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Anti-populist populism: Musical challenges to Trump's America and Erdoğan's Turkey

L Y N D O N   C . S .   W A Y ⓘ

Communications and Media Department, University of Liverpool, Livedrpool, UK
E-mail: lyndon.way@liverpool.ac.uk

Abstract

Populism is a discursive construct that represents popular interests and values by 'pretend[ing] to speak' for the people who are constructed separate and opposed to a powerful elite. Yet populism, in its various forms and accents, 'can adapt flexibly to a variety of substantive ideological values and principles'. This is manifested in 'the people' not being a prefixed natural category, but a signifier that acquires meaning through discourses and contexts. This article considers how populism is articulated in hip hop videos that criticise two authoritarian-populist politicians: America's Trump and Turkey's Erdoğan. Using Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies, Eminem's 'The Storm' and Ezhel's 'Yarınımız Yok (We have no tomorrow)' are analysed to demonstrate how oppositional popular music can articulate its own brands of populism, transcending contexts, yet shaped by them.

Introduction

The exact nature of relations between popular music and politics is an ongoing debate that has produced no real consensus (Hesmondhalgh and Negus 2002, p. 7). There is a wide spectrum of views, including some highly optimistic (Lorraine 2006; Korczynski 2014) and others far more sceptical (Stravinsky 1935; Grossberg 1992) in terms of music's ability to represent and promote socio-political interests or particular cultural values. Production, promotion, social and consumption contexts constrain and influence potential meanings in popular music (Frith 1988; Street 1988). Furthermore, much of its political power lies with listeners, meanings being ambiguous and open to individual interpretation (Hebdige 1979; Grossberg 1992; Street 1988; Huq 2002).

Scholars have demonstrated how 'political music' tends to express vague and populist political ideas (Street 1988; Eyerman and Jamison 1998; Way 2016a, 2018, 2021). Populism can be seen as a discursive construct, used by musicians and politicians alike, 'representing popular interests and values' with a universal 'appeal to the people and anti-elitism' (Williams 1988; Laclau 2005). Intertwined and inseparable from politics in music are musicians' personal narratives of authenticity about

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themselves, their fans and others. Much has been written on the subject (see Redhead and Street 1989; Moore 2002; Burns 2007; Way 2017, 2018), with recent studies finding it useful to view authenticity as the quality of 'sincerity' or 'playing from the heart' that listeners ascribe to performers (Moore 2002: 210). How this is assigned by music producers and fans is socially, historically and genre dependent.

In this article, I consider how popular music that criticises populist politicians leans on forms of populist discourses. Studies in the past have revealed how this is a common discursive strategy in political popular music that constructs the 'people' opposed to an elite 'other' (Way 2015, 2016a, 2018). Each of these studies considers one music video in a specific political context. Here, I compare two music videos that criticise two authoritarian-populist politicians in two very different political contexts to reveal populism's different accents in popular music. Using Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies, lyrics, visuals and musical sounds from Eminem's 'The Storm' (YouTube 2017) and Ezhel's 'Yarınımız Yok (We have no tomorrow)' (hereafter 'Yarınımız Yok') (YouTube 2018) are analysed to reveal how they express opposition to former US president Donald Trump and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan respectively. I explore the discursive universe of 'the elite' and 'the people' that both videos communicate, the former constructed as despotic and the latter as victims who are brave, legitimate and strong. This comparison enhances a growing body of research that explores how oppositional popular music articulates its own brands of populism that transcend contexts, yet are shaped by them.

Populism and authoritarianism in Trump and Erdoğan

Populism shares conceptual territory with the term 'popular', defined as 'belonging to the people', 'widely favoured' and 'well-liked' (Williams 1988, p. 236). However, popular politics and the inclusion of popular elements in political discourse does not necessarily make it populist (Carpentier 2007). What distinguishes these terms from each other is the fact that populism includes 'representing popular interests and values' (Williams 1988, p. 238) as well as having a universal 'appeal to the people and anti-elitism' (Laclau 2005, p. 7). This is achieved by presenting 'popular-democratic elements [...] as an antagonistic option against the ideology of the dominant bloc' (Laclau 1977, p. 143), firmly 'separating the "people" from power' (Laclau 2005, p. 224).

Crucial to this study is the idea that 'the elite' and 'the people' are not prefixed natural categories, but signifiers that acquire meaning through a diversity of discourses and contexts (Laclau 2005, p. 74; De Cleen and Carpentier 2010). Studies illustrate how the meaning of 'the people' changes and is fought for by different groups, including extreme right wing Belgian political groups and those opposed to them (De Cleen and Carpentier 2010), Turkish politicians and protesters (Way 2018), the political left and right during Obama's 2008 election campaign (Jordan 2013) and Trump, a white, multi-millionaire property developer who represents himself as one of 'the people' (Merrin 2019). These studies illustrate how populism, in its various forms and accents, 'has a chameleon-like quality which can adapt flexibly to a variety of substantive ideological values and principles' (Norris and Inglehart 2019, p. 3).

Often, we see populism discursively linked to ethno-nationalism, the rejection of immigration and/or a return to past glories. This is evident in a number of

countries including the UK (arguments for Brexit), and politicians like France's Marine Le Pen, Italy's Matteo Salvini, and Hungary's Viktor Orbán. Politicians such as these seize upon 'a growing revolt against mainstream politics' and offer tropes of national populism that 'prioritize[s] the culture and interests of the nation, [giving] voice to a people who feel that they have been neglected, even held in contempt, by distant and often corrupt elites' (Eatwell and Goodwin 2018, p. 1). Scholars warn that politicians who combine populism with authoritarianism are dangerous for democracy (Norris and Inglehart 2019). Authoritarianism, in any of its forms, goes against the grain of democratic ideals. It prioritises 'security against risks of instability and disorder', 'group conformity to preserve conventional traditions' and 'loyal obedience toward strong leaders who protect the group and its customs' (Norris and Inglehart 2019, p. 7). Combined with populism, authoritarian-populist politicians commonly argue that in order to defend 'us' we need to restrict 'them', resulting in policies that justify restricting the freedoms of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, foreigners and 'others' (Norris and Inglehart 2019, p. i).

By this definition, both Trump and Erdoğan are authoritarian-populists. Trump 'uses populist rhetoric to legitimize his style of governance, while promoting authoritarian values that threaten the liberal norms underpinning American democracy' (Norris and Inglehart 2019, p. 3). He has called his opponents 'phoney' or 'dopey', labelled the media and journalists as 'corrupt' or 'fake news' while discourses of violence, racism and wider uncivility become the 'new' norms of social and political doing and acting (Krzyżanowski 2020, p. 4; Happer *et al.* 2019, p. 15). He has become the darling of the Alt-right, associated with anti-foreigner sentiments, white nationalism and white supremacism (Merrin 2019, p. 206). All the while, Trump represents himself as a political outsider, one of the people 'against the establishment, the elite, the mainstream, the political order, the neo-liberal economic order, the global order, the established way of doing things' (Happer *et al.* 2018, p. 4). Although Trump continues to influence US politics in significant ways, he is not president at the time of writing and checks and balances in US democracy remain intact.

Erdoğan is also an authoritarian-populist. Despite rising to power on a wave of tolerant politics in 2002, Erdoğan has become 'an authoritarian president whose speeches are as populist as those of the late Venezuelan leader Hugo Chávez' (McKernan 2019). He represents himself not as one of the secular 'elite', but one of 'the people': a pious, devote, Turkish Muslim who is the voice of like-minded Turks. Those who oppose him, including Western powers, Kurds, the former (secular) ruling classes, the media, human rights activists and political opponents are named as 'traitors', 'conspirators', and 'outsiders' attempting to usurp Erdoğan's Turkish nation. This has resulted in most aspects of civil society being firmly under government control and/or closely monitored with oppositional voices silenced. Erdoğan not only criticises journalists and the media, he controls most media, making it virtually impossible for journalists to 'expose political or military corruption, or to implicate a public official in criminal activity, without running the risk of themselves being convicted of a crime' (Christensen 2005, p. 195). In fact, Turkey is ranked 153rd out of 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders' 2021 World Press Freedom index with the number of jailed journalists being one of the highest in the world (Öğret 2016) and over 90% of media being pro-government with the remaining silenced or stifled (Way and Akan 2017; Way *et al.* 2018). Internationally, his populist positioning has resulted in very public tensions with

the European Union and the US. In this article, I argue that although the political contexts are very different in both countries, popular music is one space where we see opposition, although this leans on differing forms of populism.

Sample

Comparative studies 'sensitize us to variation and to similarity, and this can contribute powerfully to concept formation and to the refinement of our conceptual apparatus' (Hallin and Mancini 2004, p. 2). I chose to compare music videos from the US and Turkey to illustrate similarities and differences in how populism is articulated in popular music in two different political contexts that have endured authoritarian-populist leaders. Hip hop videos were chosen because this global and popular genre is closely associated with 'dissent and critique' (Walser 1995, p. 197), although this differs across borders. American hip hop tends to tackle political issues of Black rights and racism by musicians revealing 'personal truths' linked to lived experiences in pre-dominantly Black urban neighbourhoods (Walser 1995; Fraley 2009, p. 43; Boutros 2020, p. 99). Global hip hop politics include 'youth protest and resistance around the World' (Williams 2010, p. 67), which challenges the status quo (Lee 2010, p. 139). Although most hip hop (US and elsewhere) tends to focus on national politics (Terkourafi 2010; Street 2013), some hip hop attempts 'to address and transform both local and global political discourses', including Greece's Imiskoumbria (Hess 2010, p. 169) and Turkey's Saian (Way 2016b), who tackle injustices both at home and globally.

Both 'The Storm' and 'Yarınımız Yok' are part of wider trends in political hip hop. 'The Storm' is just one expression of 'hip-hop's disdain for President Donald Trump [which] increased in the months since [his 2016 election]' (Penrose 2017). Likewise, Turkey has seen a spike in anti-Erdoğan hip hop at the time of Ezhel's 'Yarınımız Yok', including the release of '#SUSAMAM (I can't stay silent)' with over 53 million views on YouTube (as of 1 November 2021) and 'Olay' also by Ezhel. 'The Storm' and 'Yarınımız Yok' were selected because both videos are in wide circulation and both musicians have a reputation for being 'political', generating interest in the press and online.

Marshall Bruce Mathers III, or Eminem, has been a global success since his 1996 *Infinity* debut album. He has won Grammy and Academy Awards, and released global and US best-selling albums. He is outspoken in his politics. In 'The Eminem Show' video (2002), his character rips up the American constitution. Lyrics in 'Encore' (2004) attack George W. Bush's Iraq war. In a 2012 interview, he confirmed he voted for President Obama, whilst in 2015 in a freestyle rap, he criticised both presidential candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. In 2016, he freestyle rapped concern about Trump as president, and the following year, he led a 'Fuck Trump' chant at the UK's Reading Festival. 'The Storm' was released on Twitter and played on 10 October 2017 at the Black Entertainment Television Awards. It is considered 'one of his most upfront freestyles ever, blasting the "racist" Donald Trump in a series of brash, take-no-prisoners lines' (Milton 2017). It directly addresses Trump 'on topics including the NFL protest, America's recent spate of hurricanes, Trump's lavish trips to "his golf resorts and his mansions" and more' (Connick 2017). Eminem claims it is his chance to speak out about 'injustices' by Trump, 'a president who does not care about everybody in our country; he is not the president for all of us, he is the president for some of us' ('Songfacts' 2017).

Sercan İpekçioğlu, or Ezhel, is a Turkish rapper, singer and songwriter. He was Spotify's most streamed Turkish artist of 2020, named 'Freestyle King' by Turkey's Hip Hop Life, and named by *The New York Times* (2019) as a European Pop Act that everyone should know. He has released three albums since 2017, with his song 'Aya' streamed more than 80 million times on Spotify. Like Eminem, Ezhel is politically active, being an outspoken critic of Turkey's government. Along with other musicians, he protested during the 2013 Gezi Park protests (Sharpe 2020). In 2018, he was arrested and sent to pre-trial detention for 'inciting drug use' in his lyrics (O'Connor 2018). He has released 'explicitly radical songs' like 'Katili Katlet', 'Bombok' and 'Olay', the latter described as 'focusing on [...] killings of journalists and activists, police brutality, the failed coup attempt, and the economic crisis [and condemned by the government as] a provocation and political manipulation' (Kilic 2019). He now lives in Berlin to 'escape repression' (Sharpe 2020). 'Yarınımız Yok' was officially released on 3 May 2020, reaching number 90 on Turkey's Apple Music Chart. Ezhel's record company describes the music as an 'unreleased old record at our studio' that continued to 'live in the studio' until 2020, a time that saw further repression by Erdoğan and musical protests as outlined above (VooDoo personal correspondence, 4 February 2021). The video release (30 May 2018) coincides with Ezhel's detention and the #FreeEzhel campaign, 'a top trending hashtag on Twitter, spurring dozens of artists, journalists and other prominent figures to call for his release, along with Amnesty International' (Lepeska 2018). As of September 2022, 'Yarınımız Yok' had received 3,348,279 views.

Approach

Both videos are analysed from a multimodal critical discourse studies approach that considers how the modes of lyrics, visuals and musical sounds articulate discourses. This approach has the advantage of revealing the way each mode works individually and together to articulate discourses 'on a particular occasion, in a particular text' (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001, p. 29). It also addresses concerns that a lot of video analysis ignores musical sounds, these being 'usually relegated to the status of sound track' (Goodwin 1993, p. 4). This paper's approach finds its origins in Critical Discourse Studies and Halliday's (1994) functional grammar, which assume that linguistic and visual choices reveal broader discourses articulated in texts (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001). These discourses can be thought of as models of the world and project certain social values and ideas that contribute to the (re)production of social life. The aim of analysis is to reveal what kinds of social relations of power, inequalities and interests are perpetuated, generated and legitimated, explicitly and implicitly, in texts (van Dijk 1993).

Lyrics and images are analysed by focusing on the use of metaphors and the representation of social actors, their actions and settings. Besides their aesthetic qualities, metaphors are a powerful representative strategy, used more so in popular music than many other communicative acts (Way 2015). Producers make choices when mapping a 'source' domain onto the semantic field of a 'target' domain. These choices are important, metaphors being a 'functional mechanism which affects the way we think, act and experience reality' by representing aspects of the world in certain ways (Flowerdew and Leong 2007, p. 275; Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Metaphors can have specifically political roles, strengthening, reproducing

or subverting relations of power, 'classify[ing] and order[ing] reality, social and political classifications and ordering [they are] the vehicle through which power operates' (Mottier 2008, p. 184). My approach to the representation of social actors and their actions is gleened from Fairclough's (2003) and van Leeuwen's (1995 and 1996) seminal work that focusses on who is included and excluded in a representation, how social actors are named and how their actions are represented. A range of scholars have demonstrated how such an analysis is central to revealing discourses (Wodak *et al*. 1999; Bishop and Jaworski 2003; Wodak and Weiss 2005). Likewise, the representation of place affects our understanding of places, reinforces myths and provides fans with a sense of identity (Forman 2002). In song, analyses of settings are 'highly revealing about the world being communicated' (Machin 2010, p. 92), and 'can be used to understand broader social relations and trends, including identity, ethnicity, attachment to place, cultural economies, social activism, and politics' (Johansson and Bell 2009, p. 2). Representations of place are intricately linked to authenticity, urban dwellings being an important aspect of authenticating rock and rap musicians, while rural settings authenticate folk and country (Connell and Gibson 2003, p. 37).

Musical sounds are also examined, leaning on past semiotic approaches by Cooke (1959), van Leeuwen (1999) and more recently Machin (2010), Tagg (2012) and Way (2018). In all these studies, the importance of context is emphasised by 'knowingly position[ing] the interpreter [of music] in relation to [context]' (Cook 1990, p. 123). Here, I consider this previous work encapsulated conveniently by van Leeuwen (1999) into six domains of sound: perspective, music's adherence (or not) to regularity, how sounds interact with each other, melody, voice quality and timbre, and the modality of sounds. These domains are considered, where relevant, to reveal the role musical sounds play in articulating discourses, both independently and in conjunction with other modes of communication. Obviously, some domains, such as voice quality and timbre, are explored in greater depth than other musical domains in this study, owing to the inherent emphasis on voice in hip hop. This is especially relevant to Eminem's 'The Storm', a cypher with no musical accompaniment.

Eminem's 'The Storm'

In the lyrics, namings distinguish 'the people' from 'the elite'. 'The people' are named using the pronouns 'I', 'we', 'us' and the possessive 'our' and identified as Eminem, Black soldiers, Black athletes who 'take a knee', a 'POW who's tortured and battered' and 'any fan of mine'. Opposed to 'the people' is Trump, named either informally ('Donald Trump'), without honourifics ('Trump'), using the third person pronoun ('he'), with insults ('Donald the bitch', 'a kamikaze') or as a racist ('this racist 94-year-old grandpa'). There are a small number of other elites mentioned once, including members of Trump's family ('Melania' and 'his fam') and well-known racists (Steve 'Bannon' and 'Klansmen'). Part of the 'elite' are Trump supporters. They are distinct from Eminem's people, made clear in the line 'any fan of mine who's a supporter of his' must decide to be 'either for or against'. Trump supporters are also identified as distinct from 'the people' through Eminem's use of accent in the lines 'He's gonna get rid of all immigrants!' and 'He's gonna build that thing [wall] up taller than this!' Here, Eminem mimics Trump supporters' enthusiasm for his

anti-immigration policies. These are rapped with exaggerated nasal sounds suggesting not only an accent from America's South, but also contempt for Trump supporters (Lomax 1968, p. 193).

Key to articulating populist discourse is representing 'the people' sympathetically, thereby legitimising their claims of victimisation at the hands of 'the elite'. We see victimisation in lines such as 'It's like we take a step forwards, then backwards', 'he [Trump] attacks the NFL', ''Cause to him [Trump] you're [POWs] zeros' and '[Black soldier] is still told to go back to Africa'. These lines identify specific groups within Eminem's 'people' who are victims. However, other than the 'attack' line, none of these represent Trump with agency. As such, these lines minimise connotations of the people's weakness and Trump's strength (van Leeuwen 1996). In fact, for the most part, the people's victimisation is backgrounded in favour of delegitimising Trump. Consider: 'When he attacks the NFL so we focus on that in-/-stead of talkin' Puerto Rico or gun reform for Nevada.' Here, Eminem represents three separate political issues and events where 'the people' are victims of Trump's (in)actions: Trump's criticisms of 'taking a knee', his reluctance for tighter gun control after a 2017 Nevada mass shooting and his response to Hurricane Maria. However, listing all three of these together suggests they are linked to a theme of Trump's incompetence (Fairclough 2003, p. 131). Taking a knee is a 'movement started by former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who protested police brutality and racial inequality by declining to stand when "The Star-Spangled Banner" was played' (Wood 2018). This was (and is) not supported by all players and owners in the NFL. Trump publicly criticised this gesture through Twitter posts, pressuring NFL owners to ban the practice and even cancelling the Super Bowl-winning Philadelphia Eagles' trip to the White House owing to their support for the gesture. His actions were criticised by many in terms of race. Here, Eminem names protesting players as 'the NFL', a slippage that suggests Trump is pitted against a much larger group than some players in the NFL. Furthermore, Trump is represented acting negatively in 'he attacks the NFL' in order to distract 'us' from more pressing issues like a sub-standard hurricane relief response and not considering gun control. Indeed, Trump's links to the National Rifle Association are well documented and his administration's response to Hurricane Maria that devastated Puerto Rico was criticised by agencies including Oxfam as 'slow and inadequate' ('Despite desperate shortages …' 2017). However, here Eminem has added a 'purpose' of distraction, a proposal that cannot easily be substantiated. Furthermore, these lines presuppose that people are distracted from other issues by Trump's criticisms, presuppositions being 'a taken-for-granted, implicit claim embedded within the explicit meaning of a text or utterance' that enforce ideologies without questioning them (Richardson 2007, p. 63). Together, these strategies imply victimisation, although directly delegitimising Trump and his policies. Here is an example of how Eminem turns Trump's populism on its head by representing Trump as 'the elite' that victimises 'the people', an essential element of populism.

Emphasised throughout the rap is the idea that Eminem is an authentic and legitimate voice of 'the people'. This is achieved using imagery, lyrics and sounds, including the representation of place. The video opens with a graphic of white writing on a black background that reads 'EMINEM 10.06.17 DETROIT MI'. Upper case lettering in a font with no flourishes and a lack of colour suggests this is serious, factual information, unlike colourful, lower case lettering with excessive

flourishes (Machin 2007, p. 99). Choosing to start the video as such suggests import- ance in situating Eminem in Detroit, a Black majority city synonymous with urban decay, crime and poverty. Scholars demonstrate how codes of hip hop authenticity tend to value Black identity over White (McLeod 1999: 141). This opening attempts to overcome this valuation of race (Eminem being a white rapper) by linking him to the 'lived experiences in predominantly Black urban neighbourhoods [Detroit]', a key element of hip hop authenticity (Fraley 2009, p. 43). As such, the opening helps legitimise Eminem rapping about Black rights, politics and activism.

The rap is shot in a darkish car park, darkness suggesting danger and untruths (Machin 2007). In almost every shot, Eminem raps to the camera, gesticulating and leaping in the foreground. In the background are a group of men and four cars. The cars' headlights seemingly light the space, although close ups of Eminem suggest lighting is from off screen sources to Eminem's right. However, the head- lights and background connote a 'budget', authentic, impromptu cypher not a care- fully constructed piece of entertainment. Authenticity is further connoted in the choice of cars – large, dated Buicks and Cadillacs. These do not connote affluence and privilege the way Porsches, Mercedes or Jaguars may, but hard times and cars driven by criminals, pimps and gangsters in films, television shows and rap videos. These link Eminem to 'the dangerous, mean streets', suggesting that he is a legitimate and 'authentic' spokesperson for 'the people'.

Throughout the whole rap, Eminem is active and empowered, rapping and moving aggressively in front of nine Black men. The men (including Eminem) wear clothes associated with rap such as hoodies and baseball caps, although Eminem's gold chain suggests that he is different. The men either stand with legs apart, sit or lean on the bonnets of the aforementioned cars. All of them look in the direction of Eminem. Almost every shot sees them in a group behind Eminem, de-emphasising their individuality (Machin 2007, p. 118). A few times, a short-lived close-up is shown, but these are almost always group shots and all of them are 'offer images', where members look off screen, omitting power and symbolic engagement with viewers (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996, p. 124). Furthermore, they do not move nor add any sounds to the rap. This is a silent, disempowered people here to listen, a visual metaphor for a disempowered Black community with Eminem as its spokesperson.

Musical sounds affectively support the idea that Eminem is the people's legitim- ate spokesperson, emphasising discourses connoted in the visuals and lyrics. Although his voice is in the foreground, there is also atmospheric 'noise' evident. This was not recorded in a tightly controlled studio, but outside in a car park with a 'natural' echo noticeable between lines. Eminem's voice is recorded up close. However, he does not whisper to us like a lover, but is like an angry friend venting his rage. This perspective allows us to feel his real emotions up close. There are no interacting sounds, neither musical accompaniment nor other voices. Eminem is the sole source of sound, expressing his dominance as a powerful voice of the people.

Yet legitimating Eminem and implying victimisation is only part of this popu- list discourse. Throughout the rap, Eminem and the people's positive representations are paired with ones that delegitimise Trump and his supporters. Rearranging events, issues and elements of representations occurs in most texts, this usually 'relate[d] to the interests, goals and values' of producers (van Leeuwen 1999, p. 97). Here, we see rearranging in lines like: ''Cause like him [Trump] in politics, I'm usin' all of his tricks'. The metaphor 'usin' all of his tricks' works in two ways

to delegitimise 'the elite' (Trump) but also connotes intelligence in Eminem (spokesperson for the people). The line presupposes that Trump is indeed 'using tricks', connoting bending the rules, manipulation and possible wrongdoing. In the meanwhile, Eminem is also 'usin' all of his tricks'. Unlike politicians who are supposed to be honest and transparent, this adds street credibility to Eminem, a clever operator who bends the rules. Elsewhere, Eminem and the people are represented as brave, strong and authentic while Trump is incompetent. Consider:

The fact we're not afraid of Trump,
Fuck walkin' on egg shells, I came to stomp
That's why he keeps screamin', "Drain the swamp!"
'Cause he's in quicksand

Here, Eminem is active: 'we' who are 'not afraid' of Trump. This use of the pronoun 'we' conjures up the notion of a people who are against 'the elite', an essential part of populism. Yet Eminem's courage and power are emphasised in the eggshell and stomp metaphor. He rejects 'walkin' on eggshells', opting 'to stomp', that is, to act strongly and aggressively without fear of reprisals. Although no details are given, Eminem represents himself as a straight-talking, fearless spokesperson for 'the people', further authenticating himself and legitimising his ideas. Paired up with this representation is an inept Trump. Throughout his campaigns and time in office, Trump promised to 'Drain the swamp!', that is, 'fix problems in the federal government' and take on its 'power structure', including disempowering lobbyists with foreign interests that work against the working class (Bhunjun 2018). Although fixing governmental problems may be a worthwhile endeavour, Eminem rearranges this in a line that sees Trump 'scream', a verbal action connoting weakness and mostly associated with women and children (Caldas-Coulthard 1994, p. 307). Trump is further delegitimised, represented as being incapable of fulfilling his presidential duties ''Cause he's in quicksand'. Although Eminem does not elaborate on Trump's ineptitude, such metaphors suggest that Trump is a weak imposter, diametrically opposed to a straight-shooting authentic Eminem leading a brave people.

Eminem's style of rapping adds a sense of sincere anger to his lyrics. Throughout, his voice is tense, rough and at times yelling, connoting aggression and scorn. This is especially noticeable in some lines including 'we got in office now's a kamikaze'. Timing is also important. He raps in natural time, as opposed to clock time, changing in tempo and reflecting his emotions. At times, in a fit of anger, he raps very fast. At other times, between lines he stops, suggesting he is overwhelmed with emotion. Here, we hear agitated breathing suggesting excitement, giving us the impression of real emotions expressed in authentic ways. As such, it is easy to forget that this is a recorded piece of entertainment for a glitzy awards ceremony.

Although some of Trump's de-legitimation represents events and issues, a significant part of Eminem's critique uses personal insults. Although these authenticate and legitimate Eminem, they also lean on negative stereotypes and sexist discourses of (de)masculinity. Consider:

Trump, when it comes to givin' a shit, you're stingy as I am
Except when it comes to havin' the balls to go against me, you hide 'em
'Cause you don't got the fuckin' nuts like an empty asylum
Racism's the only thing he's fantastic for
'Cause that's how he gets his fuckin' rocks off and he's orange

In this excerpt, we see insults that attack Trump's appearance ('he's orange') and his manhood ('having the balls [...] you hide 'em', 'don't got the fuckin' nuts', and 'gets his rocks off'). In the first line, Trump is represented as being uncaring by being stingy in 'givin' a shit'. This connotes a despotic 'elite', not a politician that represents, protects and makes decisions on behalf of the people. Although no details are provided, Eminem also does not care, feeding into his image of a tough, streetwise spokesperson. Trump is also represented as a coward when he comes up 'against me [Eminem]', although this is through de-masculinisation by 'hiding' or lacking his 'balls' and 'nuts'. These lines presuppose that cowardice is associated with femininity (non-masculine). In the last two lines, this sexist discourse changes to perversion. Here, Trump is accused of metaphorically getting excited and being fantastic at racism. Eminem uses vibrato or a wavering voice in these lines (and in many lines). This wavering is not like a classically trained vocalist, but a breaking of his voice suggesting intense emotions. Using voice and sexualised metaphors indeed may invoke anger and delegitimise, but none of these lines provide any information, evidence or proof to claims of being uncaring, racist or sexually perverted. They represent Eminem and 'the people' as strong and brave whilst delegitimising Trump by leaning on sexist discourses, a strategy far from enlightening and inclusive in opposing Trump.

Ezhel's 'Yarınımız Yok (We have no tomorrow)'

'Yarınımız Yok' differs from 'The Storm' in a number of ways. It is not blatantly critical of Erdoğan. In Turkish oppositional music, we find that criticism is vague and masked in generalities to avoid cancelled events, damaged careers, police harassment, arrests and imprisonment (Way 2018). Despite Ezhel living in Germany in exile to escape government repression, there is still the threat of Turkish governmental reprisals. Also, unlike 'The Storm', 'Yarınımız Yok' has a two verse/two chorus structure, is recorded in a studio with musical accompaniment and has a video made up of visual graphics of lyrics and images. Like 'The Storm', however, this video leans on populist discourses that invert Erdoğan's populist tactics. Here, semiotic resources construct a despotic 'elite' of not only Erdoğan, but also his government, the media, police and the legal system, and 'the people' as Ezhel, the working classes, dissidents and those wanting justice.

In the lyrics, Ezhel names 'the elite' as 'they', 'dictator', 'the system', 'arm protectors [police]', 'newspapers' and 'empty brains'.[1] Opposed to this elite are 'the people', named as 'the people', 'the public', 'everybody', 'children', 'mothers', 'a victim' and the pronouns 'us', 'our', 'ourselves', 'we', 'you' and 'I'. The use of pronouns in 'the only thing I want is justice, but it's far from us' suggests that Ezhel is part of 'the people' opposed to 'the elite'. 'The elite' are activated on a number of occasions connoting both power but also negativity as they 'lie', 'threw us into the fire', 'hit', 'have perverted mentalities', 'fell really bad [have sick ideas]', 'always talk empty' and 'steal from the public'. Unlike in 'The Storm', the people's passivations and victimisation are emphasised by such actions. Consider:

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[1] All translations are my own (a native English and fluent Turkish speaker) and then checked by a native Turkish and fluent English speaker.

If a foot slips, arm protectors hit, never die
Lots of mothers are grieving, children are hungry
Don't think those children are in school, they are child labour
What future is expected from us to live on our salary?

The police are named as 'arm protectors' (slang for police), a generic naming that 'symbolically remove[s them] from the readers' world of immediate experience, treated as distant "others"' (van Leeuwen 1996, p. 48). To the contrary, namings of 'the people' such as 'mothers' and 'children' identify family relations while sympathy is connoted by these people being 'hit' by police (van Leeuwen 1996). When the people are active, none of these are with agency (one 'event' and four 'state' processes), connoting a lack of power (Halliday 1994). However, there is a hint of power in the people 'never die', although no details are given while victimisation is emphasised. This is evident where we see grieving mothers linked through co-text to police actions as well as child hunger, child labour and poor salaries. Erdoğan's government is implied as being responsible for these conditions, although not named. Since 2002, Erdoğan has advanced a neo-liberal economic programme of 'massive privatizations', 'flexibility to labour markets' and 'deregulation of the social welfare and public health systems', resulting in success in some sectors of the economy and record unemployment and poverty in others, especially the labouring classes (Bahçe and Köse 2016, p. 65; Sümer and Yaşlı 2010, p. 17). He and his government are directly responsible for the Turkish people's standard of living. Although poverty has always been an historical reality, linking Erdoğan with child poverty, education problems and weakness connotes a cold, uncaring 'elite' not concerned with 'the people'.

'The people' are also represented as brave. This works multimodally in lines like 'Dictators lead, the people are on the street in front of them'. Here, 'dictators' includes Erdoğan (another generic naming for the elite), 'dictator' being a common name and criticism used against him by oppositional media and politicians. He is emphasised at the beginning of the line, although cowardice is also connoted by him leading from behind 'the people [. . .] on the street'. Indeed, during Turkey's 2016 coup attempt, Erdoğan instructed citizens to confront coup soldiers on the streets while he was put on a plane in relative safety until the situation was under control and coup soldiers had started surrendering ('Turkey timeline: Here's how the coup attempt unfolded' 2016). As such, this naming and activation are used to delegitimise Erdoğan while 'the people' are represented as brave. Voice plays a role in this line to both delegitimise Erdoğan and legitimise Ezhel, something we see in 'The Storm'. The song starts with Ezhel singing with an open throat, suggesting confidence. In the 'dictator' line, throat muscles tense and he sings in a higher pitch, suggesting tension and connoting aggression, anguish and scorn over Erdoğan's actions. His vocals are up front in the mix, expressing his dominance. However, another male voice is also heard 'behind' Ezhel in this and other lines, including the chorus. These other voices sing the same words and same notes at the same time (although with different timbre), connoting collective experiences and a sense of community or unity (Lomax 1968, p. 156). As such, Ezhel's voice is dominant, metaphorically leading 'the people' who criticise the government.

Lyrics that construct a despotic 'elite' and a strong, bold victimised 'people' focus the meaning potential of both the dense layer of low-pitched 'droning' instrumentation heard throughout the song and the high-pitched keyboard 'solo'. Both of

these suggest despair but also hope. The low-pitched sounds alternate between the dominant B (5th) to the tonic E minor, low pitch and minor keys both associated with inward thoughts, sadness, gravity, threat and danger (van Leeuwen 1999, p. 108). Although very likely produced using MIDI effects and not acoustic instruments, the E is produced by a chorus-effect rapid plucked string tremolo while the higher sound is produced by a flute-like trill oscillating between the B (main note) and C. This alternation plays on the dominant–tonic harmonic relationship, both connoting 'anchoring' and 'stability' (Cooke 1959). Confined to these two chords, this melody does not connote 'going places', but suggests no escape, a metaphor for victimisation of the people, including Ezhel's imprisonment (see below).

The pitch, pitch movement and notes of the high-pitched keyboard sample suggest sadness, but also optimism. Image one is a visual representation of the notes in the first two musical phrases and image two the second two musical phrases. The vertical axis on both images represents notes on the scale (four is the tonic note of E) and the horizontal axis represents time (Figures 1 and 2).

Depending on context, high-pitched sounds may suggest optimism and higher levels of energy (Machin 2010). Ascending melodies may express 'outgoing', 'active' emotions that can energise listeners, while descending melodies 'incoming', 'passive' emotions, a lack of energy and negativity (Cooke 1959, p. 133). In both 'pairings' of phrases, we have an 'arched' melody that combines the two. The downward pitch movement of the first half of each pairing adds gravity to lyrics that represent a despotic elite. But both pairs also ascend in pitch, suggesting more positivity and energy, a sonic metaphor for the people and Ezhel who are strong and brave.

Cooke's (1959) observations about the meaning potential of notes reveal that musical sounds in 'Yarınımız Yok' emphasise discourses articulated in lyrics and visuals. Most notes played here suggest stability and anchoring, such as the four E tonics and the three phrases that start on a high B (5th) and the one that ends on the low B. However, this anchoring is not something to be celebrated. The five instances of the G (3rd) suggest sadness or pain, while the most played note is the F#, played six times, connoting 'something in between, the promise of something else'. Juxtaposed on to the low droning musical accompaniment alongside lyrics and imagery, these keyboard sounds suggest that the anchoring is more about confinement, or going nowhere due to the actions of 'the elite' while Ezhel, 'the people' and their views are a 'promise of something else'.

In the lyrics, Ezhel offers a solution to escaping poverty when it is blamed on 'the elite', although again this feeds into a discourse of victimhood. Consider:

Life in the illegal dwellings is difficult and shabby
And the teens are in jails because the only way out is the bag
Bonsai, heroin and ex Not love, poison[2]

Along with other hardships, life for the poor ('illegal dwellings') is 'difficult' and 'shabby'. Ezhel raps 'the only way out is the bag [selling drugs]'. This, obviously, is only one of many options available to escape poverty, although these are excluded here. A few lines later, Ezhel summarises this as 'Either money or our lives'. Here, Ezhel suggests that one can either make money through the criminal activity of selling drugs or stay alive but live in poverty. Both these options are represented

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[2] This line suggests that recreational drugs (Bonsai, heroin and ex [ecstasy]) are not 'love', but poison.
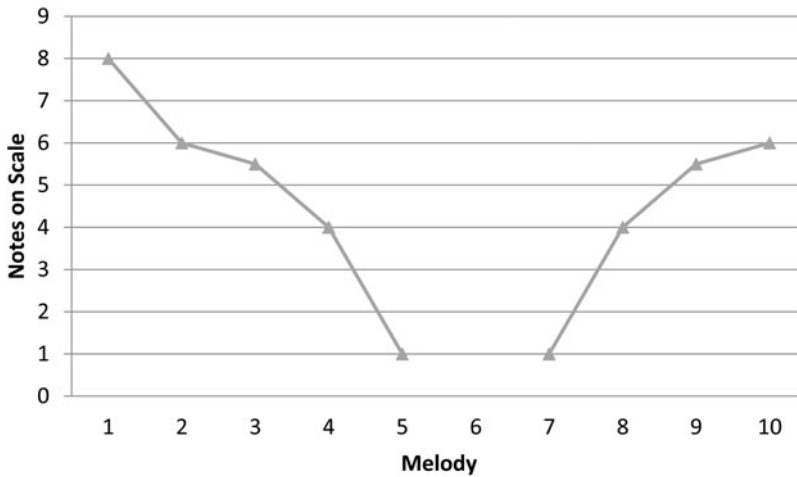
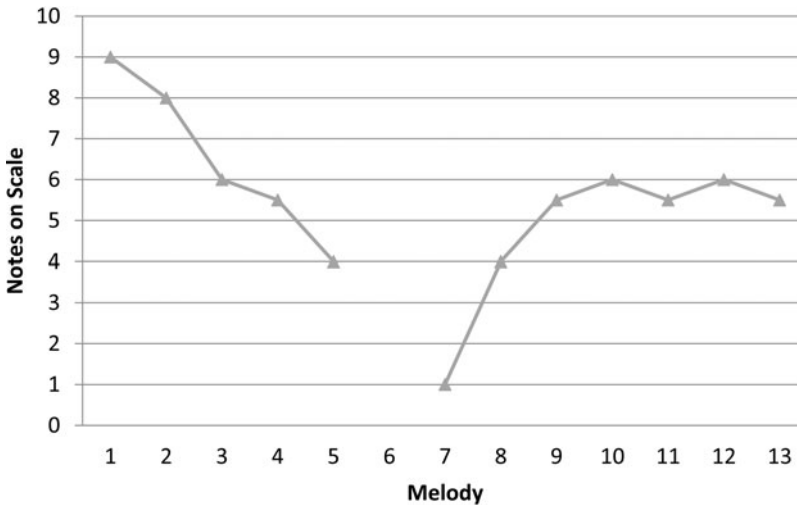*Figure 1. First two melodic phrases of keyboard solo ('Yarınımız Yok', 2020).*

Figure 2. Second two melodic phrases of keyboard solo ('Yarınımız Yok', 2020).

as unattractive. Ezhel raps selling 'poison' results in 'teens [. . .] in jails' and in the following lines, 'cadavers from hospitals' and daily 'noon death prayers'. Alternatively, poverty results in hunger, grieving and a lack of education (see above). While he sings the line 'Either money or our lives' a graphic of money and a siren are flashed on screen emphasising the limited options available to the people. In the context of a rap that blames the elite, this representation collapses complex social and economic issues into a few lines that put the blame on an uncaring 'elite'.

In the musical build-up to the choruses, a violin sample is added to the mix creating tension as Ezhel raps about the lure of selling drugs owing to poverty and legal injustices. These additions are dropped as Ezhel and an 'echo' voice rap 'Yarınımız Yok', repeated 16 times throughout the song. Whilst singing this line, Ezhel's

authentic emotions are connoted, legitimising him as a voice of 'the people'. Here, lyrics are sung significantly higher than the rest of the rap, a higher pitch range used to assert and dominate, connoting 'effort and urgency' (Tagg 2012, p. 112). Furthermore, words are elongated, especially 'yok [there is no]' alongside a descending pitch on the word. Such strategies connote gravity about 'our' victimisation and Ezhel's intense despair (van Leeuwen 1999). These musical choices emphasise victimisation of 'the people' at the hands of a despotic 'elite', key components of populism.

Graphics during this line and throughout metaphorically suggest a difference between 'the elite' and 'the people'. Ezhel's lyrics appear synchronously in white lettering on a black or dark background. White has a common meaning potential of truth, goodness and/ or clarity with dark colours suggesting the opposite. Here colours suggest that Ezhel's words are the truth in a time of evil. The truth of Ezhel's words are further connoted in the font choices of (mostly) Arial and Times New Roman, regularly used in factual texts such as news reports and academic articles (Machin 2007, p. 99). Other writing is characterised by sharp angles and bold lines with a lack of flourishes, connoting assertiveness, aggression and chaos (Machin 2007). These choices alongside a small number of words and phrases written in red, further suggest Ezhel's anger at 'the elite', articulated in lyrics and sounds.

Twice, Ezhel appears in a close-up shoulder shot in an animated form (time: 0:08–0:30 and 3:00–3:20). This image legitimises Ezhel as an authentic rapper and legitimate voice of 'the people'. The visual modality of animation suggests that this is more about the symbolic than documentary (Machin 2007, p. 46; Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). He floats above a bleak landscape of bare trees and snow shot through a blue filter and a strobe effect: a cold, bleak disturbing place. Ezhel's head is split with a feather floating in a cage that connects the two parts. Here is a metaphor for Ezhel's time spent in jail. His disempowerment is emphasised by his gaze that looks towards the sky in what Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) call an 'offer' image. Similar to subjects in war monuments, he does not symbolically demand anything of his viewers, but 'metaphorically [looks] to the future and high ideals' (Abousnnouga and Machin 2010, p. 144). He is offered to us as someone who is isolated, entrapped, yet thoughtful and clever. At the same time, he is legitimised as a rapper, adorned with hip hop cultural symbols of a baseball cap, dreads, trendy beard, tattoos and a black t-shirt. He is a thoughtful rapper who is a victim of the justice system, but he is also angry, suggested by the flashing red strobe that replaces the blue one (time: 0:26–0:30) just as the musical introduction finishes and he begins his rap.

Ezhel is not only legitimate, he is also empowered in lyrics and visuals. He appears in a series of images on the front cover of *Time* magazine (time: 1:45–1:50), an honour most artists will never see, legitimised as an important international figure. He appears in a close-up, granting viewers a point of identification, allowing us to engage with him and his views (Machin 2007). He symbolically addresses us in a demand image, an empowering pose as he sports dreadlocks and apparel reminiscent of Bob Marley's 'Soul Shakedown Party'. Yet unlike Marley's imagery, Ezhel is angry. His chin is tucked in and his mouth is tense as he stares at us through swinging hair as if shaking his head. Accompanying lyrics of 'We have no writers because newspapers lie, Writers are in jail, I don't know how many nights they spend in prison' represent injustices in Turkish society. A few lines later, he reappears accompanied by the lyrics 'the only thing I want is justice, but it's far from

us' (time: 1:55–1:58). Lyrics direct fans to why Ezhel looks angry and empowered, linking his personal brushes with the law with 'we the people' who include jailed writers and those of 'us' who want justice, while newspapers 'lie'. By including himself in a 'we' group of dissident voices, Ezhel further legitimises himself as not only part of 'the people' who are victimised, but also a rapper who is critical of authority. Following a list of negative actions by 'the elite', Ezhel's authenticity is further constructed when he threatens the authorities with 'So in a matter of time I will have a tense word with a slingshot'. Here, Ezhel represents himself as active metaphorically harming 'the elite'. This attack on 'the elite' is metaphorical, high in modality ('will') and vague at best. All the same, lines such as this further authenticate Ezhel as an anti-authority rapper.

Conclusion

Authoritarian populist discourses are an unfortunate part of numerous political landscapes, Trump and Erdoğan being just two of many politicians who use these. Both politicians have been criticised for using authoritarian populism to solidify their own personal power as elites. Yet populism is adaptable and can be coupled with a variety of ideological values and principles. Indeed, some of the most powerful criticisms of Trump and Erdoğan have been expressed by musicians who wield this double-edged discursive strategy against them. We have examined how Eminem and Ezhel do just this by leaning on forms of populism. In both videos, 'the elite' are despotic, uncaring and self-interested and victimise a strong, brave 'people'. The music videos cast each musician as an authentic rapper and legitimate spokesperson for 'the people'. These discourses are articulated in individual modes and multimodally, each mode contributing in a variety of ways.

We also find differences between these videos in their representation of 'the elite', 'the people' and the musicians. In the case of Eminem, 'the elite' are personified as Trump who is attacked not so much for his policies but through unsubstantiated claims of racism, motivations and personal attacks on his looks, age, capabilities and masculinity. 'The people' are not all Americans, but Eminem fans, some Black Americans and POWs. Although they are victimised indirectly, for the most part, 'the people' are strong and unafraid. Eminem is not only a spokesperson, but a leader who is clever, authentic, sincere, powerful and correct. Ezhel's video constructs a set of characters with different attributes. He does not specifically name 'the elite', probably for political reasons. Instead, vague namings suggest 'the elite' are not only Erdoğan, but the police, judiciary and media. They are despotic and cowardly, responsible for many of society's ills such as poverty, a lack of opportunities and injustices. 'The people' are the poor, writers and victims of justice. They are mostly constructed as victims, though occasionally as brave and strong. Ezhel is legitimate, his authenticity emphasised in his victimhood.

This comparison reveals that populism in popular music, like populism in politics, comes in many guises and accents. As previous studies have illustrated (Way 2015, 2017, 2018), populism in oppositional popular music is a common discursive strategy, although this comparison reveals that 'one size' does not 'fit all'. It is tailored by producers to specific political and historical contexts and how musicians interact with them. It is inconceivable to imagine Ezhel rapping about Erdoğan like Eminem is able to do about Trump. Both musicians use forms of populism that suits their contexts.

This study also illustrates how populism in music videos communicates complex issues in an easily understandable and entertaining manner. It exposes political problems to an audience who otherwise may be disengaged. Nevertheless, populism discursively simplifies events and issues into 'us' and 'them' binaries that emphasise division and conflict. As such, populism, whether used by a politician or a musician, works in ways that represent issues and events in their own interests. In all forms of communication, populism is a struggle over the meaning and sentiment of 'the elite' and 'the people', and thus over the popular will that all politics depends upon.

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