



Klaus Theweleit

THE LAUGHTER OF KILLERS: BEIVIK ET AL.

A Psychogram of Killing for Pleasure

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Theweleit describes the laughter of killers using a selection of case studies, including German soldiers in British prisoner of war camps during WWII, who are said to have told each other about the atrocities they had committed with considerable mirth. The laughter masks another aspect of killing for pleasure however; the cold rationality with which murderers speak when they justify their acts in public. Anders Breivik's defence in court starts to sound like a statistical analysis of Norwegian immigration figures, for instance. Theweleit's essay reveals the language of justification as a foil for sadism, because, according to the author's provocative argument, anything can be 'justified'; we should avoid believing a word of it.

KLAUS THEWELEIT

was born in 1942, and studied German and English literature. He is a theoretician of literature and cultural studies, and a writer. His "Male Fantasies" became a bestseller, achieving him international acclaim. Theweleit lectures at the University of Freiburg's Institute of Sociology, and at the German Film and Television Academy, Berlin. From 1998 to 2008 he was professor of art and theory at the Academy of Fine Arts, Karlsruhe. Recent publications include "Buch der Könige" (3 volumes, 1988–1994) and "Der Pocahontas Komplex" (3 volumes, 1999–2013).