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The Mass-Mediated Chronotope, Radical Counterpublics, and Dialect in 1970s Norway: The Case of Vømmøl Spellmanslag

This article explores the reflexive role the Norwegian musical group, Vømmøl Spellmanslag, played as a mass-mediated cultural expression of an emergent counterpublic in 1970s Norway. It also examines how “Vømmøl Valley,” a fictitious community described in Vømmøl’s music, came to constitute a cultural chronotope of dissidence within a context of sociopolitical polarization following Norway’s 1972 referendum on membership in the European Economic Community (EEC). In their performance, Vømmøl deployed contrasting phonolexical registers to animate socially recognizable regional and class subjectivities. This article questions how the replication of regional and class indexical speech in Vømmøl’s verse made available various role alignments to its listening audience. [Norwegian; register; popular music; chronotope; role alignment]

In 1975 Norwegian telecommunications workers waged a national strike, fighting for raises in the midst of rising living costs, or what was known then as *dyrtid*—literally, expensive time. In an effort to build public support and solidarity for their cause and to raise money for their strike fund, a group of telephone installers did something out of the ordinary; they released a single, *250 Mann*, with a hit Norwegian musical group—Vømmøl Spellmanslag, headed by the musician and lyricist Hans Rotmo, then singing under the pseudonym Kristian Schravlevold (Friheim and Bjerkem 1997).

The year before, Vømmøl Spellmanslag’s album sold 50,000 copies and proceeded to top the charts for two years. In a small nation of four million inhabitants, this number of record sales represented a commercial success but was remarkable for other reasons as well. Rather than interpreting international hits for Norwegian audiences, as was common during the 1950s and 1960s, Vømmøl incorporated some elements of traditional Norwegian musical instrumentation and sang in a particular phonolexical register of Norwegian—Trøndersk, a central Norwegian dialect.

Vømmøl’s unprecedented commercial success and the telecommunication strike are reflective of the tumultuous period leading up to and following Norway’s 1972 vote rejecting membership in the European Economic Community (EEC). As elsewhere in the world, the early 1970s in Norway was a time of considerable political polarization and social upheaval. The question of EEC membership delineated a significant rift and was widely understood as a rural/urban divide, with 60 percent of Oslo residents voting for membership, and central and northern Norwegians voting 70–80 percent against it.¹ Despite majority support in Oslo, the political

debates concerning EEC membership were consequential in the traditionally urban milieus of the labor movement and left parties. All of the nation's major newspapers and political parties, including the *Arbeiderpartiet* (The Labor Party),² supported entrance and the no vote's victory was perceived as a victory for those on the margins, literally in the case of the dispersed and remote farming and fishing communities, and metaphorically, in the case of the members of far left parties agitating against entrance. As a central Norwegian student at the University of Oslo in contact with various socialist youth associations, Vømmøl Spellmønslag's Hans Rotmo embodied a link between these groups, and his music articulated a vision of precisely such an alliance.

While perhaps out of the ordinary for striking telephone workers to record hits for the radio, it was not unusual that they would collaborate with Rotmo. The telephone installers embodied the very kinds of characters Rotmo animated through his song, songs which came to occupy an important space in Norwegian cultural life in the early 1970s. This "space in cultural life" had a name—Vømmøl Valley—a fictitious rural Norwegian community described in Rotmo's music. Within a context of political polarization regarding EEC membership, "Vømmøl Valley" presented a chronotopic model of experience (Bakhtin 1981) that both emerged from and played a role in organizing "no vote" counterpublics (Warner 2002). Rotmo's use of dialect served to animate opposing subjectivities within the "Vømmøl Valley" chronotope and resonated with a Norwegian linguistic tradition of nonsubmission to "legitimate" forms of speech.

Language Situation in Norway

Norway is exceptional among the Scandinavian countries in its diglossic language situation. There are two written standard varieties of Norwegian, and four main Norwegian dialects, northern, central (Trøndersk), western and eastern, each with nearly as many local varieties as locales (Haugen 1972; Jahr 1986; Skekkeland 1997). The dominant written variety, Bokmål, is based on Danish and is more associated with urbanity, cosmopolitanism, and bourgeois cultural norms. Norway had for centuries been under Danish rule until 1814, when Napoleon's defeat resulted in Denmark ceding Norway to Sweden, and finally became fully independent in 1905. During the 19th century the inherited Danish written language became more Norwegian as writers adopted forms common to urban, educated classes. Simultaneously as the Dano-Norwegian written language was becoming more Norwegian, another written norm, Nynorsk (New Norwegian), was developed by musicologist and linguist Ivar Aasen (1813–1896) as one component of the nascent 19th century nationalist project. With Nynorsk, a synthetic language based principally on a composite of western Norwegian dialects, Aasen advocated not only national independence from Sweden, but also a linguistic break with the Danish writing system inherited from Norway's colonial past.³

Throughout the 20th century there have been a number of contentious language reforms, aiming to standardize the two written varieties and to bring them closer to the daily language spoken by Norwegians. The first standardization of both Nynorsk and Bokmål took place in 1919. An editorial cartoon by the Danish cartoonist Ragnvald Blix in that same year compared the debates surrounding these reforms to something approaching insurrection or civil war (see Fig. 1). In the cartoon, a Russian peasant, identifiable by his dress, asks a man crouched with a gun behind a barricade how the revolution is coming in Norway. Beyond the barricade there are people fighting, a woman swinging a broom and even a dog can be seen joining in the action. The Norwegian responds, "Currently we're fighting about how to spell it."

Within a Scandinavian context, where there is a high degree of mutual intelligibility with neighboring Swedish and Danish, the ongoing language conflicts in Norway are well known. There is even a word to describe the ongoing debates and struggles concerning language: *målstrid*. In another Danish cartoon from 1963, a quarrelsome



Figure 1

“How far have you come with the revolution here in Norway?—Currently we’re fighting about how it should be spelled.” (reprinted in Haugen 1966: 87)

stance toward language is portrayed as one of many other emblems of Norwegian identity (see Fig. 2). In the cartoon, two skiers have crossed paths. Their expressions, mutually inclined postures and open mouths depict an argument. Each is pointing in different directions to a sky that is snowing small E’s on one side and Ø’s on the other. The caption reads: “The Norwegian language struggle is currently culminated in a bitter fight about whether one serves his fatherland best by saying ‘sne’ or ‘snø.’” It is worth noting that the depicted argument does not even address the Bokmål/Nynorsk rift but concerns whether or not within Bokmål to use the more Danish and literary *sne* or the more “Norwegian” *snø*. Here, arguing about how to say *snow* is portrayed as being equally emblematic of Norwegian cultural identity as knit sweaters, cross country skiing, and remote cabins in a snowy wilderness. The depicted crisis of indexicality, however, is social not physical. Although the two skiers are pointing at the snow, they are looking at each other. From the standpoint of *målstrid*, what matters is not the indexically immediate surrounding to which their deictic gestures point, but the speakers’ relationship to one another as marked through their indexical engagement through eye gaze.

While the language patterns of speakers from the wealthier suburbs of western Oslo most approximate Bokmål, there are no speakers of Bokmål or Nynorsk as they are written languages (*bok* = book). Nevertheless, speakers of all varieties of Norwegian may approximate the written variety to differing degrees, depending on context and communicative aims. In a classic study of interactional sociolinguistics, Gumperz and Blom (1972) examined conversation between a group of college students in a northern Norwegian community, where a northern Norwegian dialect, *Ranamål*, is spoken.⁴ Having returned from their respective schools to visit their home community, the extent to which the interlocutors code switched between their native *Ranamål* and Bokmål-approximated speech depended on the topic of conversation and the extent to which speakers indexed participation in supralocal discourses of scholarship or urbanity. For these speakers, *Ranamål* was associated with home, rural

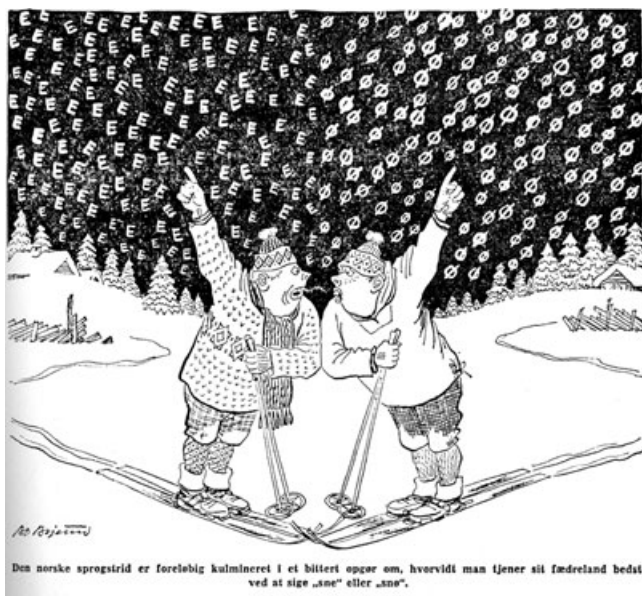


Figure 2

“The Norwegian language struggle is currently culminated in a bitter fight over whether one serves his fatherland best by saying *sne* or *snø* (snow).” Drawing by Bo Bojesen in (Danish) *Politiken*, 23 March 1963 (reprinted in Haugen 1966: 261)

life, and set of cultural values—honesty, trustworthiness, health—as was Bokmål-approximated speech associated with cosmopolitanism, education, but also pretension and arrogance.

In 2006 the Oslo branch of the international advertising agency BBDO developed a Yoplait yogurt commercial whose central irony is the use of Trøndersk in the midst of a Parisian setting. Using a clip from a 1960’s French film, the advertisement opens with a shot of the Eiffel Tower and then proceeds to another emblematic image of “Frenchness,” an unfaithful husband returning from work smelling of perfume, a slap from his wife and then a plea to not to leave her. But the plea is not *ne me quittes pas* but *itj gå frå mæ, Pierre* (Trøndersk: Don’t leave me, Pierre). The entire scene is dubbed in Trøndersk and ends with the text, *noen ting er bedre på fransk* (Bokmål: Some things are better in French) and a beautiful woman eating yogurt from a spoon. A female voice speaking with west Oslo Bokmål-approximated speech invites the consumer to try *fransk yogurt med mer smak* (French yogurt with more taste).⁵ Not only is there a contrast between refinement, good taste (things French), and their opposite (Trøndersk), but also the juxtaposition of the speakers’ Trøndersk voices and the Bokmål assessment of their speech, namely, that they don’t belong in the frame. How the advertisers set up this juxtaposition is indicative of the stereotypical personae associated with phonolexical registers of speech, or *enregisterment* (Agha 2003). This advertisement draws on precisely the contrasting models of personhood that resonated through Norwegian society in the early 1970s when Norway’s relationship to Europe had become such a polarizing political question as a result of the 1972 vote on EEC membership.

Mass-Mediated Language / Mass-Mediated Role Alignments

Rotmo’s use of Trøndersk, its subsequent release into mass circulation, and how this circulation can be understood as an intentional and consequential cultural act, both by Rotmo and his fans, is the subject of the rest of this article. Although the anticapitalist

Rotmo might balk at the suggestion, his use of Trøndersk bears some similarities to the Yoplait case. Both Rotmo and BBDO use phonolexical register to animate particular social personae with a set of associated attributes.⁶

There has been an unfortunate tendency within the field of cultural studies to depict consumers as passive experiencers of prefabricated messages, providing them little or no active role in making meaning of the products they consume, much less describing the mechanisms by which they arrive at particular stances toward mass-mediated messages. One such view is presented by Louw (2001) discussing marketing and mass media, "the mass media simultaneously increases the reach of professional communicators, while dramatically narrowing the role of recipients, turning recipients into passive receivers of meanings made by others" (Louw 2001: 18). Louw correctly acknowledges that mass media technologies enable artists like Rotmo to reach larger audiences than would be possible as merely a live performer, but far from being passive recipients of his message, upon hearing a song by Rotmo a listener is presented with a variety of possible alignments toward it. In the following discussion, I consider some of the mechanisms within Vømmøl's lyrics that enabled listeners to align themselves in different ways not only with Hans Rotmo and his band as performers, but with the signs they generated through their music. This process is in some ways similar to the alignments and projections of self discussed by Goffman (1981) as "footing," drawing in part on the Blom and Gumperz data mentioned above. By examining a mass-mediated process of semiosis, however, what follows goes beyond a goffmanian account of participant alignment in face-to-face interaction, and provides a case for examining mass-mediated role alignments (Agha 2007).

Referential Alignment

Perhaps the most immediately recognizable type of alignment between sections of Vømmøl's audience and their music is with the propositional content of their lyrics. The explicit political content of Vømmøl's music provided its listeners with the possibility of referential alignment with the political stances articulated in their music. Something of a Norwegian Woody Guthrie, Rotmo's lyrical content is expressly political, anticapitalist, often with strong doses of irony and humor.

Songs such as "*Itjną som kjem tå sæ sjøl*" ("Nothing comes about by itself") articulated a particular vision of disillusionment with social democracy, combined with exhortations of strength in unity and explicit reference to Marx, Lenin, and Mao as sages for contemporary Norwegians:

Og seinar med i livet så vart det kamp og bønn	And later in life it became struggle and prayers
Om mat og klea, hus og heim	About food and clothes, house and home,
Og skattetrekk og lønn	And taxes and wages
Det e itjną som kjem tå sæ sjøl	Nothing comes about by (it)self
Og prisan dem va altfor høg og tariffan for låg	And prices were too high and tariffs too low
Æ trudd på Stortinget og på snakk	I believed in the government and all the talk
Heilt innte æ såg:	Up until I saw:
(Refreng)	(Refrain)
Det e itjną som kjem tå sæ—	Nothing comes about by (it)self
Sjøl e du lett som ein spøl	(by)yourself you are light as a sparrow
Men sammen så veie vi fleire tonn	But together we weigh many tons
Med littegrann hjelp gjer det littegrann monn	A little bit helps, it does, a little bit must
Det e itjną som kjem tå sæ sjøl	Nothing comes about by itself

Det kjem ein dag, æ veit itj æ,	A day is coming, I don't know
Han kan vel kåmmå snart	It may well come soon
Da ting ska skift	When things will change
Og nye ting ska moas ætti kvart	And new things will mature eventually
Det e itjnå som kjem tå sæ sjøl	Nothing comes about by (it)self
Da e det opp te dæ og mæ	So it's up to you and me
Ka lei allting ska ta	Which direction things will take
Og hugs på det som Lenin og Marx og Mao sa:	And remember what Lenin and Marx and Mao said:
(Refreng)	(Refrain)

Other songs, like *Høvlervisa* discussed below, depict the plight of workers fighting precarity and humiliation on the job. It was not by chance that striking telephone operators would look to Rotmo as a vehicle to build wider solidarity.

Vømmøl's albums did not become magically present in the homes of fifty thousand Norwegians. Rather, there was the institutional enablement of a record label to facilitate the distribution of Vømmøl's music as a commodity. Vømmøl's record label was itself an explicitly political brand that aimed to provide an alternative mode of production for the music industry, through volunteer labor (*dugnad*, a rural Norwegian tradition of communal labor) and relying on networks of Mai "commissioners" who helped local sales and distribution (Gravem 2006). Mai Records operated from 1972 until 1981 and shared its board of directors with the leadership of the newly formed *Arbeidernes Kommunistiske Parti* (AKP; Workers' Communist Party) (Johnson 1989). Although Rotmo was not an AKP member, his music was embedded within a well-elaborated semiotic system of Marxist reference through Mai's packaging and distribution (Stubberød 2003). The name of the record label itself, Mai, is Norwegian for the month of May, when May first is celebrated as a day of strikes and marches by unions in Norway and internationally. On the single released with the striking telephone installers, a photo of striking workers and their name as artists (*telefonsentralmontørene*) are featured more prominently than the band name. Inside, on the record sleeve are both the lyrics and an extended commentary from strike leader Leif Johannessen on "what the strike weapon means for workers' struggle," namely, that, "strikes are schools of war, but also lights along the road to a classless society where the fundamental causes for strikes are eliminated" (see Figs. 3 & 4). Through both the lyrics and the materiality of the Vømmøl record, the Vømmøl listener had access to a variety of semiotic channels enabling referential alignment to expressly political propositions.

Direct Characterological Alignment

Although the early and mid 1970s were a heyday of radical politics not just in Norway, but internationally, Vømmøl's politics alone cannot explain why one out of every 80 Norwegians would buy their album. Clearly, there was a broader appeal to the music. In addition to opportunities to align oneself with the propositional stances embedded in and surrounding Rotmo's lyrics, Vømmøl presented the listener with a series of tropes to which listeners could align themselves in a direct way. This modeling of experience is what Bakhtin (1981) refers to as a *chronotope*, literally time/space. "Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (Bakhtin 1981: 84). Rotmo's lyrics depicted a specific social space with a spatial continuum extending from the mountains, wilderness and woods, through the farms of Vømmøl Valley, and down to the small urban center of Porselenstrand, where we find factories and the main street Europavei. Europavei is not fictional, but a major national thoroughfare and transportation artery. Time and plot unfold lyrically



Figure 3
Album cover (left): Central Telephone Installers
Their banner reads: *Slå Tilbake Voldgiften* (Fight Back Arbitration)
Inner sleeve (right): Commentary by strike leader Leif Johannessen on “what the strike
weapon means in workers’ struggle.”
(Author photo)

through conflicts depicted between farmers and the state, between workers and employers.

Vømmøl Valley’s place names, fictional or not, play an iconic role in evoking place and social realities. Porcelenstrand translates to English as “Porcelain Beach,” iconic of both refinement and leisure. *Vømmøl* as a place name includes both the vowel harmony and the retroflex tap consonant typical of Trøndersk.⁷ Rotmo’s chronotope is populated by a host of characters: farmers, factory workers and factory owners, old people, cops, drunks, woodsmen. The artists themselves present themselves as part of this chronotope—the name of their group could translate as the Vømmøl Player’s Group, as if they were a *Spellmannslag* that incidentally came from Vømmøl Valley. All of these characters present listeners with models of personhood to which they may or may not identify.



Figure 4
Mai 1975 Record (Author photo)

Rotmo's chronotope also emerges through the packaging of Vømmøl albums where bucolic images of rural Norway are depicted. The sleeve of one record includes a map complete with Europavei, the contours of the valley's topography and the names of farms, streams and lakes. This bucolic scenario was in no way romanticized, however. The drudgery and difficulties of farm life are hilariously explained through Rotmo's ventriloquation of a farmer bemoaning "kuskitt og fjøs" (cow shit and barns) in *Fjøsvisa* (*Barn song*):

Her står æ i eit digert fjøs,	Here I stand in a huge barn
Det gjer mæ både sur og bøs	And it makes me sour and angry
Æ spring og æ dætt så kuskiten skvett	I run and I jump and cow shit splatters
Oppi båsa og brett,	Up in the stalls and boards,
Nei det e vel besett	It must be possessed
Æ kan bli både lut og lei	I can get so tired
Tå mjøl og hælme og timotei	Of feed and straw and timothy (grass)
Og all den svett og den skit	And that sweat and that shit
Og forbannade drit	And that damn crap
Koffer skull æ kommå hit?	Why should I have come here?
(Refreng)	(Refrain)
Kjære industri, kom og gjer mæ fri	Dear industry, come and liberate me
Fra all bekymmer med kuskitt og med fjøs	From all worries about cow shit and the barn
Na-na-na-na-na- Kuskitt og fjøs	Na na na na na cow shit and barns

The song continues with more mention of udders, turds, injury on the job, problems with the farmers' cooperative, and state centralization. Although far from idealizing farm life, bringing into focus through comedy and song the everyday life challenges of the farmer may have had a certain appeal to a layer of rural Norwegians.

In addition to animating the farmer in his music, as mentioned above, Rotmo's ventriloquism includes the voices of waged workers. "*Høvlervisa*" ("Saw Mill Song") provides an interesting case. Much like *Fjøsvisa*, this song's protagonist explains the difficulties of his workplace. Together with thirteen other men, he works at a sawmill under constant pressure from an avaricious boss, *Gyldentann* (Goldentooth), who threatens them with layoffs and wage cuts. The workers respond by forming a union:

Men Gyldentann snakke tull	But Goldentooth talks crazy
Og trompe fram sin mening	And gets his way
Han e rik på gods og gull	He is rich in goods and gold
Før glømt vi det og drakk oss full	Before we forgot about that and got drunk
Men no har vi starta fagforening	But now we've started a union
(Refreng)	(Refrain)
Ja, neste gong ska Gyldentann	Yes, next time Goldentooth
Bli berre lett og bleik	Will get light and pale
Når vi krev høgare lønn pr. mann	When we demand higher wages per man
Og vess 'n bynne å prøv sæ, han	And if he begins to try anything
Så truge vi med streik	We'll threaten to strike.
(Refreng)	(Refrain)

While there is ostensibly one author of the lines in *Høvlervisa*, there is more than one voice. Embedded within the narrative provided by the sawmill worker there is the *phonic embodiment* of his employer, Goldentooth, through embedded, indirect reported speech. In describing the social status and behavior of his employer, the

author assumes a Bokmål approximated phonolexical register coordinated with raised pitch (↑):

11	Vi selg vår egen arbeidskraft	We sell our labor
12	Te høvleriets boss	To the sawmill's boss
13	Sagbruksmester Gyldentand	Sawmillmaster Goldentooth
14	↑En <u>meget velbeholden</u> mann	↑ A <u>quite welloff</u> man
15	Takket være oss	Thanks to us
(Refreng)		(Refrain)
16	Gyldentand har stort kontor	Goldentooth has a big office
17	Han sitt no der og skriver↑	He sits there now and writes↑
18	Store tall og store ord	Big numbers and big words
19	↑Og gnir sæ i sitt nesebor	↑ And he picks his nose
20	I profittjakt og iver	In the search for profits and zeal
(Refreng)		(Refrain)

Lines 14, 17, and 19 above are distinguished belonging to Goldentooth not by a laminating verb marking them directly as reported speech, but through a change in prosody and through their very phonetic makeup. *Meget velbeholden* are lexemes foreign to Trøndersk, pertaining squarely in the Bokmål lexicon, contrasting much like “quite well off” (with a released, hyper articulated final /t/ in *quite*) would with “stinking rich” or “totally loaded.” Furthermore, the verbs depicting Goldentooth’s physical behavior (writing and picking) have the final trilled /r/ of Bokmål-approximated speech rather than Trøndersk verb endings with apocope or /r/-lessness. While the lyrics of the song are in Trøndersk, in these lines the shift of register helps the listener to abstract the social persona of Goldentooth. The encounter between wageworker and capitalist here also involves an encounter between two linguistic codes, deployed to animate these opposing subjectivities with the chronotope. Not only is the listener presented with a sympathetic worker with whom to align, but also a modeled *other*. And as we find from these examples both not only occupy particular social spaces but inhabit them with particular ways of speaking.

Register Mediated Alignment

If perhaps Vømmøl listeners had encountered employers like Goldentooth, *Høvlervisa’s* protagonist presented a modeled subjectivity to which listeners could directly align themselves. There is also a particular propositional content with regards to class agency articulated in the course of the verse. Additionally, there is the protagonist’s style of speaking, his inhabitation of a particular register, and an accompanying stance that is separate from, although altogether related to, both of these previously mentioned alignments. The ridiculing of Goldentooth’s use of Bokmål-approximated speech and the insistence on speaking in dialect represents a third possible alignment, a *register mediated alignment*, that resonates with sectors of Norwegian society that place value on the use of dialect and resist the adoption of legitimate speech forms. This sentiment is expressed humorously in the Norwegian version of Dik Browne’s *Hagar the Horrible* (see Fig. 5). The Norwegian counterpart, Hårek, sees a man addressing a crowd and asks his companion why the man uses such big words. His friend replies that the man is encouraging people to speak dialect because it gives confidence, self-knowledge, and identity. Hårek replies, “He doesn’t fool me. No one can get me to speak anything but what I’ve grown up with.” The cartoon is written in Nynorsk and provides a humorous illustration of a slogan put forward by *Noregs Mållag*, (The Language Organization of Norway), the main organization advocating for the use of Nynorsk—*snakk dialekt, skriv nynorsk* (speak dialect, write New Norwegian).



Figure 5

“What is it he’s using such big and pretty words about?—He wants people to speak dialect! He says that it gives confidence, self knowledge and identity.—He doesn’t fool me! No one will get me to speak anything than what I’ve grown up with!”
(Courtesy of King Features)

The metadiscourse surrounding the use of dialect in Norway often relies on the contrasting styles of *å snakke pent* (to talk beautifully) and *å snakke brei* (to talk wide). Speakers of Trøndersk, and Norwegians generally, refer to Trøndersk as a *wide* (*brei*) dialect. This may be in part because one systematic difference between Trøndersk and Bokmål-approximated speech is the openness of the mouth. The first person singular pronoun is a case in point. In Trøndersk it is *Æ* (pron: /æ:/) while the Bokmål-approximated form is *Jeg* (pron: /jæi/). There is a general tendency in Trøndersk to eliminate diphthongs, eliminating tense front vowels.

Bourdieu (1991) analyzes mouth aperture and word choice in socially indexical registers of his native French. He considered the rejection of linguistic domination as involving concrete, physical resistance on the part of the speaker through what he termed the *bodily hexis*—the articulatory style and coordination that makes communication not only possible and but also socially meaningful. In examining working class Parisian males’ hesitance to adopt bourgeois-legitimated language, Bourdieu contrasts the use of the French words for mouth, *la bouche* and *la gueule*, as gender and class indexical lexemes. Underlying this indexicality are attitudes toward the body that are tied up in class habitus. The closed mouth *bouche* aligns with bourgeois concerns about the body and humility, whereas *gueule* has an open mouth sexuality, and lack of reserve (Bourdieu 1991: 87).

In so far as terms such as *talking wide* or *talking beautifully* abstract stereotypical models of personhood from phonetic material they are *personifying terms* (Agha 2003). Within the logic of these personifying terms, however, for a Trøndersk speaker to occupy the social space of beauty (perhaps a beautiful woman eating French yogurt) it would be necessary to reign in a *wide* articulatory style, to discipline the mouth into forming tense, front vowels, and, generally, shutting the mouth. Few Norwegians, much less a viking like Hårek, are inclined to submit their bodies to the social expectations of legitimate speech and, as such, may share a *register mediated alignment* towards the stance expressed in Rotmo’s music.

Conclusion

The social conflicts emerging in Norwegian society in the early 1970s—migration from country to city, centralization, labor strife, tensions between individuals and the state—are depicted within Rotmo’s chronotope of Vømmøl Valley. Vømmøl Valley served as a common chronotopic point of reference to which groups as disparate as student radicals like Rotmo, rural farmers, fisherman, and striking workers aligned themselves. These various publics can be considered counterpublics in Warner’s (2002) sense in that they were not merely differentiated from a wider listening public but from the dominant public of Norwegian society (Warner 2002: 119). Insofar as Rotmo articulated a particular vision that categorically rejected the legitimacy of capitalist social relations; constructed a semiotically mediated alliance between political

radicals like himself, rural farmers, fisherman, and urban workers; and directed a strategically political force (i.e., building support for striking workers, consolidating an audience for Mai records), Rotmo could perhaps also be viewed as a Gramscian organic intellectual of the “no vote” counterpublics from which he emerged.⁸

We can also see in the case of Vømmøl that Warner (2002) is correct in recognizing the role code switching can play for maintaining counterpublic horizons within discourse (Warner 2002: 120). Unlike the Gumperz and Blom (1972) study that examined the microcontextual interactional dynamics of Norwegian code switching, this article dealt with mass-mediated language embedded within a popular musical form. The aim of this article was not to develop a linguistic musicology; questions of musicology were largely left to the side along the way. Nevertheless, although music’s lyrical content rarely gains attention by musicologists or sociolinguists (Rasolofondraosolo and Meinhof 2003), popular music often presents cases of mass-mediated language, mass-mediated text worthy of analytic attention. The aim of this study was to look at mass-mediated language and its reflexive role for reflecting and constructing particular counterpublics in 1970s Norway—reflexive in the sense that it simultaneously emerged from these counterpublics and served to give them a collective identity. Rotmo’s music provided a mass-mediated representation of not just “rural speakers” but of a whole modeled social reality—a chronotope, complete with personae—to which addressees could align themselves in a variety of ways. Like the marginalized voices that spoke up in the 1972 referendum, in speaking dialect to power, whether to Goldentooth or the Norwegian state, the subjectivities ventriloquated by Rotmo in the chronotopic realm of Vømmøl Valley literally refused “to shut their big mouths.”

Notes

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1. 1972 EEC vote results: <http://www.dna.no/dna.no/Historien/Oppslutning-ved-valg/EF-valget-1972-og-EU-avstemningen-1994>, accessed August 7, 2008.

2. The Arbeiderpartiet (AP—Labor Party) support for entrance into the EEC was in part what led to its left wing leaving and forming the Sosialistiskfolkepartiet (The Socialist People’s party), which later became the Sosialistisk Venstreparti (Party of the Socialist Left). The primary cause for this split was, in fact, Norway’s membership in NATO.

3. See Haugen (1966) for a fuller discussion of this period.

4. See also Agha’s (2007) discussion of this case in *Language and Social Relations*, chapter 2.

5. See Yoplait commercial.

6. Some cultural events are more consequential than others; Vømmøl’s selling of fifty thousand copies of their first album and continued popularity trumps the cultural weight of one yogurt commercial and represents a cultural phenomenon that requires some explanation.

7. The metalinguistic term used by Norwegians to describe the retroflex tap consonant is *tjukk L / tykk L* (thick L), a description which is itself a *personifying term* (Agha, 2003)—a concept that will be discussed below.

8. Gramsci’s conception of the organic intellectual (of the ruling class): (1) builds consent and legitimacy for a society’s dominant group, (2) organizes alliances and compromises, (3) helps strategically to “direct” political (coercive) force (Gramsci 1971).

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