanings do not lie outside the music, but are internal to the text in the sense that their implications are formative for how the sounds themselves are perceived. Consequently, “the interpretation of any single text is based on an understanding of the juxtapositions of a range of discourses” (Hawkins 2002: 28), which constitute sources of meaning for a hermeneutic approach to the pop text.

The *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (1998) defines hermeneutics as a term that refers to “a family of questions ranging across many different cultural traditions and intellectual disciplines” (Burns 1998: 396). These questions deal with what it means to “understand and interpret anything, whether a text, a human action, an alien culture, or oneself” (ibid). Modern hermeneutics emerged with Friedrich Schleiermacher in the 18th and 19th centuries, preparing the ground for Wilhelm Dilthey’s ‘hermeneutic circle’, which describes a “method of considering the whole of the object of understanding in the light of its parts and the parts in the light of the whole” (Treitler 2002: 54,5). Applying this method to music analysis and interpretation, the hermeneutic circle inspires readings that move freely between musical codes and the text as whole, encompassing the relationships between musical text and context as well, i.e. between analysis and interpretation:

[The] best understanding will come by allowing the explanation to move in both directions at once: analysis leads to questions answerable only through interpretation of expressive content; apprehension of expressive content leads to questions answerable only by analysis. This is nothing other than a hermeneutic circle operating in the interpretation of music (ibid).

Following this, the benefit of hermeneutics for popular musicology has been a holistic one, moving focus back and forth, between part and whole; text and context; music and life; “the technical [and] the emotive [...] the objective [and] the subjective; and moving in different orbits, gradually encompassing the whole work as well as its ‘horizon’ and context” (McCreless in Treitler 2002: 54).

Considering these reflections, I introduce a methodology that is based on discourse theory, performativity, and intertextuality. Hawkins and Sarah Niblock (2011) draws

on David Machin who espouses “a less semiotic and more discourse-oriented approach to examining the way that sounds, words and, importantly, images can have particular meanings through a mechanism called Critical Discourse Theory (CDA)” (Hawkins and Niblock 2011: 36). This is a methodology that Norman Fairclough has explained emanates from a perspective where all social practices are perceived as having a semiotic element (ibid). From this, Hawkins suggests, “we can move beyond thinking about the connotation or denotation of a single gesture or album cover, to thinking about what the wider personal, social or cultural implications of that signification might be” (ibid). Drawing on this to shape a methodology means that a qualified notion of homology can usefully be applied to fathom out the relationships between sound and subjectivity. For example, Middleton has noted that there “appears to be a widespread recognition of semantic connections between specific musical types and techniques, and specific groups and positions” (Middleton 1990: 237). Homological models have been somewhat controversial, and have been critiqued for proposing a too deterministic relationship between the musical text and context. Middleton introduces *articulation* as an alternative, which he insists “recognizes the complexities of cultural fields” (ibid: 9), a point also made by Derek Scott:

[In] the absence of an obvious or direct link [...] between production and consumption [...] the concept of articulation avoids the idea in homological interpretations that the lives people lead explain their cultural preferences in a deterministic manner, or, at best, that people are driven to seek a symbolic cultural parallel to their social existence (Scott 2009: 9).

I would argue that even without any deterministic links, a flexible notion of homology still seems useful. In some instances there certainly are connections between ‘the lives people lead’ and their ‘cultural preferences’. Middleton also claims that there seems to be good reasons to “hang on to the notion of homology in a qualified sense”, because “it seems likely that some signifying structures are more *easily* articulated to the interests of one group than are some others; similarly, that they are more easily articulated to the interests of one group than to those of another” (Middleton 1990: 10). Similarly, media scholar Jason Toynbee argues for a notion of homology as just one type of link between socio-cultural communities and social practice: “From this perspective the homology is best thought of precisely as an ‘authentic’ expression of social being in musical style” (Toynbee 2000: 114). From my own experiences as a

musician and fan there seems to exist empirical evidence for homological connections, something that scholarly work seems to corroborate. Tagg observes:

[Music] is capable of transmitting the affective identities, attitudes, and behavioural patterns of socially definable groups, a phenomenon observed in studies of subcultures and used by North American radio to determine advertising markets (Tagg 2000: 47).

A convincing example of homological relationships comes from Peter Webb, who theorises sound and place to understand what constitutes the Bristol sound and how it came to be a distinct and internationally recognised style. Webb applies Alfred Schutz' 'social phenomenology', Jorg Durrschmidt's definition of 'milieu', and Bourdieu's 'cultural field', to understand "the importance of place and locality in the creative production of particular types of popular music that then come to be associated with [...] a particular milieu situated within a cultural field of production" (Webb 2004: 69). The concept milieu is similar to other conceptualisations of social groupings such as subculture, or the more recent, scenes and neo-tribes. Durrschmidt defines milieu as follows:

Milieu shall be defined as a relatively stable configuration of action and meaning in which the individual actively maintains a distinctive degree of familiarity, competence and normalcy, based on the continuity and consistency of personal disposition, habitualities and routines, and experienced as a feeling of situatedness (Durrschmidt in Webb 2004: 68).

Webb goes on to define five functions of Schutz' concepts of 'relevancies' and 'typifications' to illuminate "the development of particular musical milieux" (Webb 2004: 69), of which I focus on the second, third, and fifth:

2. that they transform unique individual actions into typical functions that lead to typical ends; 3. that they act as a scheme of interpretation and orientation which constitutes a universe of discourse amongst the actors; [...] 5. that a socially approved system of relevancies and typifications provides a common field through which individual members live and order their lives (ibid: 69).

Here Webb provides a framework for research, where "system of relevancies that frames individual's every day life carries the index of his or her 'biographical situation' - life plans, projects, skills and abilities and corresponding stocks of knowledge" (ibid: 80). This can cast light on how genres and styles become

institutionalised through the everyday actions of artists, musicians, and fans, in turn explaining why certain musical choices are made over others in certain social and cultural formations, at certain points in history, constituting a ‘horizon of expectations’ (cf. Goodwin 1993). Thus, unearthing some of the intended and unintended connections between the lives people lead and sounding musical texts. Webb also points out that we need to acknowledge the struggle that takes place in musical milieux to understand how genres become institutionalised (Webb 2004: 83). This is particularly pertinent to popular musicology occupied with political and moral issues of popular music. Importantly, for interpretation and analysis to take place the popular musicologist is dependent on some conception and understanding of musical codes, and an ability to identify and distinguish the pertinence of these. And as Hawkins has pointed out, the task of “code identification [...] involves a range of levels of *acquired* listening competence” (Hawkins 2002: 9). In the following I explicate the ways in which musical codes can be understood, situating my own subject position and code competence as a significant reference point for music analysis and audiovisual intertextual interpretation.

Musical Codes, Audiovisual Rhetoric, and Intertextuality

Identification of codes that comprise open-ended musical texts can fruitfully be executed through conceptualising different categories, or levels, of musical particulars. Musical codes works at *stylistic* and *technical* levels, where stylistic discourses are shaped by performances, genres, and trends, as well as idiolects, sub-codes, dialects, and norms (Hawkins 2002: 10). And the technical aspect involves musical structures, musical units (pitch, melody, rhythm, chord progression), and texture (ibid). The latter includes aspects of production such as the mix, studio effects, and “the configurations of recording, and the polyphony of multi-tracking” (ibid). My interpretations and analyses approach these levels interchangeably, and I will be less interested in technical analysis than in stylistic intertextual interpretation, based on association, connotation and metaphor. To a large extent, but not entirely, I will avoid technical jargon, recognising that general language is “an incredibly powerful and

nuanced system for making sense of things and communicate our understandings” (Walser 2003: 22), and I agree that we should be careful not to resort to the intricacy of technical jargon in order to pass interpretations off as objective (Walser 2003). Here it is worth commenting on a concern noted by Philip Tagg about the danger of using hermeneutics: “Musical hermeneutics, as a subjectivist, interpretative approach, is often violently and sometimes justifiably criticized and indeed it can from time to time degenerate into exegetic guesswork and intuitively acrobatic ‘reading between the lines’” (Tagg 2000: 77). Hawkins, drawing on Berthold Hoeckner, explicates an attractive solution to the chasm between hermeneutics and analysis, where an essayistic strategy is based on intertextually cumulative and associative interpretation (Hawkins 2009: 8). Here, I propose a methodology drawing on Critical Discourse Theory where general language forms the basis for an essayistic interpretative strategy.

Dwelling on the term intertextuality, this is a concept coined by Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s, emerging as a synthesis of Ferdinand de Saussure’s semiotics and Mikhail Bakhtin’s ‘dialogism’, and refers to the way a text’s meanings are shaped by other texts. Hawkins notes that intertextuality in “musical terms, relates to the sounding of one text in and through the other” (Hawkins 2002: 28), which in a broad sense includes the totality of sound and image (moving and still). This opens for intertextual readings that “acknowledges the circulation and interplay of meaning across numerous signifying practices (music, literature, film, the visual arts and so on)” (Scott 2009: 10). Popular music exists in mass-mediated contexts, where the ‘general language’ that comprises ‘pop texts’ consists of audiovisual layers of signification. At a highly mediated point in history, TV, and the Internet, disseminate texts where musical codes and images work in congruence. As Andrew Goodwin insists, “[m]ass-mediated rock and pop texts contain both visual and aural codes that are often inseparable” (Goodwin 1993: xx). Tackling this musicologically, I find Hawkins’ notion of ‘pop text’ useful, which accounts for totality of meaning production: “the total constituents of the musical experience in pop music which include the intertextual levels of visual and sound coding, packaging, and the layers of connotation that inform our responses” (Hawkins 2001: note 6).

This perspective indicates how various signifying systems can alter the experience of the purely musical, for example through the way lyrics or images work dialectically with the music. Michel Chion has developed an approach to account for the totality of music and moving image in film or music videos, where he has introduced the concept of ‘added value’ to interpret the total experience of sound and vision, creating meanings that are more than the sum of its parts (Chion 1994). One could say that through “conjoining pictures to sound, music creates a seamless form that allows for new meanings to emerge” (Hawkins 2009: 8). Similarly, Andrew Goodwin’s “musicology of the music video image” (Goodwin 1993: xx) has drawn on “the phenomenon of *synaesthesia*, the intrapersonal process whereby sensory impressions are carried over from one sense to another, for instance, when one pictures sounds in one’s ‘mind’s eye’” (ibid: 50,1, original italics). Goodwin lists several “sources for the iconographies stored in popular cultural memory” (Goodwin 1993: 56), and for my purposes, the following are considered most interesting; “images of the musicians/performers”; “visual signifiers derived from national-popular iconography”; “deeply anchored popular cultural signs associated with [the style in question]” (ibid). Thus, added value can be applied broadly to describing relationships between music, music videos, film, live performances, sleeve design, and fan journalism, in other words the total reservoir of iconographies that compound cultural ‘horizons of expectation’. Indeed, this is crucial for a commodified art form that sells on the basis of the star’s desirability (Hawkins 2007a: 27). As Hawkins argues, “this raises questions of aesthetic value and taste, directing us to the reception of the body and the shaping of identity” (ibid). Notably, the musical body has a profound impact on networks of aesthetic dialogue and intertextual connectivity.

Intertextuality enables us not only to understand how different musical texts inform one another, but also how society and culture are intertwined, constantly referring and alluding to one another.³² Interpretations are thus dependent on broad interdisciplinary knowledge, where intertextual links become denser as competence increases. This would also imply that interpretations are dependent on knowledge about one’s own

³² On this account Serge Lacasse’s essay ‘Intertextuality and Hypertextuality in Recorded Popular Music’ provides a useful typification of the different modes of intertextual play. Here he mentions quotation, allusion, parody, travesty, pastiche, covering and remix as intertextual practices (Lacasse 2007).

subject position, situating self-knowledge as an essential part of acquired competence, which is, as we have seen, an important point taken from hermeneutics, where understanding is dependent on an awareness of the subjective aspects of interpretation. In congruence with the concept of *affordance*,³³ subjective aspects mean that there in principle exists an infinity of possible interpretations, where success is dependent on the competence and creativity of the interpreter, and his or her self-reflecting abilities. Addressing this issue, Richardson and Hawkins point out that pop texts "depend on viewer/perceiver recognition of other texts in order to confirm meaning" (Richardson and Hawkins 2007: 17). And opposing positivism, an intertextual approach takes advantage of "processes of intertextuality [that] circumvent the domination of one interpretation over another, or, to put it differently, the totalisation of any specific singularity (Hawkins 2002: 27). This would of course also imply that any number of references and allusions might be overlooked. Following these reflections, for this thesis, it is thus important to point out that my interpretations commence from a white working class male body, a musician with particular stylistic tastes, belonging to what has been labelled generation X, living in a small, scarcely populated, but enormously affluent European country in 2012. Indeed, this subject position forms a 'text' in dialogue with the case studies as well as with its historical, social, and cultural surroundings. Furthermore, positioning within a dynamic discursive topography is informed by aesthetic judgements based on what constitutes authenticity. Aesthetic values are binary organised into high and low categories, where Brackett's fourth issue, the relationship of artistry to commerce, has been rife with negotiations over truth and autonomy. Notably, aesthetic value is intertwined with issues of gender and ethnicity through the musically performed body. In a Western context certain homological connections exist between aesthetic judgements and white patriarchy, where hegemonic modernist assumptions have a tendency to naturalise authenticity as a pre-discursive phenomenon. Thus, authenticity "functions as a nodal point in art-related discourse" (Weisethaunet and Lindberg 2010: 466), it is linked "to socio-cultural power relations" (ibid), and, for my purposes it is a main element in a methodology constructed as a means for social critique.

³³ Affordance is a term developed by J.J. Gibson to conceptualise the different opportunities, uses, functions, and values music has to offer its perceivers (Clarke 2003: 117).

Authenticating Identities

An important ingredient of my methodology is the concept of authenticity, which is a term that politicises popular music, assuming that people, through aesthetic choices, align themselves and others according to socio-cultural hierarchies. In the previous sections I have several times touched upon the concept as an aspect of the processes through which artists are legitimised or revoked on the basis of audiovisual characteristics that either comply with, or resist, hegemonic notions of gender, sexuality, 'race', and ethnicity. As ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes insists, "[c]learly the notions of authenticity and identity are closely interlinked" (Stokes 1994: 7). And he continues: "What one is (or wants to be) cannot be 'inauthentic', whatever else it is" (ibid). In this section I will briefly outline a poststructuralist framework for interpreting artists' perceived authenticity with regard to national ethnicity and gender. However, on account of the central part gender has in Breivik's 'ideology', the main part of this section will be concerned with explicating how deeply ingrained a patriarchal structural domination has become in Western societies, which can explain the difficulties women still are facing in being recognised and authenticated as artists (although some progress has been made). Several musicologists are in agreement that (post)modernity's social alienation lies at the root of the popularity of authenticity (Moore 2007: 210; Weisethaunet and Lindberg 2010: 466), which could also explain what appears to be a recent surge in anti-multiculturalism and anti-feminism related to anxieties over postmodern decentring of the subject; for example anxieties in the form of a perceived 'crisis of masculinity' (which Breivik and many other males of his generation evidently adhere to). For the purpose of critiquing essentialist notions of authenticity, I draw on Allan Moore's work to form a poststructuralist framework for analysis, where his general categories of authentication are of great interest; *first, second, and third person authenticity* (Moore 2007). Moore labels his first perspective *authenticity of expression* where authenticity arises if "an originator (composer, performer) succeeds in conveying the impression that his/her utterance is one of integrity, that it represents an attempt to communicate in an unmediated form with the audience" (Moore 2007: 214). The second angle is labelled *authenticity of experience*, arising if a performance is successfully conveying the impression "that the listener's experience of life is being validated, that the music is 'telling it like it is' for them" (ibid: 220). And the third category, *authenticity of*

execution, arises when “a performer succeeds in conveying the impression of accurately representing the ideas of another, embedded within a tradition of performance” (ibid: 218). And as I will demonstrate throughout my case studies, the latter category is of primary significance when interpreting how artists are authenticated on the basis of national ethnicity. Considering Moore’s deconstructive framework, then, this emphasises that authenticity emanates from discursive struggles, which are predicated upon the question of *who* rather than *what* is being authenticated, and upon the view that authenticity is an ascribed rather than inherent quality of representations (ibid: 210). Following Moore would therefore imply eschewing any essentialist notions of authenticity, which is of main concern when dealing with issues of gender.

Evidence of the broad spate of various authenticities available in Western music culture seems to corroborate an anti-essentialist perception of authenticity.³⁴ Nonetheless, in (rock) music journalism and common-sense views, authenticity is most often thought of as designating a pre-discursive kernel, often axiomatically conceived of as a guarantee of truth. In music culture, the genealogy of a modernist authenticity discourse can be traced through the 1960s counterculture to the Frankfurt school’s Marxist approach, introducing “‘authenticity’ as a liberating, ‘utopian’ aspect of the autonomous work of art” in the face of modernity’s mass markets and culture industry (Weisethaunet and Lindberg 2010: 466). This perspective is still influential and brings forth problems related to essentialism, not least in regards to gender, where the feminine category is often associated with mass-consumption, commercialism, and regression. For example, Biddle and Jarman-Ivens note how “dominant ideologies of gender” in popular music has helped reproduce patriarchy:

One obvious example is that supposedly ‘masculine’ genres such as rock musics are culturally privileged as ‘authentic’ and ‘meaningful’, in contrast to so-called feminine genres such as ‘teen-pop’, which is widely perceived as being devoid of significant meaning (Biddle and Jarman-Ivens 2007: 3).

³⁴ For example, Weisethaunet and Lindberg have identified “folk authenticity,” “authenticity as self-expression,” “authenticity as negation,” “authentic inauthenticity,” and “authenticity as transcendence of the everyday” (Weisethaunet and Lindberg 2010: 467).

Continuing this line of thought, in Western societies a patriarchal structural domination has become ingrained in the very evaluation of art. The level at which this naturalisation works can be exemplified by considering the Western paradigm of rational thought. Which inevitably also has its impact on ‘race’ and national ethnicity (cf. Weisethaunet and Lindberg 2012: 475). By appropriating a Freudian account of identity the Frankfurt School presented a social theory suggesting that the patriarchal family hierarchy is reproduced in the social structures (Bannister 2006: 13). In an industrialised society the father is absented from the home, leaving children’s individuating process to abstract systems of power, e.g. mass media (ibid). This process poses a threat to individual autonomy as subservience to these systems of power pacifies human agency and leaves the individual unable to resist. Furthermore, the shift from direct forms of authority towards an impersonal form stifles human agency through “surveillance and regulation, bureaucratic and legal process, technology and ideologies of efficiency and instrumental rationality” (Benjamin and Weber in Bannister 2006: 14). On account of the rational systems of power that ultimately are governed by men, “what is understood by rational method will be reciprocally related to men and masculinities” (Hearn in Bannister 2006: 15). While the Frankfurt School model leaves very little room for individual agency, it nonetheless indicates “how patriarchal authority can become institutionalised as the voice of reason and truth” (Bannister 2006: 15), forming a “*gendered* discourse” where the “instrumental orientation and impersonality that govern modern social organization and thought should be understood as masculine” (Benjamin in Bannister 2006: 15). From this, Bannister notes how a high/low distinction maps onto a masculine/feminine³⁵ split that ultimately “correspond to the Freudian split between superego and id, and the implied model of repressive power relations” (Bannister 2006: xxv). The Freudian idea of autonomy is thus bound up in the “production of the rational Cartesian autonomous self, unburdened by neurosis (regressive attachments)” (ibid: 13), thus ignoring or devaluing women as threatening male autonomy by signifying regressive dependence (Benjamin in Bannister 2006: 12).

³⁵ McClary has for example shown how classical music theory and narratives are informed by masculine and feminine categories corresponding, respectively, to major/minor, natural/unnatural, rational/irrational, reason/emotion, active/passive, and strong/weak (McClary 1991: 7–19, 151). And through her close readings of classical works, she has further exemplified how tonal musical language is systematically structured by a patriarchal discourse; this in turn compels women composers to use the language of their dominators if they want to make music in this tradition, thus restricting their agency (McClary 1991).

Bringing this perspective into my discussion is aimed at emphasising the sheer weight of a naturalised patriarchal discourse that can provide clues about how Breivik's aesthetic preferences seem to have been guided by 'the crisis of masculinity' discourse. Which can also clarify the reasons for his harsh retorts against feminism as well as what he perceives as the threat of the metrosexual 'weak man'. From reading his 'manifesto' it becomes evident that he appropriates a discourse that emanates from a perception of white patriarchy as an intellectually and morally superior social structure. And importantly, as I hope will become clear in part two of my thesis, this has profound consequences for his musical preferences. In addition, from one perspective, Bernhoft is also drawing on a notion of authenticity bound up with the discourse of the autonomous artist, although in his case a modernist paradigm seems to be negotiating with a postmodern authenticity paradigm. The latter has challenged a modernist notion of authenticity, and involves a self-conscious inauthenticity that has opened for style and artificiality to be viewed as authentic. Lawrence Grossberg identifies 'authentic inauthenticity' as a central strategy in a postmodern condition, where "no particular pose can make a claim to some intrinsic status, [thus] any pose can gain status by virtue of the commitment to it" (Grossberg 1992: 226). Extending this argument he has further stated that "the only possible claim to authenticity is derived from the knowledge and admission of your inauthenticity" (Grossberg 2000: 206).³⁶ Drawing on this definition Weisethaunet and Lindberg have noted the following:

Transformed into a strategy by artists such as David Bowie and Madonna, the possibility emerged of identifying a new dimension of the 'authenticity paradigm' focused on *play*, whose claim to truth lay precisely in the exposition of artistic identities as constructions (Weisethaunet and Lindberg 2010: 474).

These cultural developments, driven by deregulation and commercialisation, have through the last three decades ushered in a masculine paradigm that has provoked debates over the 'new man' and 'the crisis of masculinity'. This can, for example, be traced back to glam rock, which signalled a break with countercultural notions of rock

³⁶ See also Hawkins' interpretation of The Pet Shop Boys, where he sees their strategy of being musically unoriginal as a means for "resisting modernist ideals of artistic expression" as well as "the naturalism of rock authenticity" (Hawkins 2002: 147). Following this approach, the pop duo depends on 'authentic inauthenticity' to charge their musical banality with irony and parody. I return to this issue in chapter four.

authenticity by explicitly foregrounding theatricality, emphasising the performativity of masculinity (Goodwin 1993). The development of the ‘new man’ has led to “entirely new labels such as the ‘metrosexual’ – a moniker that links anxieties stemming from perceived contradictions between (and within) gender, sexuality, class and consumer practices” (Oakes 2009: 230). And from my perspective, Breivik and Bernhoft negotiate this modern/postmodern schism in different ways. While both embrace a polished metrosexual visual style, ironically the former laments the loss of ‘old’ masculinity and attacks the metrosexual ‘new man’. Conversely Bernhoft embraces the empowering possibilities of a new masculine paradigm, while still tapping into aspects of the modernist paradigm through his performance strategies. Interestingly, this schism could be seen as evidence that masculinity resists fixed categorisation, and the point to emphasise here is the performed nature of masculinity, which I will pick up on in part two.

Conclusion

In this part of my thesis I have been concerned with explicating a wide area of issues and theories that I see as crucial for understanding how aspects of power, identity, and subjectivity intersect to shape a politics of popular music. I have suggested that popular music forms a vital area of researching issues of agency. A main goal has been to develop an interdisciplinary theoretical basis for critiquing essentialism and cultural absolutism. Such critique is arguably most effectively approached through discourse theory, which might help blur fixed categories of identity that often severely impede on the agency of ethnic and gender minorities. One goal has been to discuss how modern and postmodern paradigms negotiate fixity and flexibility with regard to authenticity, as well as investigating the oppressive and liberating effects on agency this concept can facilitate. From a musicological perspective the concept of authenticity is of vital importance considering that music works as a catalyst for powerful feelings, providing a sense of truth to cultural experience, which is legitimised by the impact of emotional affect. In turn these feelings and emotions work to authenticate a sense of belonging that synthesises into notions of one’s subjectivity (Hawkins 2002; Ruud 1997). I also relate the emphasis on emotion to the

empathic and anti-empathic aspects of music, which I will continue explicating during parts two and three. Through poststructuralist theories of identity and subjectivity I work from a social constructivist framework for comprehending the discursive production and reproduction of national ethnicity and gender. Critiquing a modernist paradigm of fixed and biologically determined identity categories, I further maintain that transculturalism is a prolific concept when appropriated as a means for dismantling socio-cultural boundaries with the objective of promulgating empathy and intercultural dialogue. And it is my opinion that popular music has a potential for achieving this. Thus, I position transculturalism as a fundament for a flexible methodology dealing with analyses and interpretations of pop texts within socio-cultural contexts.

Fathoming out a flexible methodology I have in the preceding discussions also introduced some central theories and concepts that comprise my approach to textual analysis. This is based on hermeneutics, which combines with poststructuralist semiotic deconstruction to enable accumulative intertextual readings of pop texts. Here, discourse theory has a central position, resulting in a dialogic essayistic writing style dependent on the interpreter's subject position and acquired listening competence. This invites for a consideration of a tentative structural homology as a way of interpreting audiovisual codes through their (ambiguous) links to socio-cultural groupings, or milieux. It is significant for my approach that popular musical texts are irreversibly intertwined with multiple signifying systems comprising intertextual networks, which infuse music with meanings that are more than the sum of its parts. These networks also include social, cultural, historical, and political circumstances. Furthermore, in developing a critical musicology, aesthetic values and judgements are of crucial importance. Thus, the concept of authenticity has been given a key position, where a relativistic notion of 'truth' has implications for resisting fixed aesthetic hierarchies, and by implication, essentialist notions of gender, 'race', and national ethnicity. This critique is mainly established through a poststructuralist notion of *ascribed* rather than *inherent* authenticity, eschewing pre-discursive perceptions of truth.

PART TWO

Staging Empathy and Anti-Empathy

I am a military commander i the Norwegian resistance and a Knight Justiciar in Knights Templar Norway and Knights Templar Europe - Breivik, 2012³⁷

If one man can show so much hate, imagine how much love we all can show together - Helle Gannestad, 23 July 2011, via twitter³⁸

Picking up on the main questions underpinning this thesis, the current part concerns the roles that technology and audiovisual rhetoric have had in shaping and articulating two particular brands of Norwegian masculinities. Breivik and Bernhoft's radically different responses to socio-cultural surroundings revolve around tensions between a modernist and a postmodernist paradigm, where popular music forms a central part in promulgating either anti-empathy or empathy. Pondering over Breivik's performance, it seems as if his masculinity is constructed around an essentialist response to anti-essentialism; or one might say that he constructs a modernist subjectivity in a response to postmodern deconstruction. Mapping this fracture onto the politics of location in Norway seems to reveal strained relations between a transcultural urban, and a monocultural district condition. From personal experiences it seems that for suburbia and beyond, the Norwegian capital often connote contamination and danger (cf. Eriksen 1993), contributing to vexed debates over multiculturalism and gender that are reflected in musical choices. Breivik seems to be attracted to music associated with Norwegian Arcady and origins, lamenting Oslo's cultural diversity and the urban metrosexual 'new man', where his construction of 'heroic' and conservative masculinity is made possible by retrieving the past. As Hawkins has put it, the "discourse of whiteness and religion he chose to adopt rejects the future while occupying the past" (Hawkins and Bjørøy 2012: 25). As will become clear in the following analyses, I regard Breivik a trickster who has moulded himself into what he perceives as an ideal and 'pure' Nordic specimen, articulated through a merger of music and technologies such as steroids, surgery, Photoshop, and the Internet.

³⁷ See http://www.dagbladet.no/2012/02/05/nyheter/innenriks/terror/anders_behring_breivik/20096742/ (last accessed 13.02.2012, my translation).

³⁸ See <http://www.tk.no/speilet/article5689366.ece> (last accessed 12.04.2012, my translation).

Conversely, from my perspective Bernhoft fashions his masculinity by embracing a postmodern condition, and the possibilities for creative self-invention that this might entail. Notably, he has recently reinvented himself from a hard rocker to a funk/soul artist, and although at a smaller scale, he follows a familiar postmodern pop strategy of reinvention as that of e.g. David Bowie, Prince, Madonna, Michael Jackson, Lady Gaga et al. Bernhoft has appropriated a metropolitan musical style, forging a blend of funk and soul that is combined with polished good looks that seems to reveal an empathic sensibility that is buttressed by his biography. In my opinion Bernhoft comes across as self-reflective and original, and seems to embrace cultural diversity while sympathising with feminism and the gay community. Interestingly, there are striking similarities between Breivik and Bernhoft's constructions, but where Bernhoft responds with solidarity and creative musicianship to postmodern anxieties, Breivik reveals a paranoid white supremacist male, whose Eurocentric and androcentric notion of authenticity informs his musical choices as much as his ideology. Like Breivik, Bernhoft depends on a merger of technology and music to shape a highly stylised masculinity, which through queer theory and notions of the posthuman can be read as potentially subversive. Through fashion, musical style, looping technology, and the Internet, it is my opinion that, to some extent, Bernhoft destabilises notions of fixed categories of national ethnicity and gender. I propose a comparative reading of these two subjects that not only can unearth how music functions as catalyst for identity politics, but also how notions of fixity can be critiqued. From this position, I will go on to explicate these two metrosexual celebrities' performative strategies, and how they both invest great efforts into their appearance to become desirable. First, however, it is necessary to take a closer look at the appropriation of performativity and queer theory from the perspective of masculine studies.

Performed Masculinities

As a result of 'second wave' feminism, women's studies had the unintentional consequence of "somewhat ironically and partly against its own intentions, [triggering] the development of Masculinity Studies" (Emig and Rowland 2010: 2).

Later, 'third wave' feminists "attacked both the notion of inferiority and supplementarity of women and the idea that 'woman' was a homogenous and universal entity" (ibid). This instigated masculine studies to question "the simple and uniform existence of 'man'" (ibid). And importantly, since the study of men have moved past searching for an "essence of manliness" (ibid), studying masculinities need not be at odds with feminism. As Emig and Rowland asserts, Butler's theory of performativity has "helped recast our critical insights into the cultural, psychic, and social production of gender" (ibid: viii). To explicate, performativity emphasises that categories of masculinity and femininity are continually performed contributions to their own discourses, or, in Butler's words, "performativity must be understood not as a single or deliberate 'act,' but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (Butler 1990: 2). From these considerations it follows that gender categories must be rethought as plural, i.e. as masculinities and femininities. And further, Butler's assertion that "gender does not seem to follow from sex" (ibid: 173) has been developed by Judith Halberstam in *Female Masculinity* (1998), suggesting, as previously mentioned, that masculinity does not belong solely to the male body, nor femininity to the female. Taking onboard Butler and Halberstam's flexible model has far-reaching and potentially liberating effects for people refusing to fit into convenient categories, or comply with conservative and stifling norms. And following Hawkins I intend the interpretations in this part of the thesis to reveal aspects of "the intangible notions of national ethnicity and male behaviour" (Hawkins 2009: 3).

Importantly, queer studies enable critical thought about all social mediators, be it gender, ethnicity, class, religion etc., and facilitates thinking beyond stable categories. For instance, this becomes evident through the diversity of issues presented in *Queering the Popular Pitch* (2006), "which delve into issues concerning race and ethnicity, forgotten histories, the body in music, and the use of popular music in power politics" (Whiteley 2006: xiii). This offers a productive approach to researching the intersections between masculinities and national ethnicity through interpretations of performed structured sound.³⁹ Thus, it is my contention that Breivik

³⁹ Hawkins' *The British Pop Dandy* (2009) provides good examples of this approach, where he interprets British dandies' temperament through detailed analyses of the intricacies of the pop voice, intertwined with other musical and performative aspects.

and Bernhoft's musicking form an intriguing point of departure for critiquing essentialism and cultural absolutism. Through a historicised analysis of the dandy, Hawkins traces a metrosexual, 'softer', masculinity from Oscar Wilde and through the 20th century, emphasising the implication of the MTV era:

[B]y paving the way for a strong alliance between pop and commercial enterprise, the art school tradition [Warhol, Velvet Underground, Bowie] would contribute to the aestheticizing of masculinity. So much so that by the 1980s the male pop artist would be contextualized by representations of a more sensitive, less macho type; it was as if mainstream culture had shifted the focus onto a type who unabashedly saw himself as an object of desire. Subsequently, images of the male through the 1980s and 1990s signified a subtle blend of the soft and hard; a chiselled muscularity framed by beautiful clothes, make-up and flawless complexion (Hawkins 2009: 33).

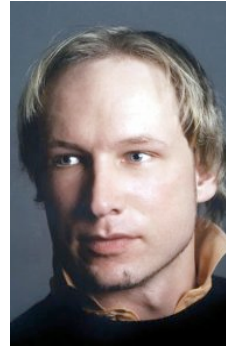
Undoubtedly, these developments have influenced Breivik's generation, which also Bernhoft and myself belong to, and pondering over Breivik and Bernhoft's quite different identity politics, it is worth considering the various ways in which gender, 'race', and national ethnicity are inscribed in their staged acts of masculinity. To start with the former, his denouncement of the metrosexual notwithstanding, Breivik's polished visual rhetoric is influenced by the less macho masculinity that entered the 'identity market' in the 1970s. As a narcissistic and vain type this brand of masculinity offered new ways for males to carve out their identities. There is little doubt that Breivik has worked hard to obtain an airbrushed appearance that ironically puts him well inside the boundaries of the metrosexual category.⁴⁰ Breivik is highly critical of this development, lamenting that 'men are not men any more', leaving Europe defenceless against Islamisation. According to Simpson, Breivik loathes the emotional metrosexual man, subdued by "the new age feminist woman goddess",⁴¹ both of which he blames for weakening Europe's defences. However, Breivik's high degree of narcissism "fulfils many of the criteria of the metrosexual himself: he underwent cosmetic surgery in his early 20s (to his chin, forehead and nose). All this is in addition to steroids, vigorous gym participation, and regular self-tanning" (Hawkins and Bjorøy 2012: 9).

⁴⁰ English journalist and author, Mark Simpson, who claims to be the 'Daddy of the Metrosexual', has coined the term using David Beckham as prime example. See <http://www.marksimpson.com/about/> (last accessed 21.01.2012).

⁴¹ See <http://www.marksimpson.com/blog/2011/08/03/metro-psycho/> (last accessed 21.01.2012).



Mark Simpson and David Beckham.



Breivik's promotional pictures.

Driven by narcissism and a hunger for celebrity status, Breivik follows a strategy very similar to that of pop and rock stars such as Bernhoft, where music comprises ritualistic and symbolic resources that are empowering for both performer and recipient. The main difference is that Bernhoft seems to be self-conscious and original, while Breivik appears to be a copycat in denial. And a point to emphasise here is that reading Breivik and Bernhoft through the ‘pop text’ blatantly reveals Breivik’s notion of biological fixity as a performance in itself, in regards to both national ethnicity and gender. Both of them appeal for empathy, but for very different ends. A case in point: central to Breivik’s drama is revenge, forming the main focus for a theatrical adaptation of “the legendary justiciar knight and the discourse of power surrounding him” (ibid: 8). Through this adaptation, Breivik promotes a certain brand of masculinity that seems to be appealing to the far-right corners of European societies,⁴² making his intense media coverage highly problematic. A paradox of Breivik’s negative media attention is that he has managed to achieve what seems to be his main goal, becoming a celebrity. Says Simpson:

The manifesto, those glamour shots and probably even the awful crimes are one enormous, mega-creepy personal ad. Not so much metrosexual as *metro-psycho*”.⁴³

Considering the above reflections, his violent strategy for becoming a ‘martyr’ celebrity is evidently buttressed by his peculiar politics of representation, as he stages himself through the virtual realms of the Internet and traditional media. Notably, by

⁴² See e.g. this article on British supporters of Breivik - <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/mar/03/far-right-supporters-armed-attacks> (last accessed 11.04.2012).

⁴³ See <http://www.marksimpson.com/blog/2011/08/03/metro-psycho/> (last accessed 21.01.2012).

touching up his appearances and moulding himself into what he perceives is a model for the Nordic stereotype, he is in fact highlighting the constructed nature of his unconstructedness. And through his efforts to distribute a message of fear and hatred, he has been highly dependent on various technologies for shaping and aestheticising the self, not least through his choice in music. Now let us turn to this metrosexual's musical preferences to investigate their central role in staging a brand of masculinity that through an appeal to potential fans subverts empathy into anti-empathy.

'Metro-Psychosis': Knighthood and paganism

Designated by Breivik to become the anthem for a cultural conservative 'European Federation', 'Lux Aeterna' follows an orchestral style highly influenced by a Western classical canon that in Hollywood film scoring has become institutionalised as a standard emotional strategy for large-scale dramatic productions. In the deep-layered density of textures, a foreboding mood depicts a 'passionate rage' that can easily become a source for psychological motivation and stamina. The highly charged rhythms of the up and down string bows blend with atmospheric sounds, at several points intersecting with a choir reminiscent of the opening movement of Carl Orff's eerie 'Carmina Burana'. Musical ideas and processes, and swollen harmonic devices constitute a score rife with imagery of war and battle where simultaneous feelings of anxiety, fear, and victory, alerts the recipient. A sensation of impending doom infuses the listener as s/he enters a soundscape comprised of dramatic film clichés characterised by lush strings, polished production, and action filled musical processes. These are built around pompous and gradual crescendos, fast-paced rhythms, and harmonic tension and release structured around threat and hope - 'them' and 'us'. Recalling Edward Said (1978), Breivik's leanings toward traditional Western cinematic scoring, well suited for the drama of war can be read as a symbolic marker for white male heroism that seems to go well with the acting out of 'Knighthood'. Interestingly, gender theorist Tod Reeser has found that a Knightly masculinity is still present in modernity; "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" (Reeser 2010: 84). He continues: "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" (ibid).

Breivik's inflated ego and narcissistic 'Knighthood' are spelt out and disseminated through the appropriation of dramatic cinematic music, uniforms, medals, badges, ribbons, Masonic freemasonry symbols, and interestingly, Lacoste (Hawkins and Bjorøy 2012: 10). In his photoshop shots is an iconography that depicts a delusional fantasy and the extremes of masculine performativity. All this culminated in an astonishing act at the last court hearing before his trial, where he demanded to be awarded the medal of honour called 'Krigskorset', or 'Cross of War'.⁴⁴ Which is a military distinction for personal bravery and exemplary leadership.⁴⁵ He deserved this, he claimed, because the strike had been an act of self-defence, as 'his' indigenous people ('urfolk') were being subjected to ethnic cleansing, mainly by multicultural 'traitors' promoting Islamic colonisation of Norway (ibid). For him, what's at stake is a Norwegian, Nordic and Western European patriarchy threatened by ethnic Others, and significantly, gendered Others; feminists and 'weak' new men. In his studies of American and Swedish far-right masculinity, gender scholar Michael Kimmel has asked why these men are so angry, and why misogyny and racism are so central to their politics (Kimmel 2011). The extremists he interviewed were highly motivated by a profound feeling of losing certain privileges they felt entitled to, supposedly taken away from them by Muslims, Jews, or blacks. They also lamented the loss of a 'hard' masculinity that they perceived as threatened by feminists, gays, or just 'weak men'.⁴⁶ The idea that masculinity has come into crisis because of feminism has been growing at least since the 1980s. I remember discussions on the topic with my male friends early in the 1990s, and such discussions are still present today, although it seems, in a more aggressive tone. For example, the anti-feminist blogger Eivind Berg (b. 1979) has expressed sympathy with Breivik claiming that: "Hate breeds hate. Norway is in a climate where the official man-hate runs deep. And

⁴⁴ See Ole-Tommy Pedersen 2012 - <http://www.dagsavisen.no/samfunn/krever-umiddelbar-loslatelse/> (last accessed 16.04.2012).

⁴⁵ For more information on this medal of honour see <http://www.krigskorset.no/statuttene.html> (last accessed 12.04.2012).

⁴⁶ Two chapters in Breivik's 'manifesto' sum up his attitudes towards feminists and feminised 'cultural Marxists'. The first is an article by Peder Jensen: "How the Feminists' 'War against Boys' Paved the Way for Islam". And the second by himself: "Are all European men weak minded cowards or are they just brainwashed?"

then a reaction from men must come” (Berg in Olsen and Gossner 2011, my translation). Five days after Breivik’s attack he stated on his blog that he himself had contemplated becoming a violent activist because of a forced celibacy: “enforced by a feminist regime that had driven me to the point where I did not see any other possibility” (ibid). Here, Berg is making himself out to be a victim of women’s ‘erotic capital’, and their freedom to choose not to have sex or a family with him, which shows one of the ways entitlement and loss can impact white masculinities.⁴⁷ Both Berg and Breivik’s gender conservatism reflects the type of men they want to be, and what they expect a woman to be. From their perspective, retrieving a ‘lost’ masculinity means regaining power over women, who must be forced into pre-determined roles defined by men.⁴⁸

For Breivik the pagan and Christian Knight apparently offered a solution. Kimmel has found that Viking mythology is a central part of the way Swedish nationalist right wing masculinity constitutes itself. In Norway the same pattern is seen in far-right organisations like Vigrid,⁴⁹ as well as in Black Metal music, where e.g. Burzum’s Varg Vikernes has called himself an Odinist and Paganist.⁵⁰ For Norwegian nationalists the Viking era (ca. 800 to 1100) has special significance, creating a strong sense of rootedness for believers who follow a familiar strategy of appropriating the past for present needs. As anthropologists have found, “history is not a product of the past but a response to requirements of the present” (Eriksen 2002: 72). Notably, Breivik has also called himself an Odinist, subscribing to a pagan/Christian hybrid

⁴⁷ For an entertaining reflection on popular culture’s role in shaping men’s feelings of entitlement for women see this blog: http://www.cracked.com/article_19785_5-ways-modern-men-are-trained-to-hate-women.html (last accessed 31.03.2012).

⁴⁸ Notably, Breivik dated White Russian women he met online by buying their contact information from an intermediary service. As the stereotype goes, Eastern-European women are more traditional and domesticated than the ‘new woman goddess’, and idealising 1950s gender roles in his ‘manifesto’, it is not surprising that he looked for ‘traditional’ women in the East – See http://www.dagbladet.no/2012/01/12/nyheter/terror_i_oslo/anders_behring_breivik/19758362/ (last accessed 19/03/2012).

⁴⁹ Vigrid’s leader Tore Tvedt has become known for his inauguration rituals, where new members, often very young, are ‘baptised’ into his ‘brotherhood’. Tvedt calls himself ‘the prophet of Odin’ and holds ‘baptisms’ at Norway’s biggest burial mound for kings, Raknehaugen - See http://www.rb.no/lokale_nyheter/article763285.ece (last accessed 12.04.2012).

⁵⁰ In 1993 Varg Vikernes (b. 1973), or ‘Count Grishnackh’, drove across the mountain watershed from Bergen to Oslo and murdered fellow black metalist Øystein ‘Euronymous’ Aarseth (Mayhem). This was one year after I had visited Aarseth’s record shop ‘Helvete’ (Hell), Schweigaards gate 56 in Oslo, discussing with him the fake skull and supposedly real femur displayed on his counter. Greven was later sentenced to 21 years in prison for the murder as well as four counts of arson, connecting Vikernes to the burning of four historic churches.

masculinity, which is composed through an act of violence not only meant to defend ‘his’ people, but also a masculinity he feels is threatened. Simultaneously drawing on the Knights Templar and pagan myths, Breivik suggests a peculiar alliance between Christianity and paganism. Norwegian essayist Jone Salomonsen has noted that paganism is a “hierarchical, traditionalist and mythologist cult, where war symbols like Odin and Thor are retrieved to strengthen nationalistic ties, to separate friend from foe and defend masculine honour”. Regarding Breivik she further makes an interesting observation: “as European and federalist he is Christian, as a Norwegian and nationalist he is a paganist”.⁵¹



Paganism is central in the iconography, as well as the name, of Swedish nationalist singer songwriter Saga⁵². Breivik has claimed that they belong to the same movement of “heroes and heroines of Scandinavia” that has been enduring political persecution and demonisation for years⁵³. Further he claims that Saga fights by his side through her music, against the cultural and demographical genocide of ‘their’ European and Scandinavian ‘tribes’. Although Saga has denounced Breivik’s actions on her homepage, she has nonetheless been a supporter of the Swedish neo-Nazi organization and political party *National Socialistisk Front* (NSF), until it dissolved in 2008. However, the party immediately re-formed and is now called *Svenskarnas parti* shaping its politics around biologically grounded nationalism.⁵⁴ In the top right corner of her YouTube video for ‘Ode to a Dying People’ the NSF coat of arms lingers throughout the six and a half minute duration of a pop ballad dripping with sentimentality.⁵⁵ Scenes from what appear to be news footages are randomly pasted together, crosscut with footage from two live performances. Her lyrical punch lines are underscored by hand gestures while flashes from audience cameras blinks on her face, testifying to her popularity amongst the

⁵¹ See http://morgenbladet.no/ideer/2011/terroristens_religionsprosjekt (last accessed 15.04.2012).

⁵² Sagas are preserved written stories from medieval Iceland, and are epic dramas focusing on heroic deeds and travels (often in the past) by great Viking, Pagan or Christian men (cf. Ross 2010). They were written in the period between the Icelandic settlement period (c. 870 – 930), the Iceland swearing allegiance to King Hákon Hákonarson of Norway (1262-4), and the establishing of the Kalmar Union of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden (1397) (ibid).

⁵³ Downloaded 19.11.2011: unitednations.ispnw.org/archives/breivik-manifesto-2011.pdf, p.849.

⁵⁴ See <http://www.svenskarnasparti.se/punktprogram/> (last accessed 22/03/2012).

⁵⁵ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OP3rKRh0h5k&skipconrinter=1> (last accessed 22/03/2012).

NSF spectators. Foreboding synthesised bass strings introduce the song before her voice enters. This is emotionally charged by an almost whispered delivery and ornamented by affected tremolo, as she attempts to create an intimate connection with her fans. As the song progresses she increases the intensity and dynamic impact of a slowly paced singing that sometimes stumbles when rapid pronunciations are required. The lyrics add to the sentimental mood conjured up by musical clichés that attempt to seduce the viewer into believing the apocalyptic imagery on screen; bleak urban scenarios of supposed immigrants demonstrating and rioting. For most of the duration, close-ups of Saga dominate the screen, only interrupted by soft fade-ins and outs of dramatic and menacing scenes. These are synchronised to enter on choruses and instrumental parts, accompanied by an understated 4/4 drum groove laid upon a sluggish harmonic pace, based on blurry synthetic strings in the mid register.

The incessant choruses spell out the fear and angst Saga wants the listener to embrace: “If this is the way it ends, if this is the way my race ends, if this is the way it ends, I can’t bear to witness”. To these lyrics recipients can see shots of hooded people smashing windows and throwing Molotov cocktails, a gathering of black people, riot police, helicopter with search-light, burnt out cars, a crowd turning over a car, a man waving a gun, and riot police chasing people. After the second chorus an intermittent part follows, introducing a vocal solo consisting of melismatic long notes, preceding a synthesised pastoral ‘trumpet’ solo. The latter is accompanying images of Saga walking or standing solitary on a grass field littered with what could be rune stones, crossfaded with kitschy shots of Hellenistic statues and columns. Seemingly Saga is trying to make a connection between the ancient Greece society and Nordic populations, infusing her perceived ethnic heritage with the status of Renaissance culture. The intermittent part disembogues into the last verse, of which the second half contains the following lyrics:

The greatest race to ever walk the earth,
Dying a slow death with insane mirth,
The tomb has been prepared, our race betrayed,
White man, fight the flight towards the grave

This message is sung with heightened emotional investment, mimicking the words with melodramatic gesticulation, before an abrupt break creates a tension that releases into a climactic and drearily stretched last chorus. There is hardly any other way to describe this than as coarse propaganda. The stance against multiculturalism is articulated through an audiovisual rhetoric of biologically motivated white supremacy and nostalgia, combined with a sentiment based on fear and impending doom due to immigration. Lamenting the dilution of the 'Nordic genotype', there is little wonder that Breivik was attracted to this artist, investing in the narrative of entitlement and loss. His beliefs in essence and origin are articulated through notions of loss; loss of masculine power, loss of control, loss of meaning, loss of culture, loss of privileges and resources. However, what seems to trigger his aggression is a feeling of entitlement. Putting himself on display as a Knight Templar, Breivik is grooming a fantasy of himself as a morally superior middle-class Christian, a pure Western European 'inquiring mind' in a 'perfect' Nordic white body. This construction helped facilitate an act that he saw as 'gruesome but necessary', as a response to 'politically correct' feminists and 'weak multiculturalists' with frivolous sexual morals. However, Breivik's delusion of intellectual superiority is stripped of authority by a cut and paste 'manifesto', brimming with simplified analyses and uninformed judgements of his Others. Significantly, the source of his 'ideology' has been the Internet, where far-right networks reiterate a xenophobic discourse until it becomes orthodoxy in online 'echo chambers'. Norwegian journalist Øyvind Strømme (2011) has noted the dangers of these virtual spaces where poorly interpreted statistics and common-sense positivism are often uncritically used as 'evidence' for simplified interpretations of culture and society. Socially isolated, and for a long period spending far more time in hyper-reality than in reality, Breivik's anti-empathic politics were confirmed and buttressed in these chambers. And through role-play and war games, all set to music, he enacted his hero-protecting-homeland-fantasy, envisioning an ordered, patriarchal Norwegian Arcady. He finds authenticity in the soundtrack for *Age of Conan*, and uses it to sell his chilling YouTube-pamphlet, which has now become an influential addition to the same echo-chambers that once helped pull Breivik over to 'the dark side'. A blurring of reality and hyper-reality seems to have confirmed and inflated his ego, constructing a 'Knight' masculinity that reminds us of deluded don Quixote, fighting imaginary enemies, unable to distinguish life from fantasy.

Ere' Our World Crumbles: Arcadian illusions

Arcady is related to a notion of purity, nature, and freedom, which has developed through the unfolding of modernity and postmodernity. The idea of a democratic and uncontaminated *gemeinschaft*⁵⁶ located in a rustic pre-modern paradise is a response to alienation and anxiety that since the World War II has become related to fear of nuclear disaster, environmental collapse, financial crises, and terror. Michael Bracewell has written elegantly about the Arcadian theme in English identity, in which the “idyll of Ye Olde England” provided values and patriotism in the face of WWII:

Temperament and moral sense were hereditary. All things were in their traditional place for the good of all - a sacrosanct arrangement given stern new purpose by the demands of war, in which medieval arcana [...] become symbolic of the deeper constitution of England (Bracewell 1998: 6).

A romanticising of Arcady has in Norway been articulated through folk tales and songs, articulating pre-modern peoples' closeness to nature in simpler times of stable identities and gender roles. As we have seen in the above section, a notion of Arcady can be found in the Viking era, with its connections to English Knighthood.⁵⁷ This constitutes a symbolic reservoir that Breivik draws on as he shapes his subjectivity, and in dialogue with Saga and ‘Lux Aeterna’, stands the folkish new age songs ‘The Dreaming Anew’ and ‘Ere The World Crumbles’. From one perspective one might say that the two latter conjure up a sound image of Norwegian Arcady that gains urgency by the Viking-like universe of Conan the Barbarian. In a sense, these four songs represent a conglomerate of identities that Breivik adopted as part of shaping a traditional masculinity by drawing on Norwegian, Scandinavian/Nordic, and European sentiments articulated in these songs' audiovisual rhetoric. Let us take a closer listen to ‘The Dreaming Anew’, which has a sound production that conjures up a melancholic feeling that can be associated with nostalgic loss.⁵⁸ The text is structured around threat and hope, ‘them’ and ‘us’, manifested musically through

⁵⁶ *Gemeinschaft* (community) is related to the allegedly intimate relationships that characterised pre-modern communities (Tönnies 1887). Conversely, *gesellschaft* (society) relates to the impersonal relationships that are seen as governing modern society (ibid).

⁵⁷ In periods, Norwegian Vikings had close ties to English Knights, and some even travelled to Jerusalem as crusaders (e.g. Sigurd the Crusader).

⁵⁸ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=deDNzOYHu-4 (last accessed 11.04.2012).

tension and release. And the string instrumentation and trained vocal tentatively relates the text to a Western European classical tradition, often valued at the expense of Eastern styles.⁵⁹ A deep drone introduces the text, before Bøksle's wordless voice enters immersed in reverb, filling the mix. The melismatic melody, based on calm 'ooing', lies in the high register, while the movements have a folkish aspect to it, reminiscent of 'kulokk'.⁶⁰ Kulokk was sung by women tending the livestock on summer mountain pastures in traditional Norwegian peasant society, often characterised by long notes combined with rapid downward melismatic movements. The use of wide-space chorus suggests an imagery of sparsely populated mountains, reifying the impression of 'authentic' Norwegian pastoral life.

The first two sections are differentiated by separate melodic phrases. Bøksle's calm and soothing voice underlines a maternal aspect, bringing to mind a comforting mother singing lullaby⁶¹ for her infant, fulfilling her 'natural' role as care worker. Traditionally, Norwegian lullabies have had a central position in the collected material that became the basis for the construction of a folk canon since the 19th century, connoting nostalgia at all levels. Based on E melodic minor (Aeolian), a modal scale central in folk styles, the melody drips in sentimentality. Situated high above the E drone, Bøksle starts on the dominant B, before moving a semitone up to C, to D, and then down to C. With a C-D-B ornamental move, she lands on a long note on the dominant once again. This creates an open fifth harmony with the drone, a well-known feature of Norwegian folk music as much as classical music (e.g. Edvard Grieg) where the low fifth accompanies melodies sung or played on top. The crystal clear voice moves above, grounded 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, emphasising the I – V harmony. The second bass alternates with a semitone between the low fifth and the more dissonant sixth. Alternating semitones can possess a menacing quality, best exemplified in John Williams' theme for the film *Jaws* (1975), which has become

⁵⁹ Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) reveals this structural domination as part of "a specific exposé of the Eurocentric universalism which takes for granted both the superiority of what is European or Western, and the inferiority of what is not" (Barry 2002: 193).

⁶⁰ Hear for example; www.youtube.com/watch?v=I44PUvoL70w; www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpDnJ3QuSrY&feature=related (last accessed 11.04.2012).

⁶¹ See for example www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tcpa59OhvL4 (at 1:30) (last accessed 11.04.2012).

institutionalised as a cliché of impending danger.⁶² In ‘The Dreaming Anew’, however, the alternation is much slower than in *Jaws*, and has an effect more similar to Angelo Badalamenti’s ‘Laura Palmer’s Theme’, from the cult series *Twin Peaks* (1990-91). In the memorable first few seconds of Badalamenti’s track, a bass drone is positioned below a low register 6-note melody, starting and ending with a semitone step. This creates an intertextual connection with David Lynch’s surreal universe and drawing on the effect from the slowly alternating semitone, this infuses the opening sections of ‘The Dreaming Anew’ with an almost sinister atmosphere. And in the context of the YouTube video it seems to represent the threat of the Other (and for me Breivik’s mind).

Used as accompaniment for his YouTube video the music can easily seduce the viewer.⁶³ “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. And Bøksle’s reassuring but melancholic voice urges the subject to mobilise and retrieve the past in order to expunge all impurity. Just before the third section, Bøksle rounds her phrase off, and after a dramatic movement in the bass ends her calm introduction, her vowel sound changes from ‘O’ to ‘A’, switching to chest-tone with more powerfully delivered melisma. The dramatic effect in the bass comes about by a minor seventh leap downwards from A to B, shifting the keynote from E to B, via the pitch A. Resolving to the dominant adds to the suspense, and in a fraction of a second after the sound has faded to complete silence a sense of hope resurges as Bøksle overpowers the eeriness. Joined by a dense and pompous string orchestra the E keynote is brought back, and an imminent threat is averted. Western patriarchy prevails. In the third section, the drone is left behind, as more vigorous strings accompany Bøksle. Initially this creates a sense of liberation, but the text never transcends the boundaries of A-melodic minor; neither does it transpose or use augmented or lowered notes - the voice is clean with no inflections, keeping activity safely within the confines of a stylistic universe. Conformity is once again assured.

⁶² In functional harmony the leading tone is positioned a semitone below the tonic, and is synonymous with suspense, which is why the semitone has such dramatic effect.

⁶³ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_A5JN-UHfE&skipconrinter=1 (last accessed 12.04.2012).

Listeners appropriate music as they see fit, tuning in to desired social alignments across time and place to experience a sense of belonging that is embodied through music. Undoubtedly, the iconography of national and European cultural memory has a vital impact on how the music is perceived and interpreted. Here, the music reference sources pertaining to Western European femininity, romantic Norwegianism, Norwegian Arcady, and the prestige associated with classical and folk styles. What strikes me is the ‘marriage’ of Conan and Bøksle, the pagan Knight and the maiden, with parallel references to Norse mythology and Christianity. A common denominator is Western patriarchy, and its entrenched status as the ‘natural’ form of domination. This places Bøksle’s voice at the centre of attention. Says Breivik:

This voice is all you hear as your light turns to darkness and you enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. This must surely be the most glorious way to claim the honour of martyrdom in battle.⁶⁴

Bøksle’s ‘ungrained’ voice has an angelic quality, an ethereal and disembodied voice that nonetheless is female.⁶⁵ These elements draw attention to the issue of national stereotypes, where the national dimension in music has consequences for idealisation that is of critical importance (Biddle and Knights 2007). Significantly the Internet became the source of Breivik’s subversive romanticisation of nationhood and the basis for his shoddy cut and paste ‘manifesto’. Amongst his favourite female vocalists is the Norwegian folk singer Helene Bøksle, who he perceives as a prototype of Nordic identity. Breivik has cited her track, ‘Ere the World Crumbles’, for his own physical and mental preparations. Not without its problems, at least in retrospect, the visual imagery of Bøksle’s performance at the *Spellemanns Awards* was televised to the entire nation in prime time viewing, providing an array of powerful symbols. In no uncertain terms, the iconography references classic Western beauty ideals while her sound connotes an idealised sense of feminine sensuality. Let’s turn our attention to *Spellemanns Awards* January 21, 2009.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Downloaded 19.11.2011: unitednations.ispnw.org/archives/breivik-manifesto-2011.pdf, p.849.

⁶⁵ See for example Simon Frith for a development of Barthes’ ‘grain of the voice’ (1977), and his explication of the disembodied voice (Frith 1996: 191, 196).

⁶⁶ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=-g5KYv2oqXk (last accessed 12.04.2012).

Centre stage, Bøksle is poised statue-like, flanked by two athletic-looking drummers. Glittery snow sprinkles the air, and against a blue, cold light, her body is draped in a long, antique pink dress, illuminated by gentle lighting from directly above. Her dress is cut similarly to that of a Norwegian national dress ('bunad'). 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, fair skin, and blue eyes. An angelic appearance is matched by the purity of her voice, entering solo, drenched in reverb, as if singing from a mountaintop. All in all the performance has a Wagnerian effect. Once the first phrase has subsided, a high-pitched, low-volume, synthesised 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 synthesised sound. Imitating her phrasing, this motif heralds in dancers 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), allegedly the written and spoken language used by the Vikings and other Nordic tribes in the Middle Ages.⁶⁷ As the song progresses, Bøksle repeats a new melodic phrase, the second repetition slightly altered in its ending to create tension on the lines: "Ere the world crumbles. Not ever shall men each other spare".⁶⁸

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 off-beat. Masking the downbeat, the ambiguous metre provides the feeling of a floating sensation. With the drumming and string section intensifying, the dancers move into position, forming a circle around Bøksle. The drummers intensify in their playing, and the drums come over as over-sized snare drums. Historically the snare drum has had a central position in military parades and in Norwegian folk music (cf. Waadeland, Carl Haakon 2008), and with their exaggerated size and military slant they conjure up 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, it is an

⁶⁷ The lyrics are allegedly taken from the Poetic Edda, written by Snorre Sturlason in the 13th century.

⁶⁸ Translation of lyrics taken from: <http://www.tentonhammer.com/node/45827> (last accessed 12.04.2012).

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 on five measures. The first beat of the three last measures is heavily accentuated while the asymmetrical grouping of measures anticipates release one measure prematurely. 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".⁶⁹ In moments like these how can one not imagine the terrified youth at Utøya, as much as the extremities of Breivik's gall to execute a plan of such magnitude.

Breivik has testified that he listened to music on his daily walks, preparing mentally for the terror attack. And as he did, we can envision the music as soundtrack for his 'martyrdom'. Music's tumultuous force during the climax of this song functions as a steroid for the mind. Music has a magnificent motivating effect, and at the most significant moment in the song the psychological steroids are in full effect. Indeed, Bøksle's voice, now at its loudest in the mix, penetrates body and mind, uplifting the spirit, as it drives the listener forward, overcoming fear and obstacles. The grandeur of the heroic visions of mythical battles is manifested in the strength of her vocality. The imagination conjures up majestic Norwegian nature in helicopter perspective, the hero's land, threatened by oriental hordes. Then the 'inner eye' (cf. Goodwin 1993) shifts perspective, to a mobilising crusader army, 'Trooping the Colour' and preparing to defending one's motherland, culture, religion, and ideology; the aim being to protect one's own 'race', one's family and women from the invasion of the Other. Insistent, the marching tribal drums force the army forward, over majestic mountains, valleys and fjords, spearheaded by the dedicated 'hero'. 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: 12). This has a resonance in Breivik's own perceptions of music. Referring in his 'manifesto' title, to the 400-year anniversary of the 1683 Battle of Vienna, Breivik appropriates a historic drama and re-enacts it by attacking an internal enemy. Through music, then, he connects with the past in order

⁶⁹ The Vanir: God inhabitants of Vanarheim in Norse mythology, associated with fertility and wisdom.

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 ‘saviour of hope’ rather than terrorist.

Through music, authenticity is *felt* “physically and cerebrally” (Hawkins 2002), aligning musical to social processes in motivating and exhilarating ways. Breivik’s authenticity is in an imagined past when Norwegian ethnicity was, supposedly, homogenous and Christian, and when genders were ordered ‘naturally’. What for Breivik is a pre-discursive kernel, is in fact a hybrid construction, drawing on Norse Mythology, Christianity, and the Knights Templar myths, adapted to suit his need for legitimacy. Attempting to naturalise an ‘us vs. them’ discourse he uses music as a symbol of ‘our’ moral superiority, facilitating the formation of a subjectivity that rationalises terror. In music he found the cultural material to buttress his notion of authenticity, and like Hitler appropriated Wagner, Breivik appropriates Bøksle. The singer seems to confirm Breivik’s fantasy, not only through her voice, but also through the visual codes in which her performance references Western beauty ideals. As Hawkins points out, “[m]ostly, it is in the star persona that constructs of beauty are reinforced by the stability of fixed categories” (Hawkins 2007b: 30), and Bøksle’s performance can easily be read as a conform “response to political structures of gender control” (ibid: 41), but also ethnic control. Revisiting, Moore’s *third person authenticity* (Moore 2007: 218), Breivik’s positioning of Bøksle in a pure light of moral superiority, makes her a true representative for *his* Norway. And he constitutes his masculinity in the image of this fantasy, positioning himself as the Knight taking a stand against feminism and Muslim aggressors. Music had multiple roles in Breivik’s project: motivating his actions, symbolising his ideals, and spreading his message. Unfortunately for Bøksle the links between her music and Breivik are hard to sever, attaching un-welcomed associations. The danger is that it becomes a symbol for his ‘martyrdom’, attracting future supporters. All in all, the music has had a central role in the process of constructing a white masculinity that feels destined to rule, and in the process subverting the empathic qualities of music into anti-empathy.

February 18th 2012, a quite different male celebrity has been awarded the (somewhat controversial) *Statoil Grant* of one million NOK,⁷⁰ meant to encourage an international career.⁷¹ Jarle Bernhoft received the award approximately one year after his second and breakthrough solo album *Solidarity Breaks* (2011),⁷² and five years after he launched his solo career with the album *Ceramik City Chronicles* (2008), which was released following his period as front man and singer for the rock band *Span* (2000 – 2005). With two well-received albums released in 2011,⁷³ and noticed performances at the *22/7 Memorial Concert*, *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, and the *Peace Prize Concert*, this has been a good year for Bernhoft. In December his work also earned him and his management the *Music Export Norway*'s three years 'Export Programme', with a potential value of NOK 900 000.⁷⁴ What is it about this artist that makes him so popular and desirable? And why do state run sponsors and the music industry queue up to fill his bank account? And can Bernhoft be seen as countering cultural purism and anti-feminism? Pop idols are intriguing characters that through their high visibility invite a broad array of questions concerning issues of ethnicity, sexuality, and gender, alongside those of technology and authenticity. In the following section I will focus on the political body⁷⁵ and music's potential for agency and subversion. Bernhoft is building a career using various strategies to seduce a large audience, and the level of empathy he is able to invoke is dependent on his and his audience's positioning within the conflation of modern and postmodern, transcultural and transpersonal spaces. A reason for scrutinizing Bernhoft is that he, to some extent, seems to inspire empathy across social and cultural boundaries that can be contemplated through an interpretation of his artistic output.

⁷⁰ The Norwegian currency – Norske kroner.

⁷¹ The annual by:Larm event, held in Oslo, is a music festival aimed at promoting Nordic artists and music to an international music industry and audience. Since 2008 the festival has cooperated with the national oil company *StatoilHydro ASA* to support Norwegian artists and bands with potential - <http://bylarm.no/nor/pages> (last accessed 10.04.2012).

⁷² *Solidarity Breaks* (2011) is produced by the London based Norwegian artist and songwriter Fredrik Ball, or Fred Ball, who follows a familiar and formulaic sound recipe, with production strategies appropriated from the polished side of soul, hip-hop and funk.

⁷³ *Solidarity Breaks* (2011) is a studio album. *Walk with Me* (2011) is a live album with KORK, kringkastingsorkesteret (The national broadcasting orchestra).

⁷⁴ See <http://www.musicexportnorway.no/export-program-goes-to-bernhof.4993917-149133.html> (last accessed 10.04.2012).

⁷⁵ See for example Judith Butler's horrifying story about a man who was killed for walking with a feminine swagger - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLnv322X4tY> (last accessed 10.04.2012).

For example, art director, photographer, and graphic designer Robert Dalen was given the task of branding Bernhoft and building an image for the *Solidarity Breaks* release. He states on his web pages that according to Bernhoft the title “refers to the balance between the person/ego and other people/personalities in their life”.⁷⁶ This spells out a self-reflective stance to his social and cultural environment, concerned with how to balance individualistic urges and collective responsibilities. Hinting at a sensibility that might be considered as promoting intercultural solidarity, this can be read against his public statements against racism,⁷⁷ his family life, and his reinvention from rock to pop star. Coupled with his alluring performances Bernhoft is easily singled out as a potential antidote to the single biggest anti-celebrity Norway has ever seen. Interestingly, both Breivik and Bernhoft use similar strategies to forge their subjectivities through the male body on display, and “[s]ubordinated to specific aesthetic norms” (Hawkins 2007b: 197) they both depend heavily on technology to shape an identity that from opposite sides can invite “idolisation and endless amounts of intrigue” (ibid).

Jarle Bernhoft: A queer antidote?

Enter Bernhoft. At the exact moment he initiates a syncopated vocal line, his foot slams down on one of the seven pedals of his *Boss RC-50* loop station. He records phrase one, which lasts four measures in 4/4 time signature, beginning on the third upbeat (the words in bold marks the first beat of first and third measure):

Rhy – rhy – rhy – rhyth, mi – mi – mi – mic,
c'mon and talk to me, I will try my utmost to be
honest with you, try to be honest with you, ev'ry single
word - *c'mon* and talk to me, I will try my
utmost to be rhythmical, try to be
rhy – rhy – rhy – rhyth, mi – mi – mi – mic.

⁷⁶ See <http://www.behance.net/robertdalen/frame/1004707> (last accessed 16.04.2012).

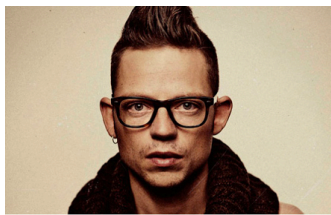
⁷⁷ See Jarle Bernhoft-Sjødin 2012 - http://www.dagsavisen.no/nyemeninger/alle_meninger/cat1003/subcat1018/thread236078/#post_236078 (last accessed 16.04.2012).

Sitting solitary on a stage raiser at the *Peace Prize Concert 2011*, Bernhoft is submerged in white light from behind and above. A grey suit, black tie and ornamented white shirt, complement the bright light, silvery black backdrop, and polished black stage lacquer. The small space he occupies is in focus throughout the performance, directing attention to his skilled use of technology. With millions of eyes fixed on him, he introduces a performance legitimated by many strands of authenticity. Weaved together, sometimes in conflict, this authenticity might be characterised by self-fashioned commodification and the value placed on autonomy and control, borne out through creative mastery. By layering musical elements, one by one, onto a digital loop recorder, he lies down an accompaniment of vocal dubs, finger snaps, vocal beat with vocal bass, and a bright ‘sparkling’⁷⁸ acoustic guitar riff animated by a subtle flanger effect. Finally he dubs the vocal bass with bass guitar to glue it all together. From television recordings, I see him using at least three recording channels, connected to two microphones, and one guitar that doubles as a bass. This set-up allows him to produce a multilayered text, designing a song structure by punching musical elements (layers) in and out of the mix. The structure of this song is based on a simple three partite form; A = verse, B = Pre-chorus, C = Chorus. Recorded in the introduction, the different layers, or tracks, are stored in different memory banks on his digital recorder. This becomes evident when he mutes everything but the vocal beat as he enters the first verse, leaving a skeletal accompaniment that highlights the singing. The lyrics are inviting and generous, as the singer is trying his utmost to be honest and rhythmical, taking the blame for “the end of our family affair”, apologetically stating that “I should’ve been more forthcoming about the things I needed to say”. Here, a typical soul topic of love and passion emerges.

An empathic connection is made with the listener through the sheer amazement invoked by Bernhoft’s control over the instruments and sound equipment in the live recording process. Building an accompaniment by layering loops requires a high level of skill, timing, and concentration, since, as Richardson has noted regarding KT Tunstall’s looping, “inaccuracies in timing can lead to a flawed underlying groove

⁷⁸ The ‘sparkly’ effect comes about through the crisp sound of an amplified acoustic guitar with new steel strings that is articulated through the minute adjustments and ‘touching up’ of the sound image before and during broadcasting (equalising, panning, compression, ‘riding the fader’ etc.).

that will repeat throughout the duration of the song” (Richardson 2009: 90).⁷⁹ Bernhoft anticipates the first verse with an emotional and ‘soulful’ outcry in the mid-high tenor register: Oo Oo Yeah! Bernhoft then enters with a passionate outburst as he executes a breakneck, steep, upwards melodic manoeuvre. Beginning in his comfort zone on the keynote D3, he accelerates the melody through six ascending notes during a difficult and swift transition from chest tone to falsetto. He ends up a duodecim higher, on the pitch A4. Immediately, this positions him within a stylistic discourse characterised by the “elastic and embellished style of singing that is found in the black styles of soul, blues, and gospel” (Hawkins 2007b: 198). As the first verse progresses he exhibits a pleasant and calm charm, as the well-timed vocal beat and bass groove (3+3+2) strolls along under his warm, ‘meaty’ chest tone and breathy falsetto. Simultaneously, he effortlessly dubs the recorded sung bass with bass guitar. And as the camera shifts focus to his face, the shot reveals an aerodynamic Mohawk-do, mild focused eyes that close on emotional vocal peaks, and his characteristic wayfarer signature glasses.



Black Eyewear Max DT

The discourse surrounding the iconic wayfarer glasses infuses an aura of expensive fashion and smooth coolness to a choice in eyewear that connects specifically to urban American popular culture, where pop and rock with roots in r&b, blues, and soul are central ingredients.⁸⁰ Through this reservoir of meaning, Bernhoft positions himself as a stylistically self-aware male that draws on the rebellious discourses of the cool rock star and the dandified pop star that uses good looks, a compelling voice, charm and musicianship to intrigue and dazzle the recipient. Excavating Bernhoft’s brand of white masculinity, his

⁷⁹ The level of concentration required for Bernhoft at the Peace Prize Concert gains urgency as the audience claps completely out of time as he records the layers he is dependent on for a successful performance.

⁸⁰ In 1952, Raymond Stegeman designed this eyewear fashion for the American company Ray-Ban. The wayfarer look was popular throughout the 1950s and 60s when it became part of the styles of white rockers such as Buddy Holly and Bob Dylan. The glasses were nearly discontinued in the early 1980s, but were rejuvenated by avid product placement throughout the 80s (Risky Business 1983, The Breakfast Club 1985, Miami Vice 1984-89), and was popularised by artists such as the Blues Brothers and Michael Jackson. They fell out of style again in the 1990s, and made yet another comeback in 2007 and has been used by contemporary metrosexual white megacelebrities such as Justin Timberlake, Robert Downey Jr., Johnny Depp, and Brad Pitt. Today the brand is categorised under ‘Icons’ on ray-ban.com and have become part of the sign economy for a retro ‘50s look’.

appearance and vocal mannerisms are of crucial importance. As Hawkins maintains, “[d]andified characteristics in pop entail a set of attitudes, norms and conditions of self-aestheticization that lead to social elevation and commercial gain” (Hawkins 2009: 184). Starting with looks and gender, aesthetic norms regulating male behaviour have, as previously noted, since the 1980s changed dramatically, and no longer are females alone facing the pressures and pleasures of the *gaze*⁸¹. Male artists and their bodies are today being exploited at an almost equal scale as that of their female counterparts. This includes subjection to side effects, such as stress due to unobtainable beauty ideals and intense sexualisation of popular culture,⁸² superficial relationships, and alienation, brought about through escalated and technologically induced blurring of hyper-reality and reality. Born in 1976, Bernhoft belongs to a generation that has been severely impacted by the MTV era and the opportunities that arose for male representation in its wake in terms of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. As Hawkins points out: “In recent years, the male variant of [the pop star] has become more transgressive as his body has appeared to be released from heteronormative constraints and racial divisions” (Hawkins 2007b: 197). This could be seen as a transculturalist aspect of queering that Bernhoft articulates in terms of a dandified metrosexual temperament. From this perspective, Bernhoft’s performance has a subversive edge that might chip away at dominant norms. However, there are problems with this optimistic view, and if Bernhoft can be read as a representative for intercultural dialogue and flexible gender norms, his queering can equally be read as reinforcing the very same boundaries he seems to be blurring. As Hawkins maintains: “As a form of appropriation, the practice of queering swiftly substituted for a range of norms in gender behaviours; queer performance, after all, undermines the subversive side of gender politics, which has its parallels in race, ethnicity and class” (Hawkins 2009: 104). Thus, in my opinion Bernhoft’s act can be read as moderately queering gender and national ethnicity, staged around unresolved tensions between modern and postmodern sensibilities. For instance, Hawkins has insisted that celebrity

⁸¹ The concept of the gaze relates to how the onlooker’s attitudes have a role to play in conditioning objectified bodies on display. Notably, the male gaze has most famously been theorised by film theorist Laura Mulvey (1975). She has proposed that the male gaze is instrumental in shaping the female subject, which contributes to the cultural codification of feminine aesthetics. Mulvey’s approach has however in the last decades been rendered outdated by developments in popular styles and identity politics (Hawkins 2002; Fast 2001). Today it is more reasonable to consider a plurality of gazes, which also include the female gaze.

⁸² See for example Kai Arne Hansen’s problematising of the normalisation and naturalisation of digitally enhanced hypersexual representations in mainstream pop videos (Hansen 2011: 29, 30).

metrosexuals such as Justin Timberlake and Beckham, “hardly express attitudes that put them at risk as they still contribute to the dominant system by spelling out their underlying heterosexuality [...] As an acceptable alternative to heteronormativity, straight celebrities who play queer fit comfortably into the category of *stylistic straight-queers*” (Hawkins 2007b: 207). I would argue that Bernhoft fits neatly into Hawkins’ argument here.

For example, in Bernhoft’s case heterosexual masculinity is grounded by his personal life, specifically with regard to fatherhood and an apparently successful marriage. And although one could argue that his queering has limited subversive charge, a metrosexual sensibility has in some cases, as with Prince, been “interpreted as an alignment to women’s resistance to men at least in comparison to the active and dominant roles assigned to men in rock and pop styles” (Hawkins 2002: 162). Far more conventional than Prince, Bernhoft’s gendered construction exists in a limbo, where the safe is blended with a touch of revolt. On the one hand, Bernhoft’s masculinity is characterised by a combination of personal life, technical control, and a powerful and almost gravelly chest tone. On the other hand, his dandified looks and temperament, as well as his falsetto, and to some extent his lyrical content, position him on the queer side. Indeed, identifying queer performances is dependant on time and place, and on a cautionary note Hawkins maintains that queering “remains an excruciatingly difficult term to justify. For the process of identifying the act of queering necessitates a differentiation between what is meant by ‘straight’ and what is ‘queer’” (Hawkins 2007b: 201). Some of the most queered moments in ‘C’mon Talk’ appear in the passages sung with falsetto. Since the voice is one of the musical signifiers inscribed most strongly with notions of identity, this singing style arrives as a highly coded musical element. Drawing on Koestenbaum, Hawkins has pointed out that “[h]istorically as much as culturally, falsetto is coded in effeminacy, and [...] cultures have long since ridiculed men who sing high” (ibid: 199). Both stylish looks and falsetto are often met with allegations of homosexuality, and studies have shown “that the gay voice occurs within a homophobic culture” (ibid). In a Norwegian context, queered subjects are still treated with suspicion and harassment in homophobic and xenophobic spaces that often are associated with rural districts and suburbs. In terms of gender and national ethnicity, tensions between urban diversity and rural tradition are related to bewilderment and struggle over what constitutes

contemporary national identity. In this regard Hawkins and Bjorøy has noted the following:

The national space has in recent times denoted a definite shift towards roots and notions of cultural fixity, marked by a fragmentation of larger national, regional and district identities that constitute both liberating and oppressive side-effects. Significant here is the evolution of a greater dynamism in the constant transformation of a society that has moved from the problematics of class conflict to those of ethnicity and right-extremism; this is discernible in all European states to a lesser or greater extent (Hawkins and Bjorøy 2012: 6).

As a Norwegian brought up in a rural suburb to Bergen, and living the past 16 years in Oslo, I am very familiar with the tensions that exist between the rural and the urban, and from a wider perspective, Oslo and the rest of Norway. In general, but not always, ‘the rest’ have a perception of Oslo as superficial (fashion), effeminate (fashion, intellectual), and contaminated by immigrants, prostitutes, drug-addicts, and homosexuals.⁸³ Eriksen would agree that in a national context, Oslo is pervasively seen as a dirty hybrid of immigrants and other minorities that many perceive as a threat to the ‘purity’ of Norwegian culture (Eriksen 1993). Considering the latter point, Bernhoft’s queering of gender and ‘race’ can gain a transcultural charge when combined with biographical facts. His critical stance against everyday racism, and his participation at events such as the *Peace Prize Concert* suggest sympathy and solidarity with ethnic minorities, feminism and sexual minorities. However, as a white Norwegian following a black stylistic tradition Bernhoft’s blurring of ethnic boundaries is equivocal. He confesses being inspired by 1960s and 1970s soul/funk music, citing as influences several black American artists such as Donny Hathaway, Stevie Wonder, Sly and the Family Stone, Marvin Gaye, Al Green, and Aretha Franklin.⁸⁴ As well as Prince and early Lenny Kravitz closer to his own generation.⁸⁵ These preferences become obvious through sound and production, technical and

⁸³ A good example is a slogan for Bergen’s soccer team, Brann, that we can hear sung when the somewhat overly-patriotic Bergeneese soccer fans come to Oslo for the cup finals against VIF: “Oslo city is full of shit. Negro whores and heroin”. This is of course meant as a tongue in cheek stab at Vålerenga soccer team, but it nonetheless reveals a core of truth as to how Bergen perceives Oslo – see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6q_yvf8bIho (last accessed 02/03/2012).

⁸⁴ See Anders Grønneberg 2011 http://www.dagbladet.no/2011/12/02/kultur/jarle_bernhoft/stipend/music_export_norway/plate/19245666/ (last accessed 16.04.2012).

⁸⁵ See Trine Stalsberg 2011 - <http://www.side2.no/underholdning/article3080047.ece> (last accessed 16.04.2012).

stylistic choices, and of course vocal techniques and sound. And one might ask in what sense Bernhoft can be regarded as ‘authentic’? As Hawkins has warned us, “[o]perating within established genres such as blues, R&B, rap and hip-hop, often results in a more Americanised accent, as a copy of the original” (Hawkins 2009: 67). An issue problematised by Born and Hesmondhalgh and others:

Do the worldwide popularity and significance of musics of black origin represent triumph for African American culture? Or a cultural consolation for political suppression and economic inequality? Is the ‘borrowing’ by white musicians of putatively black forms, and the vast profits generated by the recording industry on the basis of such traffic in sounds, merely an other form of racist exploitation? (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000: 22).

Polarising questions like these emanate from a double process of transcultural success and failure. Some, e.g. George Lipsitz, Dick Hebdige and Simon Jones, have interpreted appropriation of black musics by whites positively, seen as potentially opening “cultural spaces in which intercultural dialogue between ethnic groups can take place” (ibid). On the other hand, critics have turned to the history of jazz, rock and roll, and hip-hop, taking up issues revolving around “the degree to which white musicians and listeners have brought about a ‘dilution’ of black music, and the extent to which the recording industry (in general, white-owned) has exploited black culture and black musicians in particular” (ibid: 23). Following Leroi Jones, critiquing the ‘dilution’ argument, Gilroy suggests approaching music as a *changing* same, because the “syncretic complexity of black expressive cultures alone supplies powerful reasons to resist the idea that an untouched, pristine Africanity resides within these forms” (Gilroy 1991: 126). Read optimistically, then, the postmodern pole of Bernhoft’s subjectivity enables him to invest affect in appropriated cultural material that has been detached from any supposed origin. In this sense, Bernhoft fabricates a personal audiovisual style that is ‘authentic’ because he controls the creation of an original brand of musical subjectivity that in my opinion successfully invites intercultural dialogue through a temperament that is articulated as *authenticity of expression*, which convinces us of his sincerity and integrity (cf. Moore 2007). In an unessentialist manner, his performance is guaranteed by a self-aware investment in an audiovisual poise that gains virtue by the commitment Bernhoft displays. In this sense Moore’s *first person authenticity* conflates with Grossberg’s ‘authentic inauthenticity’, opening the floor for self-fashioned originality, while released from

the straitjacket of essentialist policing of socio-cultural borders. One should be aware, however, that respect and decency towards peoples' traditions is required to pull off transcultural dialogue successfully.

The metrosexual 'new man' sometimes comes in the form of a dandy, a self-aesthetised figure that in every age has been characterised differently (Hawkins 2009: 15). In his study of the British pop dandy Hawkins emphasises that this character comes in many guises, and "[t]antalizing the fan [...] he can be demure, sensual, sexually naive, or bold, cock-shure, rough and vulgar; or even passive, regressive, and a psycho-case" (ibid: 5). Bernhoft seems to fit comfortably in the first two categories, but he is also bold. His appearance on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* has at the time of writing been seen more than 660 000 times on YouTube, and was seen by approximately 2.5 million Americans when it was broadcasted in September 2011.⁸⁶ DeGeneres is a highly successful comedian, actress and TV host, and came out as a lesbian on *Oprah Winfrey Show* in 1997. Interviewing Bernhoft she said she had been "blown away" by Bernhoft's video, leading in to a question about his instant success on YouTube. Uploaded early in 2011 the simple but stylish video for 'C'mon Talk' caught on quick and has today been seen more than 2 700 000 times.⁸⁷ The interview revealed a confident and humble persona that was able to joke and make the viewer feel comfortable, despite the strain that comes with being exposed to a celebrity of DeGeneres calibre in front of a two million plus audience. Teasing about underwear led Ellen to exclaim, "I will pull your pants down!", ending with a heartfelt laugh to the studio audience's applause and pleased yells.⁸⁸ Firm eye contact, smiles, and friendly temperament make the interview compelling to watch. Talking with Ellen, Bernhoft displays a charisma and inclusiveness that he brings with him on stage, and performing at transcultural events such as this and the Peace Concert underscore a sympathetic cosmopolitan sensibility that might invoke empathy across stylistic and genre borders. Stylish, demure, sensual, and bold, combined with skilled and inventive use of technology, Bernhoft plays with conventions to shape an original brand of musical masculinity that seems to place him within the category of the dandy.

⁸⁶ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCn5hCmRoMc> (last accessed 12.04.2012).

⁸⁷ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjEsAEsYCw4> (last accessed 12.04.2012).

⁸⁸ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rqaYxirtQ> (last accessed 12.04.2012).

Hawkins has proclaimed that the “dandy is a bewildering construction: a creature of alluring elegance, vanity and irony, who plays around with conventions to his own ends” (Hawkins 2009: 15). And further, the dandy is driven by a “desire to draw on a personal style”, stating unabashedly “who he is and what he wants without giving a damn for what anyone cares” (ibid). From this, a dandy ‘not giving a damn’ can be seen as in opposition to transcultural dialogue, which requires mutual respect, and indeed the dandy can be unpleasant. However, on the other hand ‘not giving a damn’ is precisely what is required to break down national, ‘race’, and gender boundaries, since not caring render them unimportant and unthreatening (cf. Gilroy 2004: 105). However, this does not mean that Bernhoft is apathetic and ignorant to his surroundings. On the contrary he is convincingly ‘keeping it real’ through a dandified act characterised by a peculiar and individualistic temperament that comes across as original (in contrast to Breivik). However, in no uncertain terms, through a performance characterised by genre specific audiovisual technical and stylistic codes, Bernhoft subscribes to a Princean tradition. Although, where the American dandy relies heavily on dance to articulate himself, Bernhoft’s freedom of movement is limited by his cyborg-ish dependence on technology. To make his one-man-band work, he is confined to a chair behind guitar(s), microphones, and an array of sound manipulating pedals. Nonetheless, there is a sense of elegant dance in the way he operates body, instruments, and sound equipment. His feet are shuffling between pedals, and shoulders, torso, and head are moving in an understated manner, rhythmically interwoven with the musical (e)motions expressed through movements from playing the (bass)guitar, as well as the dynamic contours of singing and breathing, and with his feet stomping the beat. The accuracy he displays in timing the various layers in the mix is astonishing. From personal experience I know how excruciatingly difficult it is to not only record several layers in time, and more significantly, to get live loops to ‘groove’⁸⁹ or ‘swing’ while playing, singing, and moving over them. All in front of a large audience’s scrutinizing eyes.

One way to approach Bernhoft’s performance strategies is through his use of technology. In this regard, notions of the cyborg and the posthuman can be applied to

⁸⁹ Whether or not a song has groove is determined by micro-rhythmical deviations from the strict metronome grid that are often highly important for constituting a distinct personal style and convincingly address an audience musically. See for example Anne Danielsen’s various models for conceptualising groove (Danielsen 2010: chapter two).

construe a performance that is ambiguously positioned according to “differences between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions *that used to apply to organisms and machines*” (Haraway 1991: 152, my italics). Further, Katherine Hayles’ notion of the posthuman draws on the cyborg as metaphor for the seamless intersection between human beings and intelligent machines, marked by distributed consciousness and cognition (Hayles in Auner 2011: 9). Following this, the cyborg and the posthuman have an aspect of queering to them where fixed notions of authenticity are blurred along the traditionally stable boundaries of gender, ‘race’, and national ethnicity. As Auner has noted, the “posthuman decentring of the subject has clear connections to other postmodern narratives that have called the subject into question” (Auner 2011: 9). An obvious example of a posthuman condition is the Internet, penetrating nearly all spheres of social interaction, where Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia and YouTube have become extensions of people’s brains, or ‘hard drives’.⁹⁰ Interrelated in networks sharing vast amounts of information, one can envision a distributed cognitive system that to some extent forms a common collective conscience (cf. the Borg’s ‘hive mind’ in *Star Trek*). Thus, the queer aspect of the Internet is related to the virtual perforation of national borders, blurring national ethnicity by making the constructedness of national ‘authenticity’ apparent. DeGeneres’ discovery of Bernhoft through the Internet exemplifies this, where two powerful distribution technologies, TV and Internet, merge to present a Norwegian cosmopolitan that is impossible to pin down to any distinct national identity, eschewing the idea of ‘race’ as something inherent to nation-states (an idea important for Breivik). One could argue that Bernhoft constitutes himself through a globally disseminated consciousness where common cultural materials are transcending the nation-state, and are playfully appropriated in ways that in a sense makes him an American as much as a Norwegian. Or from a more *utopian* perspective, he could be seen, or rather heard, as a black American.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Note for example Anahid Kassabian’s notion of post-individual or distributed subjectivity, where she uses distributed computing as a metaphor for “how we interact with music in contemporary everyday life” (Kassabian 2008: 120,1).

⁹¹ I am well aware that this is a highly problematic statement. However, if one listens to Bernhoft without seeing him, and given his musical style, he could just as easily be perceived as a black American artist as a white Norwegian, which I feel underscores the point that categorisations of the biological body into ‘races’ is a cultural construct.

This, perhaps overly optimistic, view can be countered by a bleaker picture where the possibilities of information technologies can seduce people believing in “fantasies of unlimited power and disembodied immortality” (Hayles in Auner 2011: 10). Indeed, Breivik seems to have been absorbed in a mesmerizing hyper-reality where positions of masculine power could easily be obtained through mythical and violent worlds of video games, as well as through ideologies found in white supremacist ‘echo chambers’. These negative and positive side effects of technology are expressed by Hayles’ “idea of the posthuman as having both destructive and liberating implications for how we define ourselves, and thus for how we interact with others and with our environment” (Auner 2011: 10). It seems perfectly reasonable that from this perspective, Breivik’s case represents the destructive implications on social interaction, while Bernhoft represents the liberating and empowering effects information technology can have on autonomous self-fashioning and transcultural dialogue. As Frith notes, “technology has also made possible new forms of cultural democracy and new opportunities of individual and collective expression” (Frith 2011: 44). In Bernhoft’s case, technology is also crucial for solo performances based on live looping that has implications for his brand of masculinity. Staging the act is a gendered action, and aligning to the work of Toynbee (2000) et al., Hawkins insists that “*how* the male artist engages with music through the changing resources of technological production is a major point for consideration when it comes to understanding social relations through gendered construction” (Hawkins 2002: 163). Bernhoft’s ambiguous gender positions are for example articulated through technical mastery of a perceived feminizing technology. And here I draw on an example from KT Tunstall’s use of simulated multitracking in her breakthrough appearance on the TV show *Later... with Jools Holland* in 2004. John Richardson’s analysis of Tunstall suggests that the ambiguous space created by “looping and other repetitive practices,” can have a positive impact on agency, despite allegations of effete passivity (Richardson 2009: 91). Further, he has insisted on “a heightening of agency through the performer’s immersion in the act of composition, which is compounded by the fact that her role overlaps with that of the studio engineer” (ibid). Thus, by blurring the distinctions between musician, composer, and producer she becomes an autonomous agent, and assumes the role of the *auteur*.

The passive and effete connotations of looping notwithstanding, in Bernhoft's case, a subversive potential related to the destabilisation of gender categories seems to be undermined by bringing the studio space onto the stage, which confirms a modernist authenticity ideal by tapping into an androcentric discourse related to individuality and autonomy (cf. part one – 'Methodology'). Indeed the recording studio is a gendered space, where "the masculine/feminine binarism continues to underpin much of the discourse surrounding the creative role of the producer in a predominantly male domain" (Hawkins 2004: 16). Since the 1990s the producer has increasingly gained status as a creative force within the studio, drawing on the authenticity idiom of the *solitary genius* inherited from the Romantic era. Solitude means that none other than the *auteur* is allowed to tamper with the artistic *utterance*, thus one speaks the truth of one's own situation (*first person authenticity*). An artist is judged by her/his perceived honesty, and if suspicion arises that someone else is in control, an artist comes across as a 'puppet on strings' (e.g. Milli Vanilli's 'deception' in the late 80s). Emma Mayhew has noted that in fan talk and music criticism, the 'puppet' role is most often relegated to female artists, revealing a masculine arts discourse that since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has seen a "solidification of the creative subject as male" (Mayhew 2004: 150). Since Beethoven, this idiom has become institutionalised as a marker of male authenticity, especially in rock discourse, where the ideal is total control over creative output. Most certainly Bernhoft draws on this discourse, while presenting a simplified version of a recording process that goes on at length in an actual studio environment, where a recording is "realised through a blend of live performance, multiple takes, overdubs and mastering" (Hawkins 2002: 160). Significantly, at the *Peace Prize Concert* Bernhoft simulates what is normally a cooperative process, making him seem in total control.

As Bernhoft enters the pre-chorus, the first recorded vocal phrase is clocked in once again, while he presents a new melodic idea that is executed through a phrase alternating between chest tone and falsetto. His emotions are ambiguous: "Talking to you, bitter sweet, bitter sweet". As he moves on to the chorus, all the recorded elements come into play simultaneously, and while demanding communication and recognition, a vigorously strummed chord progression complements a dynamic peak on the refrain. A percussive, syncopated, stuttering vocal flow, spells out a solution to the ambiguous sentiment in the pre-chorus lyrics. This short rhythmical melody hook

coincides with the return of the undulating melodic contours of the recorded guitar riff. Undoubtedly this dynamic peak can lift the mood and invoke empathy: “Come on talk t-talk, t-t-talk, t-talk, talk, to me yeah, to me yeah”. Bernhoft’s phrase is sung with chest tone in the mid-high tenor range, where the column of air that sets the vocal cords in motion is skilfully mastered and shaped, creating a sound that is powerfully executed and precisely intonated by keeping control over the muscles in diaphragm, throat and mouth cavity. His vocal sound is reminiscent of a tenor version of Johnny Cash’s knife sharp baritone-bass that has a clear texture with a subtle rasp. Bernhoft’s skill as a singer is spelt out through a combination of precision and acrobatic movements between falsetto and chest tone, while playing around with affective outbursts and syncopated rhythms. At the same time he is in dialogue with himself through looped samples of vocal and instrument phrases, creating a fascinating audiovisual spectacle that apparently intrigues people to accept him as authentic. Which opens for a consideration of the transculturalist potential of shared aesthetic tastes across socio-cultural boundaries.

Conclusion

In this study I have pondered over the links between music, empathy, and anti-empathy, while identifying ways to comprehend the shaping of masculinities through music and technology. Concerned with addressing issues of ideology and transculturalism, I have argued that Breivik’s appropriation of music can unearth several aspects of his subjectivity. This has primarily been related to an identification of a pagan/Christian duality in his representational politics, where his appropriation of ‘Lux Aeterna’, Saga, and Helene Bøksle has provided insights into to how Breivik has shaped and envisioned his subjectivity, where a fantasy of the Knight has been sinisterly appropriated to forge an attack against what he sees as multicultural and feminist traitors of a supposedly homogenous, pure, and fixed patriarchal society. In this sense his notion of national and European identity merges with an ideologically defined masculinity. For example, following Reeser, since “the gender of a nation is performed”, a continuous repetition of a “national-gendered style comes to be seen over time as stable, as natural-like, or as inextricably characteristic of that

culture” (Reeser 2010: 179). Notably, his musical preferences have also provided an understanding of the powerful motivational effects music can have, mainly through homological links between audiovisual codes and processes, and an idealised notion of culture and society that apparently Breivik feels represents his subjectivity.

Emphasising my reading of Bøksle, then, Norway’s gendered symbolic repertoire seems to be in full effect in her performances, leaving them open for ideological appropriation for an extremist nationalist white supremacist. Furthermore, it is my argument that Breivik’s aesthetic appropriations and staging of anti-empathy, in the real world and through the Internet, have disclosed aspects of how subjectivities continually morph into new ideals through social mediation, underscoring the constructed nature of masculinities, national-ethnicity, and ‘race’ (Hawkins and BJORØY 2012).

I have also argued that Bernhoft might be considered a queer antidote to Breivik, an antidote promulgated through using the empathic qualities of creative musicking to promote transcultural dialogue and solidarity. One of my main objectives has been to understand how popular music merges with technology, where in Bernhoft’s case I propose that his Peace Prize performance, read in dialogue with other recent performances and biography, exemplifies liberating and empowering aspects of technology. In contrast, Breivik’s use of technology afforded him with possibilities not only for altering physical features, but also as a tool for accessing virtual worlds where he easily could play out his ideology, connecting with likeminded, and appropriate a fantasy of masculine power and authority. Furthermore, through a study of Bernhoft’s performance strategies I have suggested that although his queering of gender and ethnicity has limited subversive powers, his audiovisual style, consummated through inventive use of technology, can nonetheless destabilise hegemonic norms and might reveal the incapability of binary structures to capture the complexities of the human condition. Thus, considering Bernhoft’s self-reflective dandification, empathically blurring, or rather queering, gender and ethnic boundaries, it seems as if he inhabits a transgressive potential, which could be considered valuable in a society that seems to be shifting towards the conservative right. In this sense, through an intriguing staging of empathy, Bernhoft can be regarded as a queer antidote to Breivik. However, one should not over exaggerate the subversive potentials of Bernhoft’s straight, mainstream queering. A point Hawkins has laboured

regarding Justin Timberlake could here be employed to Bernhoft. Mainly that “gender travel through straight-play emphasises the restrictions of masculinity while still clinging to them” (Hawkins 2007b: 197). Thus, one might ask about Bernhoft as Hawkins does about Timberlake: Does Bernhoft’s queering “privilege straightness at the expense of the Other?” (ibid: 208). And further, “to what extent does he give voice and legitimacy to heteromale norms?” (ibid: 209). As I have argued, Bernhoft’s queer display continually negotiates paradoxes that arise from the, often contrasting, sensibilities of his vocality, fashion, lyrical content, use of technology, appropriation of musical style, and biography. Thus, his queer originality is nonetheless underpinned by a ‘fake’ slipperiness that makes him hard to pin down. Which incidentally might be exactly what constitutes a subversive potential in his performances, with regard to gender as well as national ethnicity.

Considering both normativity and subversiveness of popular music through readings of Breivik and Bernhoft, I have also sketched out a schism in the Norwegian society, aligning a postmodernist optimism about diversity and transculturality to urban spaces, and modernist fixity, nostalgia, and idealised notions of Arcady to the districts and suburbia. I will pick up on this fracture in the next part, where the transcultural potential of urban diversity is addressed. On a cautionary note, Adam Krims warns us against taking the subversive potential of urban hybridity mediated through music for granted. From a Marxian perspective he argues that hybridity in a postmodern economy has become commodified and exploited, to the extent that transgressions of socio-cultural boundaries are rendered insignificant (Krims 2007: 103). From this perspective hybrid dynamics, once potentially subversive, have become standardised and mass-produced (ibid). Taking this into consideration, I would nonetheless argue that in some cases more than others, queering and diversity in musical performance, even if commodified, can have a subversive edge (Warhol and Velvet Underground, Bowie, Morrissey, Cobain, Madonna, Prince, Lady GaGa). Importantly, the level of impact is dependent on the performer’s subjectivity, whose temperament, sentiment, and creativity must be taken into consideration when “locating specific moments that are symptomatic of agency, style and idiosyncrasy” (Hawkins 2009: 5). Thus, what seems to be lacking in Krims’ critique is a subjective level, which is a main focus for a transculturalist approach.

PART THREE

Transculturalism or Nationalism?

*All ethnic Norwegians have to confront racist attitudes - Abid Raja, 2012.*⁹²

Is Norwegian culture in peril? Or do immigrants enrich an already hybrid culture? How do Norwegians respond to increased immigration and cultural diversity? This leads to several questions regarding how 22/7 could happen. Instead of looking for reasons in Breivik's childhood, psyche, or international influences, I will direct attention to the issue of nationalism and racism in Norway, where my aim is to investigate the political and cultural backdrop for last year's horrific events. Questions need to be raised regarding what level of personal responsibility we all have in what happened, and how we (Norwegians), at an individual level, can better intercultural dialogues. For I do not think we can blame the Labour Party's immigration politics for the terror attack, as The Norwegian Progressive Party's Johnny Wæhler does.⁹³ This third part of the thesis will investigate national identity through five case studies, read with regard to integration and the vexed issue of multiculturalism. Here, a main objective is to heed to the call of Norwegian social anthropologists Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Marianne Gullestad who calls for critical self-reflection over Norwegian identity and values, and importantly over the way 'we' represent and construct 'us' as opposed to 'them' (Eriksen 1993, 2002; Gullestad 2002).

Maria Mena, Samsaya, Tooji, and Stella Mwangi are artists who have managed to succeed in making their transcultural voices heard, representing welcome convivial additions to the collage of national media images often saturated with overdramatised immigration scenarios.⁹⁴ Reading these artists against more 'safe' performers such as

⁹² Raja is a politician for the Party of the Left, interviewed April 16th 2012 during the court proceedings against Breivik - <http://www.dbtv.no/?vid=1570176347001> (last accessed 16.04.2012, my transcription and translation).

⁹³ See <http://www.ostlendingen.no/nyheter/frp-politiker-fra-hamar-mener-ap-er-medskyldige-i-terroren-1.6415436> (last accessed 08/03/2012).

⁹⁴ See for example the controversial 'documentary' about multicultural Holmlia, called Naive Norway, by photographer Christofer Owe, aired prime time on TV2 in 2006. (Hylland Eriksen described it as

Plumbo, I ponder over Norwegian patriotism and the impact its various guises can have on transcultural integration and solidarity. I begin with an interpretation of Mena's 'Mitt lille land', setting up a dialogue between Mena's version and various other versions. This allows me to ponder over the tensions between modern and postmodern spaces in contemporary Norway, and how the fractures between these where smoothed over and polished through the use of music in the various memorial events during the late summer of 2011. Focusing on close readings of Mena's version, as well as the hip-hop-esque version by Vinni, Samsaya, and Tommy Tee, I maintain that the transcultural sensibilities that charge 'Mitt lille land' reveal a politically charged split between a cosmopolitan and an Arcadian sentiment of Norwegian identity. As we shall see this split has consequences for the level of impact nationally broadcasted transcultural concerts or videos might have, spurring both liberating and oppressive side effects.

In the second section, through an investigation of recent debates on immigration, I present and critique snap-shots from a hostile discourse compounded by public and semi-public utterances based on cultural absolutism, fear, and blunt racism. From this I pick up on the question of Norwegian everyday racism, which, as we saw in part two, is an issue that also Bernhoft has engaged himself with. The rock band Plumbo form the centre of attention when considering a type of racism that appears in slips of the tongue. Though often meant as jokes, I suggest that examining these kinds of utterances might reveal an institutionalised way of discoursing about the Other that should be more carefully reflected over. Today everyday racism has become a noticeable part of online discourses, where transcultural and transpersonal spaces converge to shape a novel arena in which ethnic relationships are shaped. A telling example of this is the negative responses and harassment that surfaced online after Tooji's ESC victory over Plumbo in 2012. Through a comparative reading of Plumbo's performance of 'Ola Nordmann' and Tooji's performance of 'Stay', I consider how audiovisual representational politics give rise to quarrels over which artists should be allowed to represent this nation in the international ESC finals. As O'Flynn argues, "[in] the case of music, the particular ideological constructs

ignorant and offensive) - <http://www.dagbladet.no/kultur/2006/12/06/485124.html> (last accessed 29.03.2012). And see warning articles on recent SSB statistics over Oslo's immigrant demography – <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/artikkel.php?artid=10078980> (last accessed 29.03.2012).

obtaining in any nation state are likely to impact on the relative status and/or support afforded to different musical styles” (O’Flynn 2007: 23). Again, recalling Moore’s *third person authenticity*, to be regarded authentic, the artist must “[convey] the impression of accurately representing the ideas of another, embedded within a tradition of performance” (Moore 2007: 218). From this, it becomes problematic for many Norwegians to authenticate artists with non-Western appearances using non-Western audiovisual codes in their performances. Here a particular display of nationalist popular music politics can be unveiled, which again relates to the now familiar urban/district discourses.

Anti-immigrant and aggressively patriotic utterances that flourish in the blurred space between the public and the semi-public⁹⁵ stands in contrast to the unity and transculturality promulgated by the Labour government, *TV2 Nyhetene*, and the 22/7 memorial events. And for many, transcultural artists represent a violation of the norms that constitute ‘authentic’ Norwegian culture, provoking anxieties related to hybridisation. For example, when Mwangi won the Norwegian ESC finals in 2011 it caused much dismay from an anonymous mass of Internet commentators, to the degree that NRK had to shut down their comment board on account of indecent and hateful messages. In the final section I introduce Mwangi as a potential transcultural antidote to absolutist notions of Norwegian culture, interpreting her ESC success as a site of struggle, where her high visibility seems to shape an ample response to those who only see only danger in cultural diversity. Through a close reading of Mwangi’s performance of ‘Haba Haba’ I unearth how otherness in musical performances can provoke harsh retorts. At the same time, however, the reading can provide an example of the way in which transcultural convivial culture can blunt the edge of such anti-empathic responses. Here I wonder if we can begin to think of Mwangi as a new kind of Askeladden, a transcultural Askeladden successfully empowering herself against poor odds. Revisiting the concept of queering, I interpret her performance in the Norwegian ESC as a type of resistance, where what I perceive as studious naivety through audiovisual rhetoric can form a defensive and possibly subversive act.

⁹⁵ For example Facebook, YouTube, news comment-boards, Twitter, and blogs.

Mitt lille land: A transculturalist mirage?

In times of national trauma, music activates cultural memory in a way that is comforting, although in different ways for different groups within a nation-state. In the immediate 22/7 aftermath, several songs became central for a process of healing, and already before the *22/7 Memorial Concert* in Oslo Domkirke July 30th 2011, Maria Mena's version of Ole Paus' 'Mitt lille land' became one of the most popular songs for a nation in mourning. In different ways this song align to and draw meaning from Norwegian history, on account of the ways in which music is a politically charged symbol that means different things for different people, and as Struken has argued, "[cultural memory] is a field of contested meanings in which [people] interact with cultural elements to produce concepts of the nation, particularly in events of trauma, where both the structures and the fractures of a culture are exposed" (Struken in Fast and Pegley 2011: 359). Following this, the outburst of patriotism through the popular song 'Mitt lille land' reveals fractures that can be read along the mentioned schism between modern and postmodern paradigms, or structures of feeling. When sung by an entire nation in trauma, both poles of meaning come into play simultaneously, and in this sense the song can offer unity across the political spectrum, however briefly. Read this way, the song conceals a fracture between two poles of Norwegian identity; an inward looking nostalgia, pessimistic about a chaotic present and multicultural future; and an outward looking and forward-thinking optimism about vibrant cultural diversity.⁹⁶

Originally written in 1994 by Ole Paus on commission for the pro-EU organisation *Fra Nei til Ja*, 17 years later his little song became a source for comfort and unity in a time of unprecedented grief. A reason for the song's recent success is not only on account of the sonic particularities of the song and Mena's popularity, but also the familiarity Paus' song has gained from being used since the 1990s as a promotional soundtrack for *TV2 Nyhetene*. The many versions of 'Mitt lille land' recorded by transcultural artists such as Samsaya, Haddy N'jie, Maria Mena, and Mari Boine can

⁹⁶ Drawing on Nederveen Pieterse Biddle and Knights, identifies a modernist pole of the politics of location that is characterised by "a recourse to a 'new traditionalism'" where national identity is articulated through 'rootedness' or authenticity in terms of "ethnicity, race, linguistic communities, the local and so on", that is, "a territorial, inward-looking sense of place" (Biddle and Knights 2007: 5). The postmodern pole is characterised by a celebration of "a plurality of globalized cultures", that is, "a translocal, outward-looking sense of place" (ibid).

be interpreted as an effort to promote intercultural dialogue, all the while establishing TV2 as a supposedly politically correct and credible news channel. Transcultural sentiments were after 22/7 infused into the song when it became an ephemeral outlet for showing sympathy for the victims and victims' families, while functioning as a catalyst for mourning and unity. A schism materialises in the meanings arising from 'Mitt lille land'. Seemingly the song represents a collective stance against the monocultural politics that led to Breivik's attack. However, considering anti-immigrant and anti-feminism discourses flourishing in public and semi-public media before and after the attack, questions arise regarding music's manipulative role in promoting a self-image of Norway that seems at odds with broader sentiments. Three months after the attack, October 21st, Aftenposten could report that the brief moment of sympathetic outburst of 'love, community and democracy' had once again been overpowered by xenophobic hatred.⁹⁷ Here Aftenposten presented examples of the resurgence of a passive aggressive rage directed at immigrants in general and Muslims in particular, that has been noticeable in Norway for quite some time.

At the *22/7 Memorial Concert* in Oslo Domkirke July 30th 2011, TV hostess Hilde Hummelvold proclaimed, "Norway has managed to turn evil into kindness and solicitude". After which Maria Mena entered the stage and sang 'Mitt lille land' backed by KORK ('The Norwegian Broadcasting Orchestra'). KORK provides a dramatic orchestral texture for a live performance that conjures up romanticised melancholy and nostalgia, in turn emphasised by Mena's whispery voice and the cushy sound of the minor-scale piano hook; Gm – Eb – F – Gm. A strong sense of intimacy is brought about through Mena's voice, which through amplification can be heard over the much louder orchestra (cf. Frith 1996: 188), allowing the audience to experience Mena as close and comforting. It is almost like being given a sonic hug. Through the years 'Mitt lille land' has become a familiar anthem that because of its various versions gives associations to both urban and rural spaces. In this sense it can be read as a song able to bridge discrepancies and smooth over the most pressing discords between district and city. To start with the rural, an Arcadian aspect of the song is seductively neo-romantic and nostalgic, and is tied to an idealised, simple, rustic, peasant, and fishing society. The lyrics for 'Mitt lille land' weave together

⁹⁷ See Carl Martin Nordby 2011 - <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/Rosetoget-er-gtt-6668371.html> (last accessed 16.04.2012).

several narratives that capture facets of Norwegian national pride. For example, with all the canonised accomplishments in a country's cultural memory, emphasising the smallness of the country seems to make them even more impressive.⁹⁸ Also, small-sized societies connote intimacy and community, with tightly knit social bonds and *gemeinschaft* (cf. part two – 'Arcadian illusions'). With its connotations to pre-modern social organisation, the title aligns to Paus' poetic embellishments about peace, plains, fjords, mountains, soil, ocean, coast, and stars; Presenting Norway as an autonomous, quiet, peace-loving, and rural nation of dreamers:⁹⁹

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. My little country
A small place, a handfull of peace
Thrown out amongst plains and fjord</p> | <p>2. My little country
Where high mountains are planted
Between houses and people and words
And where quietude and dreams grow
As an echo in barren soil</p> |
| <p>3. My little country
Where the ocean brushes mild and soft
As caresses from coast to coast</p> | <p>4. My little country
Where stars glide past
And becomes a landscape when dawn breaks
While the night stands bleak and silent</p> |

Given that it was originally written for a pro-EU organisation, the national romantic lyrics, almost a spoof on the national anthem, makes it hard not to interpret the song ironically.¹⁰⁰ Although others have also pointed this out, Ole Paus has assured us that this was not his intention.¹⁰¹ Whatever Paus' intended meanings might have been, when Maria Mena performs her version at the Memorial Concert, the polished and dramatic production in Oslo Domkirke smothers any hint of irony that might have been retained from the original.

⁹⁸ Obama often uses the term 'punching above their weight' to flatter smaller European allies like Norway. See Snorre Schjønberg 2012 - <http://www.dagbladet.no/2012/03/29/nyheter/usa/obama/stoltenberg/retorikk/20880209/> (last accessed 16.04.2012).

⁹⁹ My translation.

¹⁰⁰ The first verse on the Norwegian national anthem: Yes, we love this country, as it rises, furrowed, weather-beaten over the water, with the thousand homes. Love, love it and think, about our father and mother, and the saga night that lowers, dreams upon our soil (my translation).

¹⁰¹ See Ole Paus 2011 - http://www.dagbladet.no/2011/09/27/kultur/debatt/debattinnlegg/ole_paus/mitt_lille_land/18316244/ (last accessed 16.04.2012).

Mena's first version was commissioned by *TV2 Nyhetene* and released on YouTube June 16th. Here she cooperated with music producer Martin Sjøhelle and created a version that was set to a video directed by Erik Edland¹⁰². This version lacks the pompous orchestration from the memorial concert, but the moody piano hook is present in both. The first version has more of an intimate and jazzy urban sound, emphasised by her intimately produced voice. As with her performance in Oslo Domkirke the intimate feel of her voice is produced by an intersection of two technologies, microphone and reverb. Frith has noted the far-reaching consequences of the popularisation of the electric microphone, which "allowed us to hear people in ways that normally implied intimacy" (Frith 1996: 188). Mena's breathy voice is brought very close to the listener by the amplified sound signal, and stands crisply out on top of the blurry and reverberated piano hook. Similarly, production techniques such as reverb can also be used to invoke intimacy, as in this case where the listener seems to be placed in a small room with Mena softly whispering into our ear. At the same time an Arcadian sentiment comes across through the lyrics and highly reverberated and clean electric jazz guitar, drawing on a sound that some would characterise as 'fjelljazz' ('mountain jazz'). This metaphor is part of what has become known as 'the Nordic tone' associated with the internationally acclaimed jazz saxophonist Jan Garbarek.¹⁰³ 'Fjelljazz' is a hook label popularised by the music press, most likely quoting Garbarek's heavily reverberated soprano saxophone. Not surprisingly the thin tone of a soprano sax with lush reverb gives rise to associations of mountains, ice, and snow. The mountain jazz sound is echoed in the short el-guitar lick that ends the song, and creates a tension against the mostly urban or neutral images in the video (one frame shows a fisherman). Clearly TV2 is trying to appeal to both rural and urban areas, which becomes clearer when reading Mena's version against the version by Vinni, Samsaya, and TommyTee.

On April 15th 2011 Vinni, Samsaya, and Tommy Tee released a video to their version of 'Mitt Lille Land' onto YouTube. The video, directed by Edland, is set in a distinctly urban and transcultural space. Complete with graffiti, skateboard ramps, break dancing, and turntable DJing, the iconography and music style is decidedly

¹⁰² See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyVg5dG5Hh8> (last accessed 09/03/2012).

¹⁰³ See for instance <http://jazznytt.jazzinorge.no/leder/februar-2011-fjord-og-fjell-og-%C2%ABthe-nordic-tone%C2%BB/> (last accessed 09/03/2012).

referencing American street culture, drawing heavily on hip-hop. This is a dance, graffiti, and rap culture that developed in New York City in the 1970s, in neighbourhoods that were,

dominated by people of African descent from the continental United States, Puerto Rico, and the West Indies. As a result, African-derived aesthetics, social norms, standards, and sensibilities are deeply embedded in the form, even when it is being performed by individuals who are not themselves of African descent (Schloss 2004: 2).

The one-minute promo video is structured around a common, but by no means universal, gender division in hip-hop, rap and r&b (interestingly Prince and Cat reverse this trend in ‘Alphabeth St.’ from *Lovesexy*, 1988).¹⁰⁴ Samsaya and Vinni are standing confidently in the midst of flames, dancing, DJing, and skateboarding. Samsaya starts off by singing the title words, before Vinni initiates a rap which, in turn, is succeeded by a melodic hook from Samsaya:¹⁰⁵

Samsaya:

My little country

Vinni:

Hey I always find my way. In the tiny country we live in
Sour porridge [...], nan and tandoori. From street to coast where the ocean [resides]
[Flame, fireworks, and sagas and northern light]. We exit the hall of Dovregubben
What once was so different is now everywhere. Don't believe everything you're told
Cus' hey, it isn't always cold in my small nation

Samsaya:

You see me looking back
It never lets go
It rises over mountains and lakes
My small country
X2

Vinni:

I, with old valleys and lakes. And [...] as best you can
Hey, so come take my hand. [...]

¹⁰⁴ See Jarman-Ivens critique of heterosexism in rap music, where she investigates the patriarchal structures of language – i.e. ‘Language and/as Patriarchal Structure’ (Jarman-Ivens 2006: 204).

¹⁰⁵ I have transcribed and translated the lyrics myself, and I cannot guarantee the exact accuracy of every word and phrase. I still feel the general message comes across. The bracketed dots indicate that the rap is unintelligible (for me).

While Vinni's rap is optimistically addressing an urban transcultural condition, intertwining references to tradition and progress, Samsaya politely reminds us that despite our changing cultural texture, Norwegian history can still be a part of a common transcultural identity. This doubleness is echoed in musical codes and visual images. Samsaya starts with a generously reverberated phrase with added echo effect, singing the title words "mitt lille land". An acoustic folk guitar riff is repeated as Samsaya's voice slowly dissipates, and a sinus-generated bass warns us that the introduction is coming to an end, before all sounds cease so that the guitar alone can lead in to the first verse. Pastiche, and 'cut'n'paste' is familiar aspects of urban postmodern genres such as hip-hop and electronica, and here the composers draw on several stylistic traditions in an effort to create an idiosyncratic personal expression.

The schism that becomes apparent in the duality of tradition and transcultural progress can be read through a sound technology that is specifically designed to represent places and spaces. If we think of cosmopolitan areas as postmodern spaces and district/rural areas as modern spaces, reverb can help position a pop text metaphorically and literally according to these locations. As I have demonstrated in the previous case studies, reverb is often used lavishly to connote distance in time¹⁰⁶ and space, connoting large outdoor spaces and rural/mythical nostalgia (despite the dead and dry sound of actual open outdoor spaces). For example, Nicola Dibben's research into vocality and authenticity reveals that "the idea of emotional authenticity held by artists, engineers and audiences alike is manifested in the sound of recordings" (Dibben 2009: 319). And she continues: "In contemporary popular music recordings techniques, such as reverb, delays, filters and overdubbing, help stage voices" (ibid). These elements, she goes on, can be manipulated to "specify varieties of physical space (size and type)" and invoke intimacy by influencing "the emotional character of a recording, because they specify a location and physical relationship between listener and sound source" (ibid: 320). As I have pointed out, in Mena's version there is a negotiation between the urban and dry jazz sound of her voice and the lavish reverb on the mountain jazz sound of the guitar. The same pattern is distinguishable in Vinni, Samsaya, and TommyTee's version, where Samsaya's short phrase, 'mitt lille land' is drenched in reverb with echo, sprinkling the otherwise dry

¹⁰⁶ Notice how reverb is often used on voices in movies to denote that a scene is a memory.

sound image with a taste of countryside, mountains, valleys, and nostalgia.

Complemented by mostly urban locations in the video, the predominantly dry sound locates the pop text in urban Oslo where the intimacy of small spaces (clubs, studios, apartments, offices, rehearsal rooms) and postmodern queering is a part of the lived condition. Both pop texts are produced to appeal to both sides of a national divide, appealing for empathy though envisioning a ‘unified’ nation by pandering to both district and urban authenticities, articulated through style, lyrics, technology, and production techniques. Compositional and production choices thus seem guided by the motive of reaching as many people as possible.

Striving to address as large an audience as possible *TV2 Nyhetene* has produced many different versions of ‘Mitt lille land’, representing a broad spate of identities that presents a cross section of a diverse and fractured national identity. Minorities and majorities alike are here claiming Norway as their own, and TV2’s strategy is trying to maintain some optimistic notion of ‘colourful community’. Language is a central element of music that aligns empathic responses according to official and civilian political structures in a nation. In Norway this can be related to vexed debates over the value of the two official languages ‘bokmål’ and ‘nynorsk’; the language of the Sami; and quarrels over the many dialects and nuances that signify the places often assumed to be their origins (west coast, east coast, north, south, Bergen, Trondheim, Stavanger, Oslo). These differing languages are all divided according to class, gender, and sexuality, and as far as ethnicity goes, people are often judged according to the level and type of foreign accent. In the broad cross section of Norwegian subjects covering ‘Mitt lille land’ for TV2 one of the strongest identifying elements are found in the various variants of the Norwegian language; e.g. urban rap (Samsaya and Vinni), district dialect (Tone Damli Aaberge), Bergeneese (Kurt Nilsen), and Sami (Mari Boine). These are language categories with strained relationships that these videos to some extent mask. TV2’s efforts to reconcile the tensions between fractures in national culture are not entirely successful, though. Good intentions notwithstanding, the promotional videos come across as somewhat self-congratulatory, for both nation and TV programme. Still, it seems obvious that the news channel’s creative strategy is motivated by want for the highest possible ratings, and although the videos may have an empowering effect for minorities, they can equally hide and palliate, as well as reconcile tensions. Gilroy has for example noted:

Most corporate attempts at ventriloquizing the desire to live lives that are not amenable to race coding have been ham-fisted. The betrayal of that utopia is obvious where racial types are reinscribed in the service of commercial reach rather than abolished in the name of human freedom (Gilroy 2004: 163).

Thus, TV2's attempts at promoting transculturalism seem to constitute a mirage that have limited effects in triggering the dynamic potential of cultural diversity (cf. part one – 'Transculturalism'). Although the transcultural hopes of these videos are limited, they nonetheless conjure up a vision of unity and empathy that adds a significant layer of meaning to Mena's memorial concert performance. One that helps create a sense of common resistance against the cultural absolutism and racism that motivated the terror attack. However, as I have attempted to show, the type of unity that this song signify depends on who is listening, where notions of transculturalism are intertwined with nationalism. One might say that a field of negotiation within the national identity discourse is articulated through the national familiarity of the song, its lyrics, sonic particularities, Mena's star status and intimate voice, as well as her transcultural background. Which can reveal both structures and fractures in Norwegian culture and society. And when read against the everyday discourses of anti-immigration that surfaces in the (social) media, the song's transculturalist potentials seem to be thoroughly undermined.

Virtual Spaces and Norwegian Identity Politics

*I try to shield myself against hateful comments, but you know, it is hard. In the commentary field under a youtube video very racist comments quickly emerge - Tooji, 2012.*¹⁰⁷

Reflecting over the political backdrop for 22/7, I wish to draw attention to what role Norwegian immigrant discourses might have had for paving the way for a Norwegian middle-class white supremacist terrorist. Here I am interested in personal responsibilities in the intersection between populist politics and social media that

¹⁰⁷ See Tina Åmodt 2012 - <http://www.gaysir.no/artikkel.cfm?CID=15126> (last accessed 16.04.2012, my translation).

seem to shape a discourse impeding on any hopes for transcultural solidarity. As Strømme (2011) has showed, far-right online networks have Norwegians in central positions, and the hostility lurking under the official Labour discourse can be read in online commentary boards and various blogs. In the debates that followed 22/7 everybody distanced themselves from Breivik, and some, such as Breivik's ideal Peder Jensen aka 'Fjordman', have claimed that the terror act is being misused to hinder freedom of expression for the right and far-right nationalist and anti-multicultural voices. 'Fjordman's concerns is echoed in FrP's vice-president Per Sandberg's claims that FrP is being increasingly censored and muffled. This was a response to Labour Youth Party leader Eskil Pedersen and Labour Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, who suggested that FrP should reflect over their political rhetoric, stressing the importance of everybody taking responsibility for their utterances in the light of the terror attack. I agree with Støre and Pedersen's claim, that words matter and should be used thoughtfully in the public sphere. Since the Norwegian Progress Party is fluctuating between being the second and third largest party nationally, their rhetoric should certainly be taken into consideration when reflecting over the general *geist* that transcultural subjects live with in the Norwegian society. Let us take a closer look at this discourse.

25th of august 2010, Kent Andersen of Oslo Frp, and Christian Tybring-Gjedde, Member of Parliament and leader of Oslo Frp, published an article on the threat of multiculturalism in Norway:

We are registering the changes around us, and often hear that they are for the better. But something is distorted, something unmusical. There is a difference between gradual and natural cultural development, and a rapid and politically controlled cultural revolution. [D]o we want to help Arbeiderpartiet to exchange Norwegian culture with 'multiculture'? Never! Do we want to contribute to cultural treason? [...] Do we ever want to call ourselves 'multicultural'? Never!¹⁰⁸

Ironically Tybring-Gjedde and Andersen use the term 'unmusical' to describe their unwanted otherness, and follows in a similar rhetorical style as Frp's leader Siv Jensen with her warnings of hidden islamisation. The latter is also the motivation

¹⁰⁸ See <http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikker/article3783373.ece> (last accessed 16.04.2012, my translation).

behind organisations such as the English Defence League, and their newly established Norwegian branch, NDF (See also Strømme 2011: 31). One should not overlook that there are challenges with immigration and integration, but I am hard pressed to accept that there is an ongoing cultural revolution in Norway. In the quote of Andersen and Tybring-Gjedde, the authors naturalise their own stance by calling it “gradual and *natural* cultural development”, without hinting at what this actually means or how this might be accomplished. Notably, a ‘natural’ cultural development has always involved migration and hybridisation, and as Eriksen points out: “It is nationalism as fundamental ideology that deserves to be undermined, i.e. the belief that Norwegians are culturally equal in a certain way, and the attempts at fixing an authorised, official version of ‘Norwegian culture’. We Norwegians are neither equal nor unchangeable” (Eriksen 1993: 10, my translation). Extending this argument, the comprehensive challenges a diverse society faces cannot be solved by shutting borders and demonising difference. After all, collectively and individually, locally and globally, we have a common responsibility for each other that seems to escape Tybring-Gjedde and his supporters. At the Progressive Party’s national congress, May 13th 2011, he held a generalising and gloomy speech about Holmlia, a multicultural suburb to Oslo, where he suggested four points for the three largest parties to agree on, the Labour Party, the Conservative Party, and the Progressive Party. One of these sticks out; “The responsibility for integration lies first and foremost with the immigrants themselves”.¹⁰⁹

What strike me here, is the total renouncement of responsibility for integration, as well as the bleak doomsday rhetoric of the whole speech, characterising Holmlia as a multicultural place to be feared. First, I believe ‘ethnic Norwegians’ are required to take responsibility, since they are largely in control of social, cultural, and political resources. Second, taking responsibility means creating a balanced discourse on matters of integration, which means avoiding overdramatisation of the ‘immigrant situation’, and also emphasising the success stories. Importantly, popular music can be a potent force for integration and intercultural exchanges. Gilroy provides a fairly optimistic analysis of The Streets album *Original Pirate Material*, where in Mike Skinner’s snapshot of British identity “[r]acial difference is not feared” (Gilroy 2004:

¹⁰⁹ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eOG6hs9Bn8> (last accessed 16.04.2012, my transcription and translation).

105), and “[e]xposure to it is not ethnic jeopardy but rather an unremarkable principle of metropolitan life” (ibid). Furthermore, Gilroy suggests that racism and ethnic absolutism “can only be answered by exploring the details unfolding of cultural formations” (ibid: 161), and that “local and specific interventions can contribute to a counterhistory of cultural relations and influences from which a new understanding of multicultural Europe will doubtless eventually emerge” (ibid). Here, I intend to draw attention to instances in Norwegian culture that might contribute to such a counterhistory, hopefully buttressing a counter discourse against the oversimplified picture promulgated by the populist and far-right. The important potential of cultural métissage through popular culture is met by increasingly hostile counter reactions. As Gilroy has noted, “the standard of what counts as acceptable commentary has been sharply altered [...] bolstered by newly invented cultural homogeneity” (ibid: 156). Following this, I would argue that Tybring-Gjedde’s rhetoric is a good example of these lowered standards of communication, that can be seen as contributions to “complicated discursive figures that have made tacitly race-coded common sense an attractive option for confused and anxious European folk” (ibid: 158).

However, one thing is the official public rhetoric of political parties, another is the racially charged discourse that surfaces in virtual spaces. In social media the distinctions between public and private has had a tendency to be poorly handled by public persons, and the blurred area between public and social spaces can reveal an especially crude and vile tone: In November 2011 Drammen FrP’s Odd Beston unveiled this view on the current ‘wave’ of assault rapes in Oslo:

...can NOT understand that it should be any problem to get rid of all the rapes in Oslo and NORWAY... It is just to stop everybody at Norway’s border and send all the monkeys back to africa where they can cultivate their FUCKING beautiful culture (as some even claim). The worst is that there are women in Norway who thinks monkeys from Africa are soooooooo pretty.¹¹⁰

This highly aggressive statement speaks volumes about a certain kind of white masculinity in Norway today, it reveals how racism and misogyny are intertwined phenomena, and uncovers a horrendous but not all that uncommon assumption that all

¹¹⁰ See Jørgen M. Gilbrant 2011 - <http://www.dagbladet.no/2011/11/08/nyheter/rasisme/frp/18937939/> (last accessed 16.04.2012, my translation).

rapists are immigrants. The point here is that the Internet blurs ‘frontstage’ and ‘backstage’ spaces (cf. Goffman) in a way that reveals the gory truth about an everyday racism discourse that is usually hidden. This discourse is deeply problematic and exemplifies how sharpened the racist rhetoric in Norway can become, even from public officials.

In the following I will further outline an anti-immigration discourse based around notions of cultural authenticity and exclusivity that disappeared, or rather drowned, for a brief moment after 22/7, but soon resurfaced. Ethnomusicologist O’Flynn has noted how the nation-state is often conflated with notions of ethnicity (O’Flynn 2007: 23), and in a Norwegian context, *same-other* power structures are evident in the opposed categories ethnic Norwegian and non-Western. Historically ‘the Same’ has been “assumed as normative” (Hawkins 2002: 13), and it is important to note how “the discourses of identity politics have become directed against the power structures that are implicit in the same-other hierarchies of dominant groups” (ibid). Forming a prime constituent of categorisation in Norway, the category ‘non-Western’ stresses the anxieties around the ‘immigrant situation’ within the borders of the EU and the EFTA states (Hawkins and Bjorøy 2012: 6,7).¹¹¹ And, as Hawkins has pointed out: “Such political positioning is rooted in an ideological construction of otherness, with a general repudiation of that which is foreign and distanced” (ibid). Furthermore, asking who gets to be called ethnic Norwegian, activates a schism similar to that in Britain, where Gilroy has pointed out that the “discourse of imperiled Englishness is called upon to manage the stressful consequences of the great and growing split between city and country” (Gilroy 2004: 130), which is a point harking back to the idealisation of Arcady mentioned in part two (cf. ‘Arcadian illusions’). As we know, music is a mediator for debates over national identity, and drawing on Benedict Anderson, Eriksen points to how “nationalism derives its force from its combination of political legitimation and emotional power” (Eriksen 2002: 101). Music is a prime source for emotional power that is appropriated or denounced through strategies of cultural protectionism, where ‘non-Western’ contributions to Norwegian music

¹¹¹ “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. At the time of writing the EEA consists of 30 European countries, the 27 members of the EU and the 3 EFTA member states” (Hawkins and Bjorøy 2012: 6,7).

culture can result in aggressive responses. In an increasingly transcultural society Norwegians have to make some important choices on how to handle an escalating tendency, and a quick look at sentiments surfacing on Norwegian comment boards and social media, reveals a troubling way of thinking and talking about the non-Western Other. Simultaneously, it reveals something about the status of Oslo as the hybrid stepdaughter of a ‘pure’ motherland, and unearths a polarising discourse based on national pride that is so naturalised that it provokes aggressive retorts when critiqued. This has become evident in the recent dispute between Plumbo and Madcon after *Spellemanns Awards 2012*, where an initial outrage about a racist comment made by Plumbo on Madcon’s expense was replaced by massive support for Plumbo a week later.

An interesting aspect of ‘Plumbogate’ is this episode illuminates the now familiar tension between the urban and rural areas of Norway. Eriksen points out that one of the benefits of national symbolism, constructed from “certain aspects of peasant culture” in the 19th century, is that it provided “‘evidence’ that Norwegian culture was distinctive” (Eriksen 2002: 102), and that “urban and rural Norwegians belonged to the same culture and had shared political interests” (ibid). However, as my case studies in this part reveal, the ‘evidence’ of unity that an institutionalised cultural memory might provide can in some instances be undermined by the agency of transcultural artists and the responses they provoke. Plumbo come from Sande municipality in the county of Vestfold, with a population of approximately 9000. Consequently, inhabitants of Oslo are seen by those who defended Plumbo’s joke as the arrogant and dominant intellectual, contrasting the inhabitants of rural Norway as the innocent and oppressed. Rural areas are generally considered ‘simple’ and ‘harry’,¹¹² which both have become stamps of authenticity in Norway, at least for men. A blog-article from 2008 focuses on the emphasis male celebrities put on simplicity when describing themselves: ‘I am a simple man’, ‘I am a simple man from the countryside’, ‘Give me culture I can understand. I am a simple cotter’, ‘I am a

¹¹² ‘Harry’ is a difficult term to explain. It is often seen as relating to an ‘unpretentious’ approach to life, where simplicity, and often anti-intellectualism, are valued. It is used both as a derogatory term and as a term designating ‘folk’ authenticity. Critics emphasise lack of coolness, style, irony, and subtlety. See (Hawkins 2007c: 185) for an example of how ironic subversion of the term can be expressed musically.

simple boy from inner Vestfold, and have no clue about Pakistan'.¹¹³ The author Marta Breen notes that women celebrities have not understood that "journalists love these kinds of charming statements, and that the higher you are in the social hierarchy, the more sympathy you gain by representing yourself as an average talented person, with a propensity towards simple values".¹¹⁴ Here lies the core issue of the Plumbo debate; hands off the noble, simple, and hardworking 'peasant'. This anti-intellectualism is an aspect of The Jante Law, as well as a result of the Protestant work ethic and pietism, where a construction of noble simplicity characterises the category 'folk flest' ('the common folk'), which incidentally is the category of people that the Progressive Party claims to fight for ('FrP – for folk flest'). And it was 'folk flest' that eventually claimed the role as victims after Madcon was insulted on prime time national TV.

January 14th 2012 *Spellemanns Awards* was held at Folketeatret in Oslo, televised by NRK. The Irish folk-rock band Plumbo was awarded the Spellemanns-prize 'Hit of the Year' for their song 'Møkkamann' (which translates to something resembling 'dirty dog' or 'asshole'), a song stylistically positioned within a broad traditional rock genre based on distorted power-chords, bass guitar, and drum kit, with national markers such as the 'Jew's harp', which is generally assumed to be a distinctly Norwegian instrument, although its origins are uncertain and are used in many parts of the world. Another national marker is the Irish tin whistle (cf. O'Flynn 2007: 26), and of course the Norwegian lyrics. As they were presented with the prize from Madcon's Tshawe Baqwa and Yosef Wolde-Mariam, Plumbo frontman and singer Lars Erik Blokkhus made a joke: "...you know what, when I look at you two, then the song suddenly gets a new name, 'mocha man'".¹¹⁵ Around the time of the controversy, 'Møkkamann' was positioned high in the iTunes chart, streamed 40 000 times in three days on Spotify, and the YouTube video seen by over 1.6 million. Although Plumbo entered ESC with their less popular song 'Ola Nordmann', they were the clear favourites to win, and when they didn't, it spurred controversy, even conspiracy theories. Some have suggested that state run NRK should be sued for

¹¹³ See Marta Breen 2008 - <http://martabreen.wordpress.com/2008/11/27/jeg-er-bare-en-mann/> (last accessed 16.04.2012, my translation).

¹¹⁴ See Marta Breen 2008 - <http://martabreen.wordpress.com/2008/11/27/jeg-er-bare-en-mann/> (last accessed 16.04.2012, my translation).

¹¹⁵ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGKN6Bo8ARE> (last accessed 12.04.2012, my transcription and translation).

allegedly manipulating the SMS voting in the ESC 2012 finals.¹¹⁶ The argument is built around the discrepancy between Tooji's 155 486 votes and Plumbo's 61 868 votes, where a Labour run NRK supposedly fixed the voting in a conspiracy to promote multiculturalism. Given Plumbo's years of hard work, the Spellemanns success, and the high streaming and download frequency, they were the clear favourites to win ESC. What the conspiracy theories miss is that the voting ESC audience is a crowd that seems to be more accepting of difference than 'folk flest'. The ESC finals were seen by ca. one third of the five million population and approximately 9% voted (387 079). While ESC has a large gay following, it is by heteronormative rockers, that I assume form a large part on Plumbo's fans, often seen as a commercialized and standardised contest that is inauthentic and unworthy of attention. Thus, the outcome of the finals is not that surprising, and hardly worth being called a conspiracy.

The stylistic codes comprising their ESC contribution 'Ola Nordmann are quite similar to those found in 'Møkkamann', although the 'Jew's harp' has been substituted by an accordion, which is also commonly perceived to have a distinctly Norwegian sound. Again, a notion of instrumental authenticity is undermined by the sheer global ubiquity of the instrument (hear for example the accordion on the opening song from Paul Simon's *Graceland* (1986), 'The Boy In the Bubble'). As the band is introduced in the nationally televised ESC 'Gold Finals' the musicians are already ready on stage, prepared to play, and as a militaristic snare drum marches through four introductory measures it is accompanied by an Irish 'Titanic whistle'¹¹⁷ soaring in the high register on the buoyancy of a reverb-soaked thin tin sound and a joyful G major melody. Then the tutti of the band enters simultaneously to propel the song through four new measures before the first verse starts. Tutti compounds distorted el-guitars, el-bass, kit, and an accordion that doubles the tin whistle melody. The fact that the ESC is a playback environment is evidenced by the lack of anyone playing the accordion on stage, while the instrument still can be heard distinctly in the mix.¹¹⁸ The instrumentation, structure, voice, and lyrical theme relate the pop text to a similar stylistic universe as that of dance bands such as D.D.E. (hear for example 'Det

¹¹⁶ See <http://debatt.sol.no/content/bor-nrk-saksokes-mgp-svindel> (last accessed 30.03.2012).

¹¹⁷ The cliché-ridden tin whistle has become tightly intertwined with the romantic and nostalgic melodrama of Céline Dion's 'My Heart Will Go On' from the seminal romantic drama *Titanic* (1997).

¹¹⁸ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDd88rpKRik> (last accessed 02.04.2012).

går likar no’).¹¹⁹ Regarding aspects of gender and ethnicity this style references notions of Norwegian white masculinity in several ways. Most obvious is the Norwegian lyrics sung with a raspy strained voice, which at emotional peaks has a Springsteen-esque quality that connotes a white, ‘common working man’ masculinity (Solis 2007: 14). This ‘grain of the voice’ (Barthes 1977; Frith 1996: 191) can be seen as a theatrical representation of white masculinity, drawing on the connotations of sincerity that in a Norwegian context emerges from the simple hardworking white man. An aspect of ‘ordinariness’ is also found in Blokkhus’ delivery of sung accents and rhythms that is similar to regular speech (Solis 2007: 26). The basic rock line-up and simple A – B – C song structure of ‘Ola Nordmann’ is based on variations over goal oriented¹²⁰ dominant cadences such as II – V – I and VI – II – VI – I, with unaltered chords built on the triad, conjuring up a sense of stable and fixed identity, free from the artifice and masking of truth that complexity connotes in a broad spate of traditional rock discourses, as Solis has argued:

The voice of the ‘common workingman’ has come to be associated lyrically with songs that deal in direct address, and which can be plausibly interpreted as autobiographical statements or statements of the singer’s actual interiority, and musically with rock and roll—three chords, guitar, bass, drums, and perhaps saxophone, straightforward sectional form—all somehow coming to seem sincere and free of artifice. Significantly, these features have all become ‘unmarked’ in a popular music discourse that sees basically pop/rock since the 1960s (the Rolling Stone generation’s main-stream) as unmarked and other genres and other lyrical strategies as marked, Other (Solis 2007: 39).

The value attributed to the ‘simple man’ should not be underestimated. As my own experience tells me and as Marta Breen’s empirical material shows, the positive connotations of the simplicity that many Norwegians are attracted to can be summed up with the following:

Simple men are not self-centred and they won’t walk the red carpet. The expression is often combined with positive adjectives like ‘calm’ and ‘industrious’. Regarding cultural preferences naturally they prefer sports for Jane Austen. Simple men fall asleep at the Opera

¹¹⁹ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKHAOsYxkgg> (last accessed 02.04.2012).

¹²⁰ The importance of goal oriented activities lies at the heart of the Protestant work ethic, and is reflected in male ‘working class’ styles such as rock and heavy metal. See e.g. how the masculine hegemony in heavy metal bands is based on social relationships that are goal-centred, rather than relationship-centred which is coded feminine and seen as a threat (Walser 1993: 114,5).

and brags about it later. They are not demanding and have seldom the need to explore foreign cultures, cultivate romance or brag about their money.¹²¹



*Askeladden with 'rucksack and cap',
and Blokkhus with his Spellemanns trophy.*

Plumbo's lyrics tell the story of the stereotypical Norwegian 'simple man', who is allegedly a unique person; an adventurous wanderer wearing a 'rucksack and cap'.¹²² The latter is an allusion to the 'Ash lad' and carries connotations of the ordinary man becoming a hero, despite, or rather because of, his uncomplicated view of the world. According to Plumbo the Norwegian man has 'humour and charm', likes to have a drink, and is most comfortable at home. He travels dutifully through heavy weather, wind, and rain, to provide for his family, and he is a modern man updated with the latest fashion in technology; 'iPhone, flat screen, and Nintendo Wii'. Indeed Plumbo presents a flattering image of a generic Norwegian boyish and playful man that seems to conjure up a mythical image of charming simplicity that undoubtedly resonates with many Norwegian males' perception of themselves. Combined with visual style, lyrics, and sonic signifiers, the performance of 'Ola Nordmann' stages a familiar and safe white masculinity that connotes 'ethnic Norwegian'. Despite the Irish associations of the prominent tin flute, for a nationalist male ESC spectator, Plumbo operates within a safe stylistic landscape that is un-queered and ethnically safe enough to be allowed to represent their country internationally. However, the ESC audience seems to value a different kind of style.

From a male rockist and nationalist perspective Plumbo is the 'unmarked', against whom stands the 'marked' Tooji, queering the notion of a stabile 'ethnic Norwegian'

¹²¹ See Marta Breen 2008 - <http://martabreen.wordpress.com/2008/11/27/jeg-er-bare-en-mann/> (last accessed 16.04.2012, my translation).

¹²² See complete lyrics at <http://artists.letssingit.com/plumbo-lyrics-ola-nordmann-1gxldb2> (last accessed 02.04.2012, my translation).

masculinity. As a transcultural newcomer winning over an ‘ethnic Norwegian’ band Tooji has been subjected to some harassment online:

For the second year in a row the state controlled, socialist-friendly and imposed channel NRK managed to send a foreigner to the international finals. Before ESC hardly anyone had heard of this ‘Tooji’ from Iran, who according to NRK won with 155 486 votes.¹²³

A person who has two Iranian parents can of course never become Norwegian. A dog born in a stable will never turn into a horse.¹²⁴

too bad that we can’t even get a Norwegian to represent Norway... and it will get worse...¹²⁵



Tooji Keshktar has lived in Norway since the age of one, when he and his Iranian family were granted asylum in 1988 after they had strenuously escaped from the *First Persian Gulf War* between Iran and Iraq (1980 – 1988).¹²⁶ Growing up he was severely bullied at a school that ignored the problem, with a principal who urged him and his family to ‘move on’. His family’s

economic resources were scarce, but Tooji has nonetheless managed to get an education and become a socially and culturally engaged person, seemingly an empathic person, working as a Child Welfare Officer for Oslo Municipality.¹²⁷ Previously he has worked as a model before he became a host for MTV Norway, which is evidence enough that he is no lazy freeloader ‘hired’ by the Labour Party on a multicultural quota to represent Norway in Baku, Azerbaijan in May 2012. Compared to the Irish working-class-hero rock style of Plumbo, Tooji’s performance is posh, queer, and metrosexual (although Tooji also qualifies as a working-class-hero). ‘Stay’ draws on the stylistic realm of eurodance with a Persian twist, written

¹²³ See <http://debatt.sol.no/content/bor-nrk-saksokes-mgp-svindel> (last accessed 12.04.2012, my translation).

¹²⁴ See <http://debatt.sol.no/content/bor-nrk-saksokes-mgp-svindel> (last accessed 12.04.2012, my translation).

¹²⁵ See comment board: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=piZbJ6vp5bw> - (last accessed 13.02.2012, my translation).

¹²⁶ See Merete Skogrand 2012 - http://www.dagbladet.no/2012/02/23/kultur/tooji/melodi_grand_prix/nrk/skavlan/20355504/ (last accessed 16.04.2012).

¹²⁷ See Fredrik Skavlan 2012 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIGeUVAuOmM> (last accessed 16.04.2012).

and produced by the Swedish team Peter and Figge Boström who also wrote the winning contribution of the Swedish ESC 2011, performed by Erik Saade. The structure of ‘Stay’ can be reduced to a simple A – B – C form, and the song has an introduction and post-chorus dominated by a violin hook based on what is commonly known as the Persian scale. This is similar to the Phrygian dominant scale, which is an alteration of the modal Phrygian scale. The Persian and Phrygian dominant scale only differ in their upper tetrachords:

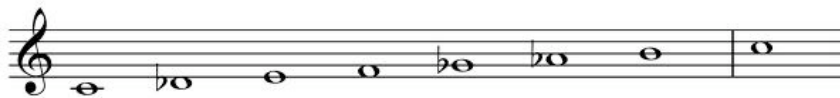


Fig. 1 Persian scale.



Fig. 2 Phrygian dominant scale (also known as Jewish scale).



Fig.3 Phrygian scale.

The exoticism of the Persian scale is centred on pronounced semitones and augmented seconds. In ‘Stay’ the synthetic violin riff dominating the introduction and post-choruses is based around the first semitone step from a middle-C, stretched upwards over two octaves. Short accented attacks with bow on strings in a fast paced 3+3+2 pattern shapes a phrase that ends on the two final quavers with an ornament created by a 16th note glissando tremolo between the pitches Db and C. This characteristic element references songs like M.I.A.’s recent hit ‘Bad Girls’ and Britney Spears’ 2004 hit ‘Toxic’. The central violin motif in the latter is interpreted by Hawkins and Richardson as having a “distinct Arabic character”, since the “‘exotic’ intervallic characteristics [resemble] those in the Arabic *Maqam*”, i.e. augmented seconds and tritones (Hawkins and Richardson 2011: 610). Since I do not have the space here to explicate the differences between Arabic and Persian music, it should be sufficient to say that when it comes to this style of violin playing, or *Kaman*, both traditions are based on similar scales, ornamentation styles, nasal timbral characteristics, glissando, and the absence of harmony (ibid: 610). Describing

the downwards glissando hook in ‘Toxic’, Hawkins and Richardson have noted how these “slippery musical figures bring into play well-established connotations of exotic otherness and eroticism” (Ibid: 609). In the performance of ‘Stay’ these associations are emphasised through an agile performance with Persian dance moves intersecting with the violin to heighten the passionate charge and *jouissance* (cf. Hawkins 2002). In the post-chorus Tooji’s four dancers moves in behind him in a synchronised formation dance of wavy ‘belly dance’ motions, and raised, swirling underarms that almost seem to echo the violin tremolo. With sensually gyrating hips and good looks, Tooji comes across like a metrosexual Persian Elvis, encapsulated by a pulsating eurodance beat.

The various layers of ‘otherness’ in Tooji’s queer performance have stirred up anxious and hostile emotions, related not only to his queer ethnicity. Notably, blogs are saturated with speculations over his sexuality (‘fake and gay’). However, he is very strict about not revealing anything about his private life. He has stated that since he is a case handler for the Child Welfare Service he would not want clients to know details of his personal life.¹²⁸ The seriousness of his day job contrasts the celebratory, lively and joyous escapism of his new artist career, however he has stated that he aims to use his music and celebrity status as a tool to draw attention to the causes he feels strongly about, such as refugee children’s and youth’s mental health care, as well as human rights in general.¹²⁹ His balancing of fun and seriousness could be seen as an indication of the new seriousness of postmodern sentiment that has been called metamodernism (cf. part one – ‘Transculturalism’). The kind of affective investment that Tooji shows would probably have been ridiculed in the 1990s, at least in the ironic indie rock Oslo scene, where the stance against political correctness was stern. Today it could be argued, as one online commenter does, that political correctness is the new Rock’n’Roll.¹³⁰ Indeed, Tooji reveals a type of engaged and ‘informed naivety’, and a ‘pragmatic idealism’, that combined with a queer ‘revolt’ could imply that this might have some truth to it. As Hawkins has insisted, “the tendency towards the desirability of a resistance to the norm is the *raison d’être* of queering” (Hawkins

¹²⁸ See Tina Åmodt 2012 - <http://www.gaysir.no/artikkel.cfm?CID=15126> (last accessed 16.04.2012, my translation).

¹²⁹ See NRK interview (13.02.2012) - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92oKiUlVOKM> (last accessed 31.03.2012).

¹³⁰ See comment no. 7: <http://www.nrk.no/debatt/index.php?showtopic=94505> (last accessed 31.03.2012, my translation).

2009: 95). Looking at Tooji through queer binoculars he seems to exist between and across the comforting and stable hegemonic categories of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, and consequently an example of the arbitrariness of these same categories. As with Tooji, it is my argument that Stella destabilises institutionalised categories, and in the following I turn to her performance in ESC 2011, which I perceive as a response to the Norwegian society that sometimes has worked against her. However, at the same time, this adversity seems to have sharpened her resilience.

Towards a Transcultural Askeladden?

*There was not many with dark skin in Eidsvoll at the beginning of the 1990s. We experienced racism and bullying. I have put all the bad behind me. I am not bitter, but still get sad when I think of my childhood – Mwangi, 2008.*¹³¹

On April 10th 1814, in Eidsvoll municipality, one hundred and twelve state officials, businessmen and peasants formed an assembly of the King's advisors. These men proceeded to write and pass a constitution, and finally on May 17th, the members met in gala to elect a King for the newly established nation-state.¹³² One hundred and seventy seven years later the Mwangi family settled in Eidsvoll with their five-year-old daughter and two older children.¹³³ They came from Kenya as political refugees and were granted asylum by the Norwegian state, but other Norwegians feared that these, and other, immigrants would destroy Norwegian culture and society. According to Øyvind Strømme the Norwegian resistance against immigrants has formed three 'waves' since the 1970s. The first was a neo-Nazi milieu that grew around Erik Blücher from Moss, who was the 'führer' for the political party Norsk Front established in 1975 (Strømme 2011: 43). The second was not neo-Nazi but comprised people that had been active in the Norwegian resistance during WWII, such as Thomas Høegh (ibid). This 'wave' grew out of the cross-party organisation

¹³¹ See http://www.rockheim.no/mediateket/biografier/stella_mwangi/ (last accessed 03.04.2012, my translation).

¹³² Information gathered from Norsk Folkemuseum's web pages: <http://www.eidsvoll1814.no/?aid=9064248> (last accessed 03.04.2012).

¹³³ All biographical material in this section I have found in Rockheim's online biography archive, which includes a bio on Stella Mwangi written by Øyvind Holen. Rockheim is a recently opened rock museum in Trondheim. See http://www.rockheim.no/mediateket/biografier/stella_mwangi/ (last accessed 03.04.2012).

Folkebevegelsen mot innvandring, established in 1987 with former Labour supporter Arne Myrdal as leader (ibid). And in 1990 he was convicted for planning to bomb a reception centre for asylum seekers that were being built in his hometown Arendal (ibid: 47). As Stella can testify to, in the 1990s this second ‘wave’ had an impact on immigrants living in Oslo, and in the districts circling the city, but also other Norwegians residing there. I moved to the capital during the autumn of 1996, when I attended a year at the then newly established private popular music school, *Nordisk Institutt for Scene og Studio* (NISS).¹³⁴ There I joined the indie rock band Tacoheads, and for a year we rehearsed and recorded an album at this school, cooperating with two politically engaged sound technicians who also were students.¹³⁵ They were involved in the Blitz milieu, and during the school year 96-97 we joined them in at least one big anti-Nazi demonstration in Oslo, organised by Blitz leader Stein Lillevolden against groupings supported by Myrdal. However, this demonstration was not nearly as violent as the Lillevolden vs. Myrdal showdown known as *Fevikslaget* in Kristiansand, which in 1990 was broadcasted nationwide on NRK. Eleven years later a continuous tense situation resulted in murder.

Oslo 2001, February 1st, one month after the millennium celebration and eight months before 9/11, I remember joining the spontaneous nationwide torchlight procession in protest against the racist murder of Norwegian-Ghanaian Benjamin Hermansen at Holmlia, January 26th.¹³⁶ At the time Stella was fifteen, the same age as Hermansen, and two years later she released the song ‘Its All About the Benjamins’, written as a reaction to the Holmlia murder. This song was released by the hip-hop/r&b group/collective The R.I.S.E Project, on their album *Maroon* (2003). Due to lack of success Stella pursued a solo career and released her solo album *Living For Music* (2008), which with an eponymous first track, made a bold statement, with an attitude familiar in American hip-hop. Stella’s rapping on this track is in fluent English with impeccable flow, and at the time she got attention for being one of the very few

¹³⁴ Nordic Institute for Stage and Studio.

¹³⁵ Tacoheads was an ironic name based on Tom Cruise’s comment to a Mexican taxi driver in the movie *Born on the 4th of July* (1989), ‘Step on it Tacohead’. We found this racist comment hilarious, and although we weren’t racist, people naturally misunderstood, and we stuck with the name as part of an exclusionist tactic that was integral to our indie/alternative strategy. See (Bannister 2006: ch.3) for details on the ‘anti-star’ attitude in indie music and performance.

¹³⁶ Hermansen was stabbed to death by members of the violent neo-Nazi organisation Boot Boys, which was formed in the mid-90s. The murderers were then in their late teens. See <http://www.sos-rasisme.no/sentralt/71> (last accessed 04.04.2012). See also (Strømmen 2011: 43).

woman rappers in Norway. When she grew up she learnt to speak English, Swahili, and Norwegian, and her father encouraged his children to express themselves through ‘rhythm and poetry’, and he introduced Public Enemy’s seminal anthem ‘Fight the Power’ to them.¹³⁷ Her stylistic influences include Salt-N-Pepa, Queen Latifah, Wu-Tang Clan, Missy Elliot, Nas, and African reggae artists such as Lucky Dube and Alpha Blondy.¹³⁸ Undoubtedly, Stella empower herself by drawing on the cool, self-confident assertiveness of black American feminists such as Salt-N-Pepa, Latifah,¹³⁹ and Elliot, constructing her own hybrid of hip-hop and r&b. On her latest album *Kinanda* (May 9th 2011) she blends this hybrid with eurodance spiced with distinctly South African signifiers.

At the time, she must have been aware of the vexed ‘Birther’ debate in the U.S., where the populist Tea Party movement laid pressure on America’s first black Commander in Chief, President Barack Obama to reveal his birth certificate. The opposition suggested that Obama was really born in Kenya, since this is where his father is from. Business magnate Donald Trump got involved in the conspiracy and arrogantly took credit when Obama released his long-form Birth certificate April 27th 2011.¹⁴⁰ Three days later they both attended the White House Correspondent’s Association Dinner where Obama had his revenge. He opened the show to ‘I Am a Real American’ by rock artist Rick Derringer blasting out of the speakers, and as the music faded he entered and proceeded to ridicule Trump. Obama offered to show his exclusive ‘live birth video’, which turned out to be a clip from the Disney movie *The Lion King* (1994). Elton John and Tim Rice wrote the songs and lyrics for this film, which includes the soundtrack hit ‘Circle of Life’ sung by Carmen B. Twillie.¹⁴¹ Scored by film composer Hans Zimmer, the song is as melodramatic and high-flown as would be expected to accompany Disney’s visual and narrative clichés, representing a romanticised Africa set to a score that seems to be an easy target for

¹³⁷ See Robert Walser for an analysis of this song: ‘Rhyme, Rhythm and Rhetoric in the Music of Public Enemy’ (Walser 1995).

¹³⁸ See http://www.rockheim.no/mediateket/biografier/stella_mwangi/ (last accessed, 04.04.2012, my translation).

¹³⁹ For a queer perspective on Latifah see Robin Roberts’ ‘“Ladies First”: Queen Latifah’s Afrocentric Feminist Music Video’ (Roberts 1994). See also Halberstam (1998: 29).

¹⁴⁰ See Jon Stewart 2011 - <http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/wed-april-27-2011/believe-it-or-believe-it---obama-releases-long-form-birth-certificate> (last accessed 16.04.2012).

¹⁴¹ At the time, this music video, uploaded December 2006, had been watched almost 34 million times on YouTube – See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vX07j9SDFcc> (last accessed 04.04.2012).

postcolonial deconstruction. The scenery is animated by Chris Sanders and was allegedly inspired by *Hell's Gate National Park* in Kenya. Obama's scene was from the 'Circle of Life' sequence where Simba is born, a cub that is destined to become the new African lion King. After showing the clip, he proceeded with a stand-up act, roasting Trump (et al), stating that 'the Donald' now could get back to the issues that matter, like "where are Biggie and Tupac?".¹⁴²

Where people are born is a big issue not only in America but also in Norway, and here Stella's biography resonates with Obama's situation and the 'Birther' controversy. Legally one is Norwegian once one is granted citizenship by the state, but as my previous examples have shown, culturally this does not determine who gets to be called 'ethnic Norwegian'.¹⁴³ Unreflective and absolutist notions of national identity impede on Stella's agency, and are ignoring the fact that national-states are constructed units that always have been characterised by diversity and change. From this perspective, the term 'ethnic Norwegian' tends to obfuscate processes of hybridisation that must be "understood as an escalation of a condition that has been going for thousands of years" (Hawkins and Bjorøy 2012: 6). Indeed, 'ethnic Norwegian' is usually employed in an essentialist manner, basing its meaning upon the idea that there exists a pre-discursive Norwegian identity, a fixed kernel of 'Norwegianness' that emanates from biology. However, as I hope have become clearer during this thesis, essentialist and binary categories seem poorly suited to capture the diversity of life and the unstable nature of identity. For example, Stella challenges a modernist and inflexible notion of national identity, drawing inspiration from several musical and political sources to shape a self-aestheticised response to her adversaries.

On the cover for her 2011 album *Kinanda* (EMI/Big City Music), she takes the Lion King cliché to the max, complete with Flamingos in sunset, an African equivalent to the Norwegian 'Elk in sunset'. She has stated that the sound for this record was created in cooperation with Big City Music, shaping a "mix of her African roots and

¹⁴² See Barack Obama 2011 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eJpWOY3r18> (last accessed 16.014.2012).

¹⁴³ Here I follow Hawkins' notion of Britishness to advocate Norwegianness, seen as "a selective term that broadly encompasses the groups of interrelated people that reside in or originate" from Norway, and are holding Norwegian passports (Hawkins 2009: 4).



the urban music she has always loved”.¹⁴⁴ The album features a track called ‘Hakuna Matata’ (Swahili for ‘no worries’) which is also the song and life motto of the comic carefree Lion King characters Timon and Pumbaa, who have a naive and ‘problem free philosophy’ outlook on the world. Not unlike that of Askeladden, or Stella herself it would seem. As an internationally recognised artist one can’t help wonder how she feels about living at Kløfta, a rural area in Ullensaker, a Municipality that has been a stable stronghold for FrP since 2003. FrP Ullensaker has had one of the highest and most stable poll ratings in the country for many years. Recently there has been a surge in neo-Nazi activity especially around Jessheim,¹⁴⁵ which is a small place very close to *Raknehaugen* (cf. part two), and only a ten minutes’ drive from Kløfta. From these surroundings Stella has managed to launch an international career, and in cooperation with her uncle and manager in Kenya she broke into the Kenyan market in 2006, winning her the *Kisima Music Awards* in the category ‘Most Promising Artist’.¹⁴⁶ Later, the single ‘Take it Back’ from *Living for Music* reached number one in the South African charts in 2008. She has also toured Europe, U.S., and Africa, been supporting act for Busta Rhymes and Rick Ross, and her music have been licensed to many major American films and series.¹⁴⁷ In Norway her albums have not been that well received, and only her second album entered the VG top 40 charts, peaking at number fifteen.¹⁴⁸ Nonetheless, Stella won the hearts of the ESC audience in 2011.¹⁴⁹ In the following I ponder over her act in light of an anti-immigrant discourse that in the last decade have become

¹⁴⁴ See http://stellamwangi.com/?page_id=2 (last accessed 16.04.2012).

¹⁴⁵ See for example the private but plausible YouTube documentary *Flere Arenaer*, uploaded May 7th, 2010. This short film suggests a recent increase in violent racist activity at Jessheim, and documents the establishing of Romerike anti-rasistisk ungdom (Romerike Anti-Racist Youth). Notably, the Mayor of Ullensaker denied every request from this organisation for his support. For example stating that he thinks measures like anti-racism demonstrations are too drastic: “The day the Mayor of Ullensaker attends e.g. a torchlight procession, we kind of accept that [racism] is a serious problem” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sR8-uPKc4-Y> last accessed 04.04.2012, my transcription and translation, at 4:56).

¹⁴⁶ See <http://www.kisimaawards.co.ke/> (last accessed 20.04.2012).

¹⁴⁷ See http://stellamwangi.com/?page_id=2 (last accessed 04.04.2012).

¹⁴⁸ See <http://lista.vg.no/artist/stella-mwangi/singel/lookie-lookie/5883> (last accessed 04.04.2012).

¹⁴⁹ Stella won with 280 217 votes over The BlackSheeps (125 158 votes), The Lucky Bullets (115 793 votes) and Sie Gubba (94 884 votes). Her result was 45,2% of totally 620 052 votes. Norway’s total population was at the time 4 920 300 (www.ssb.no/02/), of which 12,6% voted. 1.3 million watched the program (26,4%) - <http://www.vg.no/musikk/grand-prix/artikkel.php?artid=10038220> (last accessed 05.04.2012).

increasingly aggressive. Stella's performance represented both musically and visually an identity that many Norwegians refused to identify with (cf. Moore's *third person authenticity*). And as Stuart Hall points out, representing difference "engages feelings, attitudes and emotions, and it mobilises fears and anxieties in the viewer, at deeper levels than we can explain in a simple, common-sense way" (Hall 2007: 226). Stella's victory incited feelings and anxieties that became evident through the large amount of racist and displeased comments that surfaced on the web after her victory in the Norwegian finals, forcing nrk.no to close down their commentary field because of coarse racism. Notably, this was the first time a black artist won the Norwegian ESC, and the second time a Norwegian artist born outside Europe won. The first time was in 1999 when Colombian born Stig Van Ejik secured the victory. While Van Ejik's winning contribution represented a familiar white boyband identity, 'Haba Haba' draws on specifically South African signifiers while her performance mark her always already as Other, simply by her physical appearance. Unbalanced power relations between white identity and the coloured Other have become ingrained in Western popular culture, through beauty ideals promulgated by the film and music industry. Lady Gaga has a telling example:

I went to Tisch you know, at NYU. And what used to happen was that the teachers would go [...] 'you know, you're never gonna play the heroine, and you're never gonna play the blond, [...] you're never gonna be the main character, you're never gonna be the star. Because you have dark hair, and you're too ethnic (Lady GaGa 2011).

Considering this, Stella's performance can be seen as challenging a thoroughly naturalised popular cultural discourse that impedes on her agency. While her victory was received mostly positive in the mainstream press, other sentiments surfaced as well. Rita Ormbostad is a politician in Høyre, who at the time was Deputy Mayor of Aure Municipality in Møre og Romsdal county (north west coast of Norway). After Stella's victory, Ormbostad expressed her opinion on her own personal facebook page:

I will sharpen a spear and buy a bongo-drum for [the international finals in] Düsseldorf!
Maybe I'll go to Africa and watch it from there! I'll eat Gnu!!! I thought I'd bring next year's

contribution back with me [...] Give me sami, ice-bears and moscus! I think that's what we should sell, not that we have open immigrant asylums!!!¹⁵⁰

This racist statement lies far from the political rhetoric of a public persona, making it all the more interesting. Through social media there is a possibility for looking behind political rhetoric and public facades, and observe tensions between subjectivity and public identity, in a way not possible before the Internet age. As a member of the Socialist Left Party (SV) has commented, “it is from children, drunk people, and facebook users we get the truth”.¹⁵¹ Ormbostad’s slippage reveals a private discourse that I believe is more ubiquitous than official rhetoric leads us to believe. As was the case with Plumbo, the politician claimed that her slip was meant as a joke, which is a poor excuse. If this type of rhetoric is allowed to stand unchallenged, it can create an unwelcoming and stingy climate for cultivating relationships across cultural borders. Ormbostad’s statement contribute to a discourse of everyday racism that reveals an institutionalised ‘symbolic violence’ that perhaps should encourage one to reflect over the democratic necessity of politeness and intercultural respect from an individual level. The discourse surrounding Mwangi’s ESC success is related to mechanisms of exclusion that emanates from “the tragic popularity of ideas about the integrity and purity of cultures” (Gilroy 1993: 7). Thus, Ormbostad’s response unearths a conservative Norwegianism that follows the legacy of Euro-American modernity, which “conditions the continuing aspiration to acquire a supposedly authentic, natural, and stable ‘rooted’ identity” (Gilroy 1993: 30). In a response to Ormbostad, ESC general Per Sundnes stated:

She [Mwangi] is the new Norway. She is as Norwegian as one can get, and shows that we come in all colours. She is a great role model for the new Norwegian with background from a foreign culture, who has managed to adopt our culture in an excellent way – and shares her culture with us.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ See Trygve Joakimsen 2011 - <http://www.nettavisen.no/nyheter/article3092851.ece> (Last accessed 16.04.2012, my translation).

¹⁵¹ See Inga Marte Thorkildsen 2011 - <http://ingamarte.blogspot.com/2011/02/rasist-jeg.html> (last accessed 16.04.2012, my translation).

¹⁵² See Linn Kongsli Lundervold 2011 - http://www.kjendis.no/2011/02/16/kjendis/stella_mwangi/melodi_grand_prix/15456272/ (last accessed 16.04.2012, my translation).

As Sundnes suggests, through her transcultural background, high visibility in ESC, and international success, Mwangi is a role model that can have some effect in grinding down Norwegian prejudices and inspiring other transcultural Norwegians. However, her success has been limited in Norway, at least compared to her international reception. From this perspective she would not qualify as an Askeladden winning the Kingdom. But is Askeladden even a suitable model for Stella? According to *Det store norske leksikon* Askeladden is the “Norwegian folk tales’ ideal character, a hidden force, who apparently dumb and drowsy waits for the right moment. Then he is triumphant, the youngest and despised, in all ordeals and wins the King’s daughter and half the Kingdom”.¹⁵³ Like Askeladden, Stella displays a blue-eyed optimism about life; she is despised by the far-right, and succeeds against poor odds (the Horatio Alger facet of Askeladden). However, the concept of ‘hidden force’ seems like a modernist notion of destiny that is not suitable for a postmodern woman who creates her own. Unlike Askeladden, Mwangi is not dumb and drowsy, and displays an optimistic investment of affect that could be seen as a metamodern sensibility in her work (cf. part one – ‘Transculturalism’). Notably, Stella is industrious and has a similar ‘do-it-yourself’, *auteur*, approach to music and fashion as Mira Craig.¹⁵⁴ And according to Sundnes, Stella is part of the new generation of ‘self made women’, and claims that she has control over everything from record contract to costume.¹⁵⁵ In this sense she can appeal to a modernist and Romantic notion of independent artistry, which aligned to a banal sensibility, opens a field of negotiation between a modernist and postmodern paradigm. Here a pop strategy destabilise modernist categories of aesthetic value, while her performing out of an African-Norwegian subjectivity in the context of ESC queers a fixed and backward-looking idea of Norwegian identity. Suggesting Stella’s victory as an ample response to the naysayers on the political populist right, I simultaneously read her performance as a form of aestheticised naivety that can be seen as a defence mechanism against overt and covert racism in a country that has been hard for her to grow up in. Undoubtedly, Stella is aware that today, nationalist groupings is once again mobilising against immigration and transcultural people. In light of this development, global history, and the artist’s

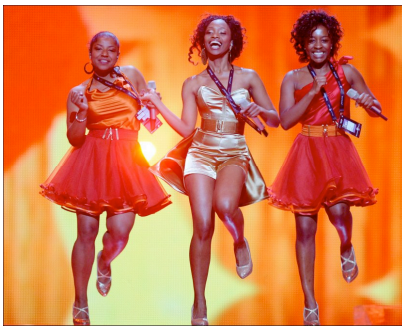
¹⁵³ See <http://snl.no/askeladden> (last accessed 04.04.2012, my translation).

¹⁵⁴ Mira Sherdin Craig (b. 1982) is a Norwegian artist with a black American father and a white Norwegian mother that has had success as performer, songwriter, dancer and clothing designer – See http://www.rockheim.no/mediateket/biografier/mira_craig/ (last accessed 06.04.2012).

¹⁵⁵ See Kaja Korsvold 2011 - <http://www.aftenposten.no/kultur/Utenlandske-plateselskaper-vil-ha-Stella-5110437.html> (last accessed 16.04.2012).

difficult childhood and adolescence, the responses that surged online after Stella's victory seems all the more important to counter. And maybe Stella herself is the best antidote. In contrast to haters spreading their bile online, or commit murder, she deals with her frustrations through 'rhythm and poetry', and naively but self-consciously invests in an idealised vision of music as a reservoir for empathy and vehicle for breaking down cultural borders. Now I would like to direct attention to ESC 2011 and Stella's performance of her winning contribution from *Kinanda*, 'Haba Haba'. Here, I propose, she displays a trusting view of the world, a confident optimism that could be read as a strategy drawing on naivety as a studied defence mechanism. At the same time her musical choices within the context of Norwegian ESC contribute to a politics of representation that together with a naive sensibility might be considered rebellious.

Naivety and the Politics of Representation.



Soundcheck in Düsseldorf 2011

Stella Mwangi's last album draws on an eurodance style mixed with various South African signifiers intersecting with banal and fun driven lyrics and song names: 'Haba Haba', 'Hula Hoop', 'Lookie Lookie', 'Smile', 'Hakuna Matata'. According to Hawkins, naivety "suggests something excessively simple – a trusting view of one's environment –

and often the result of youthful expression and inexperience" (Hawkins 2009: 40). Although Stella is a quite experienced artist, a naive sensibility is echoed in interviews where she claims that she does not pay attention to racist comments, ignoring the entire issue, as she did when Fredrik Skavland asked her to comment on Ormbostad's racist statement.¹⁵⁶ And further, in a more recent interview, after her lack of success in Düsseldorf, she was confronted with speculations over whether or not her faltering success could be related to racism, searching for an explanation with regard to the lack votes in her favour. She replied: "I try to live in a world where I don't talk about it at all. This is about music, and music doesn't have a background,

¹⁵⁶ See Fredrik Skavlan 2011 - <http://www.nrk.no/kultur-og-underholdning/1.7512243> (last accessed 16.04.2012).

age or colour. That's the way it is, and that's what I will relate to".¹⁵⁷ Notably, the assumption that music knows no colour, race, background etc., that music is a neutral universal language, is a widely held common-sense view that critical and popular musicology have revealed as a misunderstanding. Here Stella presents a naive attitude that seems to resurface musically through self-conscious choices about composition, production, and image. In the Norwegian ESC, as Stella enters the stage, what strikes me is the sense of escapist dance and joy that emanate from her performance.¹⁵⁸ Through a short introduction lasting four measures, an instrumental syncopated hook underscores a sense of joyous naivety through its synthetic sound and simple melody. The synthetic sound also has a sense of 'Africaness' to it, as it comes across as a digitally reproduced crossing of marimba (percussion instrument) and kalimba (thumb piano), instruments generally known as traditional African instruments (which also have influenced South American music).¹⁵⁹ In the first verse Stella's voice enters on a low note, arguably a bit too low for her register, which results in some missteps. Progressing through the verse, strained rapping forces Stella to gasp for air in fractions of a second that is available in-between phrases. In rock discourse, intonation mistakes and emotional investment might connote liveness and authenticity. However, in the context of an ESC playback performance there is a fine line to balance, for even if missing the notes can be charming, the slick playback environment emphasises the voice in a way that makes it harder to get away with errors.

Stella will not let the somewhat stumbling start ruin the celebration, as the verses spell out simple motivational common-sense advice learnt from her Kenyan grandmother. In the first verse Stella repeats twice: "When as a little girl my grandma told me, that I could be just anything that I wanted to". This is a statement that could just as well come from a Norwegian grandparent. Simultaneously it challenges the Law of Jante, a prevalent ambition inhibitor in the Scandinavian countries. The 'law' is composed by 'ten commandments' instructing social behaviour, and was created by the Danish-

¹⁵⁷ See Jan Thomas Holmlund and Håkon Eikesdal 2011 - http://www.kjendis.no/2011/05/11/kjendis/mgp/melodi_grand_prix/eurovision_song_contest/eurovision/16498813/ (last accessed 16.04.2012, my translation).

¹⁵⁸ See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7k9vOc_B9w (last accessed 05.04.2012).

¹⁵⁹ For information on the history of these instruments see e.g. <http://csulb-dspace.calstate.edu/handle/10211.14/11> (last accessed 06.04.2012), and http://asadl.org/jasa/resource/1/jasman/v131/i1/p945_s1 (last accessed 06.04.2012)

Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose (1899 – 1965).¹⁶⁰ This ‘law’ does not seem to apply for Stella as she confidently embraces her artistic ambitions, playing them out without inhibitions while drawing on close relationships for inspiration and empowerment. In the second verse she repeats twice: “When as a little girl my grandma told me that it’s the little things in life that’s gonna make me happy”. A focus on the little things, being content with everyday experiences, happy with what you’ve got, fits nicely to the way Norwegians have a tendency to romanticise the local and simple, and in line with the Jante Law it often means downplaying one’s ambitions and ego. For Stella it means the opposite; that the little things will lead to big things. At the emotional peak of the chorus her voice floats in a more comfortable register and the intonation becomes more precise and relaxed as she in Swahili sings: ‘Haba Haba Hujaza Kibaba’ – ‘small victories lead to big victories’.¹⁶¹ These motivational lyrics are accompanied by an uplifting Zulu choir while a digital bass line and minute changes in rhythmic pattern and bass drum sound, increases the density of the mix, shaping a dynamic peak contrasting the ‘naked’ verses. This dynamic progression and climax incites bodily motion while connoting hope and ambition in the face of opposition.

As a whole the musical text and performance give an impression of Stella “construed as romantic, charmingly straightforward and refreshingly unaffected” (Hawkins 2009: 152); a confidently naive attitude that resists the pressure from the Law of Jante, as well as ignoring a normative Norwegian identity hierarchy. The impression of simplicity is articulated musically through the rudimentary A-B-C structure, simple I – IV – I – V harmonic progressions, uncomplicated melodies and harmony, and last but not least, the banal production based on almost solely on MIDI generated sounds. Interestingly, William Kristoffersen from the Norwegian dance-band Ole Ivars has criticized ‘Haba Haba’ for being too simple, since it consists only of three chords.¹⁶² This is a statement that makes little sense given the host of relatively simple songs

¹⁶⁰ Don’t think you’re anything special. 2) Don’t think you’re as good as us. 3) Don’t think you’re smarter than us. 4) Don’t convince yourself that you’re better than us. 5) Don’t think you know more than us. 6) Don’t think you are more important than us. 7) Don’t think that you are good at anything. 8) Don’t laugh at us. 9) Don’t think anyone cares about you. 10) Don’t think you can teach us anything.

¹⁶¹ See Jan Thomas Holmlund 2011 - http://www.kjendis.no/2011/01/29/kjendis/mgp/melodi_grand_prix/eurovision_song_contest/eurovision/15245203/ (last accessed 16.04.2012).

¹⁶² See www.rb.no/lokal_kultur/article5492198.ece (last accessed 12.04.2012).

that previously have won the ESC, and given the many simple songs on Ole Ivars' repertoire. And it begs the question why Kristoffersen targets 'Haba Haba'? Notably, Kristoffersen was quick to defend Plumbo after Blokkhus' slip-up. And ironically both dance bands Plumbo and Ole Ivars draws on a rockist authenticity idiom based on simplicity.¹⁶³ Thus, Kristoffersen's comment is best read against the pop/rock schism that paradoxically connects to the familiar simplicity vs. complexity debate between art and popular music. In a modernist paradigm quality is often measured by the degree of harmonic, melodic and structural complexity, and spurs a debate that is reproduced in the disputes between pop and rock. Since rock became elevated to the realm of art in the 60s and 70s the pop/rock binarism has become mapped onto a matrix of simple/complex - commercial/art - feminine/masculine – inauthentic/authentic (cf. part one). However, studies from critical and popular musicology have shown that parameters such as rhythm, beat, sound, timbre, texture etc. can be equally complex as melody, harmony, and structure. In addition, the focus on complexity emphasises one specific way of listening, namely *rational listening*. Hawkins points out that it is commonly “taken for granted that a clear distinction exists between listening and responding, but, in practice, the boundaries of such difference are blurred” (Hawkins 2008: 121). The fact is, music affords many responses that differ from the rational, aesthetic, and intellectual, ways of experiencing pleasurable responses that might depend on simplicity, such as dancing and singing along. Which also dance bands such as Ole Ivars and Plumbo depend on. Thus, it seems like Kristoffersen's judgement positions rock's 'authentic' simplicity against pop's 'inauthentic' simplicity (cf. Grossberg's authentic inauthenticity).

Stella seems to knowingly stage a joyous 'not-giving-a-damn' attitude that is studiously naive. In his reading of Pet Shop Boys, Hawkins has noted that “musical simplicity and banality in pop texts should not be underestimated” (Hawkins 2002: 143), since “popular musicians often invest great craftsmanship to produce material which conveys a high degree of simplicity” (Walser in Hawkins 2002: 143). In the case of Pet Shop Boys, musical banality 'underpins the inference of irony', that can

¹⁶³ In Norway there is no clear-cut definition of what a dance band is. In 'cred' milieu the term dance band ('danseband') is often used derogatorily about bands such as D.D.E. and Ole Ivars. And from this perspective they are seen as having little artistic value, and are often listened to ironically. From my point of view a dance band is a commercial, most often male, band, making a living by playing relatively simple rock music, most often with Norwegian lyrics, designed to appeal to the broad category of 'folk'. Through what is seen by many as an 'unpretentious' approach to music making.

make their music open for misunderstanding, although it also has the potential for biting satire. Stella's approach seems less ironic and more genuinely optimistic, gravitating towards the 'informed naivety' and 'pragmatic idealism' of the metamodern sentiment mentioned above. Stella invests everything she's got and 'lives for the music', while putting on a stylised act and choosing to ignore the reality of Norwegian and European racism. And in entering a contest meant to select a Norwegian ambassador, one could interpret her African style as an act of resistance (or perhaps vengeance?). In the pre-chorus an agile guitar pattern contribute to the easy flow towards the climax. Stella has cited Paul Simon's *Graceland* (1986) as stylistic reference, and both the guitar style and Zulu choir in 'Haba Haba' forms direct intertextual links with this album.¹⁶⁴ *Graceland* was mostly recorded in South Africa and features local musicians, raising vexed debates over global capitalism, and the exploitation of non-Western cultures and musicians for commercial gain in the industrialised countries (cf. Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000). When Stella, a black Kenyan-Norwegian, taps into this style, accusations of exploitation become problematic, and in the context of ESC the act of appropriation can plausibly be read as empowering.

'Crazy Love, Vol. II' from Simon's controversial album opens with a repeating arpeggiated guitar pattern, played on a clean-guitar, high in register, with medium chorus, before a second guitar riff melts into the arpeggio, played on one-string, also in the high-register. This sounds similar to the guitar style in Stella's song, although the production and playing technique are much less virtuosic and inventive in 'Haba Haba'. Nonetheless, for me, this guitar sound connotes summer, sun, beach, party, dancing, romance, and easy living, accompanied by a choir that produces connotations of an exoticised Africa. It would not be surprising if Stella's Norwegian fans associate this with the Natural Park version of Africa portrayed in *The Lion King* to lushly orchestrated dramatic music shaped around a vigorous Zulu choir. Zimmer has explained that for *The Lion King* they worked with a Zulu tribe in South Africa, and has this to say about how it sounds:

¹⁶⁴ See http://www.rockheim.no/mediateket/biografier/stella_mwangi/ (last accessed 05.04.2012).

When you hear an African choir, its innocence, its never this feeling of inadequacy, you know, which makes people sing quietly. You can hear every individual in the group.¹⁶⁵

When Zimmer talks about innocence, it seems as if he means the power with which the lyrics are sung (the amplitude), and the corporeal and emotional investments that are made.¹⁶⁶ Thus, his statement seems reductive and essentialist, forming part of a broad and multifaceted discourse on African music. From one perspective innocence is the opposite of shyness, and is related to the free expression of mind and body often associated with the behaviour of un-socialized young children. And here enters the full weight of the Western Romantic discourse since Rousseau. From a different perspective the Zulu choir invoke a joyous feeling that is not related to innocent primitivism, but rather to an informed optimism about life that might come across as naive. Therefore, rather than innocence, the choir connotes vivacious life, opportunities, and hope. In conjunction with the lyrics, groove, and Stella's charm, these musical elements conjoin in a bundle of motivation.

The sonic representation of 'Africaness' in a Norwegian ESC context can be read as a response to living in a country where normative identity categories are sternly policed. By knowingly embracing a naive joy of life through aesthetic choices, and through sonic representation politics, Stella resists her adversaries. As we have seen, several musical signifiers in 'Haba Haba' adhere to a South African discourse. In fact, her winning contribution is similar in style to that of Shakira's 'Waka Waka'; the anthem for the *2010 FIFA World Cup* hosted by South Africa. Interestingly both artists have been attacked for being unsuitable for representing respectively South Africa and Norway; Shakira, for being South American and too white, Stella for being Kenyan and too black. Both artists' songs are based on a quantised groove constructed from the clave pattern, allegedly a pattern with African roots that today is most commonly associated with the African diaspora in South America, e.g. in the form of the Afro-Cuban Son clave.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ See interview

http://www.mylionking.com/theatre/lk/production/index.php?clip=musical_inspiration (last accessed 05.04.2012, my transcription and translation, at 10:20).

¹⁶⁶ Hear for example The Young Zulu Warriors, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMY4PkeBd_0 (last accessed 05.04.2012).

¹⁶⁷ The clave pattern is for example a central ingredient in the Central American style bossanova.



Fig. 5

This groove is built on a double-time repetition of the first measure, with an offbeat variation at the end of every second measure. In ‘Haba Haba’ the second and third strokes are accentuated by a snare-like sound, similar to the sound of beating a hand-drum with a drumstick. Over a four-to-the-floor bass drum, the clave variation makes the groove playfully syncopated, encouraging a somewhat different body movement than a straight 4/4 groove would. On the climaxes the bass drum is compressed with sharp attack and short decay, which produces a tight, distinct, and penetrating sound effectively supplying a danceable beat in a tempo at about 120bpm, allegedly the ‘disco tempo’. Placed in the centre of the mix, the bass drum beat is given a prominent role as an effective body-mover. In the verses the bass drum sounds more rounded and subdued, which is a result of lower volume and dampening the higher frequencies, emphasising the area from about 50Hz to 300Hz in the frequency spectrum. When Stella moves from the verse to the chorus, this production technique works in conjunction with the changes in mentioned musical parameters to heighten the emotive and physical response, inspiring dancing and ‘letting go’. Apart from the voice, the guitar is the only instrument that sounds ‘authentic’, in the sense that it is the recorded sound of a non-digital instrument, i.e. not the sound of a software plug-in MIDI¹⁶⁸ instrument (VSTi – Virtual Studio Technology instrument). The production is not as sophisticated and nuanced as for example that of ‘Waka Waka’, and the overall sound seems based on processed sounds from what could be standard sound libraries, making the sound appear somewhat naked and cold.

However, another way to read this is through the studied naivety that appears to be one of Stella’s strategies. Thus, one way to approach her agency musically can be through the production techniques she and her team use. For example, the melodic instrument, the harmonies, and the layers of the groove have a synthetic sound to it that is a familiar characteristic of MIDI generated instruments that often emit a narrower overtone spectrum than most analogue instruments. This makes it easy for the production team to control the frequency details of each sound to form a tidy and

¹⁶⁸ Musical Instrument Digital Interface.

super-clean sound image.¹⁶⁹ Digital technology such as MIDI and synthesiser has been attacked by male rockers cut from the modernist cloth, where the assumed simplicity of execution (programming) and sound have implied passivity, commercialisation, and thus feminisation. Through postmodern glasses however, the seemingly banal performance gains status by Stella's commitment to it. Thus, a self-consciously simplistic and synthetic sound could be read as a reflection of Stella's naive temperament, interpreted as an act of resistance.

The controversy over Stella's victory shows that musical representations have a central role in the struggles over Norwegian identity. As Hawkins points out: "Authenticating a national style is as much about creating bonds and boundaries as cultural capital" (Hawkins 2009: 52). In an apologetic interview Ornbostad explained her comment: "my opinion is that the ancient-Norwegian ['urnorsk'] sells better, and is more *Norwegian Grand Prix*, than a song that has African tendencies".¹⁷⁰ Stella lost the semi-finals in Düsseldorf (May 10th 2011), a loss that came as a bit of a surprise for many. Quite a few attributed Mwangi's loss to the questionable quality of her vocal performance.¹⁷¹ However, several of the contributions voted to the finals were struggling with vocal delivery, and it is not unlikely that Stella's loss had something to do with the fact that she represents a foreign identity. When Alexander Iorjevitsj Rybak, descending from Belarus, won the ESC in 2009, he played straight into the expectations of what a Norwegian contribution should look and sound like. The song 'Fairytale' is a simple love story, which Rybak accompanies with the most 'Norwegian' instruments of all, the fiddle. The title and the fiddle throw up a number of connotations of national-romantic cultural symbols and icons, e.g. traditional rural dance and music, the internationally acclaimed fiddle virtuoso Ole Bull, or Asbjørnsen and Moe's collection of fairytales. The fiddle hook sounds like a typical Norwegian folk tune, and the song is performed by a white young man that looks like

¹⁶⁹ The impact of MIDI has been immense on the economic and democratic aspects of music production (Hawkins 2002: 131; Toynbee 2000), and has since its inception in 1981 developed a certain aesthetic that has had a major impact on European post-disco dance music, e.g. in the mid- to late 1980s through the influential American styles, Detroit techno and Chicago house (Hawkins 2002: 131).

¹⁷⁰ See Linn Kongsli Lundervold 2011 - http://www.kjendis.no/2011/02/16/kjendis/stella_mwangi/melodi_grand_prix/15453271/ (last accessed 16.04.2012, my translation and emphasis).

¹⁷¹ ESC semi-finals in Düsseldorf - www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KpVxA0aeW8 (last accessed 12.04.2012).

a stereotypical Norwegian, accompanied by three male dancers, performing a variant of the Norwegian folk dance 'halling'. Often, the ESC contributors either follow general Western pop/rock styles, or a blend of pop/rock and styles derived from European traditional folk musics.¹⁷² Historically Stella's Afro-European background is not novel, although her specifically South African rhetoric does seem to be more rare.¹⁷³ From this her politics of representation in this context might be considered an accomplishment, and combined with her naive strategy I interpret Stella's ESC contribution as a partly successful act of resistance against monocultural sentiments in Norway that either way gave her a career boost.

Conclusion

Music has multiple uses, and in this part I have first discussed the therapeutic and manipulative potential of music for a country in desperate need for a feeling of unity and community after a major trauma. Through close readings of two versions of 'Mitt lille land' I have questioned an ideal image of Norway as an inclusive and generous country promulgated in the media and in a mourning period after 22/7. I have found a schism between Oslo and the districts that is by no means universal, but visible enough to cautiously and conditionally suggest a generalisation where this fracture might be seen as emanating from negotiations over postmodernist and modernist paradigms. I have suggested that the latter is permeated with ideas of biological essentialism and cultural absolutism, and consequently there seems to be a tendency towards identity conservatism in the districts where there often is less diversity. This might suggest that urban transculturality can have a potential for eroding cultural borders and encouraging intercultural dialogue. And as I have argued, music can aid this process. Nonetheless, urban transculturality have also provoked defensive measures from those unwilling to accept the escalating cultural diversity. From this, an objective has been to reveal how successful and highly visible transcultural artists

¹⁷² This process of appropriation is also found in non-ESC bands such as Gogol Bordello (US), System of a Down (US), Farmers Market (NO), and Gåte (NO), where the three former draw on eastern European influences, and the latter on Norwegian.

¹⁷³ See this blog for some examples of black artists in the ESC:
<http://afroeuropa.blogspot.com/2010/05/overview-black-singers-at-eurovision.html> (last accessed 06.04.2012).

can disprove and counteract populist racist rhetoric in mainstream and social media, and simultaneously invigorate it. Through a comparative reading of ‘Ola nordmann’ and ‘Stay’ I have directed attention to audiovisual representation politics, where I have read Plumbo’s and Tooji’s ESC performances as belonging to respectively modernist and postmodernist aesthetic discourses. With an emphasis on revealing Norwegian racism, the ESC has seemed like a good place to excavate the category ‘ethnic Norwegian’, and in the last section I have focused on one particular district outside Oslo that through many years have been an FrP stronghold and known for its recent surge of neo-Nazism. Incidentally the Municipality of Ullensaker is where Stella Mwangi now has her home, and here I have pondered over the impact Norwegian racism might have had on her. An interpretation of her ESC performance has found that it, in my opinion, can be seen as an act of resistance against modernist notions of aesthetic judgement and national ethnicity. I have read her put-on naivety in interviews as reflected in the simplicity or banality of music and lyrics, and from a postmodern perspective I propose that in this context, self-conscious simplicity can be interpreted as an act of resistance.

Final Reflections

In this study I have taken as vantage point several Norwegian celebrities and attempted to read them through music, and music through them, while focusing on empathic and anti-empathic aspects of the ways in which popular musicking contributes to shaping various identity discourses. Which in turn have an impact on subjectivity and agency. On account of my conclusions after each chapter, I will here restrain myself from going into further details regarding my case studies. My aim here is rather to reflect on the general and overarching questions and topics, which have motivated and guided my studies throughout this thesis.

With a particular focus on gender and national ethnicity I have sought to form a critique of biological essentialism and cultural absolutism through the concepts of authenticity and transculturalism, basing my approach on an interdisciplinary poststructuralist theoretical framework. In an effort to understand the fascinating processes through which technologised audiovisual representational politics can blur hegemonic normative boundaries as well as reinforcing them, my critique has generally been about unearthing Norwegian xenophobia, racism and misogyny. Here Anders B. Breivik's and similar ideologies have been used as a backdrop for arguing for personal responsibility and self-reflection in shaping empathic and fertile transcultural dialogues. This has contributed to the cautiously normative edge of this thesis. Importantly, I have found that popular music forms a particularly vital area of research, where my studies have shown how artists often resist binary categorisation and supposedly stable stereotypes of male/female, masculinity/femininity, black/white, non-Norwegian/Norwegian. Thus, fathoming out the political impact of musicking in a contemporary Norwegian context has been one of my main objectives, where a central assumption underpinning my analyses has been that music can reflect, form, order, and disrupt society. Or as Attali's interesting analogy suggests, "[music's] order simulates the social order, and its dissonances express marginalities" (Attali 1985: 29).

By no means do I presume that my short interpretations have provided the reader with an exhaustive explication of the intersections between music and agency. Nonetheless, I have attempted to construct a discourse by weaving together an

intertextual network of meaning production that in my opinion has illuminated, at least partly, how my case studies contribute to a politics of aesthetics that can have implications for the wider society's ways of dealing with issues of gender, 'race', and ethnicity. Notably, it is how these artists' outputs are appropriated and interpreted by the fan and non-fan that can reveal their impact on society, and society's impact on them. For example, in the same way Breivik's interpretation of Bøksle can say something about his worldview, my interpretations can say something about me. Thus, I hope, my studies have exemplified how musical genres and styles can reveal ways in which the structures of aesthetic judgements are intertwined with political struggles that are apparent in wider Norwegian society. This is also the main reason why I have found it necessary to include a rather comprehensive unravelling of the broader political discourses in Norway today, given that these have significant implications for the ways in which popular music can become politicised.

Positioning my work within popular musicology, a relatively novel field of interdisciplinary critical research, I have chosen to write a politically charged text. There is no denying that 22/7 has profoundly affected my choice of case studies and style of writing. However, recognizing the excruciatingly complex issues of human agency, I have strived for a balanced critique, while relying on transculturalism as a moral fundament. Granted, my subject position as a privileged white male from a small and exceptionally affluent country has its challenges when it comes to undertaking the enormously challenging task of untangling the vexed issues of power, gender, and ethnicity. Notably, my interpretations have sometimes challenged my own prejudices and assumptions, which I have made sincere efforts to overcome. These issues notwithstanding, highly motivated by the world's unjust power structures, and what seems to be a withdrawal from genuine hopes of global humanism in the 21st century, I have felt compelled to engage some of the main issues that have been placed on the political agenda since 22/7. Admittedly, there have been significant developments in the 20th century with regard to dismantling oppressive power structures, but as Stéphane Hessel has recently argued, in the 21st century, regressive developments have become so evident and pressing that people need to 'get angry' – *Indignez-Vous!* (Hessel 2011). The recent events and developments in the Norwegian society have indeed made me angry, and I have struggled with my own emotional investment in the material. Given this, and given my privileged

position, I hope that my self-knowledge and my understanding of the scholars that I have built on have been sufficient to steer away from the most obvious pitfalls when engaging the issues that have motivated this thesis.

Given the Internet's major impact on social interaction and democracy, and the surge in online conspiracy, harassment, misogyny, and racism, it is significant for a critical musicology to keep an eye on what goes on in this virtual universe, where nations intersect with the globe. And intrigued by the fractures and structures of a contemporary Norwegian national identity, which have become blatantly obvious after 22/7, my discoursing on popular music, identity, subjectivity, and agency, has unearthed some of the polarized responses that a rapidly changing society has provoked. I have argued that the pejorative rhetoric against the Other surfacing online, in the context I have examined, has a profoundly negative effect on social relationships and intercultural dialogue, prompting defensive measures from transcultural Norwegian artists. Of great concern has also been the role of this new technology in drawing people into the dark bowels of society, where a vibrant cyberscene is eschewing empathy for self-righteous hatred (cf. Strømme 2011; see also Thomas Hylland Eriksen's article - 'Anders Behring Breivik: Tunnel vision in an online world').¹⁷⁴ Here I would like to echo Cornel West's appeal to the American society, and position it within a 'glocal' context: "Either we learn a new language of empathy and compassion, or the fire this time will consume us all" (West 2001: 13). It is my belief that music can form a significant part of such a new language, and it is my hope that this thesis can provide valuable insights into how popular music can operate as a catalyst for transcultural empathy, not only anti-empathy. And perhaps popular music's role in the online intersection between the transcultural and the transpersonal can prove to be a vital area of research to engage with in the future? As I have found during this thesis, online discourses intersect with popular music on account of the Internet making access to music easier, which in turn has "heightened individuals' reflections on the tie between their choice of music and perceptions of their own identity" (Hawkins and Bjorøy 2012: 5). For example, the case studies I have chosen to scrutinise all represent different ways of responding to anxieties over globalisation, immigration, and alienation.

¹⁷⁴ http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jul/25/anders-behring-breivik-norway-extremists?CMP=tw_t_gu (last entered 12.04.2012).

Recognising the pressing need for more research on issues of popular music and agency, I perceive this thesis as a contribution that positioned within a larger interdisciplinary field, can complement other scholars' work in a manner that might be productive. However, today an ongoing downscaling of the human sciences is happening in universities across the country. In times of unprecedented environmental challenges and financial crises, it seems as if the value of humanities is downgraded on account of its supposed lack of practicality and its scarcity of unequivocal answers. Here a paradox surfaces, in that population growth, the 'war on terror', and environmental and financial crises intensify processes of immigration and cultural hybridisation. Thus, to tackle present and future challenges and ethno-cultural frictions, humanist scholars trained in matters of history, philosophy, culture, language, identity, and subjectivity have never been more important. It is therefore regrettable that the humanities are being sacrificed while there is pressing need for critical culture studies to sensibly handle an increasingly transcultural situation, and to challenge the surge of myopic positivism. And here I believe popular musicology has something to offer.

These reflections lead me back to my main objective: to figure out how popular musicology can contribute to a better understanding of society and culture, and how popular music impacts human agency. Throughout this thesis I have been attempting to do just that, and although more research undoubtedly is required, it is my opinion that this thesis, at least tentatively, has illuminated ways in which popular musicology matters when engaging critically with the difficulties an increasingly transcultural Norway is facing. Thus, I believe, by paying attention to the ways in which music contributes to the processes through which people are shaped as subjects, an understanding of how invocations of empathy and anti-empathy are instigated through musical identity can unearth the arbitrary nature of socio-cultural power structures.

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