A Norwegian Tragedy
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Anders Behring Breivik and the Massacre on Utøya

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A year ago today, on 24 August 2012, Anders Behring Breivik was found guilty of killing seventy-seven people, violating sections 147 and 148 of the Norwegian Penal Code, which cover acts of terrorism, and section 233, premeditated murder where particularly aggravating circumstances prevail. The prosecuting authority’s plea that he be transferred to mental health care was not upheld. The court found Breivik criminally sane and sentenced him to preventive detention for twenty-one years.

Thus a chapter came to an end. The events of 22 July 2011 had not only been scrutinized in detail by possibly the most comprehensive court case in Norwegian history, but had also been thoroughly investigated by the 22 July Commission and almost endlessly discussed in the media. Nevertheless, there are still aspects of the case that have not been reported widely. The extent of the detailed discussion has perhaps also meant that the bigger picture has become fragmented. How can we understand 22 July 2011?

A single book cannot describe such a great tragedy, but a book can still go into further depth than an article or a television programme and attempt to create a narrative or analysis of the events. Ideally, then, a book may contribute to deeper understanding.

My work on this book took other routes than I had initially envisaged. I eventually encountered the dilemma of how much I should tell and where to draw the line. I made a different choice from most Norwegian journalists because I decided that some of the lesser-known elements shed light on the explosive hatred that had such deadly consequences. They have explanatory power.
This was not a simple assessment; rights came up against other rights. Those affected have the right to know as much as possible about the background to the catastrophe. Breivik and his family have the right to their privacy. With a case of such enormous dimensions, however, I concluded that openness weighs heavily as a consideration. This is why I chose to tell more about Breivik’s background and family than was publicly known at the time, because the picture I would have painted otherwise would have been incomplete at best, if not false.

That decision left its mark on this book. I have written about the community that was attacked, AUF [the Workers’ Youth League], and, in a broader sense, Norway. I have written about extremist reactions to the emerging new Europe, with a focus on Breivik’s so-called manifesto. I have learnt a lot in the process. The events of 22 July showed that Norwegian society is strong, but also that some people are left out of it. The reasons for this are not always clear, including in this case.

The process of understanding what led to Breivik becoming such a radical outsider is important. Without knowledge of where the holes in the net of our society are to be found, it is difficult to mend them. On its publication in Norway in the autumn of 2012, this book caused a debate about writers’ ethics and the roots of radicalization. Why do children from peaceful and prosperous societies end up as terrorists? While Breivik serves his possibly lifelong sentence, the discussion about the attacks on 22 July 2011 and the phenomenon of European terrorism continues. I believe that is a good thing, and this book is a contribution to that discussion.

Aage Borchgrevink
Oslo, 24 August 2013
Personnel from several police districts scramble independently of one another in the Tyrifjord area at 18:03. The map gives an overview of most of the police vehicles active in the operation at the time. The vehicles approaching from Oslo belong to the Delta Unit.

The Tyrifjord and surrounding area, 22 July 2011
Utøya
Redrawn from ‘Rapport fra 22. juli-kommisjonen’ [22 July Commission Report], Report for the Prime Minister, NOU 2012: 14, fig. 7.5, p. 120.
The bomb exploded at 15:25:22. The blast reverberated through the city. The van disintegrated. A motorcyclist and a chance passer-by vanished in the white flash of the explosion. A fierce fireball blinded the nearest surveillance cameras and was followed by a cloud of smoke and dust. Pieces of the van flew like projectiles in every direction, axles and engine parts spinning through the air.

At the scene, cars were flung around, and the lamp posts bent like blades of grass. The buildings on both sides of Grubbegata bore the brunt of the shockwave, completely destroying their lowest floors. The pressure wave pulverized the windows in the floors higher up, passed right through the building and smashed glass in other buildings around the square in front of the high-rise H Block. Ceilings collapsed above the offices in the H Block and in the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy. Splinters of glass and wood whistled through the corridors and offices, drilling their way deep into wall panels and cupboards.

The blast sparked fires on both sides of the street and gouged holes in the asphalt. The bomb crater gaped open right through two levels of tunnels running under the street. These corridors were used to transport documents between the ministries. The explosion cut deeply, uncovering hidden passageways and exposing the very nerves of administration in Norway. There was a smell of sulphur, like rotten eggs.

Eight minutes earlier, at 15:17, the large, white Volkswagen Crafter van had turned in off the street called Grensen. It drove calmly up Grubbegata towards the government district and stopped on the
right-hand side in front of a metal fence covered with a white canvas to hide the construction works outside R4, the building that housed the Ministry of Trade and Industry as well as the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy. The driver put on the hazard lights, as illegally parked vans often do, and made his final choice.

A couple of minutes later, the van rolled forwards again. It turned off to the left by the H Block, stopping outside the main entrance to the Office of the Prime Minister. A man in a dark uniform got out of the vehicle and walked on up Grubbegata. A security camera captured him on his way up the pavement: a man with a black helmet, a lowered visor and a pistol in his right hand, turning round and staring back at the van he had left behind. The time was approaching half past three in the afternoon on 22 July 2011.

It was a sleepy Friday in the summer shutdown.

At Tvedestrand, further south, a man stood on the jetty by his holiday cabin, studying the cloud banks hanging above the grey sea. It was the summer holidays, after all, even for the foreign minister. He decided to take his sons out trolling for mackerel, and went to change the hooks on his fishing line.

A young, dark-haired woman sat nodding off in a car heading in to Oslo. She was dressed up in red boots and red earrings and was tired after a night out with her friends.

The rain lashed down over eastern Norway – again. The summer of 2011 would go down in the history books as one of the greyest and muggiest in living memory. People in their holiday cabins stayed indoors; no point in going out into the mist. The grass was wet, and if you wore trainers your feet would just get soggy.

A woman lit a cigarette and took a break from preparing dinner in the kitchen. She had moved to a small coastal town by the Oslofjord after retiring from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but she still kept a small bridgehead in the capital: a studio flat in the West End. That evening, Tove was going to have some friends round.

A student from Stavanger and his friend, a girl from Oslo wearing a black turban, spoke quietly in his small room in Kafébygget [the Café Building]. Outside the window, the damp foliage glistened, blocking the view of the grey lake Tyrifjord. They were taking a short break together before the afternoon’s programme.

At 15:21, the administrative secretary at the Electricians’ and IT Workers’ Union logged off the network and got up from her desk. Holidays at last. The union had its offices on the seventh floor of Folkets Hus [the People’s House], the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions’ building, which dominated one side of the square at
Youngstorget. To the left of Folkets Hus towered Folketeaterbygningen [the People’s Theatre building], where the Workers’ Youth League, among others, had their offices. The administrative secretary was a sprightly woman in her mid-fifties, a former Norwegian football champion. She usually cycled home, but that day she had taken her bike to be repaired. She was wearing light-coloured jeans, black trainers and a brown jumper. It had cleared up when she went out of the building. Since she was going to the metro station, she could walk either down towards Jernbanetorget or up past the government district and the entrance into Stortinget metro station. It was not far to go either way, but the secretary turned right and walked up the incline. She strolled along Møllergata and turned right up the alley leading to Einar Gerhardsens Plass.

In the meantime, the man in the helmet had crossed Grubbegata, walked down to Hammersborg Torg and got into a silver-grey Fiat Doblò. A man saw what looked like an armed policeman reversing the van out and driving down Møllergata in the direction of Hausmanns Gate. The strange thing was that the policeman was driving the wrong way down a one-way street. Was he completely disorientated? Why did the policeman choose to go that way? The man at Hammersborg Torg took out his mobile and made a note of the small van’s number: V-H-2-4-6-0-5. Green plates.

In the government district at Grubbegata, there were people at work all day long, all year round. The buildings never slept, but on Fridays during the summer holidays most people left the office early. Normally, more than 1,500 people worked in the government district, but at twenty-five past three on this particular day there were only about 250 people in the buildings and 75 out on the street nearby.

At 15:24, the security cameras in Einar Gerhardsens Plass picked up a man in a white T-shirt walking towards the main entrance to the H Block. The man, in his early thirties, was possibly one of the people who usually took the short cut through the lobby, past the guards behind the desk on the left, on the way to the exit onto Akersgata. The lobby underneath the Office of the Prime Minister was open to the public. Less than a minute later, a motorbike stopped next to the Volkswagen Crafter. In the back of the large van was a homemade bomb weighing approximately 950 kg, consisting of fertilizer, diesel and aluminium. It exploded.

On the streets of the city centre, the pressure wave mowed down people on the pavements. A man was thrown onto the asphalt, as if by an invisible hand. He immediately got up again and tried to find
his bearings. Some pedestrians lay in foetal positions, lifeless, while others immediately ran away. In a busy street, first one person, then three, and eventually the whole crowd ran in panic, as fast as they could, away from the site of the explosion.

A dying woman in light blue jeans was left lying by the fountain in Einar Gerhardsens Plass.

A cloudburst of glass rained down over the city. All around Youngstorget, shards of glass from the shattered windows smashed down onto the paving stones. Out in the square, a woman touched her head and stared at her hand, which was red with blood.

The centre of Oslo is compact. It is only a couple of hundred metres from the government district to the Storting, the main party offices and the biggest media centres. If a radius is drawn out another few hundred metres from the government district, then Norges Bank, the Royal Palace and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also fall in the circle. It was possible to drive up to any of these buildings. When the raining glass had subsided, dozens of people lay, sat and walked around the centre of Oslo with blood streaming from cuts to their heads, arms and shoulders.

Within a few minutes, the pictures of R4 in flames, Grubbegata strewn with wreckage and the mangled H Block were being seen around the world. The pictures spoke for themselves. Devastated buildings, dust, smoke, people in shock and bleeding. Similar pictures had been broadcast many times over the past twenty years: Oklahoma City in 1995, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998, Moscow, Buynaksk and Volgodonsk in 1999, New York in 2001, Bali in 2002, Beslan in 2004, Mumbai in 2008 and, time after time, towns in Israel, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The damage being seen by television viewers around the world seemed to have originated outside the building. ‘A car bomb?’ wondered a man walking up Grubbegata as he filmed the inferno.

Over the course of the counterfactual hours before it became clear who was behind the bomb, many dark-skinned Norwegians in Oslo instinctively kept their heads down. The signature of al-Qaeda seemed to be written all over the Norwegian government district in fire, glass and blood. The explosion in Oslo struck like a bolt of lightning at the social and political landscape in Norway, splitting open divides like chasms. Could immigrants be behind it?

A foreigner watching the television pictures from the centre of Oslo while he commented on an English-language forum wrote that he ‘did not know Norwegians looked like Arabs’. A well-known Norwegian blogger immediately answered: ‘In Oslo they do. Arabs, Kurds, Pakistanis, Somalis, you name it. Anything and everything is
fine as long as they rape the natives and destroy the country, which they do.'1 Who was the blogger representing when he wrote that ‘the left-wing government of Jens Stoltenberg that was just bombed is the most dhimmi [and] appeasing of all Western governments’? The term *dhimmi* describes non-Muslims who live under sharia, and in this case probably meant something along the lines of repressed and cowardly.

The notion of Norway as characterized by a sense of community and solidarity, as a harmonious island in a troubled world, faded. Had Norway suddenly ended up in some kind of revolutionary situation without most people noticing? The stench of the bomb was pungent. A layer of smoke descended on Oslo, obscuring the question of what was rotten in Norwegian society.

Shortly before four o’clock, I stood in front of the physics building on the University of Oslo campus and stared over the roofs towards the centre of the city. The cloud of smoke rose up from the government district and hung over the city centre for a while before slowly dissolving and disappearing. The surreal sight reminded me of burning villages in the Balkans and bombed towns in the Caucasus. Complicated local situations often lay hidden behind the suicide attacks and massacres I had investigated there. But here, in Oslo? It was hard to fathom.

I thought about my parents’ accounts of 9 April 1940, when German aircraft swarmed over the city and Vidkun Quisling staged a coup d’état live on Norsk rikskringkasting [Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation; NRK] radio. Most of all I thought about the fallen towers in New York in 2001, and about the ideology that unites terrorists of many stripes in a common hatred towards Western cities and all that they stand for. The explosion was of such a magnitude that it appeared to be a declaration of war, an attack of geopolitical dimensions.

Yet this was only the beginning of the tragedy. Not only would the follow-up be more horrific than anybody could imagine, but the course of events would turn out quite differently to any preconceived notions. The man in the helmet was not dark-skinned, but white. Hmm, I thought, when I heard that: Chechen? Bosnian? Albanian? This must have originated in a distant warzone. No, it was not that straightforward. The man was neither Muslim nor a foreigner but one of my neighbours from the West End of Oslo.

In order to get closer to the origins of this atrocity, I would have to go not further away, but deeper. As I explored the dark online worlds of the past decade, fantasy culture and Oslo gangs of the
nineties, I found that I kept on crossing my own tracks. What appeared to be political extremism, and in a way was, would turn out to have a complicated local dimension at its core here too. Some people had seen a monster taking shape, but their ignored warnings lay buried beneath layers of time, and witnesses were silent.

As I walked back through Marienlystparken [Marienlyst Park] with my mobile phone in my hand, I tried to find out how my friends and colleagues were doing in the city centre. The ambulances screeched down Kirkeveien from Ullevål Hospital. Sometimes, the solution is closer than you think, and hatred is written on the wall where nobody notices it. By chance, a friend of mine had seen a glimpse of it at a bar in the autumn of 2010.
In mid-July 2011, the regular customer turned up for a last drink at Skaugum, an open-air bar at the back of the Palace Grill near Solli Plass in the West End of Oslo. It was the middle of the week, but there was little difference between weekdays and the weekend when everyone was on holiday. When the weather dried up, people flocked to bars and cafés like swarms of ants. The man pushed his way forward through striped shirts, hoodies and lace tops to order a Bacardi Razz, a sugary raspberry-flavoured rum that in Oslo’s West End bars is often mixed with Sprite, decorated with a slice of lime and called a Butterfly.

The customer was quiet and polite as usual. He was a typical West End boy, or man, of the sort that were two a penny at Skaugum, and he did not stand out apart from being less drunk and loud-mouthed than most of the others. He was medium height, blond and with an average build, in good shape. The bartender remembered the customer well from his days at Oslo Commerce School, one of the neighbouring buildings, in the late nineties. Over the years, as his hair slowly became thinner and his jaws rounder, he had continued to come back to the Palace Grill.

Most of the other boys from the nineties had got degrees and careers, grown up and settled down, but this regular customer had not followed the usual path from the Commerce School to a secure job in trade or industry. He did not have to pick anyone up from nursery at four o’clock and did not get up at seven to go to work.
Some take longer to find themselves, and an unmistakable aura of interrupted studies and failed business ventures surrounded the customer at the bar. ‘Get rich or die tryin’, he had said to his acquaintances in the Progress Party youth wing early in the noughties, quoting the rapper 50 Cent. But he was not much richer on this mild summer evening ten years later than he was back then.

Some of his businesses had made something, while others had gone quite badly. He had earned good money selling cheap phone call packages and fake diplomas, but his friends were still laughing about some of his ideas. For several months he had worked on his ‘unemployed academic’ project. He had developed a prototype of a pedal-driven billboard by putting together a bike and a newspaper cart. His idea was to take on an unemployed academic (of whom there were plenty, he thought) to cycle the vehicle with the billboard round Oslo: mobile advertising or, alternatively, ads-on-wheels.

It did not go well. The wind blew the cart over on the very first day, sending the billboard flying off to hit a woman. The ‘unemployed academic’ project was abandoned after its maiden voyage. Maybe his ideas were a little too big. The plan was not only about earning money but perhaps more about humiliating academics. Even though his friends thought he was enterprising, he was often strange and obstinate. An odd eccentric who wore sunglasses around town, even though it looked peculiar in the evening, and who was perpetually vain, wearing a Canada Goose-branded down jacket in the winter or with his shirt collar folded up under his Lacoste jumpers. A metrosexual, as he said himself. Before he went out, he put on make-up. He was considering hair transplants and dental bleaching. He had a nose job done when he was twenty.

The man paid for his drink with a 200 kroner note, smiled and said that he did not need all the change.

The Palace Grill popped up in 1988, a casual alternative behind the neat West End façade of Solli Plass. My friends and I hung out there back then, pale university students in our dark leather jackets. By the summer of 2011, the Palace consisted of an American-inspired bar with a substantial selection of beers and whiskies and a reputable restaurant, as well as the outdoor bar in the courtyard called Skaugum, named after the crown prince and crown princess’s family residence in Asker – maybe because the royals themselves used to show up in the courtyard there on occasion.

The place’s alternative character gave way to an elegant West End watering hole where a composite mixture of local residents quenched their thirst. While the Palace Grill was frequently visited by A-list and B-list celebrities, cultural and media figures in their thirties,
Skaugum was where student hipsters, dark horses in the financial sector and more anonymous representatives of the West End’s alcopop generation hung out under the open sky.

For almost twenty-five years, the Palace Grill had endured as a cultured alternative to the sleek concept establishments that stretched out in a golden crescent from Solli Plass up to the neighbourhood of Majorstua and then down Bogstadveien. There you could meet damaged West End characters drinking away the last remains of their grandparents’ inheritance and saying that they would soon get their big break as designers, open a gourmet food shop or publish their manuscript that would solve all the world’s problems.

This regular patron did not always go home quite so early or behave quite so well. There was something intense about him, which sometimes got out of hand.

At the turn of the year, he had been out on the town a fair bit and managed to get thrown out of the Palace Grill after having bothered one of the other customers. A TV star in his forties, known for his wicked humour and unrestrained behaviour, noticed that the thin-haired and blond regular customer was staring at him. The men nodded to each other, and the young, blond man came straight across to him. ‘Anders Behring Breivik, nice to meet you,’ the man introduced himself, speaking in his refined West End manner.

It was an uncomfortable conversation. Breivik immediately began lecturing about Muslims and immigration policy. The celebrity tried to signal that he was not interested. Breivik spoke about crusades and Knights Templar. There was something strange about him. It was difficult to put it into words, but it was something that could be felt. A kind of stiffness. A kind of flatness. Did he say he was writing a book? His face was almost expressionless, except for that artificial smile. His voice was toneless, his eyes stared and he blinked a lot. He sat on his chair as if he were sedated, not making a single spontaneous movement. It seemed as if his body were shut, closed off, like a condemned building.

The atmosphere eventually became so awkward that the celebrity called the bouncers. Breivik was led away, but he managed to turn round. ‘In one year’s time, I’ll be three times as famous as you,’ he said, before the bouncers pushed him out onto the street.4

Scenes like that are also two a penny in the West End of Oslo. There is often little distance between those who are famous and those who are not, but who would like to be. Celebrities must expect to be recognized, for good or for bad. Not all wannabes can master the codes of the West End, let alone the art of conversation. Groupies are not necessarily girls.
Breivik’s parting remark did not appear especially likely and was more like typical hot air from an awkward bluffer with delusions of grandeur and an inferiority complex. Social skills are an art that requires constant practice, as Breivik himself thought, acknowledging that he had been out of practice for the past few years.\(^5\) He was looking to boost his ego, being a bit of an attention whore, as he said. Maybe it was his lack of practice that made him go on monomaniacally about Knights Templar that evening, or maybe it was the combination of alcohol and anabolic steroids. Breivik took steroids on a regular basis.

Not only was he a monomaniac, he also spoke about something quite odd: knights. Although the Knights Templar have become a popular cultural phenomenon after having been resurrected in, for example, the computer game *Assassin’s Creed*, crusaders have not been a common topic of conversation in Norway over the nine hundred years that have elapsed since King Sigurd I Magnusson led his military expedition to the Mediterranean.

In the manuscript Breivik was writing – the ‘compendium’ as he called it – the spirit of the age came in for harsh judgement. He called the superficial and money-orientated culture he saw around him at Skaugum the ‘*Sex and the City* lifestyle’. Over the last few years he had been concerned about the ‘corrosive’ effect of celebrity culture.\(^6\) That was not how it was in the days of the Knights Templar.

The role of celebrities had changed as a result of the Internet, reality TV and social media. Breivik’s generation was the spearhead in the democratization of fame. Carpenters and teachers – completely ordinary people – were suddenly perfect celebrities. Now that anybody could suddenly become famous, perhaps the pressure to do so also increased, and new arenas for showing off and for being seen were opening up, with blogs, chat rooms, Twitter and Facebook. The media’s gaze used to be aimed at a select few, whereas the eyes of social media were, in principle, on everyone.

Unknown wannabes approached the celebrities in bars in the hope that a bit of their aura would rub off on them. A good celebrity story could increase the unknown individual’s social status, like a character in a computer game who gets increased powers by acquiring a new weapon or a powerful spell.

Breivik took part in ‘the game’ to a certain degree even if he had secretly become critical of it, and to some extent critical of himself. ‘I am not going to act like a hypocrite and pretend I have not been influenced by the typical *Sex and the City* lifestyle,’ he wrote. ‘I have been under the influence of this lifestyle as [have] a majority of my
friends and even my own family members. I used to be proud of my “achievements”.7

In his compendium, he wrote about how this had changed. In September 2006, he moved out from his bachelor pad and back into his old room in his mother’s flat. He and his mother had a complicated history. Breivik was a mummy’s boy, but at the same time he was concerned about his façade: how things looked and what people would think. Even in his compendium, he became a little defensive when he described what it was like to move back in. His motivation, he claimed, was his lack of money.

[J]ust before I started writing this compendium, I decided to move from my apartment in Frogner, one of the most priciest [sic] areas in Oslo, home to my mother. [ . . . ] The cost of renting my old apartment was 1,250 euro. My current accommodation expenditure (food included) is 450 euro [ . . . ]. This wouldn’t have worked in my old life, when I was an egotistical career cynic as it would devastate my social image [ . . . ] (the pursuit to project a desirable façade to impress friends and potential mating partners). Sure, some people will think you are a freak for living with your parents at the age of 31 [ . . . ]. The only thing that matters is to ensure that you have enough funds and free time to complete the objectives necessary to execute your individual mission. As for keeping secrecy while living with another person; sure, you need many cover stories and you need access to the loft and/or basement storage areas.8

Things are not always as they appear. ‘Your individual mission.’ Even among the rich and the diplomats’ sons in the West End of Oslo, there are people in cellars pursuing their solitary dreams, storing things in secrecy and surrounding themselves with layer upon layer of cover stories, like spiders in dusty bomb shelters.

The anonymous regular customer at the bar was in reality two people. In his compendium, at the same time as denouncing his former self, he described his transformation from a ‘career cynic’ to a knight equipped with a monumental mission. To signal the metamorphosis that was taking place, he signed the compendium not as Anders Behring Breivik, but as Andrew Berwick. Maybe he was not totally uninfluenced by the Sex and the City lifestyle after all, or at least by the desire to be seen and appreciated when he went out on the town.

The Consumer Zombie

Even though he might cling to celebrities, it was not easy to uncover any dark sides to the polite bar customer, but, one time he was at the
Palace Grill, he cracked. One Thursday evening in October 2010, he arrived at the bar early. Apart from a woman in her late thirties, Breivik was alone. Breivik was a social guy, in his own way, so he treated the woman to a beer and started talking with her.

‘Knights,’ he said, explaining what his book was about. The woman’s friends came in and sat down. She was a literary researcher and began conversing with Breivik, who readily told her that he was inspired by chivalric literature. He had never heard of *The Song of Roland*, but he knew that *Ivanhoe* was a novel about knights.

‘My book’s going to be big,’ he said.

‘What kind of genre is it’, she asked, ‘if it’s not a novel?’

‘It’s a masterpiece,’ Breivik explained.

The literary scholar tried to help him out and asked if it was fiction or non-fiction. Breivik answered with a reply that explained nothing at all. Either he did not understand the question and was not able to answer it, or he did not want to answer – mysterious. She did not understand what kind of book the strange guy’s masterpiece was. When he said that he did not have a publisher, she stopped asking. Hardly an undiscovered genius, more of a slightly simple young man, she concluded, a show-off who had maybe done a few interrupted semesters at the Oslo School of Management.

The evening was young, and more of her friends were on their way. Breivik had not displayed his whole register yet. ‘Novels about knights,’ she thought, ‘whatever next?’ Without knowing it, she was on to something about the slippery salesman character at the other side of the table, but she had already forgotten his name.

History’s most famous knight was never knighted by a monarch or a pope; he was self-appointed. Four hundred years ago, a man by the name of Alonso Quijano from La Mancha put a basin on his head and rode out into the world on an old nag he named Rocinante. The poor and childless man had read so many chivalric novels that he had begun to believe them. He took the name Don Quixote and was ready to fight bandits and save damsels in distress.

The conflict between the protagonist’s fantasies about himself and other people’s more level-headed opinions about the old man is the main theme of Cervantes’ novel about the great narcissist of world literature, the Knight of the Ill-Favoured Face. With his lance lowered, Don Quixote charged at what he thought was a giant, only to be thrown to the ground by the sails of a windmill. To use an image from the psychiatrist Finn Skårderud, the narcissistic mind alternates between floating over the waters like an inflated Zeppelin and lying on the ground like the smoking wreckage of the *Hindenburg*. 
Don Quixote’s knightly character was constructed in a library in the early 1600s, while Breivik’s knight, Andrew Berwick, was formed, dressed and armed on the Internet between 2006 and 2011. In spite of a difference in age of four hundred years, there are similarities between the two knights. Andrew Berwick also has a host of modern relatives. The Breivik/Berwick duo resemble characters described by many contemporary authors on both sides of the Atlantic, possibly because Anders Behring Breivik was even more a child of his time than many others. In a way, he had no real parents.

In his compendium – the ‘masterpiece’ – Breivik emerges as the consumer society’s prodigal son, a loser in the capitalist battleground, a gamer who cannot distinguish reality from fantasies born online. The compendium describes two different people: a wakeful, political and active Justiciar Knight and a dormant, passive and unconscious consumer, almost like the plot of *The Matrix*, a film to which he frequently refers.

One of the pictures he has included in the compendium shows a face with its eyelids sewn shut and a scalpel approaching to cut the threads. This picture is related to his frequent use of opposed concepts such as sleeping vs. waking and living vs. dead. Both the sleeping and the waking Breivik could have walked right out of novels by Michel Houellebecq, Bret Easton Ellis or Chuck Palahniuk – a ‘Norwegian Psycho’, a person who is almost totally superficial and empty, whose best friends are not people, but brands. Breitling Crosswind, Chanel Platinum Égoïste and Château Kirwan ’79 were respectively Breivik’s favourite possession (a watch), his favourite eau de toilette and the wine he had put aside for a final party with two luxury prostitutes. If a genre were to be suggested for the compendium, a notion of consumerist prose would come close.

Breivik writes about his miserable imprisonment as a cog in an enormous capitalist machine, in which people are seemingly free but in reality enslaved; in which people are seemingly part of a society but in reality are not bound to other people, not even to those who are enduring the same glossy hell as them, in the soft but deadly embrace of money. It is a self-portrait of *homo consumens*. Breivik, the dopamine wreck, is alive on the outside but dead inside. The smiling bar customer behind his glass, chatty and seeking contact, is empty, cold and dead beneath the surface. In his compendium, Breivik condemned the spirit of the age, in what at the same time emerged as a dark self-portrait. In the following paragraphs he writes ‘you’, but in all probability means ‘I’. Breivik describes his former self as:
a zombie where the highlight of your day is purchasing a 1,000 euro garment or a 100 euro sushi meal, or getting a blowjob from someone you met outside the toilet at a club that Saturday. On your way home you see a girl getting gang-raped by 4 Somalis. You don’t offer it much thought as the slag probably had it coming anyway . . . Why should you risk your health for someone you don’t know? And the poor Somalis are probably only acting out [sic] as a result of centuries of European colonialism. Poor fellas. Society should take responsibility and offer these underprivileged individuals better accommodations [sic] and more rights, perhaps affirmative action would ensure that they feel at home, that they finally would like us? How can we be so cruel and treat them this way?

You work 9–10 hours a day, come home, eat, work out a couple of hours to keep fit, take your regular tanning, spa and Botox session and don’t really have time for much else. Your concerns are not for the well-being of your family – close or extended – your neighbours, your kinsmen or countrymen, about the outlook for your country or your compassion for others, but rather the frightening scenario of being alone in this world. You don’t want children because in essence you are a child yourself without responsibility or concern for anyone but yourself. Your only concern is how you can get your next dopamine fix, through and [sic] endless spiral of feeding your own ego.11

A zombie – in other words, the living dead. Here Breivik apparently summarizes his life in the noughties before he moved back to his mother’s home in 2006, giving up the ‘rat race’. He appears as the consumer incarnate, restlessly looking out for his ‘next dopamine fix’ in the form of a new piece of clothing or some plastic surgery. Dopamine is a pheromone at the centre of the brain’s reward system – nature’s own drug, you could say. It is activated by love, for example, but also, as with Breivik, by shopping. Breivik describes himself as a monomaniacal addict, as he was addicted to the bottle of red fruit-juice drink which allegedly went everywhere with him as a little boy. He is a child, as he says, not a grown man. Beneath his well-groomed exterior is a personality with no depth or substance. He is a puppet in the hands of forces that want him to work more, buy more and not waste time on other things.

Lurking in the background is his notion of sexually and physically aggressive immigrants, Somalis who gang-rape a girl, who represent not only a threat, but maybe also a fantasy of a different and more direct form of masculinity. The gang-rape represents the promise of fellowship in a group, the need for a violent reaction and an unaffected, sadistic hatred of women. Breivik’s compendium portrays the process of the consumer zombie being cleaved open, giving rise to a violent, terrorist monster.
'I’m Going to Kill You!'

Either Breivik did not pick up the signals from the two women at the Palace Grill that his presence was no longer desired, or he did not care. He stayed sitting there, jovial and smiling.

When the third friend turned up, a beautiful, blonde, Nordic-looking woman, it was as if Breivik changed gear. He became insistent. He started off generous and courteous, although the group of friends made it clear that was enough. Breivik realized that being chivalrous was not working and began to boast. He ignored the first two women and repeated that his book was a masterpiece, but the blonde was not impressed.

Although he was talkative and generous in a calculated way, there was something strange and aloof about him. An icy shudder. Even though he was neither entirely ugly nor completely out of it, the chance of him chatting anybody up was out of the question, no matter how much he hassled them. The fourth friend arrived and, in an attempt to get away from Breivik, the friends went out into the courtyard.

Skaugum was closed and dark, but Breivik followed them. His positive chat-up techniques had been unsuccessful, and he now followed the blonde with an air of menace, stalking her. He went up close to her and glowered at her fiercely and intensely. It looked more strange than frightening. The fourth friend started dancing round him in the dark courtyard, waving her shawl and her dress, like a torero around a bull – or perhaps like a windmill in front of a knight? It was a comical scene.

‘I’m going to kill you!’ Breivik shouted.

The friends laughed and went back into the warmth and light of the Palace Grill. They spoke no more about the would-be author. If he had been a foreigner, they might have thought about his threat, but since he was just an unsuccessful white guy they laughed it off. What a freak. He did not really seem amorous either, just strangely obsessed with the blondest member of the bunch.\textsuperscript{12}

Once again Breivik had been involved in an episode typical of Oslo’s social life. Only someone who had read his compendium would have sensed a connection between Breivik’s behaviour and a deeply ambivalent relationship with women, and especially with blondes who resembled his own sister and mother. This time, he was angered by rejection. He clung to famous men too, but it was women he threatened to kill. ‘Traitor whores,’ Breivik growled in the compendium.
In his diary entry from October 2010, which was a part of the compendium, Breivik gave a slightly different version of the incident: ‘As for girlfriends; I do get the occasional lead, or the occasional girl making a move, especially now a day [sic] as I’m fit like hell and feel great. But I’m trying to avoid relationships as it would only complicate my plans and it may jeopardize my operation. And I don’t feel comfortable manipulating girls any more into one night stands. I am not that person any more.’

Perhaps this is the chaste knight Berwick talking, or maybe Breivik saw that it would be difficult to take girls home to his mother’s flat? In the compendium, unseen by the outside world and surrounded by his cover story, Breivik lived out his fantasies. Dream and reality blended into one. His operation was no dream about a blonde-haired woman, but a nightmare of violence. ‘Violence is the mother of change,’ he wrote.

A similar development from a lonely life of consumerism to a split life and terror is depicted in Chuck Palahniuk’s 1996 novel Fight Club and in David Fincher’s film of the same title from 1999. Palahniuk’s protagonist is nameless, a sign of his fundamental lack of identity and of the notion that he is not an individual in a traditional sense, but a new type of subject: born of money and brought up with a life of shopping.

Although he does not realize it himself, Palahniuk’s nameless protagonist develops an alter ego by the name of Tyler Durden, who is a free, active, politically subversive and alert character, just like Breivik’s Justiciar Knight. ‘We are a generation of men raised by women,’ says Tyler. When Tyler eventually tells the protagonist that they are the same person, he also points out all the advantages of this fantasy – in other words, the advantages of himself: ‘I look like you wanna look, I fuck like you wanna fuck, I am smart, capable, and most importantly, I’m free in all the ways that you are not.’

Breivik’s many aliases and online nicknames might also be expressions of ‘a confused identity perception’, just as his many cover stories suggest a confused perception of reality. A loved child has many names, according to a Norwegian proverb, but so does a person with no clear identity, as he or she can change his or her name at any time. Fight Club ends with the divided protagonist carrying out a massive terrorist operation, eventually bringing buildings down around him like a house of cards. The aim of the 950 kg of homemade explosives in Breivik’s van was to topple the H Block, but, even though the bomb shook the government district, it did not manage to move the foundations.
Breivik’s hedonistic past as a ‘career cynic’ resembles the background of many European jihadists, including some of the men behind 9/11. It is worth pondering whether it is easier for such zombies in consumer society to be radicalized, whether they have fewer aversions and are more open to buying into extremist and violent ideas online. The technological shrinkage of the world and the collapse of old value systems and symbolic narratives (such as religion, family and the nation-state) create a new man in Palahniuk’s novel, not unlike the way in which totalitarian ideologies attempted to make a new communist or fascist man. The methods are softer and more subtle, but they still involve a form of invasion of or encroachment on the individuals who end up in the melting pot of consumer society.

This leads to a reaction, to rage, but there is no father to kill, no ideology to overturn or state to oppose. The consumer zombie’s prison has no guards. This rage, then, either finds its expression in purposeless acts of terrorism and aimless urban vandalism or is turned inwards in the form of depression. Even if consumer zombies have no feeling of guilt towards others and are not troubled by conscience, they are still ashamed of themselves, in a kind of frustration about their own inadequacy in the marketplace. This shame is difficult to deal with because it cannot be relieved by confessing to others, and the solution is either another ‘dopamine fix, through [an] endless spiral of feeding your own ego’, as Breivik put it, or, as in Fight Club, carrying out a personal crusade.

The Herostratic Tradition

‘In one year’s time, I’ll be three times as famous as you,’ Breivik told the TV star. Even though reality TV elevated many ordinary people to celebrity status every year, the question remained: how would Breivik become famous? By writing to the newspapers? Breivik described himself to like-minded people online as a ‘cultural conservative’ intellectual, the opposite of ‘cultural Marxists’ writing opinion pieces for the papers. As a former paperboy, Breivik had worked out that newspaper carts could be used for mobile advertising. He also knew that a household deity turned up on the doormats of Oslo’s West End every morning, and that god was called Aftenposten. People who got their names into Aftenposten were guaranteed attention at breakfast tables from Solli Plass all the way up to Holmenkollen. The only problem was that it was difficult to get in: 90 per cent of contributions were rejected at any one time.
Could he make a lot of money? That was difficult too. Be extremely handsome? Even after a load of operations, most of us still have some way to go there. Sport? You need talent. Blogging and social media? Some people managed. The extreme right-wing intellectual Fjordman, for example: a Norwegian man with a decent command of English who called Stoltenberg’s government ‘the most dhimmi [ . . . ] of all Western governments’. Fjordman made a name for himself not only in Norway but throughout Europe. ‘Our own Fjordman is about to come in at third place among the most recognized/influential European anti-Jihad/anti-multiculti/anti-Marxist intellectuals/bloggers,’ Breivik wrote enthusiastically in November 2009. ‘I know it’s hard to be a prophet in your own land but this is beyond all expectations. Congratulations Fjordman!’16

Fjordman was not to everybody’s liking. He and those of the same opinion had been to some extent ridiculed in what Breivik called ‘the mainstream media’, but, within his niche, Fjordman was a big name. Fjordman was proof that culturally conservative intellectuals could find success outside Aftenposten. He was one of Breivik’s great role models and, without knowing it, a kind of godfather for Justiciar Knight Andrew Berwick, Knights Templar Europe. It was a matter of finding your own niche. But Fjordman also had some kind of talent. What about those who did not?

The Fjordman phenomenon arose, according to himself, as a reaction to the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington in 2001. It would become the decade of terrorism, and so-called warblogs sprang up online like mushrooms. The shockwaves from 9/11 led to the faces of Osama bin Laden and Mohammed Atta being broadcast across the world. Europeans and Americans alike saw Islam in a new light. At the monitor in his bedroom, Breivik read Inspire, the English-language magazine of al-Qaeda, and watched videos of the terrorist network’s bloodstained exploits.

There were many sides to the destruction of the twin towers, in terms of religion, society, politics and the media. The philosopher André Glucksmann also saw in the events in Manhattan an echo of Herostratus’ ancient crime.17 Behind the crime lay the criminals’ desire to be seen, remembered and forever feared.

According to ancient tradition, Herostratus was an unknown citizen of Ephesus in Asia Minor. He was obsessed with his desire to be seen and remembered, but he had no gifts or talents. As a result, in the year 356 BC, he burnt down the city’s Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Herostratus was arrested, tortured and executed. The city of Ephesus made his memory taboo. His name would not be uttered or remembered: Herostratus would