Humboldt Universität zu Berlin
Centre for British Studies
Mohrenstraße 60, 10117
Berlin

Social Movements in the Imagery of Modern UK Punk: The Case of IDLES

MA Thesis Submission (Class 2022 – 2024)

Student: Nedim Osmanagic

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Gesa Stedman

October 1st, 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

STATUTORY DECLARATION

I hereby declare the following:

(1) that this work has never been submitted, in whole or in part, for any other degree, examination, or thesis; (2) that it is my own work; (3) that I have acknowledged all the sources which I have used in the context where I have used them; (4) that I have marked and acknowledged whenever I have reproduced a source verbatim, and likewise any unaltered use of tables, graphics, etc.; (5) that I have marked as indirect citations all references to sources which I have copied from other sources without having verified them myself; (6) that I have not used AI or large language chatbot programmes in the research and writing of the dissertation.

With my signature, I acknowledge that any violation of these declarations will lead to an investigation for cheating or attempted cheating.

This thesis contains 28533 words.

Nedim Osmanagic, Berlin. 1.10.2024

SIGNATURE

1. INTRODUCTION

A social movement is defined as a "collective, organized, sustained, and noninstitutional challenge to authorities, powerholders, or cultural beliefs and practices" (Goodwin and Jasper 2015, p. 4). This widely accepted, yet quite broad definition, has been further elaborated by some scholars in an effort to provide a more concrete basis for scientific research. Social scientist Charles Tilly has ascertained several elements that are common to all social movements. These are: "a sustained, coordinated series of episodes involving similar collective claims"; a repertoire of performances, and "collective enactments of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment" (Tilly 2008, p. 121). An overarching unifying factor of social movements is also an adherence to a set of ideas, which are a window into the movement's aspirations and objectives (Johnston 2014, p. 15). This is usually best understood through the lens of political ideology, a "fundamental concept in the analysis of movements" (Johnston 2014, p. 15). Political ideology encompasses a loosely consistent system of ideas and principles regarding current social and power structures (Heywood 2013, p. 28). Even though social movements are guided by ideology, I have decided to focus more on social movements than simply ideology since the broad definitions of the term tend to bring about competing interpretations. Ideological ideas can be fluid and amorphous, while social movements can be seen as a specific and organised way of pursuing goals that derive from ideology (Johnston 2014, p. 15). Additionally, social movements are usually — although becoming less true[1] — regionally constrained which adds a level of homogeneity that a broadly defined concept of ideology lacks.

At the core of a social movement is a certain moral sensibility which has led scholars to draw comparisons with the world of art and explore the connection between the two. In *The Social Movements Reader,* Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper link these two spheres by noting that: "[…] they are efforts to express values and sensibilities that have not yet been well articulated, that journalists haven't yet written about, that lawmakers have not yet addressed" (Goodwin and Jasper 2015, p. 4). There has been extensive research into the link between music and social movements. Scientists have recognised the potency of music and the strength of its relationship

[1] There is a trend of growing internationalisation and reach of social movements (Goodwin and Jasper 2015, p. 6). An example of this is the Black Lives Matter movement which transcended its origins in the United States and spread globally.

with social movements which is why, unlike other cultural artifacts, their connection has been widely studied (Johnston 2014, p. 75). Most of it deals with investigating music's ability to aid in forming and fostering a collective identity that supports mobilisation and empowers groups to reach their political goals. (Danaher, 2010; Taylor and Whittier, 1992; Durkheim, 1965). Consequently, there is great significance given to the idea of the protest song. Some examples include the Nueva Canción movement in Chile, or a more contemporary example of Kendrick Lamar's *Alright* as the unofficial anthem of the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States of America. This work, on the other hand, looks at music (in this case, a musical act) and social movements from a different perspective. It builds on the notion that popular music constructs a politically important representation of issues which lie at the core of social movements (Danaher 2010; Flacks 1999; W. Gamson 1992; Goffman 1981; Lichterman 1999; Street 2003; Mills 1939, 1940). In other words, this work takes on a fresh approach and analyses how ideas of movements are featured in punk songs.

In the case of punk music, a genre with a strong political connotation, this kind of approach may be used to scrutinise its ideological consistency over time and see how punk connects to emerging social and political phenomena. Scholars have noted how, in order to understand it, it is essential "to view it in the context of other, similarly subversive social and cultural movements" (Ambrosch 2018, p. 8). This closely ties in with the research objective of this paper which is to analyse IDLES' lyrical and visual imagery since the band's first full-length release and examine how it constructs politically significant narratives and meanings which draw inspiration from the rhetoric, performance, and public discourse surrounding some of the contemporary social movements from the United Kingdom. The research question which will guide this thesis asks: How do the ideas and performances of contemporary UK social movements feature in the songs and videos of the punk band IDLES?

Before delving into the analysis of IDLES' body of work and its relationship to the specificities of UK social movements, it is necessary to look at the state of academic research on social movement analysis generally. Exploring models of social movement analysis allows one to go beyond just seeing music as a tool for empowerment and identity fostering. It is important to consider the different spheres a social movement occupies and the ways in which they are occupied. There is a consensus among social scientists that social movement analysis deals with three distinct spheres: structural, ideational-interpretative, and performative (Johnston 2014, p. 6). The first

encompasses the participants, groups, and networks of a movement and their relationships with one another. The ideational-interpretative sphere explores the ideological dimension of social movements. It seeks to uncover the values, ideas, and beliefs that influence how these actors frame issues and propose changes. Lastly, the performative sphere follows the idea of "social action as theatre" (Johnston 2014, p. 5). By extension, this "theatre" has its own repertoire of actions. Social movements use a diverse set of practices and symbols which carry their core messages to a wider audience. This means that protests, sit-ins, or other attempts at organised social action do not exist in a vacuum. Social movements are sustained and influenced by the symbiotic relationship they, as performers, have with the audience and the audience's interpretations of their messages. Seeing social movements as theatre or drama came as a reaction towards previous models of analysis which emphasised an almost economic outlook of the resource mobilisation theory which was developed in the 1970s (Martin 2023, p. 64). The work of Benford and Hunt pioneered a different position, one where attention is given to interpretative and subjective factors that have been neglected in prior models (Martin 2023, p. 65). They connect dramaturgical concepts to social movement analysis and describe four different techniques that help study the framing of the communication processes: scripting, staging, performing, and interpreting (Benford and Hunt 1992). Scripting is a fluid practice concerning "the development of a set of directions that define the scene, identify actors and outline expected behavior" (Benford and Hunt 1992, p. 38). Central to this practice is the idea of dramatis personae development which identifies antagonists and directs their rhetoric to the identified group (Benford and Hunt 1992, p. 39). Some popular labels include: "capitalist pigs", "male chauvinists", and "fascists" (Benford and Hunt 1992, p. 39). Labels like these are common in punk music (Ambrosch 2018, pp. 58, 107, 133; Skolnik 2017). Another relevant dramaturgical technique is staging. In this context, staging deals with the effective utilisation of symbols (Benford and Hunt 1992, p. 43). Furthermore, the dramaturgical approach also entails elements of performing and interpreting which are concerned with presenting and elucidating symbols, respectively (Benford and Hunt 1992, pp. 45-48). The most noticeable parallel between music and social movements lies exactly in the performative sphere.

Another overlapping aspect between social movements and music is the role of emotions. The entire field has received an "emotional turn" in academic research, as social scientists realised that a purely rationalistic approach overlooks elements that

greatly influence the trajectory of socially and politically active groups (Martin 2024, p. 155). Emotions of rage and anger are widely present both within the punk music genre as well as social movements. In order to further their goals "organizers must arouse anger and outrage and compassion" (Goodwin and Jasper 2015, p. 6). Scholarship researching music in the context of social movements has placed an emphasis on the intense reactions social movement participants can have to music and music performances. Shared intense emotional experiences form a stronger bond within these groups, leading to a more unified and solid sense of collective identity (Danaher 2010, p. 813). All in all, research shows that the representation of ideas of a social movement is based largely on practices and qualities that I argue are analogous to those used by musicians.

From the perspective of representation theory, it can be said that social movements are an amalgam of various representational practices. Every sign, poster, placard and image on a protest represents an idea, a powerful person, an institution in an attempt to fix a meaning to it which promotes the movement's cause. These posters tend to share a similar language and imagery. Representation theory is a useful methodological tool as both subjects of this paper (the band and movements) actively engage in representational practices. Keeping in mind the political dimension of punk and its socio-political legacy, the hypothesis of this paper is that IDLES' music features lyrical and visual imagery which is supportive of the subversive, counter-hegemonic ideas of contemporary feminist, anti-racist, anti-monarchist, and anti-austerity social movements from the United Kingdom.

2. METHODOLOGY

IDLES are a UK punk act whose artistic output is expressed through song lyrics (written by Joe Talbot, the band's principal songwriter), music videos, stage performances, and album artwork (among others). IDLES are therefore a multifaceted cultural product whose artistic identity is contingent on different forms of expression. Hence, the analytical framework of this paper needs to take a multidisciplinary approach as it aims to uncover the interplay and interconnections between the band's lyrical content, visual presentation and musical/aesthetic choices. Owing to the interdisciplinary nature of the work, the methodology of this study combines social movement analysis, popular (including punk) music analysis, and theories from cultural studies relating to representation. At the foundation of the methodology are

Benford and Hunt's (1992) theories connecting social movement performances to performing arts concepts, specifically those used in theatre. Together with the concept of representation (as found in the work of Stuart Hall), these models and approaches make up the methodological base of this paper.

As is elaborated in the work of Stuart Hall, discerning the meaning of a specific source is a contextual practice. Meaning is cumulative, as it relies on the interplay of symbols and signifiers found across different modes of representation (Hall et al. 2013, 222). In analysing the meaning of photographs with captions, Hall stated that: "The 'meaning' of the photograph, then, does not lie exclusively in the image, but in the conjunction of image *and* text. Two discourses – the discourse of the written language and the discourse of photography – are required to produce and 'fix' the meaning" (Hall et al. 2013, p. 218). The same reasoning can be transferred to fit the representational practices of music. In this context, it means that a song's meaning is constructed through the discourse of lyrics, the discourse of music, and optionally, the discourse of the music video.

When it comes to primary source analysis, the paper has identified eight songs from four of the band's five albums. Every song will be analysed for its lyrical content and aesthetic characteristics . Given how not every song has a dedicated music video, the paper is able to offer video analysis only to select works. Out of eight songs in total, this study covers the music videos of the songs Danny Nedelko and Mother.

The methodological framework of this paper is constructed in such a way as to analyse and evaluate three distinct problems: (1) uncovering the messages and symbolism in contemporary UK social movements; (2) uncovering the construction of meaning in relevant lyrics, sonics, and visual presentation of the band IDLES; (3) uncovering the similarities between the ways in which the band and a movement convey and perform messages.

Any analysis of a musical act would be incomplete without taking into consideration musical, visual, and textual devices that serve as a modifier to the written lyrics. Therefore, when examining such works, one must take into consideration factors such as vocal performance, song form, and genre determiners. Much of the analysis of IDLES' lyrics will be based on the various modifiers presented in the book *The Poetry of Punk* which contextualises these components within the tradition of punk

music. These modifiers challenge the "apparent determinacy of the scripted lyrics" (Ambrosch 2018, p. 26) and provide a more rounded overview of the message that is conveyed by a song. Another important component of the overall methodological framework consists of the analysis of the act's visual presentation. This will be guided by the concepts presented in David Machin's *Analysing Popular Music: Image, Sound, Text*. Here, popular music is understood not through the idiom of pop music, but rather as a broad categorisation of what is considered modern music. The book deconstructs an approach to the analysis of musical iconography and examines the use of typeface features and colour qualities. The approach distinguishes between "patterns in choices of iconographical elements", "patterns in terms of modality", "colour dimensions", and "typographic features" (Machin 2010b). Analysing the music and videos concurrently is of paramount importance, since a music video, gives an array of visual and sonic signifiers that coupled with the recorded version of the song, provides further context, and creates a more complete overview of the work.

3. THE CONTEXT OF PUNK: SOUND AND POLITICS

3.1. PUNK POLITICS

Despite the fact that punk is an ideologically charged word with connections to dogmas that challenge established systems, it would be inaccurate to view punk as a "singular, cogent perspective" since it "contained a wide political spectrum" (Ensminger 2016, p. 1). As a movement with a pronounced antagonistic dimension, the discourse of the subculture contains "ongoing references to war and violence, unemployment and poverty, pain and dissatisfaction, anarchistic allusions and associations, and alienation and taunts" (Ensminger 2016, p. 43). This is why some of the genre's progressive ideas may be better understood as a rejection of the norms, values, and organisations that serve as a foundation of contemporary society (Ensminger 2016). Its adherents are therefore opponents as much as they are proponents of certain ideas. While acknowledging the fragmentation that came from different interpretations of the same anti-establishment ideas, scholars have noted areas that have remained consistent across the various subsects of the genre. These include "a stated opposition to the status quo […] ; a disregard for symbols of authority and established hierarchy; claims to provide a voice for the marginalised and disaffected; an emphasis on self-sufficiency and overcoming obstacles that prevent access, expression or autonomy" (Worley 2017, pp. 10-11). It is worth noting that just like with countercultural movements of the late

1950s and 1960s, punk used music as a means of communication and representation of their belief system (Lamy and Levin 1985, p. 158; Yinger 1977). Nevertheless, one gets a better understanding of punk by looking beyond music and seeing it as a "cultural process of critical engagement" (Worley 2017, p. 11).

The nascent of punk in the United Kingdom was followed by a public concern that "angry mobs of 'disaffected' youth, from inner-city, working-class backgrounds, had declared war on contemporary society, its institutions, and its dominant cultural values" (Lamy and Levin 1985, p. 157). In this early period, its adherents were mostly teenagers coming from working-class backgrounds who were "largely ignorant of politics, philosophy, and literature" (Lamy and Levin 1985, p. 158). Even though its followers were not cognisant of politics, this does not diminish the political nature of the subculture. As punk grew, its audience and adherents were coming from other social strata, and not just within the boundaries of the working class. In the case of IDLES, this has come with criticism of their supposed appropriation of working-class culture (Jones 2024). While the breadth of the political spectrum of punk makes it challenging to surgically compartmentalise the genre socially and politically, one can generally associate punk with counter-hegemony (Worley 2017). Given the prevalent capitalist and patriarchal socio-political structures of the United Kingdom , it is reasonable to assume that IDLES' songs will be marked by a strong association with anti-capitalism, anti-monarchism, anti-patriarchism and pro-immigration.

3.2. SONIC SEMIOTICS

Since the 19th century, music theorists have researched and postulated the ways in which musical choices convey a feeling, a mood , or even construct meaning (Cooke 1959; Machin 2010a, p. 2). Theorists have drawn conclusions from a long history of intermedial practices which through extended repetition began to engender concrete associations between certain sounds and feelings, meanings, and imagery (Tagg 1982, p. 4). British musicologist Philip Tagg explained his rationale behind the establishment of these connections: "Time and time again the average listener/viewer has heard a particular sort of music in conjunction with a particular sort of visual message" (Tagg 1982, p. 4). It must be mentioned however that even with established systems of musical analysis, music must not be treated as a monolith. Musical conventions and with it the associated meanings vary across the world, which is why Tagg theorised a "codal system of music which is understood by people in Western societies" (Machin

2010a, p. 2). Given how IDLES may be categorised as a band abiding by modern Western music conventions, the work of musicologists Cooke, Tagg, and Machin emerges as a relevant tool for insightful analysis.

The importance of utilising these concepts is paramount for the purposes of analysis in the context of representation theory. An IDLES song, or music video are representational practices that try to construct and assign particular characteristics to individuals, groups, and ideas in order to give them a meaning (Hall 1997, p. 24). IDLES are producers of culture who, in the words of Stuart Hall, "fix" (Hall et al. 2013, p. 218) a meaning that, outside of their context, does not really exist and cannot be pinpointed. In Hall's words, meaning: " does not inhere in things, in the world. It is constructed, produced. It is the result of a signifying practice - a practice that produces meaning, that makes things mean" (Hall 1997, p. 24). When answering how a certain medium features and represents ideas or people, one must account not only for what is (not) there, but also how is it there. In other words, one must analyse what can roughly be branded as the "content" of the representational practice, together with the aesthetic style and choices that facilitate and materialise the "content". The aesthetics of a punk song lie in the instrumentation, vocal style, production, but also in the kind of language that its lyrics use. Being aware of the symbolism and connotations of the aesthetics of (punk) music positions one to better understand the language with which IDLES communicate. Otherwise, any meaningful interpretation would be impossible.

An important concept in analysing the semiotics of IDLES' music is the so-called "Body and Mind Split" (Machin 2010b). It is a concept that (roughly, and as a false dichotomy) distinguishes between the ways in which discourses about music subject certain genres or performances to varying degrees of intellectualisation. Hence, some more technically complex pieces tend to be associated with the mind, while others (such as less harmonically dense works with a prominent rhythmic component) tend to be associated with the body (Machin 2010b). As is often the problem with such broad categorisations, they tend to miss out on the subtleties and differences within genres. It is also difficult to discuss music in these terms without bringing about a feeling of covert racism. Classical music is often used as the prime example of an "intellectual" kind of music due to the relatively high standard of technical prowess and music theory knowledge it requires, while music of the black tradition tends to be seen as less refined, and therefore music of the body (Machin 2010b, p. 8).

Even though this discursive framework is not without its problems, it still has a real impact on how music is perceived. The "Body and Mind Split" means that certain styles of music are associated with high culture while others are "free from the restriction of the intellect and of high culture" (Machin 2010b, p. 8). This had implications for the formation of the sound of punk music. In seeing sound as an important semiotic resource, punk bands consciously and deliberately broke off with certain musical conventions to signify who they are and what they stand for. Accordingly, punk has been characterised by a disdain for polished production as it is a sonic aesthetic that goes against its DIY principle because of its connection to the sound of major label pop and rock artists (Worley 2017, p. 50). Punk has also shown a hostile attitude to guitar solos. Punk musicians wanted to distance themselves from the perils of corporate, blues-influenced rock (Ambrosch 2018, p. 11). At the same time, punk acts did not want to be anything like the progressive rock bands whose technical ability, intricate musical passages, and lengthy solo sections (unlike the economy of punk) made them the rock version of classical music (Worley 2017, p. 50). In the origin years of punk, this was manifested in a somewhat extreme manner since a lot of the bands "proudly flaunted their dilettantism and below-average musicianship" (Ambrosch 2018, p. 9) The reason why there was such a fervent rejection towards these musical conventions lies in the fact that progressive rock acts usually came from more affluent, middle-class backgrounds which were not representative of the working-class origin and perspectives of UK punk (Worley 2017). If progressive rock was the epitome of high-culture rock, punk was its antithesis. This politically influenced emergence of the punk aesthetic supports the theories that associate sonics with imagery, social constructs, and politics. It is the reason why a band's sound cannot be separated from its lyrical imagery since it provides additional context and thus supplements the written words.

IDLES' sonic palette reflects many of the aesthetic choices that are characteristic of the genre's lineage. This was confirmed by the band's singer and principal songwriter Joe Talbot. In an interview with CrackMag, he rejected the criticism that their genre is stifled creatively with many new bands drawing on its established and well-known sound:

> "Everything's derivative. You absorb what you love and you celebrate it. Derivative is not a dirty word, it just is to certain people. Post-punk, if you want to see it as a structured language within music, and you talk that language, that dialect, and create something interesting out of it. There's a million different languages out there and music is infinite. Every now and again

> someone coins something new, but in between it is loads of different frequencies of similar things that sound beautiful." (Blagburn 2019)

Apart from acknowledging their practices of borrowing musical elements from the recognised idiom of punk and post-punk, this quote is significant as it supports the idea that band's aesthetic choices operate in a similar fashion as written or verbal language. Their sounds and production borrow from an established system of musical communication which is ripe with various symbolic, political, and ideological connotations.

The most important features of IDLES' sound are its reliance on distortion and loud volumes. These two aspects combine to elevate the sense of urgency and power with which the singer delivers the message. Moreover, they add to the perceived rawness of the words and performance. It is critical, however, to discern what kind of distortion the band is utilising as not every type sounds the same. Unlike its smooth-sounding counterpart frequently used in blues, rock, and progressive genres, IDLES opt for an abrasive distortion which is more grating and serves an almost agitating role. The instrumental bedrock of singles like Grounds or Danny Nedelko (among many others) are loud, heavily distorted low notes played by the bass and/or electric guitars. As scientists have discovered, pitch is an essential component of music analysis given how it is "rich in metaphorical associations" (Machin 2010a, p. 8). Low pitch is associated with gloomy and dark connotations and atmospheres which is why the dominance of low-pitched notes and harmony in IDLES' instrumentals gives a dark feeling to the lyrics. Another important characteristic of the band's music is its favourable attitude towards atonality. An atonal musical work is one which does not follow the conventional writing approach of conforming to one or more scales (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2024a). Atonal music does not have a key centre and is marked by prominent dissonances (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2024a). IDLES often utilise dissonance by bending guitar strings out of tune and creating a jarring sound which rubs against the rest of the instrumentation.

4. THE SUBVERSION OF XENOPHOBIA IN DANNY NEDELKO AND GROUNDS

The punk movement, given its strong connection to anarchism, has consistently produced art that challenges or outright rejects hegemonic structures and ideologies. Punks have often proudly made claims of tolerance and acceptance of marginalised

communities (Ambrosch 2018, p.70). However, it must be mentioned that punks have not exclusively been progressive as evidenced by historical periods where those associated with the subculture were closely tied with Nazi and white supremacist ideologies (Ambrosch 2018, p. 83). While not many punk musical acts linked themselves with far-right organisations, a contingent of their audiences included followers of the British Movement and the National Front[2] (Worley 2017, p. 10). Notwithstanding these fractions, it can be said that IDLES have followed the footsteps of an anti-racist ethos in their songwriting. This is perhaps best evidenced by one of the band's most popular songs, Danny Nedelko. The song was named after the Heavy Lungs frontman who immigrated to the United Kingdom (Perry 2018), and was released in 2018 firstly as a single, and later, on the album *Joy as an Act of Resistance*.

Even though the theme of the song echoes the inclusive ethos of punk, the wider political and cultural context of the time it was written and released, distinguishes it from other time periods. This is largely due to two political phenomena which had a significant impact on the public discourse surrounding race and immigration in the UK in the 2010s. The first one being the EU Refugee Crisis and the second being Brexit. The importance of Brexit and the Refugee Crisis must not be understated. These two seismic political events made up a period of rapid political change which gave way to the establishment of new organisations (Remain movement, Refugees Welcome UK, etc.) that would seek to respond to newly emerged threats. These kinds of processes are usually accompanied by a new variant of public discourse which includes new political messaging and symbolism (Johnston 2014, p. 61). Therefore, as broadly anti-xenophobic Danny Nedelko appears to be, it is deeply connected to these changing socio-political circumstances.

4.1. THE CAMARADERIE OF DANNY NEDELKO

Understanding the message behind a song is not contingent solely on its lyrics. Instead, it is crucial to analyse its various modes of expression. These include — but are not limited to — lyrics, instrumentalisation, vocalisation, and performance. Taken individually, these elements may undermine one another. However, when analysed

[2] British Movement is associated with neo-Nazism, while the National Front is a far-right political party (Atkins 2020; Ambrosch 2018, p.83).

holistically, these modes constitute a wider image that conveys the message of a song more accurately.

One of the key signifiers of a punk song is the vocal (Ambrosch 2018, p. 29). Danny Nedelko, just like the rest of the IDLES' canon, features a vocal style that follows in the footsteps of the abrasive and shouty type of singing that has been a distinguishing feature of punk as a music genre[3]. The vocals transmit a sense of anger and urgency, thus highlighting the perceived importance of the theme of the song. The frontman, Joe Talbot, combines two ways of vocal delivery in *Danny Nedelko*. One is the aforementioned aggressive and rough delivery, while the second half of the song features a spoken word segment, where the words are spelled out letter by letter. The juxtaposition between the vocal styles gives further emphasis to the spoken lyrics. This is enabled by the transition from the sung to the spoken style. The music from the second to last chorus reaches a point of a dynamic shift and this stark contrast between the loud vocal in the chorus and the restrained bridge section grabs the listener's attention and accentuates the following words:

> The D, the A, the N, the N, the Y
> The N, the E, the D, the E, the L
> The K, the O, the C, the O, the M
> The M, the U, the N, the I, the T
> The Y, the S, the O, the F, the U
> The C, the K, the Y, the O and the U
> And you, and you, and you, and you[4] (IDLES 2018a, 2:30)

Talbot employs a similar technique in the pre-chorus sections. These sections follow the first and second verse. They are characterised by a shift from a sung to a fast-paced spoken vocal style: "He's made of bones, he's made of blood / He's made of flesh, he's made of love / He's made of you, he's made of me / Unity" (IDLES 2018a, 0:47). The final word "unity" is accentuated by a dynamic crescendo – each line is articulated with more power and urgency. The word also receives further emphasis by the sense of resolution it gives as it follows a series of fast-paced lines.

What adds even more weight to this passage is the context of the accompanying music video, the premise of which is straightforward. Danny Nedelko, the person who the song is named after, is seen interacting with strangers from (mostly) minority

[3] It should be noted that it would be incorrect to present the vocal aesthetics of punk as completely homogenous, given the diversity of singing styles, ranging from metal influenced scream singing to more traditional and clean melodic approaches (Ambrosch 2018, p. 27). Nevertheless, raw and unpolished vocal delivery is commonly associated with punk due to its prevalence in the genre.
[4] The passage spells out: Danny Nedelko, Community, So Fuck You

communities. Throughout the video, the protagonist is using his hand to make the OK symbol. The video is an attempt to reclaim this symbol which has recently been co-opted by the far right (Allyn 2019). This is a continuation of the punk tradition of using divisive and highly politically charged imagery that is "often utilised to provoke a reaction and juxtaposed deliberately" (Worley 2017, p. 10).

Figure 1 – Danny Nedelko displaying the OK symbol (IDLES 2018a, 0:39)

As the song progresses, Danny Nedelko engages more affectionately with his on-screen partners. While the first half of the music video does display a rapport between Danny and others, the sense of camaraderie is slightly more pronounced as the video approaches its conclusion. Unlike in the beginning where the viewer is met with quick cuts of embraces, the second half contains slightly longer shots that showcase how the characters go from being side-by-side (with no physical touch) to being in an embrace with each other. This is a slight distinction, but these extra frames raise the overall emotive level of the song. There is also a less significant presence of larger groups since the latter part of the video is characterised by warmer and more intimate one-to-one or one-to-two scenes[5].

[5] Except 3:22

Figure 2 – In the second half of the video, the protagonist engages more closely with his scene partners (IDLES 2018a, 2:29)

Figure 3 – Danny Nedelko in a friendly embrace. One of the final shots of the video (IDLES 2018a, 2:41)

Apart from the OK symbol, there is another common thread of great significance. The protagonist is always pictured wearing a white T-shirt with "No one is an island" written on it. The famous line — "No man is an island" — from a John Donne (1642) poem, has been altered and recontextualised to support the dominant theme of the music video - inclusive community building. The inscription is especially relevant in the UK punk context. "No one is an island" — together with the lyrics quoted below — echoes the dangers of societal alienation and the consequences it can have on one's worldview. It is difficult to read into this without the reverberations of the late 1970s

when disillusioned youths belonging to punk and other subcultures were targeted by the British National Front (Ambrosch 2018, p. 83).

> Fear leads to panic, panic leads to pain
> Pain leads to anger, anger leads to hate (IDLES 2018a, 0:57)

These visual cues call back to the iconography of social movements and utilise their performative elements. The Danny Nedelko music video displays the performance features of a social movement in the same way a protest does. It is rich in symbolism, it employs an array of actors with common interests, and it is abundant in short, effective, and provocative messages. The symbolism of the music video may be evaluated against a list devised by scholar Charles Tilly which aims to illustrate different modes of "basic symbolism in movement performances" (Johnston 2014, p. 97). Tilly distinguishes between four different dimensions: worthiness, unity of participants and of purpose, numbers, and commitment (Tilly 2008, p. 121).

One can notice many parallels between the overarching concept of the video and the fundamental concepts of what theorists call New Social Movements. New Social Movements is a school of thought that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s to set a scientific framework and explain the changing nature of social movements globally. The paradigm describes an epochal shift of the movements of the industrial age to those of contemporary society. The new framework was established to rationalise some of the core qualities of social movements that could not be justified by social theories rooted in Marxism (Pichardo 1997). The composition of these movements is not as homogenous when it comes to social class which had been central to the structure of past movements. Consequently, NSMs turn their attention away from economic objectives to issues dealing with identity and seeking rights for marginalised groups (Koca 2016, p. 100; Johnston et al. 1994, p. 7).

> My best friend is an alien (I know him, and he is)
> My best friend is a citizen
> He's strong, he's earnest, he's innocent (IDLES 2018a, 1:20)

These lines succinctly but potently open the subject of immigrants and the lawfulness of their stay. Questioning the status of an immigrant's residence is a tactic that has been heavily used in the antiimmigrant discourse (Mohamed 2024). By centring the discussion around legality, one may evade being accused of racial and xenophobic biases, and instead make it as though the primary concern in these matters is purely legislative in nature. By using the word "citizen" IDLES are metaphorically

pre-empting these accusations. It is reasonable to assume that in this context the word does not carry literal meaning. Being a citizen is not tied to one's paperwork status. It is extended to every immigrant. Similar messages are prevalent in movements and grassroots organisations championing migrant and refugee rights in the UK. This is apparent in the name of the campaigns "No borders" and "No one is illegal", which came before a more robust and tightly organised "Refugees Welcome UK" movement that started in 2015. The line "My best friend is a citizen" may also be understood as an answer to the "Go back to where you came from" rallying cry of white supremacists and xenophobes.

The lyrics transcribed above use a powerful tool often used in practices of representation – binary opposition. By using the words "alien" and "citizen" in succession, the lyrics construct a meaning whose potency is intensified by the connoted relationship of the polar opposite terms. Utilising this difference and (overtly or covertly) highlighting the chasm between binary terms has often been used to emphasise Otherness in the context of race. This is made possible by the inherent power relationship between terms of opposition (Hall et al. 2013, p. 225; Derrida 1972). Therefore, "citizen" has a positive connotation, whereas "alien" has a negative one. However, in classic punk fashion of recontextualising dominant narratives, IDLES changes the context of polarisation by preceding "alien" and "citizen" with the words "My best friend". The narrative becomes literally and metaphorically friendlier as the function of this line is to explore the space between. "Alien" and "citizen" are not isolated from one another but connected. It is a process which Hall describes as "capturing the diversity of the world within their either/or extremes" (Hall et al. 2013, p. 225).

Together with the theme of citizenship and lawful residence, IDLES open the theme of innocence. Similar as before, the word can be analysed through its meaning in the context of law and law enforcement. It invokes the problem of biased policing and systemic racial profiling, and echoes practices like *Stop and search* which have been "a key focus of anti-racist resistance in the United Kingdom" (Joseph-Salisbury et al. 2020, p. 23). In this way it foreshadows one of the main messages of Black Lives Matter, a movement that gained momentum in 2020[6], two years after the release of Danny Nedelko. These words continue to stay relevant as they describe the very biases

[6] Although the movement received widespread attention following the murder of George Floyd, it has operated since 2013, firstly in the United Stated, then spreading across the world.

that drive some of the prejudice and crime perpetrated against minorities. Talbot's lyrics are an attempt to address problems like the racially motivated riots that emerged in the UK after the horrific stabbings in Southport. The rioters were driven by misinformation and stereotyping which led to false assumptions on the perpetrator's legal status and religion (Mohamed 2024).

Central to the discourse of Black Lives Matter in the United Kingdom has been the idea of innocence. Much has been said about individual and collective accountability and responsibility, especially in the light of heightened attention the movement brought to organisations and individuals that have profited and continue to profit from racist policies. As a consequence, this Black Lives Matter movement transcended being an extension of its US counterpart and became a sharp critic of the way racism permeates the United Kingdom. It served as an exposé of the ingrained prejudices and policies and shifted away the attention from the United States back to home. This was a response to the general attitude in the public discourse that racism in the UK is not comparable to the States (Saini 2023). This is why, together with the context of the murder of George Floyd, BLM in the UK needs to be understood through the prism of other injustices like the Grenfell tragedy or Windrush (Joseph-Salisbury et al. 2020, p. 22). This drastic shift in perspective brought a message that would become one of the cornerstones of the movement: "The UK is not innocent" (Joseph-Salisbury et al. 2020, p. 22). In *Danny Nedelko*, IDLES represent the message of innocence by inversing the relationship established by protesters. The protesters fixated on the message around the relationship and effect of the state towards the individual. The UK (state) is not innocent (in its treatment of people of colour). The band, on the other hand, represents the individual and their relationship to the state apparatus. The UK is not innocent, but the metaphorical *he* is.

Danny Nedelko follows in the footsteps of the economical and concise songwriting approach that is prevalent in punk. The potency of the message that IDLES deliver is not in the intricacies of the words or microscopically detailed and ornate lyrics. Much to the contrary, its keyword-heavy narrative does not narrow down specifics, but instead points to the vastness of the issue of racism and anti-immigrant xenophobia. This conciseness of the lyrics is analogous to the way social movements frame problems and integrate these messages into their performances and overall repertoire. In the performative sphere (protests, sit-ins, etc.), movements rely on often simplified narratives and representation of issues to attract the attention of the public more easily.

IDLES' use of contrast in the song is not exclusive to changes in vocal styles and dynamic instrumental lifts. The band uses clever lyrical juxtaposition across its verses. In an effort to humanise immigrants, Talbot names successful British immigrants alongside stereotypes that have often been used as bogeymen in the antiimmigration discourse of right-wing UK media. It has been stated that these bogeymen serve as phantom actors and "substitutes for the real people excluded from the political arena" (Noyes 2018, p. 426). The Polish Butcher or the Nigerian Mother of Three mentioned in Danny Nedelko are representations of these roles. They can also be classified as negative phantom actors, given that they come into being through outside condemnation (Noyes 2018, p. 428). Prominent examples include the Islamic terrorist bogeyman, or the welfare queen (Noyes 2018, p. 428), the latter of which is a role assumed by the Nigerian Mother of Three. Like many of the song's "characters", this one is also recontextualised from the usual discourse of stigmatisation. The stigmatising narratives come in many forms, but what is especially pertinent to the Polish Butcher and Nigerian Mother is the parasitic imagery that, in the media space, is "used as part of a narrative-argumentative scenario of social groups scrounging from the nation, who supposedly deserve ethical condemnation and necessitate social and political counter-measures" (Musolff 2017, p. 50). This is exactly the type of framing that contemporary UK social movements with a pro-immigration or anti-racist refer to in their protests. Examples include the "Immigrants make England better" (Melia, 2021) or the "Migrants make our NHS" (Mead, 2023). These are slogans from the *Kill the Bill* and *Rwanda Bill* protests, respectively. They both reference the stigmatising narrative present in the media space and recontextualise the message in order to shed the imposed parasitic imagery attached to them.

The Polish butcher, on the other hand, references a construct used in the right-wing discourse of low-skilled immigrants coming to the UK to steal "ordinary people's" jobs. The Polish plumber (or butcher in this case) is a personification of the idea of foreigners usurping working-class jobs. Even though this idea is not exclusive to the UK (the Polish plumber has already been politically invoked prior to a European Constitution referendum in France in 2005) (Noyes 2005), it has received a lot of media space in the build-up to Brexit. It was one of the focal points of the debates (Roth 2016) that largely revolved around the topic of immigration. In terms of social movement analysis, this kind of discourse is part of framing processes that influence public opinion (Johnston 2014, p. 61). Organisers, participants and relevant

stakeholders highlight perceived opportunities and threats to advance a movement's cause (Johnston 2014, p. 61).

By saying: "My blood brother is Malala / A Polish butcher, he's Mo Farah" (IDLES 2018a, 1:43), Talbot, avoids reducing immigrants to harmful, politically manipulated stereotypes. Phantom actors and bogeymen take on a name and a story. There is also a reciprocal relationship here. The successes of Mo Farah, Malala, and Freddie Mercury are not presented as outliers. The lyrics equate these extraordinary stories with "ordinary" voiceless immigrants. It is telling that lyrics *choose* to talk about its social actors on an individual, not a collective level, thus moving away from the harmful, pigeonholing discourse often associated with marginalised communities. This closely connects to #SayHerName, a slogan prominently used by Black Lives Matter in an effort to: "make visible and audible the names of Black women who, at the intersection of racism and sexism, are too often ignored" (Joseph-Salisbury et al. 2020, p. 23). In addition, by frequently using the words "my" and "me", Talbot seems to throw away the concept of artistic detachment in an attempt to strongly embody the message. The urgency of these words is heightened by the level of communication of the song. In Danny Nedelko, the listener is the lyrical addressee, as evidenced by the second-person communication in the line: "He's made of you, he's made of me".

As mentioned before, the representation of immigrants (or people from immigrant backgrounds) in Danny Nedelko is reliant on the tropes used in the anti-immigration discourse of the United Kingdom's media and political spaces. In its representation of the Other, anti-immigrant discourse relies on a set of recurring themes or "topoi". Each of these topoi as listed by Wodak (Wodak and Meyer 2001, p. 74) carries an association between the subject (in this case immigrants[7] but it can be any other marginalised group) and different "threat connoting cues" (Hart 2010, p. 67; Wodak and Meyer 2001). The function of this is ascribing negative qualities to an entire group and establishing an emotive discursive framework that promotes attempts of "justifying exclusionary social and political practices" (Hart 2010, p. 66; Reisigl and Wodak 2001, p. 55). For example, the topos of Crime is tied to the premise that the "out-group are criminals", while the topos of Displacement relates to the premise that "the out-group will eventually outnumber and/or dominate the in-group and they get privileged access to limited socio-economic resources over and above the in-group"

[7] Wodak uses a broader term „out-groups", but the principle remains.

(Hart 2010, p. 68; Reisigl and Wodak 2001, p. 74). One actor may be represented through different topoi at the same time. IDLES, for example, use the empowered figure of the Nigerian Mother of three to recontextualise this character from its usual themes. This character, as a reference to the Welfare Queen, is represented in xenophobic narratives through the topos of Exploitation. That is, this person and the group it belongs to abuses the welfare system to their own advantage (Wodak and Meyer 2001, p. 74). Furthermore, as a mother of three, they tend to be represented in the context of the Displacement topos which fuels prejudiced and politically charged fears that Britain is going to be taken over by immigrants.

4.2. GROUNDS – SOCIAL MOVEMENT AS A SONG

Grounds is a single from IDLES' third album Ultra Mono*,* the successor record of Joy as an Act of Resistance. It was released on the 16th of June 2020 amidst a period of social unrest, political change, and changing global circumstances. The release was just 16 days after the first Black Lives Matter protests in the UK (Mohdin et al 2020). Grounds seemed to perfectly capture the dissatisfaction and revolt permeating British society with its scathing critiques and almost mobilising lyrics. It must be mentioned, however, that the album was written in September 2019, a year before its full release (Reilly 2020).

In an interview conducted during the album's promotional campaign, Talbot remarked how remarkable the foresight of the album is, but downplayed it being just pure chance: "Grayson Perry said in one of his Radio 4 lectures that an artist's job is to notice things. An artist should be more sensitive to what is happening around them and then convey it in a way people can see and understand it." (Reilly, 2020). This calls back to Goodwin and Jasper's comparison of social movements and art, and the remark that both "are efforts to express values and sensibilities that have not yet been well articulated" (Goodwin and Jasper 2015, p. 4).

> You will not catch me starin' at the sun
> Not suckin' on a Dum Dum, not turnin' 'round to run
> No hallelujahs, and no kingdom comes
> So you will not catch me starin' at the sun (IDLES 2020b, 0:00)

Grounds starts off with a sparse but heavy instrumentation. The song is introduced by an angular, off-putting synth figure which repeats across different sections. The drum beat is straightforward, while the bass guitar plays only one note with slight

rhythmic variations. Both the notes of the bass and hits of the drums are given significant time to sustain and decay. The long sustain of the bass and drums give off a feeling of dwelling in the dark atmosphere made up by the song's generally low pitch. The ominous sound makes up the backing of Talbot's voice whose forceful delivery lies somewhere between shouting and singing. He sets the scene of a yet unknown societal predicament and fights against being succumbed to obliviousness. By saying "You will not catch me starin' at the sun" he paints a mental image of a character attuned to the issues around him. Staring at the sun metaphorically suggests that he is not blinded and desensitised. The second line further strengthens this sentiment. Talbot uses a Dum Dum, a lollipop brand, to portray an image that is rich in metaphorical association. "Suckin'" on a lollipop is connected to conveying a feeling that is free from responsibility and concern. It is a representation of a carefree state of mind, which Talbot vehemently rejects.

These lyrics echo a sense of urgency that characterised the Black Lives Matter movement. The murder of George Floyd "resonated deeply with people in the UK" (Mohdin et al. 2020) and made sure that the gravity of the problem reached a boiling point which resulted in a surge in the mobilisation of protesters across the country. A Guardian analysis of the numbers behind the movement, revealed that: "by mid-June, more than 210,000 people had attended demonstrations around the country, including 10,000 protesters in Brighton, 4,000 in Birmingham and 3,000 in Newcastle" (Ibid). Moreover, the protesters took to the streets of "260 towns and cities" in less than two months following Floyd's murder (Ibid). The refrain below hints at the so-called "logic of numbers [which] underlies many social movement actions" (Johnston 2014, p. 95). This concept explores the way movements like Black Lives Matter communicate unity and power through consolidation of their ideas and participants. It is repeated four times throughout the duration of the song – the most out of any other line or phrase. Its repetition is significant as it reveals the refrain's message as the focal point of the song. Reiterating the refrain gives it more weight relative to the other lyrics which are sung only once[8]. If one were to think about lyrics in visual terms, emphasising them through repetition would be equivalent to putting the subject of visual representation into the foreground. In addition to the refrain which paints a picture of imminent revolt

[8] Apart from the line „I am I, Unify" which is repeated three times.

and social unrest, the power of numbers is emphasised by the word “thunder” and the sonic choices that accompany this section of the song.

> Do you hear that thunder?
> That's the sound of strength in numbers (IDLES 2020b, 1:10)

As Talbot sings the refrain written above, he is only backed by simple, yet powerful drums and a repeating synth line. By posing the rhetorical question “Do you hear that thunder?”, Talbot is playing off the clear aural association of the word “thunder”. At the same time, this word is a musical cue and foreshadows the instrumental switch that happens seconds after the utterance of the question. The synth line is now replaced with a menacing, sustained electric guitar line and a crash cymbal played on top. This new musical section materialises the sound of thunder. There is a case of aesthetic synaesthesia happening here. The lyrics inform the sound, and the sound further strengthens the lyrics. As a result, the band both lyrically and musically constructs a vivid image of a formidable communal force whose unity and size suggests an inevitability of significant social change.

> Fee-fee-fie-fie-fo-fo-fum
> I smell the blood of a million sons
> A million daughters from a hundred thousand guns
> Not taught by our teachers on our curriculum (IDLES 2020b, 1:19)

Education is one of the major gripes of the Black Lives Matter movement in the United Kingdom. As one Guardian article released in the aftermath of the protest puts it: “In Britain, one focus of the Black Lives Matter movement has been how we tell the history of the country.” (Kirk et al. 2020). By calling out the embeddedness of racism inside the structures that make up the core of the British society, BLM activists have recognised the importance of education and educational reform as a way to close the knowledge gap which sustains racism. Although calls for reform gained extra prominence in 2020, they predate the days of George Floyd protests. As early as 2014, the movement has pushed for a more inclusive approach to education when it comes to black UK history. This came as a response to Conservative education secretary Michael Gove who “[…] removed the curriculum’s explicit focus on racial and ethnic diversity, particularly within Britain” (Kirk et al. 2020). Fast forward six years later, a campaign headed by the organisation Black Curriculum was initiated in a bid “[…] to make the teaching of black history compulsory in primary and secondary school and across a range of different subject areas” (Bakare et al. 2020). The action towards curriculum reform has been seen in the context of a broader narrative of

decolonisation. Dr Shaminder Takhar, from London South Bank University elaborated on this point of view by saying that: ”Decolonising the curriculum gives voice to those who have previously been marginalised. Viewed in the context of anti-racist struggles such as BLM in the time of Covid-19, it highlights hierarchy and inequality.” (Bakare et al. 2020). Even the official Black Lives Matter UK organisation put out teaching resources that secondary school teachers could use in their classrooms (Black Lives Matter UK 2024). Just like the BLM activists, IDLES use the lyrics above to point out the power asymmetry of British education curricula. Moreover, Talbot points out the grave consequences that come as a result of it.

Grounds contains elements of intertextuality which give new light to the analysis of the lyrics and neatly tie in with some of the objectives of Black Lives Matter UK. Intertextual references are commonplace in punk music and work as a way of “transcending the limitations posed by their inherent self-containedness” (Ambrosch 2018, 40). It is appropriate to analyse the lyrics of Grounds in the context of the original intertextual reference, given how in omitting this aspect of intertextuality “we may not have access to the lyrics’ full scope of meaning” (Ambrosch 2018, p. 40).The lines: “Fee fee fi fi fo fo fum / I smell the blood of a million sons” have been used (verbatim or in subtle variations) across classic English literary works, perhaps most notably in the fairytale *Jack and the Beanstalk* (Tatar 2002). In *King Lear*, *Shakespeare* writes “Fie, foh and fum / I smell the blood of a British man” (Hudson 1856), while the fairytale contains the words: “Fee fi fo fum / I smell the bones of an Englishman” (Tatar 2002). Even though Talbot modifies his lyrics in comparison to how the lines were written in classic English literature, IDLES’ words cannot remain fully independent from the phrasing that inspired them. As much as it is relevant to consider IDLES’ variation on the famous “Fee Fi Fo Fum” quatrain, it is also important to consider the lines that Talbot’s lyrics are referencing. As mentioned before, the quatrain in Shakespeare’s King Lear and Jack and the Beanstalk refers to the blood of an English or British man. If one were to take a look at Grounds through the perspective of the original[9], it could be said that by referencing a text that mentions the blood of an Englishman, IDLES challenge a particular sense of supreme Englishness or Britishness that Grounds is fighting against.

[9] The word original is used loosely. The author does not mean original as a definitive work, rather a collection of source materials that IDLES draw inspiration from.

Apart from “Do you hear that thunder?”, Grounds features another vocal refrain. The line “I am I/ Unify” (IDLES 2020b, 1:47) is given its own space in the song. It is not connected to a particular verse, and instead acts as a self-sufficient message. As mentioned before, IDLES give weight to this refrain by repeating it several times throughout the song and by isolating it in its own instrumental space. This section demonstrates the individual and the collective aspect of performances that seek social justice. One the one hand, it highlights the emphasis of new social movements on the individual’s right to unashamedly embrace and display one’s identity. At the same time, it is a call for consolidation and togetherness without which social movements and protests cannot enforce change. The aforementioned focus on unapologetically embracing individuality and uniqueness is also elaborated in the following line “I'll say what I mean, do what I love, and fucking send it” (IDLES 2020b, 2:15). The words “unity” and “unify” are recurring themes not just in Grounds but across the group’s discography. Similar phrasing is used in Danny Nedelko’s “He’s made of you, he’s made of me/ Unity!” (IDLES 2018a).

Grounds’ song structure has a significant impact on its overall mood. This in turn changes the listener’s perception of the words. As opposed to Danny Nedelko, Grounds does not have a conventional chorus section. The song goes through dynamic changes, but it does not have a demarcated part with a singalong quality. Instead, it is characterised by an ominous mood that dominates throughout. There is no sense of resolution in the song due to a lack of an elaborate chord progression. The tension keeps building throughout, thus making for a slightly disconcerting, yet engaging listen. The unsettling instrumentation reaches a pinnacle at the end of the song. In a cacophony of sounds, IDLES mix distorted bass, sliding ascending guitar notes, and shards of noise that crescendo to a point where it seems like the song is about to implode (IDLES 2020b, 3:17). This radical crescendo is accompanied by the rhetorical question “Do you hear that thunder?” which is the song’s final lyric. The disturbing mood of this concluding section recontextualises the lyrics and gives it a dystopian feeling. As a consequence, IDLES use this rhetorical question to create an image of a society crumbling in the face of an imminent ascendance of revolutionary social change.

As a genre owing its beginnings to the people who can be thought of as outsiders to contemporary society, punk has (although not always) recognised the plight of ostracised communities. This had a two-fold effect. It led to a canon of empowering,

and anti-racist songs, but it also had an adverse outcome. By assuming a *privilegeless* status, punks "choose to become the other" (Ambrosch 2018, 87) and thus attempt to equate their position in the social hierarchy to communities that have suffered much more grave difficulties for longer historical periods. It is important to keep this in mind since a band's lyrical narrative in songs with racial themes is related to the way it reconciles its own marginalisation with the marginalisation of other (more) disadvantaged groups. In other words, does a punk group, as a counterhegemonic act, accept a level of agency and responsibility in problems of hegemonic structures?

> There's nothing brave and nothing useful
> You scrawlin' your aggro shit on the walls of the cubicle
> Sayin' my race and class ain't suitable
> So I raise my pink fist and say black is beautiful (IDLES 2020b, 2:30)

When Talbot sings: "So I raise my pink fist and say black is beautiful", he does more than just associate himself with the symbol of Black Lives Matter. As a white band, IDLES use *Grounds* to assume a level of agency and responsibility for promoting social change. From the perspective of representation theory, it is possible to decode between several meanings in this line. The obvious one is in the line's representation of the idea that black culture and appearance should and must not be shamed but celebrated. This is further accentuated by the singer's emphasis on the word "beautiful" which is sung as opposed to spoken which is the case for the words preceding it. The line takes on another meaning in the context of criticism of BLM's emphasis on the struggle of black people. Critics have used "All Lives Matter", as a supposedly more egalitarian slogan, which was often used in an attempt to relativise racism and discredit the movement (Lez Henry 2021). Additionally, this slogan has also been used "as an attempt to decentre black voices and thus steer the argument away from the particular to the general" (Lez Henry 2021, p. 32). When IDLES raise their metaphorical pink fist, they fervently reject the problems of relativisation of racism and acknowledge the imbalanced power relationship which has ingrained racism in the structures of UK society. This line also reinforces the message from the previous verse "I am I/ Unify" in how it demonstrates solidarity and promotes the message of acceptance.

5. MOTHER AND NE TOUCHE PAS MOI – PORTRAYALS OF FEMINIST ALLYSHIP

Despite its subversive modus operandi, punk has remained predominantly patriarchal with a glaring underrepresentation of women (Ambrosch 2018, p. 80). However, this is not to say that a patriarchal structure in punk is completely analogous to the patriarchy of contemporary society. Although more owing to aesthetics than politics, the beginnings of punk have been marked by bands who challenged heteronormativity and gender roles (Ambrosch 2018, p. 74). Punk bands have not shied away from incorporating important feminist themes and issues (abortion rights, sexual harassment) into their songwriting. Given the prominent didactic element of the genre's lyrics, this has often resulted in (at best) clumsy allyship and (at worst) assuming a representative role for women. As Ambrosch (2018, p. 80) puts it: "women are often the subjects—or objects—of punk songs, but relatively seldom their authors".

In addition to issues of austerity, class, and xenophobia, one of the central themes that IDLES explore in their discography are problems highlighted by feminist activists. These are manifested in the forms of lyrics examining the patriarchy from the perspective of issues it brings to women, but also to men (toxic masculinity). Although many songs from their catalogue touch upon these topics, one stands out for its uncompromising stance and evocative title. Mother, a single from the band's first full-length album Brutalism is the band's most overtly feminist song. Its subject matter touches upon issues highlighted by the #MeToo movement. Given that the song talks about physical and sexual violence against women, the potency of the words is elevated even further in the context of another important feminist movement– Reclaim the Night.

5. 1. RECLAIM THE NIGHT UK – ESSENTIAL MESSAGES

Although now perhaps eclipsed by #MeToo, a prominent feminist movement of recent memory, Reclaim the Night is a movement with a much longer history and stronger association with the United Kingdom. Reclaim the Night traces its origins back to the 1970s. Its beginnings are thought to be connected to a 1976 International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women conference in Belgium which was then followed by marches and protests in Rome and Berlin (Mackay 2015, p. 72). As a movement fighting against an, unfortunately, universal problem, its reach has been international since its inception. Even though it transcended borders, Reclaim the Night has been particularly active in the United Kingdom where it became one of the cornerstones of feminist social activism. Its path started in Leeds in 1977, while the first marches in

other cities were held in November of the same year. One of the recurring slogans during this time was: “No curfew on women – curfew on men” (Bindel 2006). This theme has remained consistent throughout the evolution of the movement into the 1990s when the marches halted. It resurfaced again in 2004 when a modest group of participants and organisers kickstarted what would become an annual UK event and protest. Since 2004, the movement has grown at a fast pace to a point where around twenty marches are happening simultaneously each year (Mackay 2015, p. 142).

In many ways, the practice of Reclaim the Night is similar to the practice of recontextualisation that IDLES and many other punk bands use as a way to give new meaning to symbols with negative connotations. The name of the Reclaim the Night movement uses the night to symbolise male violence against women which is always a higher risk at night-time. The movement, both in its demands and name, attempts to make the night free from the feeling of unsafety and threat from sexual and physical violence that women feel both at home and on a night out. Consequently, these marches and protests are usually carried out under the lights of torches or candles.

5. 2. MOTHER – A CHALLENGE TO THE PATRIARCHY

The visual presentation of the music video and imagery surrounding the song connects Mother closely to Reclaim the Night. As some of its participants have remarked: “The march to me is like a remembrance. There are women who can’t march, they have already either lost their lives or are living lost lives. I have to march every year because they can’t. To me, the march is saying – we haven’t forgotten you. That’s a vital part of the movement. No other event has that significance for me.” (Mackay 2015, p. 138). The element of remembrance is integral to Reclaim the Night. Historically, the main drivers of these protests have been specific cases of sexual and physical violence that often resulted in femicide.

Both Reclaim the Night and Mother are expressions of these issues represented through a lens of familiarity. In the marches, familiarity is present because the participants (women) have the same shared experiences. On the other hand, in Mother, familiarity is introduced through the familial relationship of the lyricist and subject. This sense of understanding of the issue is integral to the movement and is why the marches have remained women-only. Although male participation in other forms is encouraged, the organisers share a feeling that the sense of empowerment of the march

would be compromised should they include those who cannot fully understand this vulnerable position (Mackay 2015, pp. 121-125).

IDLES' Mother is an exercise of mourning through rage. In an interview following the song's release, Talbot released the following message which emphasised the importance of coming to terms and being open about one's feelings thus drawing an obvious parallel with the music video:

> Whatever we do, our fate's the same.
> So Smash and dance and hold love in.
> We all know ourselves, we just don't know it yet.
> So smash and dance and hold love in.
> Kill your quiet, kill your qualms and smash and dance and hold love in.
>
> Mothers weren't always so. I like to see this song as a brief glimpse into what she did and what she was and what women are to me and what they were.
>
> Enjoy. (Santino 2017)

The song is about Talbot's late mother whose photograph is the centrepiece of the music video and the cover of the album Brutalism. Mother functions as a tribute and a work of personal grievance. As a magnifying glass on the issue of what is commonly referred to as "toxic masculinity", it also works on a less personal level as it bluntly highlights the problems of sexual and physical violence towards women. In doing all this, the song establishes a clear demographic to which it is directing the message – men.

From the point of view of song structure and lyrics, Mother is an example of a very economical approach to songwriting. Although much of the band's discography is representative of this approach, Mother stands out as one of its more concise pieces. Instead of relying on elaborate and ornate lyrics, Talbot utilises the power of repetition. The song consists of just two repeating sections and a non-repeating bridge section which is the only instance where new lyrical content is introduced. The song commences with a verse split into three seemingly independent parts.

> My mother worked 15 hours 5 days a week
> My mother worked 16 hours 6 days a week
> My mother worked 17 hours 7 days a week
> The best way to scare a Tory is to read and get rich
> The best way to scare a Tory is to read and get rich
> The best way to scare a Tory is to read and get rich
> I know nothing, I'm just sitting here looking at pretty colours
> I know nothing, I'm just sitting here looking at pretty colours
> I know nothing, I'm just sitting here looking at pretty colours (IDLES 2017, 0:50)

The first three lines are at their core the same, with slight variations coming in the form of gradation. Repetition of the same line gives it more space and attention. As a result, this emphasises the underlying message. Furthermore, the message gets amplified by the increased figure of hours and days in succeeding lines. By mentioning abnormally high working hours, the introductory lyrics signify exploitation. Even though these hours serve as a metaphor and not as an exact representation of the subject's life, much of the power of this line lies in its plausibility. Talbot paints a picture of an all too familiar overworked working-class woman juggling several jobs. Nevertheless, its meaning is not only restricted to the context of long hours at work. Talbot's words also signal uncredited housework and point to marital exploitation.

Going further into the lyrics, the singer opens up new themes. In saying "The best way to scare a Tory is to read and get rich" IDLES criticise Conservatives, who have been in power during the band's entire musical life[10]. The lyrics point to two aspects deemed important for undermining their influence. The first highlights education as an invaluable asset. The second points to the importance of amassing wealth to disrupt the distribution of power which heavily leans towards the white, middle-class UK demographic. The importance of these lyrics, however, is in the way they help shape the representation of the subject. Invoking the Tories, especially in the context of wealth and education, puts a working-class tag on the Mother. With its allusions to the poverty trap, inequality, and lack of labour protection, the subject is now viewed in the context of the Tory enacted perils of neoliberalism and late-stage capitalism. This is why even though the song is about the danger of male violence that women live with, it is also a comment on the diminishing standard of living of the working class in the 21st century. Mother is a victim of male violence, but also the so-called "middle-class squeeze"[11]. One should not view these two separately as the rise in domestic violence is correlated with problems like substance abuse which increases in times of austerity (Friebel, Yoo, Maynou 2022). In other words, there is a link between unfavourable conditions of the working class and domestic abuse.

The song's chorus uses wordplay to a very evocative, almost disturbing extent. This section of the song only has two words "Mother" and "Fucker". Talbot cleverly separates what is usually spelled as one word (motherfu***er) into two. In doing so,

[10] This has now changed since the Labour Party win at the 2024 general election.
[11] The „middle-class squeeze" is a term that refers to the diminishing of the standard of living of the middle layer of society (Collins Dictionary 2024).

the character represented by that word is now split into two – the victim and the perpetrator. This phrasing emphasises its literal meaning as opposed to the original, more metaphorical one. Its gruesomeness puts the subject in the context of sexual violence. Talbot purposefully avoids euphemising his words to convey the exploitation of the Mother. In light of the literal interpretation, this exploitation has obvious connotations of sexual harassment and violence, but it also refers to any other form of mistreatment. In addition to this, the word "fucker" also has a cathartic function. It is the word that allows the singer to release the bottled-up rage.

Following the two verses and choruses is the bridge section whose lyrics directly point to the problem of sexual violence.

> Sexual violence doesn't start and end with rape
> It starts in our books and behind our school gates
> Men are scared women will laugh in their face
> Whereas women are scared it's their lives men will take (IDLES 2017, 3:13)

The narrative of this section adopts the same angle as Reclaim the Night. It rejects the concept of victim-blaming and problematises the behaviour of men as opposed to women. Victim blaming has been a heavily utilised tactic in conservative discourse which relativises rape and sexual assault. It relies on representing sexual assault victims as at least partially responsible for the crime committed against them. Although it may seem that this idea came to life in the 21st century, scientific research shows that this concept has been exploited in areas other than sexual violence for many years. A paper by Crawford (1977) investigated this method as an emerging phenomenon in the context of healthcare. It was established that it is an "ideology which blames the individual for her or his illness and proposes that, instead of relying on costly and inefficient medical services, the individual should take more responsibility for her or his health" (Crawford 1977). Crawford drew attention to the links behind this "ideology" and the politicisation of healthcare. In other words, it was used as a tactic that would deter from systemic and more holistic solutions towards individual choices. By putting the onus on the individual, the system does not need to undergo further economic strains and expenditure. It also shifts the focus away from institutional and/or societal problems that would bring unwanted political pressure. Even though these findings come from a different era and sphere, it is apparent that the same rationale applies in the context of the issues that various feminist organisations, including Reclaim the Night, try to shed light on. By saying that "Sexual violence doesn't start and end with rape/ It starts in our books and behind our school

gates" IDLES point out the systemic problems leading to the issue of sexual harassment and keeping the status quo. Books signify education at large thus bringing an institutional dimension to the problem. This line also serves as a reminder of all the insidious ways in which misogyny and patriarchy entrench themselves into the foundations of society. Consequently, IDLES' representation of misogyny could be seen through two different lenses. The first is the aforementioned institutional and societal lens. The second half of the bridge section challenges men to a personal reflection and reframes the issue by spotlighting men instead of women. Reclaim the Night marches follow these very principles. On a broader level, they call on institutional reforms. On a personal level, the marches frame their messages by appealing to men as opposed to women, rejecting victim-blaming, and combating so-called toxic masculinity. The band's allusion to the deeply rooted systemic problem of sexual violence represents it in much the same way Reclaim the Night organisers do. March organisers frequently talk about the deep-rooted issues that are the obstacle to their goals. These include being in "a climate where this is still normalised as acceptable 'banter', where prosecutions for assaults are decreasing, and specialist services for women are under attack" (Reclaim the Night UK, 2022). Although highlighting different areas of society, IDLES and Reclaim the Night point to two sides of the same coin. Their words reverberate Crawford's (1977) explanation behind the rise of victim-blaming ideology. The band's and social movement's solutions would include a complete revamp of education and justice systems. Politically speaking, complete revamps tend to be undesirable and as such are not high on the political agenda. This helps cultivate the status quo and engenders victim-blaming further (Crawford 1977).

Both in terms of lyrical and visual representation, Mother is a passive actor. She does not act but is being described. In the linguistic interplay of the words "Mother" and "Fucker", she is the victim, and therefore a passive object of a transgression. When it comes to the music video, Mother's passivity is accentuated by its juxtaposition to the histrionics of Talbot's screaming and plate smashing. One should not overlook the gender aspect of the active and passive characters. The man (Talbot and later in the music video his bandmates) in his active role plays next to the woman (Mother) in a passive one. Both visually and dramaturgically the music video alludes to the phrase "the woman behind the man" which entrenches stereotypical gender roles. Mother is

literally the woman behind the man as a photo in the background, but also as a bystander of the man's actions.

Despite the fact that lyrics tend to have precedence over other mediums of expression, the iconography and the visual imagery of the Mother music video are as important in elucidating the network of meanings behind the song. The metaphorical and literal mother figure is central to the album's visual identity and video. Though large in size, the photograph does not draw much attention to itself. The woman in the photo looks solemn and self-effacing. Her clothes and hair obscure much of her face. Furthermore, the photograph is in black and white, making it blend into the grey, industrialist and brutalist space of the video. The focus of the video is Talbot. His pink suit stands in contrast to the monochromatic surroundings and draws attention. The clothing choices of the protagonists in the video are not there just for the colour contrast. Talbot's suit and guitarists' dresses blur the boundaries between male and female fashion. Their seemingly macho appearance is neutralised by how they dress. In placing their fashion outside of the context of femininity, IDLES emphasise how arbitrary it is to ascribe gender characteristics to something inherently neutral. This works as a critique of the prevalent rigidity of masculinity. In this way, IDLES take on a staunchly political stance in their costume choices. On the surface, this may seem like an obvious extension of punk's visual presentation. However, Talbot's pink suit and Kiernan and Bowen's dresses serve more as a political statement than a fashion statement. The primacy of politics here is at odds with the early days of punk. Back then, although they came with political implications, the subversive clothing choices of bands had more to do with aesthetics (Ambrosch 2018, p. 74).

Figure 4 – The opening sequence. Talbot in a pink suit in front of a table stacked with porcelain. (IDLES 2017, 0:43)

Figure 5 – Talbot is joined by the band's guitar players who wear pink and violet dresses. They play beneath the portrait of the singer's mother. (IDLES 2017, 3:26)

The idea of the video is catharsis. Musically speaking, the most cathartic element of *Mother* is the vocal. As he screams some of the lyrics, Talbot goes beyond the signature shouty style of Danny Nedelko and Grounds. His singing uncovers his rage. This cathartic vocal expression is paired with the singer throwing and smashing plates throughout the music video. His bandmates' passionate guitar playing has a similar function. All in all, the band's cathartic performance uncovers Talbot's personal affiliation with the subject matter and his anger at the persistence of the issue.

Figure 6 – One of the final shots of the music video. Talbot wanders around the table with piles of broken glass and porcelain on the floor. (IDLES 2017, 4:17)

5. 3. NE TOUCHE PAS MOI – A SIGNIFICANT DUET

Ne Touche Pas Moi is another song in the IDLES canon that closely relates to the themes prevalent in feminist movements. The song's French title translates into English as "Don't Touch Me" and deals with the problems of sexual harassment and objectification. The song was released on Ultra Mono, IDLES' 2020 release. While the band has worked with different musicians in production phases of its albums and generally behind the scenes, Ne Touche Pas Moi is a rare instance where and IDLES song which features another vocalist. What sets this collaboration apart from collaborations in production is that the band lets another singer borrow the most recognisable aspect of a song – the vocals. Given the title of the song and the themes it explores, it is clear that this is as much of a political choice as it is an aesthetic one. The featured vocalist is Jehnny Beth, a musician and actress from France and a fellow member of the English rock and punk scene.

Lyrically, the song has an uncomplicated structure. It consists of a single verse and chorus that repeat throughout. The song commences aggressively, both lyrically and in performance. The string bends out of tune, making it unpleasant to listen to.

> This is a sawn-off
> For the cat-callers
> This is a pistol
> For the wolf whistle
> 'Cause your body is your body

And it belongs to nobody but you
But you (IDLES 2020c, 0:25)

The song starts off by referring to itself as a weapon (as a sawn-off[12] and pistol) – a weapon against sexual harassment. The second line reveals the lyrical addressee. In this case, it is the catcallers, but more broadly the message is directed towards men who violate a woman's private space either verbally or physically. However, the choice of using the term "cat-caller" is significant for two reasons. The first is the fact that by using that term Talbot avoids dealing with abstractions and provides a specific antagonist it can rally against. Second of all, it points to some of the insidious behaviour that a patriarchal society may brush to the side as innocuous. Calling out catcallers and their roles as embodiments of some feminist struggles is a tactic that is often used in the UK Reclaim the Night movement. Some of the campaigns that featured prominently under the umbrella of the movement were Call Out Catcalling and This Girl can Run. Much of the focus of these campaigns was voicing their fears and problems against men who make women feel anxious and unsafe on an evening walk or run. This approach found its way into Reclaim the Night's marches. Marches held in November 2021 in Derby and Nottingham, included placards like: "Catcalling gives cats a bad name" and "My clothes are not consent" (Turner, 2021). Similarly, a RTN march in Manchester from February 2017 included signs saying: "Cats against catcalls" and "Cats not catcalls" (Tillett 2017).

Alongside calling out the perpetrators (catcallers), IDLES use the opening lyrics to call out their behaviour. The "wolf whistle" is a phrase which takes on several different meanings. In the context of catcalling, the phrase signifies the whistles and the behaviour that often accompany it. As such, it would make little difference if the word "wolf" was omitted – merely singing "This is a pistol for the whistle" would have had the same effect[13]. However, by using this word in conjunction, IDLES use it to elevate the political aspect of the problem. The catcalling whistle referred to in Ne Touche Pas Moi is not just any whistle, but one associated with a predator. By constructing the image of predatory behaviour, the lyrics emphasise the imbalanced power relationship that allows such actions to continue. Catcalling men take on the role of the wolf, a predator, with women being the victims of their predatory harassment. This not only

[12] A sawn-off is used in informal English to mean a shotgun. (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2024)
[13] Here, I am discarding the implications this would have on the phonetic and rhyme structure of the song and focusing only on the lyrical message.

illustrates the precarity of the position of women but also signals their limited capacity to effect change within the confines of a system that oppresses them. One should also not disregard the vivid imagery that accompanies the phrase “wolf whistle”. Apart from the aural association, the phrase contains potent visual overtones. A particularly strong association is the image of a wolf howling in the darkness of the night. Such imagery points out the clandestine nature of catcalling. Moreover, it symbolically connects to the name of Reclaim the Night and its focus on night-time as a time when women are more vulnerable and in greater danger of sexual harassment and assault.

Although much of the focus of Reclaim the Night has been addressing the problems of sexual violence, the marches of the movement often incorporate slogans that relate to some other key feminist issues. One such example is the issue of abortion. Protesters take to the streets to voice their opinions and frustrations about this topic in a way which echoes the pro-choice abortion stance that is prevalent in this movement (Mackay 2015). A Reclaim the Night march held in Lincoln in November of 2022 contained movement-specific slogans like: “Take Back the Night” and “It’s a dress not a yes” alongside pro-choice placards: “It’s my body I’ll do what I want” and “!Abortion! is a woman’s choice” (Aron 2022). This idea prominently features in the Ne Touche Pas Moi lyrics as Talbot sings “ 'Cause your body is your body / And it belongs to nobody but you / But you” (IDLES 2020c, 0:34) as an expression of solidarity and support. These lines underscore the previously mentioned pro-choice messages which strongly feature in Reclaim the Night and other feminist movements. In addition to pro-choice support, these lyrics also work in the context of sexual harassment and the idea that strange men feel free to violate a woman’s personal space.

As mentioned before, the song contains a verse and chorus which alternate, thus making for an uncomplicated arrangement. There is a caveat, however, in the second verse which turns the other way the lyrics “ 'Cause your body is your body / And it belongs to nobody but you / But you” (IDLES 2020c, 0:34). Now instead of displaying solidarity by addressing the listener, Talbot personalises the words. Instead of “you” he sings “me” thus turning the lyrics into: “ 'Cause my body is my body / And it belongs to nobody but me / But me” (IDLES 2020c, 1:24). The inversion of the pronouns shifts the focus slightly from the female perspective, and instead underlines its general relevance. The first verse is thus connected to presenting this idea in relationship to key feminist themes and feminist problems. The second verse twists the wording to represent bodily autonomy as a human issue. Although these verses have

slightly different messages, these interpretations are not in conflict with one another. Rather, they complement each other.

Looking again at the song in light of these ideas transmitted by the various campaigns of the feminist Reclaim the Night movement, one begins to see Ne Touche Pas Moi as a demonstration of feminist allyship. Firstly, Talbot uses his lyrics to shed light on the relevant issues. Secondly, his performance is closely connected to the movement's idea for addressing these issues. As a man calling out the unwanted behaviour of other men, Talbot weaves himself into RTN's vision of a society where feminist problems stop being female problems, and one where men take on a more active role in helping settle these concerns. This thought was elucidated in a conversation between two organisers of the 2022 Manchester Reclaim the Night Run, Annie Dabb and Eleanor Taylor: "However, like other anti-discrimination movements, we spoke about how it's not enough to simply not catcall, and that 'it's more about being an active bystander' " (Dabb, 2022). The idea of featuring a female vocalist reflects Reclaim the Night philosophy where women assume an active role within the movement, while men are encouraged to be vigorous advocates. Aside from the performative aspect of the song which suggests a version of male feminist allyship akin to the vision of RTN, the choice of which vocalist sings which lyrics is also inherently political. Jehnny Beth is absent from the verses. However, she makes an appearance in the chorus sections. Beth shouts "Ne touche pas moi" (Do not touch me), over Talbot's refrain.

> Ne touche pas moi
> This is my dance space
> Ne touche pas moi
> This is your dance space
> Ne touche pas moi
> This is my dance space
> Ne touche pas moi (IDLES 2020c, 0:45)

The decision that Beth sings the song's title is a step towards making sure that Ne Touche Pas Moi does not overextend its allyship and take agency from women. It is crucial to the song's political integrity that when Talbot sings, he supports women, but does not speak for them. That role is reserved for Beth. Given that two vocalists are cohabiting a sonic space, there comes a question relating to the power dynamics between them. There are two factors which point to Beth as the character playing a more dominant role.

Ne Touche Pas Moi is the only instance[14] where constructing the meaning, feeling, and performance is not contingent solely on IDLES' band members. Jehnny Beth plays an equally important role which is why it is important to take note of her vocal performance. Even though Talbot is putting up a performance that goes right up against his angriest and most passionate, it falls just a bit short from his counterpart's singing. This is because of a slight echo on Beth voice which gives it a larger-than-life quality and in comparison, slightly diminishes the grandness of the IDLES frontman. Secondly, by asserting herself vocally and not shying away from volume, Beth is challenging gender stereotypes and putting herself in a male-dominated environment. The subversive nature of this act immediately gives Beth the upper hand in the power relationship with her partner on the song.

One of the most emotionally charged moments in the song is at the tail end of the chorus when the singers come together in unison to shout "Consent! Consent! Consent!" (IDLES 2020c, 1:57). From a musical point of view, this part represents somewhat of a peculiarity. Although punk music, with IDLES included, do not abide by musical conventions of classic rock and pop music, much of their work follows standard structures which are marked by a clear hierarchy of song sections. IDLES may not be fixated on the strength of the chorus as much as a Top 40 pop radio hit does, but choruses often make up the focal points of their discography. When thinking about a piece of music as a series of musical choices provoking tension or release, one may start to look at verses as parts which serve to set a scene and build up the song musically and lyrically to a point of resolution which happens in the chorus. From this perspective, the inclusion of "Consent! Consent! Consent!" in the chorus makes for an unusual aesthetic choice given how it does not offer any sense of resolution. Firstly, it is not a melodic phrase, meaning that it does not musically relate to the harmony of the song and sticks out from the lyrics that precede it. Secondly, it is shouted with such force that it pushes the song forward instead of providing a sense of finality. This vocal delivery adds a strong feeling of tension which keeps building with the new verse that comes as a new section. The significance of this aesthetic choice lies in the fact that it manages to convey a stronger sense of anger and urgency which would not be there had the word "Consent" been placed in another part of the song. In addition to this, IDLES accentuate the importance of this term by placing it in the part of a song which holds primacy. Therefore, it can be said that choosing where to place lyrics within the

[14] Out of the songs analysed in this paper

song is as consequential as writing the lyrics themselves. The vocals are not the only sonic signifier in the song which transmit the anger which clouds over the entire song. IDLES' drummer performs a short but technically challenging part at the end of Ne Touche Pas Moi. Histrionic drums at the end are quite unusual for the band's "meat and potatoes" approach to drumming where economy is favoured over showmanship. This musical passage sticks out from the usual drum style and assumes the role of a sonic oddity. However, as much as it evokes the drumming of punk's arch nemesis progressive rock, it would be misguided to analyse it in that context. The propulsive, lightning-fast drum playing propels the song further until it reaches a final crescendo before the song stops. It is an aesthetic choice that does not really communicate technical sophistication and assurance as it would in the context of a progressive rock song. Instead, it is an exercise in anger and communicates it in the same way Beth's and Talbot's voices do. The fact that this short part is something of a musical exception gives it that much more weight and emphasis.

The word "consent" has become one of the keywords feminist social activism. Even outside the context of feminism, the politics of consent has been discussed by scholars and campaigners, especially in its connection to democracy and democratic values (Pateman 1980). This has led "consent theorists" to place consent as an important factor in social contracts governing the relationship between the state and individual. In seeing consent as an essential postulate of democracy, some feminists have put special emphasis on this very concept (Frye 2024). By framing the debates and arguments around issues like abortion or sexual violence around the concept of consent, feminist activists outline that a significant bulk of legislation and legal practices of liberal democracies is strongly authoritarian in its disregard of the individual's right to consent (Frye 2024). A prominent example of the large body of case law neglecting women's choices is the Morgan rape case from the United Kingdom (DPP v Morgan) from 1975 (Pateman 1980, p. 159). It had been described that the judge in the case "argued that if a sexual act took place because a man had falsely believed that the woman consented, then it would generally be held that, although the man might be careless, he did not commit rape" (Pateman 1980, p. 160). It is important to understand these precedents since much of Reclaim the Night's messaging emphasises the systemic neglect of female consent which has been put into place by cases like DPP v Morgan and its legislative and social legacy. One example illustrating this point comes from a Reclaim the Night march held in Ipswich in

December of 2021. There, one of the protestors promoted a sign saying: “Comfortable clothes are NOT an invite to Anything” and a “A costume does not determine consent” (BBC 2021). This messaging highlights the paradoxical state of affairs described by British political theorist Carole Pateman in the work Women and Consent. There, Pateman argues that “women have been presented as always consenting, and their explicit nonconsent has been treated as irrelevant or has been reinterpreted as “consent.” (Pateman 1980, 150).

All this is to point to the fact that the word “consent” exists in a very specific political setting. By putting it as one of the centre points of Ne Touche Pas Moi, IDLES are unambiguously fixating the entire song inside of a context of political female invisibility which is made possible by the usurpation of their consent. By shouting “Consent!” Beth and Talbot are attempting to reclaim it and take ownership, while their loud vocals make sure that this message cannot be ignored. From a performance perspective, it is worth noting that this word is repeated three times, thus drawing it even closer to a social movement-like performance where participants repeatedly shout out keywords and slogans to assert power and establish a sense of unity. From a representation point of view, this word performed with such fervour, signifies the anger at society’s rejection of women’s political voice and agency. As such, it promotes the idea advocated by Reclaim the Night and its objective of reclaiming the dangerous physical and non-physical spaces by empowering the women’s voices.

6. AUSTERITY AS AN ILLNESS

6.1. THE NASCENT OF AUSTERITY REVOLT

The anti-austerity movement in the United Kingdom has seen several different iterations. In the years following the global financial crisis of 2008, two protest movements arose: UK Uncut and Occupy. Both of these were dealing with issues regarding state economy and social welfare. As its name suggests, UK Uncut was born within the context of the economic precarity of the United Kingdom in financial recession, while the Occupy movement had a global reach. As such, the Occupy London or Occupy LSX had much in common with the goals and objectives of Occupy movements elsewhere. Both Occupy London and UK Uncut responded to contentious governmental decisions, of which one of the most salient ones was of the newly elected Conservative party to cut public spending by 83 billion Great British Pounds in order

to combat the sharp rise of public debt (Cammaerts 2018, p. 1). Although these movements arose in response to the precarious socio-economic situation of the post-2008 era, the ideological tenets and political goals of Occupy and UK Uncut were related just as closely to the 1980s and 1990s. Scholars have noted how the aims of the anti-austerity movement may best be understood "in the context of a rejection of neoliberal ideology" which was characterised by principles of "minimal state, low taxes, and individual choice" (Cammaerts 2018, pp. 48-49).

6.2. CARCINOGENIC – A REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL HYPOCRISY

Carcinogenic is a song off the band's 2020 album Ultra Mono. Unlike Danny Nedelko, Grounds, and Mother, the song does not have a music video. Musically, the song stands together with Danny Nedelko among the band's more conventional in terms of song structure and overall sound. As opposed to singles like Grounds where the music is bass-heavy and ominous, Carcinogenic is characterised by an upbeat tempo, melodic singing and choruses characterised by a singalong quality.

Any practice of representation incorporates a complex network of variables and symbols. There is a hierarchical relationship between the elements since some are purposefully made to stand out among others. Hence, the process of decoding the meaning is in large part contingent on evaluating which of the elements has a primary, secondary, or tertiary role. Sometimes these hierarchical relationships are imposed by the limits of the medium. In the case of music, this may be best understood through the example of songs with vocals. As a rule of thumb, vocals tend to be the loudest, most easily heard part of a song. In this way the voice is distinguished from the rest of the instruments, which would not be possible if all the instruments had the same loudness. In this case, equal treatment of every sound would render them unintelligible in context. In practices of visual representation, prioritisation of elements may be achieved through increased font sizes, close-ups of subjects or similar. In a punk song, the vocalist may emphasise some words more than others by increasing the frequency of the usage of the word. The same effect can also be reached by dynamic juxtaposition (loud and quiet) or by giving more space to a word. In this regard, paying attention to the song title tends to reveal the author's intent when it comes to emphasising certain themes over others. This is also significant because a song title is frequently one of the first points of interaction between the listener and the band. The word "carcinogenic"

is repeated five times across the entire song. Aside from the prominence given to it by the title, the word “Carcinogenic” also occupies more space within the music. There is a vocal absence before and after the title word, which gives it more emphasis. The band is sonically and lyrically underlining the title by giving it more space.

This is contrasted with the preceding and succceding lines which are sung, or better yet, rhythmically spoken at a faster pace. The lines:” Working people down to the bone on their knees/ 9-to-5 every day of the week is...” (IDLES 2020a, 0:24) incorporate sixteen words that last four bars. The same sonic space is given to the title word which enjoys the same length of four bars but in fifteen words less. In this way, IDLES affect the listener’s perception by shifting the focus to the word “carcinogenic” which in turn accentuates the song’s representation of austerity as an illness. Musical determiners such as these are crucial in understanding the representational practices of a medium with an aural component. Looking solely at the text without its sound context, it would be impossible to discern the author’s emphasis on certain words and phrases. IDLES’ manipulation of the word-to-length ratio in Carcinogenic is a good example of musical tools which influence the communication of meaning and undermine the “apparent determinacy of the scripted lyrics” (Ambrosch 2018, p. 26).

Carcinogenic features a sonically uplifting chorus with a catchy (by punk standards) melody. This serves as a counterpoint to the verses in the way it balances out the anger of those words. The sonic features of Carcinogenic’s chorus are supported by the feeling of resignation described by the lyrics.

> You only die once
> You'll never come back
> You're gone when you're gone
> So, love what you can
> You only die once
> You'll never come back
> You're gone when you're gone
> So, love what you can (IDLES 2020c, 0:55)

This is best encapsulated by how Talbot sings the second “gone” in the line “You’re gone when you’re gone”. From a passionate, raspy growl at the start of the song, the second instance of the word “gone” is sung without vocal distortion. It is also dynamically opposed to its surroundings since it is sung quieter and in a lower pitch, thus alleviating the sense of anxiety of the verses. When analysing the chorus from a perspective of sonic semiotics, it is noticeable that the melody of the chorus resolves down in pitch thus bringing “a falling of mood” (Machin 2010a, p. 8). Some of the

phrasing in the chorus is characterised by a longer decay which Machin describes as a tool often used to signal a drop in energy, thus strengthening the feeling of resignation. This feeling also has implications when it comes to the representation of austerity and late-stage capitalism. Resignation comes from a sense of hopelessness and lack of optimism which when combined with the title of the song represents these issues as a terminal illness. The metaphor of austerity as cancer evolves with every new lyric which highlights a different societal problem. IDLES' portrayal of austerity spreads, just like the disease, until it reaches enough areas to render the system dysfunctional. The way in which Talbot illustrates the way in which austerity poisons every cranny of society is born out of the rhetoric and problem-framing of the anti-austerity movement. For example, UK Uncut has been on record to highlight the class chasm and distribution of inequality between the rich and poor: "The cuts are dismantling the welfare state, sending inequality sky-rocketing and hitting the poorest hardest." (Cammaerts 2018, p. 51; UK Uncut 2015). In addition to this, the movement has mentioned the various sectors negatively impacted by austerity measures: "A cabinet of millionaires have decided that libraries, healthcare, education funding, voluntary services, sports, the environment, the disabled, the poor and the elderly must pay the price for the recklessness of the rich." (Cammaerts 2018, p. 51; UK Uncut 2015). The point of this was to emphasise the vastness and difficulty of the problem, as well as to bring light to the way austerity insidiously affects everyone. In keeping the metaphor of Carcinogenic, one may view the song as a list of symptoms. As the list progresses, there is a sense of the progression of the disease. In this way IDLES – both metaphorically and literally – repeat the aforementioned tactic of the UK Uncut movement.

The line "lunatics have taken over the asylum" is an intertextual reference to the song of the same title by English band Fun Boy Three. Although worlds apart in sound, this song shares the political inspiration of 1980s punk lyricism. This peculiar mix of political writing together with new wave and pop instrumentation helped it stand the test of time and remain in UK musical consciousness. In a 2023 interview with the Guardian, Lynval Golding, one of Fun Boy Three's members, talked about the background of the song: "With Lunatics, Terry wrote about nuclear war and the then US president Ronald Reagan, the idea being that the world was being run by lunatics. Forty years later, nothing's changed." (Simpson 2023). Even without considering the intertextual dimension of this line in IDLES' *Carcinogenic*, one understands what

Talbot is conveying here. Politicians and, more broadly speaking, people in positions of power are represented as lunatics. By saying this, IDLES are emphasising the recklessness of their choices, an absence of sensible decision making, and a complete disregard of others. On the other hand, the UK society (and by extension, the rest of the so-called Western societies) assumes the part of the asylum, a place which vividly illustrates a very unsettling reality and carries dark undertones. It is no coincidence that the band is referencing the work of a songwriter from the 1980s, a time considered to be the death of the politics of redistribution (Cammaerts 2018, p. 48).

Discerning the meaning of Talbot's words is relatively straightforward even without the knowledge of Fun Boy Three's song, but the intertextual reference provides more than just the metaphorical language that IDLES are borrowing. This line balances between two distinct meanings. The preferred one regards the representation of politicians as lunatics and the modern capitalist society as the asylum. There is a secondary meaning here which may only be explained in the context of the intertextual reference. By invoking the title of the famous Fun Boy Three song, the lyricist is drawing in a different time period – almost forty years prior to *Carcinogenic*. In this way, there is a parallel created between the two songs. Both works relate to the same themes of reckless, destructive and cronyist policy, but in different times. The line "The lunatics have taken over the asylum" now represents these issues as long-standing. The same problems the United Kingdom had in the 1980s, still exist in 2020. The intertextual reference gives a new perspective, and its function is to convey the inertia of the system and its inability or unwillingness to change. This inertia is also evident in the way the line is delivered. The term "pitch stasis" (Machin 2010a, p. 9) describes a constrained movement of pitch (if there is one at all) and it is fitting for labelling the monotonous vocal delivery that is (mostly) restricted to a single note. Machin describes pitch stasis as "fitting of the punk discourse of nihilism and cynicism" (Machin 2010a, p. 9). Talbot sings this line by focusing on one note which aids in the overall representation of a hopeless situation in a society ruined by austerity practices.

The band's construction of the problems and causes of austerity in Carcinogenic is multifaceted. Nevertheless, the core of IDLES' lyrical rhetoric has a pronounced Marxist perspective. Much of the lyrics of the song are represented through the binary opposition of social classes and the prism of class struggle. This is evident from the very start of the song as IDLES begin framing the problem by exploring the conflict

between the groups at opposite ends of the socio-economic ladder. In short, the problem of austerity is represented by emphasising the inequality between the rich and the poor, or between the upper class and working class.

> Working people down to the bone on their knees
> 9-to-5 every day of the week is...
> Carcinogenic (carcinogenic)
> Getting minimum wage, while your boss takes a raise
> As he lies through his brand new teeth, he is...
> Carcinogenic (carcinogenic) (IDLES 2020c, 0:24)

The opening line functions as particularly potent lyrical imagery as it evokes an image of the capitalist machine violently profiting from the workers and eating away at them. The words echo the Marxist idea of working-class exploitation and stimulate a visual association akin to the 20th century cartoon - Pyramid of Capitalist System (Labor Arts 2023) which portrays the physically strained working class as the base of the capitalist society. The implicit opposition between the working class and upper class is made explicit when Talbot mentions the boss who takes a raise. The capitalist system is now represented as an anti-meritocracy where the means of advancing lies in power and capital. In his representation of the boss as the lying opportunist, and the worker as the exploited victim, Talbot resorts to associating morality with the actions of the characters in Carcinogenic. In much the same way, social movements "vilify the identified antagonist and invoke caustic labels" in addition to resorting to "typifications of opponents as immoral, evil, or villains" (Benford and Hunt 1992, p. 39). In addition, IDLES' representation of the problematic boss and the morally corrupt system is an attempt equivalent to a distinguishing feature of all social movements - the identification of "problematic dimensions of power relations" (Benford and Hunt 1992).

Although these first lines are linked more with capitalist criticism than criticism of austerity, Talbot's representation uses the same diagnostic frame as the anti-austerity movement. In the context of social movements, diagnostic frames "identify what the movement is about and define with what it takes issue with, and as such they make apparent the societal problems that need fixing" (Cammaerts 2018, p. 50). As Cammaerts (2018) has noted, one movement may rely on multiple diagnostic frames existing at the same time. When it comes to the contemporary UK anti-austerity movement, he identified the "injustice and indignation frame" as one of the three frames influencing the rhetoric and political aims of movements like Occupy LSX and UK Uncut.

The link between the song's theme and austerity becomes obvious in the following lines:

> Over-working, working nurses and teachers
> Whilst you preach austerity is...
> Carcinogenic (carcinogenic) (IDLES 2020c, 0:46)

Once again, IDLES are shedding light on the hypocrisy of the political elite. Preaching austerity means talking about contracting the resources and work of the public sector. In the case of nurses, and healthcare generally, this puts more strain on the sector. There are two reasons for this. The internal factor which puts additional strain on nurses is the depletion of resources, both human and technical. On the other hand, austerity measures elsewhere lead to a negative health impact (Stuckler et al. 2017) which puts further pressure on the healthcare system. Nurses and teachers are two professions that tend to be championed by protest groups demanding social change. They are essential workers, which are paradoxically paid quite low, and for this reason they are used to symbolise the distorted sense of worth ushered in by neoliberal principles. This line is the first moment where the reader becomes aware of the lyrical addressee. The "you" represents the political elite imposing the measures Talbot is challenging. While this remains true across the song's verses, the lyrical "you" changes in the chorus. There the "you" is not used specifically, but in an abstract way similar to the function of "you" in proverbs.

> Cramming people into high-rises, while selling their welfare for low prices
> Public spending gets big slices, while ignoring the true crisis (IDLES 2020c, 1:20)

Here Talbot is cleverly juxtaposing binary terms (high-rises and low prices) to illustrate the negative space between. When he sings "selling welfare for low prices", the frontman represents the value (or lack thereof) of human life in a neoliberal capitalist system. The allusions to austerity continue in the following line with explicit reference to reductions in public spending.

> Where were you when the ship sank?
> Probably not queuing for food banks
> Probably waving your Union Jack
> Probably rallying for new tanks
> Probably to blow up the ice caps (IDLES 2020c, 1:31)

The above lyrics serve as a representation of hypocrisy, and they work on two levels. In the first line, Talbot is again addressing the political elites with the question which suggests a sense of two-facedness that surrounds the discourse promulgated by

pro-austerity politicians. Here, the sunken ship symbolises the post 2008 era which was marked by a collapse of the financial sector. By posing this rhetorical question, IDLES are calling out the governmental and banking sector which evaded accountability and effectively transferred the cost of their failure to the working class[15]. When Talbot sings "probably not queuing for food banks" he makes a point of austerity not being felt equally across social strata. He is emphasising the argument raised by the UK Uncut about the less economically fortunate being hit the hardest. In essence, the first two lines convey the point that even though cuts in public spending are inherently discriminatory and that austerity is for some, not for all. The other way in which these lyrics serve as representation of political hypocrisy.

The Union Jack functions as a symbol of (faux) patriotism. It is preceded by the verb "waving" which, on the one hand, adds a further sense of vehemence (waving a flag is inherently zealous), but on the other emphasises the hollow performativity of the act. Talbot questions the patriotism of those who support policies that have a negative effect on a large amount of their people. The meaning of this line is completed by the two following ones. By using the phrase "rallying for new tanks", IDLES are signifying the political hypocrisy of governments who talk about the importance of budget cuts and reduction public spending, while increasing military budgets and military spending. This works as an argument against the inevitability of these measures and echoes the main ideas of the anti-austerity movement: "We do not accept the cuts as either necessary or inevitable" (Cammaerts 2018, p. 52; Occupy LSX 2011b).

These lyrics challenge the political framing of austerity measures as prudential decisions and reject the selective patriotism of those championing such rhetoric. This is analogous to Occupy LSX's insistence on emphasising how damaging austerity is to its own people: "The UK government's approach is damaging its own citizens now and the future of generations to come. Cuts to public services are having a disastrous impact on education, employment, business, health, social care and law and order" (Cammaerts 2018, p. 52; Occupy LSX 2011a). The view that these policies damage multiple generations is reflected in the line "probably to blow up the ice caps" (IDLES 2020c, 1:43). These words juxtapose the supposed future-proofing and sensible

[15] The United Kingdom has, just like many other economies at the time, resorted to giving the banking sector an influx of money to prevent its disintegration. The UK government has put in 101 billion GBP into its banking sector (Cammaerts 2018, p. 45).

decision-making aspect of austerity with the lax government stance on industries that are bringing on environmental disasters and fuelling climate change.

In the verse before the song's last chorus, there is an instrumental drop-off. Talbot's voice is backed only by drums and backing vocals repeating "Carcinogenic!" in unison. In doing so, the frontman blurs the lines between performing and preaching. The words in this section receive an added sense of significance and an extra dimension of didacticism. In terms of performance, the band gets as close as ever to the theatricality of social movements. Although not directly connected to the anti-austerity movement specifically, there is a clear parallel between this call-and-response passage and protest performance. Talbot assumes the role of a protest group leader or designated spokesperson, while the chorus vocals that sing back "Carcinogenic!" assume the role of the agitated and motivated crowd.

> Methamphetamine, crack and heroin and living a life on tick is...
> Carcinogenic!
> Ten pints of G, Mad Dog 20-20, two pints of Bucky and some bouzi oozi is...
> Carcinogenic!
> Class division and bear-baiting on television for better ratings is... (IDLES 2020c, 2:19)

The above lines constitute the final verse of the song. Continuing with the lyrics which echo the representation of austerity policies as an insidious disease, Talbot is now drawing a parallel between substance abuse and policies which cut public expenditure, thus effectively restricting citizens' access to welfare assistance, social programs, or even rendering unemployed some of the public sector workforce. Individual opioids listed by IDLES signify the growth of the drug misuse problem that is associated with austerity measures. It also echoes the messages of the pro-welfare scientific community. Research from the Department of Health Policy, a UK public body, showed that the "Local authorities in England that suffered the largest spending cuts under austerity also experienced the largest increases in opioid-related deaths and abuse" (London School of Economics and Political Science, 2021). Scientists behind the research used their findings to support the anti-austerity agenda and revealed that: "reductions in welfare funding for social care services and housing assistance had the greatest impact, exacerbating the adverse effects of rising unemployment in a local authority area" (London School of Economics and Political Science 2021). Their findings were contrasted with countries that have stronger welfare systems, where no such relationship had been found (London School of Economics and Political Science 2021). Anti-austerity movements in the UK have used protests to convey this link

between expenditure cuts and a rise in mortality and adverse health outcomes. London protests from 2016 included messages like "We demand *health*, homes, jobs, and education. Cameron must go."[16] (AFP 2016), while one of the central messages from the protests from the year before was "Austerity kills" (Poverty and Social Exclusion 2023). When Talbot writes about methamphetamine, crack, and heroin, he points to the same idea promoted by protesters – the fatality of austerity. The messages of the protesters and these lines in Carcinogenic both point to the truths that scientists have since validated[17]. Talbot also uses the example of unsafe substances in his lyrics to communicate the perils of the long-term effects of austerity. Apart from the obvious emphasis on volume (ten pints), IDLES sing about inexpensive alcoholic beverages. Talbot mentions MD 20/20, an affordable alcoholic beverage colloquially known as "Mad Dog". The MD 20/20 is mentioned alongside "Bucky" which is the nickname of another popular alcoholic drink - Buckfast Tonic Wine. These drinks carry symbolic baggage given their association in the UK's popular imagination with particularly unpleasant hangovers. Their function is entirely utilitarian, without much regard for the sensory experience. It is about drinking to drink, instead of drinking to enjoy. When Talbot lists these drinks, he is pulling at the strings of a strong preconception that connects the MD 20/20 and the Buckfast Tonic Wine with a specific demographic and a specific experience. In practices of representation, it is important to discern in what kind of context is its object found. Even though the aforementioned drinks carry a strong association without much contextualisation, IDLES are putting them in a scenario where that association is all the more emphasised. The fact that the lead singer and lyricist couples G (Guinness), MD 20/20 and "Bucky" with high consumption (ten pints) puts it into the context of alcoholism which often comes as an attempt of "pain management" in light of adverse conditions, unsettled personal life, and uncertainty.

In addition to listing opioids, IDLES use the phrase "living a life on tick" to illustrate the precarity brought about by acute economic conditions. "On tick" is a British phrase meaning "with an agreement to pay later: on credit" (Merriam-Webster 2024d) and represents a dangerous financial reality that comes as a result of austerity. There is a causal relationship between the lyrics. The "life on tick" brings pressure on the austerity-afflicted population which is then dealt with substances that can act as

[16] Emphasis added by author
[17] Research from 2022 has shown that „More than 330,000 excess deaths in Great Britain in recent years can be attributed to spending cuts to public services and benefits introduced by a UK government pursuing austerity policies" (Butler 2022)

"pain management" (London School of Economics and Political Science 2021). IDLES continue with the list of "pain management" substances in the next lines. This time, instead of drugs it is alcohol.

It is also important to take note of the aesthetic choice to refer to these drinks by their nicknames as opposed to their actual names. Guinness is "G" MD 20/20 is "Mad Dog 20/20" while Buckfast Tonic Wine is "Bucky". The colloquialisation of language serves as a marker which points to a particular stratum of society. This kind of language is associated with a younger, male demographic from working-class backgrounds, a subgroup particularly susceptible to austerity measures and their long-term effects.

7. DOWN WITH THE CROWN: IDLES AND THE ANTI-MONARCHY MOVEMENT

One of the defining ideological characteristics of punk music and the subculture generally is its rejection of hegemonic structures and authority, and as a result, sympathy towards anarchy. In the context of the United Kingdom, one person and institution has been consistently under the receiving end of antagonising punk lyrics – the Queen. The monarchy, and the Queen (now King), personify and embody the very enemies of the subculture's egalitarianist creed. However, much of the negative press that accompanied early punk and its references to anarchy and republicanism had more to do with their presentational and performative irreverence (Street et al. 2018, p. 287). Given punk's sympathy towards anarchy, one might wonder whether republicanism can actually fit into that narrative as it also represents an established political structure. It needs to be noted that while punks actively support replacing these hegemonic systems, that does not mean that they necessarily advocate for complete chaos and disorder. By rejecting these systems "many punks began to champion anarchy, not in the sense of disorder but in the sense of order without centralized rulership" (Ambrosch 2018, p. 58). Punk historian Craig O'Hara supported this view of punks as being less politically and ideologically radical than what they were represented as: "Punks have not taken part in any violent revolutions or political assassination attempts and are certainly not violence oriented despite what the press may say" (Ambrosch 2018, p. 59: O'Hara 1999, p. 92). Although acknowledging their hostile attitude towards the police, O'Hara claimed that anarchist punks are largely nonviolent (Ambrosch 2018, p. 59). As a band that is closely related to the ideological postulates

of punk, IDLES are sympathetic to the republicanist cause as can be seen in the way Talbot intersperses anti-monarchy themes across their songs.

When it comes to organised movements, anti-monarchy sentiment and the spirit of republicanism in the United Kingdom has most notably been captured by a group called Republic. Republic is a "membership-based pressure group campaigning for the abolition of the monarchy and its replacement with a directly elected head of state" (Republic 2024a). The group was established in 1983 (Taylor 2023) but has gained more prominence and media attention in recent years, especially following the protests in response to King Charles' coronation. Although a relatively small movement (the anti-monarchy protests still have not managed to attract numbers comparable to Black Lives Matter or Occupy movements), its relevance is on the ascendancy given the gradual change of public opinion regarding the status of the monarchy. A YouGov poll from January 2024 revealed that less than half of Britons[18] support the monarchy (YouGov 2024). Another agency conducting research on public opinion, IPSOS, has also regularly conducted polls on this topic which revealed a fall of monarchy support rate from 80 to 65 percent in the period between 2012 and 2023 (IPSOS 2023).

7.1. THE PERFORMANCES AND MESSAGES OF ANTI-MONARCHY PROTESTS

As previously mentioned, one particularly significant event for the group Republic was King Charles' coronation. The protests it held in response and the media scrutiny it was under, made it enter the public consciousness. A message that dominated this protest was written on bright yellow placards in plain black font: "Not my king" (PA Media 2023). The message works on a few different levels. Firstly, it supports one of the main arguments of republicanists, which is the fact that the entire concept is undemocratic. Royalty is not elected and not held to the same level of accountability as an elected politician who can lose their seat in case of a strong negative shift of public support. The king is not elected and is therefore literally not the protesters' choice. Secondly, the slogan emphasises the gap between royalty and the general populous. It serves to say that the monarchy with its privileged positions is not representative of its people, and consequently ill-suited for the position it is occupying. It implies a difference of values between the monarch and the protesters. The "Not My

[18] 45% of Britons prefer the current system with the Monarchy at the helm. On the other hand, 31% would prefer an Elected Head of State, while the other respondents were undecided.

King" placards were accompanied by the straightforward "Abolish the Monarchy" boards and signs written in following the same yellow and black visual identity of the Republic group and bearing its stamp below the message (Sky News 2023). The coronation protests from 2023 were much more homogenous in their visual presentation compared to other social movements. There was a saturation of just two slogans which dominated the protest landscape and its media coverage (BBC 2023; NBC News 2023; The New Bubola 2023; Sky News 2023). These placards followed a simple visual identity. The two most prominent slogans "Not My King" and "Abolish the Monarchy" featured only text without any additional symbols, or wordplay. The rare embellishments of their design were added hashtags to "#Not My King" which aimed at strengthening the social media presence of the protest and the Republic logo featuring on some of the placards (Sky News 2023b; Yahoo 2023). Other slogans were fewer in numbers. Some repeating ones among the rest include the "King Parasite" placard (Barton 2023) which highlighted a key point of the anti-monarchy discourse. By labelling the monarch as a parasite, protesters hint at the expenses incurred by the institution which is ultimately levied on the general population. Another example is the "Citizen not subject" (Daily Mail 2023; Sipa USA 2023) placard which became a staple of Republic merchandise (Republic 2024b). This phrase alludes to the idea that by keeping the monarchy, the United Kingdom continues to subscribe to an outdated system, one which goes so far back in time that it resembles a historical era where citizenship as we know it today did not exist. By making the phrase revolve around the dichotomy of the citizen versus subject, protesters outline a perceived lack of egalitarianism in a system in which they are "subjected" to a much more powerful body.

One explanation which could justify the limited visual performance of the 2023 coronation protests is that in strictly adhering to such a bright and intense colour combination the protesters improve their visibility and consolidate their relatively limited numbers[19]. They appear as one homogenous group and thus strengthen their formidability which would have been more difficult to assert if their protesters were not so visually unified. This ties in with Tilly's social movement theory which describes "collective enactments of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment" (Tilly 2008, p. 121) as a key aspect social movement performance. All in all, the key

[19] While there were no official statistics revealing the number of people involved, Republic leader Graham Smith was on record in the run-up to the protest saying he expected 1700 people to join (Serhan 2023)

messages relied on by the Republic group and associated protesters during the 2023 coronation protests were: (1) the monarchy's incompatibility with the principles of representative democracy, (2) a difference of values between royalty and protesters, (3) the cost of the institution's operation and its representation as a burden on "ordinary people", (4) a call for the abolition of the institution and (5) the representation of monarchy as undermining egalitarianism.

7.2. THE SUBTLE REVOLT OF GRACE

The coronation did not just upset the Republic group and associated protesters, it also made an impact on IDLES and their principal songwriter. His dissatisfaction found its way into IDLES' latest full-length release - Tangk. Released on 16 February 2024, Tangk is the band's fifth LP, and its first since King Charles sat on the throne. Although branded by the band as a "love album" (Hawkes 2024), the material continued exploring anti-monarchy themes and lyrics. However, there are significant differences between their approach on previous albums and on this one. First and foremost, instead of the Queen (punk enemy number one), the lyrics now reference the King. Secondly, in keeping with the overarching theme of the album, some of these messages are wrapped in a much more subdued and restrained aesthetic package. A perfect example of this is the song Grace which features some of IDLES' gentlest instrumentation and vocals. Although still featuring a powerful and prominent bass, the bassline outlines a major harmony instead of the usual minor or atonal sound characteristic for the Bristol group. There is a sense of serenity given by the music which is quite unusual for a punk band. The song's dynamics are relatively quiet (especially for a punk song). Yet, in the sea of musical surprises of Grace, the biggest one is Talbot's vocal delivery. The singing is melodic and restrained, with an almost lullaby-like quality. The singer's voice in this song stands alone when compared to the rest analysed in this paper. Talbot sings in an unusually soft manner, and as a consequence he does not strain his voice like he typically does when he pursues a loud vocal delivery. This, in turn results in absence of vocal distortion and growl, Talbot's trademark and a sonic aesthetic which features heavily in IDLES' other releases. By turning away from the established vocal style, Talbot also moves away from what Ambrosch (2018, pp. 25-30) describes as the standard "inarticulacy" of punk vocals and its deep political implications. Punk inarticulation is "best understood as an expression of cultural dissent, as a deliberate inversion of established forms of musical-lyrical reproduction" (Ambrosch 2018, p. 27) and a "rejection of mainstream

pop humanism in favor of resentment and dread" (Ambrosch 2018, p. 27; Greil 2011, p. 76). By replacing the dissenting, provocative, and agitating delivery in favour of a more agreeable and less harsh sound, IDLES shed the political implications associated with usual punk delivery. Grace's performance is therefore not inflammatory and confrontational which means that its way of featuring anti-monarchy ideas stands in contrast to the performances of social movements which are antagonistic by default (Benford and Hunt 1992).

The phrasing of vocals in Grace is equally important in this regard. The melodies and phrases are sung in a legato[20] manner. The words are uninterrupted and given ample time. Once again, this is an unusual musical choice seeing as Talbot prefers more rhythmic, staccato singing where "shorter bursts of attack and decay in contrast can suggest energy, excitement or disquiet" (Machin 2010a, p. 15). Elongated note decay is an important semiotic resource as it "suggests lack of haste and relaxation, a lingering in the emotion" (Machin 2010a, p. 15). What kind of emotion this is depends on the musical context. Machin suggests that "if the notes are major notes this could be dwelling in pleasure" (Machin 2010a, p. 15). Given Grace's major key melodies and harmony, the words get an airy, calm and content feeling. Another in the long series of musical exceptions of the song is its melodic motif development. Unlike in a song like Grounds where the range of the melody's pitch is limited, Grace is characterised by larger intervallic jumps. Talbot incrementally ascends in pitch and reaches fairly high notes. This melodic ascension is a tactic often used in national anthems given how "a gradual slide from low to high pitch, gives a sense of a picking of spirits" (Machin 2010a, p. 5). All in all, Grace is characterised by choices which fall outside the musical legacy of punk music. By borrowing from another language, IDLES' construct an anti-monarchical sentiment that does not correspond to usual punk representation.

Even when the song goes to new sections and goes through dynamic changes, the instrumental lifts are gentle and gradual. The beginning of Grace is marked by quiet drumming and singing almost coming to the point of a whisper. As it approaches the chorus, Talbot opens his voice up more, but still keeping a tender delivery and melody.

[20] Legato means a „a smooth and connected manner of performance" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2024a), while staccato denotes „short clear-cut playing or singing of tones or chords" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2024b).

No god, no king
I said love is the fing
No crown, no ring
I said love is the fing
No god, no king
I said love is the fing (IDLES 2024b, 1:26)

If one were to read these lyrics knowing they are written by a punk band but without listening to the music, they would have a very different impression of the words. By using a different musical language, one of tranquil sounds and singing, IDLES subvert the standard punk representation of anti-monarchism. The serenity of the vocals and the major key harmony significantly augment what the lyrics stand for. The essence of anti-religion and anti-monarchism remains even in this surprisingly calm musical environment. However, now the anti-monarchism is no longer aggressive and violent.

7.3. THE NOT-SO-SUBTLE REVOLT OF GIFT HORSE

IDLES incorporate anti-monarchist themes in another song from the same album. In Gift Horse, the band features ideas that strongly resonate with messages from the 2023 Coronation protests. It is no surprise therefore that the protests left an impression which found its way back into the band's songwriting. In an interview just before the release of the album, Talbot described the anti-monarchy sentiments that made their way into the album: "Yeah, kind of. The coronation was happening, and it was pissing me off. Because as an anti-monarchist, I don't like occupying other countries, an unelected leader, the House Of Lords…" (Perry 2024).

Gift Horse is IDLES' return to form, at least in its sonic qualities. The sound of the song is loud and uncompromising and thus very different from the subtleties of Grace.

The most relevant song section for analysis of anti-monarchist themes is the song's bridge. It starts off with lyrics that echo the Republic slogan "Citizen not subject" in its rejection of monarchy as the supreme authority.

My baby, she, she's so raw
I give her love, and she gives me more
Ask us to kneel and bow to the floor
She say "No" and she ask "What for?"
My baby, she, she's so strong
She talks me straight when I'm doing wrong
Ask us to sing your empire songs
She laughs, tells you where I'm from (IDLES 2024a, 2:31)

In "Ask us to kneel and bow to the floor" Talbot uses lyrical imagery that is strongly associated to the context of British royal etiquette and associated formalities. Its literal

interpretation evokes images of curtsying and the rites of knighting. It also uses the acts of kneeling and bowing as symbols of succumbing and accepting one's authority. In other words, IDLES are symbolically expressing their refusal to be subjected, thus doubling down on the "Citizen not subject" idea of Coronation protests. Apart from the strong anti-monarchy sentiment expressed in the song, it is also worth remarking that Gift Horse has a pronounced feminist dimension. The bridge section has two characters – Talbot and "baby". What is noteworthy is the fact that "baby", a female character, assumes the dominant role. She is active, while Talbot is passive. In establishing a power balance where the woman is written as a subject, not an object, IDLES form a subversive feminist narrative.

Returning to anti-monarchy themes, the rhetorical question "What for?" shows a deeper divide between the two characters. The fact that the "baby" is the one who says no to kneeling and questions the act, implies that Talbot's character would have gone through with it without her. His inertia represents the passive and perhaps lethargic part of British society which accepts the status quo without much critical evaluation. On the other hand, the "baby" stands for the quintessential anti-monarchy activist. She stands up (literally and metaphorically), questions authority, and rallies others in her cause.

> My baby, she, she's so great
> I wake up grateful every day
> My baby is beautiful
> All is love and love is all
> Fuck the king
> He ain't the king, she's the king (IDLES 2024a, 3:17)

The lyrical character "baby" in Gift Horse is Talbot's daughter. In the same, previously mentioned, Mojo4Music interview, he gives a rationale for the less vehement anti-monarchism characteristic for Tangk: "And I want to talk about that through love – not anger, not hate, not disdain. Just: my daughter's my king, he's not my king. Tell me different! Prove to me different! You can't." (Perry 2024). This is an important detail to keep in mind because it reveals the potency of "He ain't the king, she's the king". By writing lyrics which cannot be literally true, Talbot does not refer to the title of a king in its isolated power and capacity. Instead, the title of the king is represented through the power a king holds in relation to its subordinates. The lyrics convey the idea that the monarch does not hold any power over Talbot. In other words, Talbot is not subordinated to the monarch, but the well-being of his daughter. The lyrics could thus be amended to say "He ain't the king *of me*" to literally relay the idea.

This whole passage is reminiscent of the key slogan of the Republic pressure group: “Not my king”. However, unlike the pressure group, IDLES focus not so much on the idea as a representation of the democratic issues that underpin monarchical systems. Rather, this line functions in a more personal and slightly less political capacity. Nevertheless, Gift Horse’s sonic aesthetics which heavily borrow from musical conventions of punk means that despite all the efforts to neutralise its point of view, the song is as violent, aggressive, and political as IDLES’ most politically charged work.

Much has been made by the band of the fact that Tangk is a love album, one which takes a different, less angry perspective on the topics the group has been writing about for years. While that is certainly true for the song Grace, Gift Horse does not live up to these promises. The song commences with an ominous sounding bass which plays on top of a simple drum hi-hat. Like many IDLES songs, Gift Horse starts off with much of its frequency spectrum being occupied by instruments sitting in the lower register. The low pitch of the bass guitar and kick drum make up most of the sonic information. This has real implications in the mood that such instrumentation sets up for the song since low pitches conjure up an atmosphere which evokes gloomy and dark undertones and emotions (Machin 2010a). The simple rhythm and tone of the hi-hat is metaphorically significant for the representation of the themes of the song. The rudimentary, equally spaced hi-hat rhythm sounds like the ticking of a clock. It gives a sense of an imminent boiling point and explosion, and a feeling of precarity.

The sound of the entire bridge section is cacophonous. It starts off relatively quietly and unassumingly following the wall of sound in the chorus. The instrumentation is deconstructed and starts building again from scratch. Firstly, with the drums, then repeating echoey guitar lines and stabs of formidable bass. The section is rounded with the addition of jarring untuned percussion in the background that plays randomly, with no regard to rhythm. Together with a somewhat whimsical guitar line, it joins to make an unsettling, almost disorienting aural experience. This section displays almost no level of musical homogeneity. The melodies of the guitar and vocals clash. The elements struggle to outline any sort of harmonic structure or consonance. It results in a collage-like aesthetic presentation where disparate components seem to be thrown together. The “wild” sound of the bridge is therefore in stark contrast and conflict to some of the “tame” messaging of its lyrics. Even though the song looks at monarchy issues from a more love-centric perspective (“All is love and love is all”, “My baby is

beautiful", "I give her love and she gives me more" etc.), Gift Horse's overall aesthetic packaging trumps the occasional reference to love and a slightly restrained lyrical approach. The fury of the instrumentation and the pace of Talbot's vocals are irreconcilable with the "love, not anger" narrative pushed by the band. This narrative is well supported by the sonic palette of Grace, where the slower tempo and sparse textures give a feeling of contentment. On the other hand, the speed of Gift Horse, the dramatics of the drums and Talbot's at times rap-like delivery do not leave the listener room to breathe and build up a state of aggravated tension. All in all, the musical characteristics give off a feeling of anger and urgency. In combination with a staunch anti-monarchist position of the lyrics, IDLES use Gift Horse to construct the image of the precarity of the monarchy and imminence of revolt. The band is challenging the authority of the king both lyrically ("Ask us to kneel and bow to the floor/ She say 'No' and she ask 'What for?' " and musically (fast tempo, overall loudness, cacophony of sounds).

In addition to this, the band uses an expletive in Gift Horse. Despite the fact that swearing is commonplace in punk, IDLES do not resort to explicit language often. Out of eleven songs on the Tangk album, only one (Gift Horse) contains explicit language (Genius 2024). It is therefore safe to say that the band's reluctance to saturate their music with swearing, emphasises the instances when they actually do it. This lyrical choice is consequential given expletives' linguistic function of an anger intensifier (Waynryb 2005, p. 46). Using the swear word in reference to the king conveys the author's desire for the abolition of the institution, but more importantly it brings a very strong adversarial sentiment. The meaning the word carries could have easily been transmitted by reformulating and euphemising the phrase, but the line would lose the sense of urgency and rage that the usage of the expletive propels. After all, swear words elevate the "cathartic and emphatic effect" of the associated idea given that they are inherently "emotionally charged and, therefore, highly expressive" (Ambrosch 2018, p. 49).

7.4. THE SARCASTIC SELF-DEPRECATION OF I'M SCUM

I'm Scum is a song from the band's sophomore studio record Joy as an Act of Resistance. It is infamous for its live performances, with the most prominent one being the 2024 Glastonbury show. As an intro to the song, IDLES invited the Other stage audience to partake and join them in singing the "new British national anthem"

(Battison 2024). Talbot started a singalong with the crowd by singing “F*** the king” - a line from the band’s latest full-length album. I’m Scum was released in 2018, but IDLES started incorporating their “new British national anthem” as an intro to the song in late 2022 (Bonnano 2022), after King Charles succeeded the throne following the death of Queen Elizabeth II. This intro which now regularly accompanies the live performances of the song, solidified the anti-monarchy perspective of I’m Scum.

The offbeats accented by the snare drum make the song sound much faster than it actually is. The intro to the song is IDLES’ signature recipe of drums and bass playing together, though this time the instruments do not play simple sustained notes. Both the drum beat, and bassline are much more rhythmically intricate than usual. They combine to give the song an unusually danceable feeling. This is no coincidence given the fact that this emphatic on and off-beat tension has defined the dance basis of *cha cha cha* (Zagorski-Thomas 2019, p. 126). The instrumental of I’m Scum and especially the quick “Hey!Hey!” shouts on the song remind strongly of marching bands and army songs. Even more so when Talbot’s vocals kick in.

> I'm council housed and violent
> I'm laughing at the tyrants
> I'm sleeping under sirens
> Whilst wondering where the time went
> I'm scum, I'm scum (IDLES 2018b, 0:08)

Talbot sings in a structured call-and-response style of singing reminiscent of sea shanties, army marching songs and other functional communal folk music. He sings the first four lines in one rhythm and melody (call) and then “I’m scum, I’m scum” in another (response). The style of the song therefore means that even if Talbot’s lyrics are self-referential, his singing and melodic approach suggest a sense of community. Although he sings about himself (albeit sarcastically), he does not represent himself, but a larger group.

The lyrics above are the song’s introduction. With a few exceptions, its sarcastic style remains consistent. The tongue-in-cheek phrasing of I’m Scum draws inspiration from punk’s longstanding relationship with postmodernism and its associated lyrical legacy. In the paper *Postmodernism and Punk Subculture: Cultures of Authenticity and Deconstruction*, sociologist Ryan Moore expands on the link between the two: “Suffused with self-reflexive irony, these punks have recycled cultural images and fragments for purposes of parody and shocking juxtaposition, thereby deconstructing the dominant meanings and simulations which saturate social space” (Moore 2004, p.

307). Talbot's lyrical modus operandi in this song is using imagery that is associated with a particular Conservative construction and representation of the poor. Going back to Moore's findings, it can be said that IDLES use this construction which "saturates social space" and subvert it with sarcastic, self-referential writing. Talbot uses the image of council housing and "sleeping under sirens" to signify the underprivileged. Additionally, by describing himself (and by extension the poor strata of society) as violent, he references the classist and xenophobic social construct of the less fortunate which views them as dangerous and fully responsible for any negative circumstances they find themselves in. When Talbot sings "I'm scum" he is accepting this construct, although with a strong sense of irony, and uses it as a point of pride. The purpose of the entire concept of the song is to make a distinction between two broad social categories: the lower and upper classes (and later on, the aristocracy and monarchy). Signifiers of poor socio-economic conditions continue in the following verse ("minimum wage job", "just another cog").

> I'll sing at fascists till my head comes off
> I am Dennis Skinner's Molotov
> I'm lefty, I'm soft
> I'm minimum wage job
> I am a mongrel dog
> I'm just another cog
> I'm scum, I'm scum (IDLES 2018b, 0:29)

As explained before, thorough analysis of the song's imagery and lyrical content is contingent on understanding punk's postmodern legacy, especially in the context of its representation of hegemonic structures. This allows to put IDLES and I'm Scum in the context of a canon of punk songs which explore the theme of anti-monarchism in a similar fashion. Although not exactly an intertextual reference, the line "I'll sing at fascists till my head comes off" echoes similar framing of one of punk's most famous songs – the *Sex Pistol*'s *God Save the Queen* where the monarchy is represented as a "fascist regime" (Ambrosch 2018, p. 107). Even though the term "fascists" may be ascribed to a broad category of individuals, precedents show that its meaning in the language of UK punk is often linked to the representation of the monarchy. This is also strengthened by the reference to Dennis Skinner which further elevates the song's anti-monarchic perspective. Skinner, a divisive public figure, held the position of a Member of Parliament from 1970 to 2019 as a Labour politician (Pittam 2019). Along his socialist views (owing to his working-class miner background), he entered the popular consciousness through his irreverent republicanism. A BBC article on Skinner published following his electoral defeat, noted that: "His humorous heckles at the State

Opening of Parliament became one of the endearing features of Commons life, where he became well-known for expressing his republican beliefs by heckling during the Queen's Speech ceremony." (Pittam 2019). In likening himself to Skinner's "Molotov" (cocktail), Talbot conjures up a vivid mental image. He is an incendiary device, which uses Skinner's republican ideas as fuel for his own anti-monarchism.

As with the rest of the song, most of Talbot's self-imposed labels are sarcastic and therefore do not serve as a self-representation. To the contrary, these labels verbalise and represent how he is seen by others. By using the word "mongrel" which means a dog of mixed breed, Talbot represents the aristocracy and those of higher social status as dismissive of people without blue blood. Talbot reduces himself into an animal in the eyes of those above him in the social ladder. This ties into some of the accusations republicans make about the monarchy on account of racism. Peter Tatchell, a prominent British human rights activist, encapsulated this by saying that "the hereditary nature of the monarchy is 'racist by default', as no Black or Asian person could become head of state for the foreseeable future" (Childs 2024). This imagery also connects to the messaging of anti-monarchy protests which were marked by (perhaps paradoxical) support for Meghan Markle. Alongside the "Not my king" slogans, some protesters carried the placards with the figure of Markle and text saying: "The People's Princess" (Crawford-Smith 2023). This kind of messaging makes up the image of Duchess of Sussex as a relatable royal, and thus different from other British aristocrats. Such framing latches onto critiques waged against the British crown and accusations that Markle's alleged mistreatment was rooted in racist and classist attitudes towards her mixed origin (Ducourtieux 2022). By using the image of a mongrel dog, IDLES highlight the same problematic attitudes.

> Spit in your percolator
> I am procrastinator
> I over-tip the waiter
> Sarcastic amputator
> 'Cause I'm scum, I'm scum (IDLES 2018b, 1:27)

The line "I am procrastinator" sarcastically references what sociologist Brian McDonough calls the "social construction of unemployment" (McDonough 2021, p. 146). McDonough describes an "intensification in the discourse which depicts the unemployed as lazy or idle individuals who are disinclined to work" (McDonough 2021, p. 146). The figure of the procrastinator assumed by Talbot, signifies an individual who puts off available work and thus puts the blame on a person rather than

systemic issues. In sarcastically accepting the tags of “procrastinator”, “cog”, “dog”, “violent”, and “lefty” Talbot takes ownership of the judgmental language waged against the lower social classes whose aim is to discredit their misfortune by putting the onus on them. What this is essentially doing is constructing an “Us versus them” narrative. On the one side there is Talbot who stands against the *virtuous and patriotic* upper classes.

> I don't care about the next James Bond
> He kills for country, queen, and God
> We don't need another murderous toff
> I'm just wondering where the high street's gone
> 'Cause I'm scum, I'm scum (IDLES 2018b, 1:50)

In the sea of ironic one-liners, every now and again Talbot inserts lyrics which hold a level of sincerity. One of the lines that can be taken at face value as an indication of anti-monarchism is “I’m laughing at the tyrants”. The word “tyrants” constructs an image of an oppressive regime, to which the act of laughing stands for the author’s irreverence. The lyrics above work in a similar way as they break the overall sarcastic pattern and use James Bond as their central figure. Bond is used as the personification of dangerous UK patriotism and royalism[21]. The violence of Bond’s allegiance (“He kills for country, Queen, and God”) stands in juxtaposition to the supposed violence of the lower classes. It hints at the paradox of the conservative social construction which demonises those in the lower social strata, yet celebrates the violence and transgressions of the royalist upper class. To signify this, Talbot uses the derogatory word “toff” which is defined as “a rich person from a high social class” (Cambridge Dictionary 2024). This verse is essential in understanding the broader republican underpinning of I’m Scum.

8. THE CONSTRUCTION OF DRAMATIS PERSONAE IN THE DISCOGRAPHY OF IDLES

As a deeply antagonistic and anarchist subcultural movement, punk has not shied away from using proper nouns. UK punk’s mentions of the Queen and contemporary political figures are abundant. IDLES follow in these footsteps with references in their discography that range from Mary Berry and the Bank of England to James Bond and The Sun, and resort to simplified narratives and typifications. The function of these

[21] Polls show that patriotism and royalism go hand in hand. A public opinion poll from 2018 found that: „Almost eight in ten (79%) describe themselves as either “very” or “quite” patriotic (compared to 41% of non-Royalists)“ (YouGov, 2018)

proper nouns in IDLES' music is to symbolise ideas and concepts vividly and economically. This is one of the places where social movements and punk music intersect. In adopting the theatrical perspective of recent scholarship on social movements, one may inevitably view this process through the lens of a dramatic technique called Scripting (Benford and Hunt 1992). As mentioned before, one of the tasks of this technique is the identification of actors. Much like punk, a social movement may identify people, stereotypical characters, or institutions to represent an idea, or personify an addressee to which their political message is directed (Benford and Hunt 1992). For instance, in the contexts of both a punk song or a movement, an invocation of the Queen is usually paired with a politically charged message and a strong anti-monarchy sentiment.

The process of dramatis personae development in social movements involves constructing "identities and roles for antagonists, victims, protagonists, supporting cast members and audiences" (Benford and Hunt 1992, p. 39; Hare 1985; Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986; Snow and Benford 1988). One of the key concepts in establishing these roles is blame. Movements identify who is to blame for the transgressions against the social and ethical principles they are standing for. The goal of this process is to animate its participants and concentrate their efforts (Benford and Hunt 1992, p. 39; Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986, p. 470; cf. Coser 1956; Lang and Lang 1961; Klapp 1962). Some antagonists are commonly identified across various social movements. The Government, for example, plays the role of the villain in the Black Lives Matter movement, Kill the Bill, or the Rwanda protests. This is a logical development given that most social movements look to enact change in areas with problems that are structurally embedded. Consequently, attempts to lay blame on institutions and officials often lead to governments, prime ministers, and politicians.

This section will present a short overview of the dramatic characters that are constructed in the IDLES songs analysed thus far and contrast them with the way relevant social movements have used actual institutions, people, or constructed characters in their protests.

8. 1. DANNY NEDELKO

One of the central figures of the Black Lives Matter movement is George Floyd. His murder galvanised activists across the world as he became a symbol of racist policing

and police violence. Floyd's murder was an event that tipped over the feeling of social unrest and outrage and inspired the 2020 movements. "I can't breathe" – Floyd's last words as he was being suffocated - featured prominently in BLM protests in the United Kingdom (Abrams 2023, p. 605). What this did is it emphasised Floyd's victimhood, and also made him a representation of the horrors of racism. On the other hand, the Refugees Welcome movement in the UK is less specific when it comes to naming names. Instead, the role of victim in their protests was assumed by a more general group – immigrants[22]. Danny Nedelko's approach in the construction of victims sits somewhere in between these two. The band uses stereotypical representations of immigrants through the characters of the Polish Butcher and Nigerian Mother of Three. In this way, their victim characters are more specific than the one-size-fits-all Migrant character of Refugees Welcome, but they miss out on conveying a story of an individual which is captured by Black Lives Matter. It is also important to notice that IDLES identify several victim characters in the song at the same time, thus allowing for a more complex representation of the different problems that affect different immigrant communities. In this way the group avoids reducing the problems of immigrant xenophobia to a to just a single perspective.

8. 2. GROUNDS

Grounds' cast of characters is the least detailed out of all the songs analysed in this study. Although Grounds clearly communicates the author's frustration with the racism and classism permeating the United Kingdom, it is vague when it comes to identifying social groups, institutions, or people. As a consequence, there are no proper nouns in the song. Nevertheless, Grounds manages to establish a "liberal vs conservative" narrative, but its lyrics do it more by suggesting instead of explicitly calling out a person, or an institution.

8. 3. MOTHER

Both in the imagery of the music video and the lyrical content, the subject (Mother) stands for a victim of sexual violence. This is constructed through the wordplay of the song's chorus and reinforced by the video where Talbot's mother portrait is hung on the wall behind him. The scenography of the music video recalls commemorative

[22] Refer back to slogans first presented in the Danny Nedelko analysis chapter: "Immigrants make England better" (Melia, 2021) and "Migrants make our NHS" (Mead, 2023).

practices and is reminiscent of the solemn processions of Reclaim the Night marches. The song also mirrors RTN's emphasis on the gender power imbalance and in doing so puts the role of antagonists to men.

8. 4. NE TOUCHE PAS MOI

Ne Touche Pas Moi heavily leans on the messaging of Reclaim the Night, a feminist movement focusing its efforts on combatting the problems of sexual violence and harassment. The song is another one of the instances where the singer assumes the role of the victim. This time, however, that role is not played by Talbot as is usually the case. His duet partner Jehnny Beth offers a female voice (both metaphorically and practically) to the song and uses her platform to sing for women affected by sexual assault. Just like Reclaim the Night, where participants use marches to express condemnation of catcalling, IDLES express the same scornful critique by directing the message of the song to catcallers.

8. 5. CARCINOGENIC

While Grounds is a good example of a song where IDLES do not construct characters in the explicit fashion of "movement dramas" (Benford and Hunt 1992, p. 39), the lyrics of Carcinogenic are saturated with "typifications of opponents as immoral, evil or villains" (Benford and Hunt 1992, p. 39). The opportunistic boss who profits off the work of his subordinates is set against the struggling employee on a minimum wage. Nurses and teachers are antagonised by politicians who put strain on the social system by starving it of resources. The song uses bold language and makes references to alcoholism and substance abuse, two problems that befall the working class in times of austerity measures. The policies of austerity are presented in Carcinogenic as a perfect example of how the power of the few has the potential to inflict pain on the many.

8. 6. GIFT HORSE AND GRACE

Gift Horse and Grace feature similar ways of constructing their Dramatis Personae. They both resort to the typical-for-punk rejection of the monarch (although Grace does it through an aesthetically subtler approach). What is interesting about these songs is that contrary to what might be expected, the protagonist here is not Talbot or the band. Both Grace and Gift Horse feature female characters that give Talbot a new anti-

monarchical perspective. In Gift Horse, that is the singer's daughter, whereas in Grace it is not possible to claim with certainty the exact identity of the female character. It is these characters who drive the subversion, not Talbot.

8. 7. I'M SCUM

Just like Danny Nedelko, I'm Scum uses stereotypical representations to illustrate a character of a victim. However, unlike Danny Nedelko, these representations are self-referential ("lefty" and "snowflake"). What is interesting about this song is that some of its characters play multiple roles concurrently. Talbot, as a "lefty" and "snowflake" embodies the victim of the social and political inequality of Britain. At the same time, he assumes the role of a protagonist. Protagonists are: "Those identified as having the capability of overcoming injustice or solving the problematic situation […] They are scripted as the embodiment of good, the negation of all that the antagonists represent." (Benford and Hunt 1992, p. 40). In the line "This snowflake's an avalanche" (IDLES 2018b), Talbot likens his ability to affect change to the sheer force of an avalanche, and in doing so positions himself as a protagonist. On the other hand, IDLES take the Queen and James Bond to personify an image of a violent and supremacist sense of Britishness. They are the revered characters of those who call Talbot "lefty" and "snowflake", and as such, they must be rebelled against.

9. CONCLUSION

This paper set out to investigate the strong relationship between social movements and music through a case study perspective. Punk, a genre ripe with overt political messaging, was identified as a particularly potent area for research concerning the intersection of music, politics, and social justice. The magnifying glass was thus focused on IDLES, one of the most high-profile bands of the modern United Kingdom punk scene. Drawing on the scholarship which established the inherent theatrical performativity of social movements, the paper's aim was to outline the common points of the ways a punk band and a contemporary social movement communicate and perform political messages. In addition, the research focused not only on the performance, but the representative aspect as well. In other words, the paper used concepts relating to movement performance, semiotics, and representation to examine the ways in which IDLES' songs and videos feature ideas of some of United Kingdom's most prominent social movements. The paper concentrated on different

areas of socially conscious politics: anti-racism, anti-xenophobia, feminism, anti-austerity and republicanism. Black Lives Matter and Refugees Welcome UK movements were used as a basis for research on UK social justice relating to anti-racism and xenophobia. Reclaim the Night has been identified as a relevant representative of feminist social action, while the Occupy and UK uncut movements served as an illustration of anti-austerity messaging. Finally, in the true spirit of punk, the research took inspiration from the recent rise of British republican sentiment and the nascent of the group Republic to evaluate how anti-monarchist ideas feature in the work of IDLES.

The study established a clear pattern in the ideological consistency of the band's songwriting. The politics of IDLES' messages remained in line with the subversive ideological legacy of punk, thus confirming the initial hypothesis stated at the beginning of this work. The analysis of the Bristol quintet's discography showed a clear support for the anti-hegemonic ideals permeating contemporary UK social movements. This is exemplified by the visual and lyrical displays of solidarity with minorities in Danny Nedelko.

One prominent way in which IDLES feature their political support for the affected communities is through the tactic of recontextualisation. The band takes contentious visual symbols, politically charged lyrics, and narratives which dominate the media discourse, and reposition them inside of a different context to alter their meaning. In Danny Nedelko, IDLES reclaim the "OK" symbol that has been co-opted by far right. The band undermines its radical xenophobia by putting it instead in the environment of diversity, friendship, and love. IDLES often employ minority stereotypes for the same purposes. Once again, Danny Nedelko references the right-wing constructs of immigrants which highlight their supposed parasitic nature (Nigerian Mother of three and Polish Plumber), but now associating them with success, community, and love. At times, the band accompanies the tactic of recontextualisation with staunchly postmodern aesthetics characteristic for the punk genre. A key example of this is the self-reflexivity, irony, and sarcasm of the delivery of I'm Scum, which moves away from the meaning of the word "snowflake" as it is understood in the right-wing representation of liberal *hypersensitivity* and instead attributes to it a feeling of power which is facilitated through aggressive sonic accompaniment.

When it comes to social movement performances, the paper established similarities in the ways social movements and IDLES use straightforward typifications to which they direct their messages and attribute blame. Both the band and the pressure group Republic use the figure of the King as an embodiment of the peril of monarchism and use it as an addressee of their antagonising and revolutionary messaging. The band also resorts to constructing a victim character in their lyrics for whom the band then advocates. One such character is the disaffected working-class character of Carcinogenic whose personal disintegration the band connects to the consequences of austerity measures.

One of the key takeaways of this paper is presenting the significance of IDLES' aesthetic choices and their seismic effect on the formation of the group's discursive identity and construction of meaning of its representational practices. One needs only to go back to the analysis of songs Grace and Gift Horse. Although appearing on the same album and featuring similar republican messages, their markedly different instrumentation gives off two distinctive versions of anti-monarchism. This highlights just how consequential aesthetic choices are when it comes to a representation of a particular issue and how they sometimes suggest an interpretation that would not have emerged in case of just reading lyrics on a sheet of paper with no musical context .

All in all, this thesis contributes to relevant social movement and cultural studies scholarship in two principal ways. When it comes to social movement studies, the significance of this thesis lies in the fact that it effectively utilises social movement theories connecting dramaturgy and protest, but in a different artistic field. It is a proof of concept translated to another research area. The study proves the relevance of Benford and Hunt's (1992) theoretical framework in disciplines that are not necessarily connected with theatre but are still performance centric. This paper works to bring analysis of social movements and performing arts even closer together and can serve as a stimulus for further multidisciplinary research. Secondly, the thesis presented a methodology that is useful for research relating to analysis of music artists, scenes, and genres through the perspective of politics.

One evident limitation of this paper is the scope of its focus and primary sources. While the formal constraints of the thesis rendered a more elaborate investigation impossible, it is still worth noting that a more complete analysis of how IDLES feature the ideas of social movements in their work would feature a larger body of songs. This

is simply because, as an overtly political band, IDLES have even more material to be analysed. Secondly, the methodology tried to account for the band's evolution in both the political and musical sense which meant covering their discograhy as thoroughly as possible from the band's inception to the present moment. Unfortunately, the thesis failed to analyse at least one song from each of the band's five full-length albums as there was no analysis of any song from the album Crawler. The limitation of the scope of primary sources is also seen in the study's focus on just songs and videos. In reality, IDLES' representational practices include more than just these two mediums. The band's album covers, promotional photos, and performances are all significant given that they help construct the identity of the group and communicate socio-political messages.

While acknowledging the method of this study is useful for further research, it must be mentioned that one of the limitations of this process is that the method does not account for the gap between performativity and empiricism. What this paper takes as a given is that the way that the band constructs and performs their messages can accurately reflect the political and ideological leaning of the band. This is not necessarily true. Although punk music has been characterised by a high level of sincerity which separated it from the hollow and glossy perfection of pop music, it is still a genre of a performing art. Despite the fact that punk generally places great importance on earnestness, punk music is still essentially a performance. It is not therefore possible to infer with total accuracy actual beliefs from performed beliefs. This is an important point to consider given how the ethos of punk transcends only music. The tag "punk" not only implies certain musical characteristics, it carries with it specific attitudes and a particular view of the world. This is why, in order to make conclusions on the state of contemporary punk, one needs to go beyond the band's performativity and venture into other spheres. Especially when it comes to the analysis of very successful, mainstream punk acts like IDLES, researchers need to take special note of how a punk band reconciles its popular status with the genre's subcultural and hegemonic status. Moreover, future research needs to examine all the artistic and ideological compromises that bands need to make for their music to be heard by a wider audience. Can a band truly position itself as an ally to the counter-hegemonic causes of social movements by playing corporate-sponsored events and festivals which only work to further engender the existing power structures?

As one of the most prominent bands of the genre, IDLES have not been immune to being at the receiving end of these types of questions. The band has also been heavily criticized for what some say is co-opting working-class culture and performing as a middle-class band under the guise of working-class musicians (Jones 2024). The point of these critiques is to emphasise the apparent hollowness of the messages conveyed by IDLES' music and performances. As a response to this, more comprehensive research into punk's political evolution and individual punk acts needs to take into account a narrative promoted by historian Anton Jäger who came up with the term Hyperpolitics to describe the current socio-political environment where everything seems to be politicised to an extent where the very meaning of the word is eroded. In Jäger's words: "If everything is political, then nothing is political" (Jäger 2022). This approach would give a fresh perspective on the question of performativity versus empiricism. At the same time, it would help recontextualise punk to the current era and thus move away from the constraints of a perhaps outdated view of the genre.

As mentioned previously, one of the implications of this paper is that it followed a methodology which can be used in the future as a basis for answering to what extent is the politics of modern British punk ideologically representative of the legacy and tradition of the genre. The obvious limitation of this approach is that it has just one subject in its focus – IDLES. In seeking an answer about the consistency of politics of contemporary UK punk with respect to its tradition, research would need to account for a much broader analysis that would include a larger number of bands from both the punk mainstream and underground. In doing so, potential studies would account for a larger portion of the whole punk music scene in the United Kingdom, which would make it better suited for making more general statements about the nature of punk in current times.

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

IDLES. (2017). *Mother*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BuQG6_evFc8

IDLES. (2018a). *Danny Nedelko*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkF_G-RF66M&pp=ygUNZGFubnkgbmVkZWxrbw%3D%3D

IDLES. (2018b). *I'm Scum*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrM5y-iCNiE&pp=ygUPaWRsZXMgaSdtIHNjdW0g

IDLES. (2020a). *Carcinogenic*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DiRc2YIRQWQ&pp=ygUSaWRsZXMgY2FyY2lub2dlbmlj

IDLES. (2020b). *Grounds*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRkUt9VnaR0&pp=ygUNaWRsZXMgZ3JvdW5kcw%3D%3D

IDLES. (2020c). *Ne Touche Pas Moi*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxt-ZaPFcO0&pp=ygUXaWRsZXMgbmUgdG91Y2hlIHBhcyBtb2k%3D

IDLES. (2024a). *Gift Horse*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HQrM5L9T1g&pp=ygUQaWRsZXMgZ2lmdCBob3JzZQ%3D%3D

IDLES. (2024b). *Grace*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gnd4jIBRfHE&pp=ygULaWRsZXMgZ3JhY2U%3D

SECONDARY SOURCES

A. Paul Hare. (1985). *Social Interaction as Drama*. SAGE Publications, Incorporated.

About. (2015). UK Uncut. https://www.uk-uncut.com/about/

Abrams, B. (2023). Mobilisation without opportunity: The UK's 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, *10*(4), 1–29. https://doi.org/10.1080/23254823.2023.2239328

AFP. (2016). [Photograph]. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-36063743

Allyn, B. (2019). *The "OK" Hand Gesture Is Now Listed As A Symbol Of Hate*. Npr.org. https://www.npr.org/2019/09/26/764728163/the-ok-hand-gesture-is-now-listed-as-a-symbol-of-hate

Ambrosch, G. (2018). *The Poetry of Punk*. Routledge.

Andy Reilly. (2020, September 16). *Interview: IDLES' Mark Bowen on their new Album Ultra Mono.* SNACK: Music, Film, Arts and Culture Magazine for Scotland. https://snackmag.co.uk/interview-idles-mark-bowen-on-their-new-album-ultra-mono

Aron, J. (2022). [Photograph]. https://thelincolnite.co.uk/2022/11/reclaim-the-night-march-for-womens-safety-in-lincoln/

Atkins, V. (2020). *British National Socialist Movement*. UK Parliament. https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-08-28/82636

Bakare, L., Mir, S., & Weale, S. (2020, June 8). Calls grow for black history to be taught to all English school pupils. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jun/08/calls-mount-for-black-history-to-be-taught-to-all-uk-school-pupils

Barton, A. (2023). [Photograph]. https://www.alamy.com/london-uk-06th-may-2023-a-placard-with-a-slogan-king-parasite-is-displayed-before-the-start-of-the-coronation-anti-monarchist-group-republic-stage-a-protest-during-the-coronation-of-king-charles-iii-the-not-my-king-demonstration-went-ahead-despite-the-home-office-issuing-warnings-about-its-new-powers-in-relation-to-the-pcsc-bill-that-passed-last-year-credit-andy-bartonalamy-live-news-image550781563.html

Battison, J. (2024, June 29). *Idles lead huge crowd "f*** the King" chant during Glastonbury headline set live on BBC*. LADbible. https://www.ladbible.com/entertainment/music/idles-glastonbury-king-chant-scum-265653-20240629

BBC. (2021, December 9). *Reclaim the Night Ipswich: March calls for end to gender-based violence*. Bbc.com; BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-suffolk-59601177

Benford, R. D., & Hunt, S. A. (1992). Dramaturgy and Social Movements: The Social Construction and Communication of Power. *Sociological Inquiry*, *62*(1), 36–55. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-682x.1992.tb00182.x

Bindel, J. (2006). *Julie Bindel on Reclaim the Night | UK news | The Guardian*. Web.archive.org. https://web.archive.org/web/20180528215527/https://www.theguardian.com/society/2006/nov/22/publicvoices.crime

Black Lives Matter UK. (n.d.). *Black Lives Matter Teaching resources for secondary school students*. Retrieved August 29, 2024, from https://blacklivesmatter.uk/Resources/v1_20%20Black%20Lives%20Matter%20Teaching%2011-18.pdf

Blagburn, F. (2016). *Jehnny Beth in conversation with Joe Talbot: Grit, pain, love*. Crack Magazine. https://crackmagazine.net/article/long-reads/jehnny-beth-in-conversation-with-joe-talbot-grit-pain-love/

Bonanno, J. (2022, November 6). *IDLES - I'm Scum ("F#@& The King!") at Enmore Theatre - 2nd November 2022*. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03DnWowzWSg

Bubola, E. (2023, May 6). *Anti-Monarchists Protest Charles's Coronation*. Nytimes.com; The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/06/world/europe/charles-coronation-antimonarchists.html

Butler, P. (2022, October 4). *Over 330,000 excess deaths in Great Britain linked to austerity, finds study*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/oct/05/over-330000-excess-deaths-in-great-britain-linked-to-austerity-finds-study

Cambridge Dictionary. (2024, September 25). *Toff*. Cambridge Dictionary. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/toff

Cammaerts, B. (2018). *The Circulation of Anti-Austerity Protest*. Springer.

Childs, S. (2024, May 13). *"Snooping" Claim After Anti-Monarchy Opinions Included in Government Disinformation Reports*. Novara Media. https://novaramedia.com/2024/05/13/snooping-claim-after-anti-monarchy-opinions-included-in-government-disinformation-reports/

Collins Dictionary. (2024). *The Squeezed Middle*. Collins Dictionary. https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/the-squeezed-middle

COOKE, D. (1959). *The Language of Music. [With Musical Illustrations.].* Clarendon Paperbacks.

Coser, L. A. (1956). *The Functions of Social Conflict*. Free Press.

Crawford, R. (1977). You are Dangerous to Your Health: The Ideology and Politics of Victim Blaming. *International Journal of Health Services*, *7*(4), 663–680. https://doi.org/10.2190/yu77-t7b1-en9x-g0pn

Crawford-Smith, J. (2023, May 6). *Meghan Markle Posters Displayed During Coronation: "People's Princess."* Newsweek. https://www.newsweek.com/meghan-markle-posters-displayed-coronation-princess-diana-protests-1798793

Dabb, A. (2022, March 16). *Reclaim the Night: A run-down of catcalling - The Mancunion*. Mancunion.com. https://mancunion.com/2022/03/16/reclaim-the-night-a-run-down-of-catcalling/

Danaher, W. F. (2010). Music and Social Movements. *Sociology Compass*, *4*(9), 811–823.

Derrida, J. (1972). *Positions*. University of Chicago Press.

Donne, J. (1642). *No Man Is an Island* [Poem]. https://allpoetry.com/No-man-is-an-island

Ducourtieux, C. (2022, December 9). *Harry and Meghan repeat accusations of racism against royal family*. Le Monde.fr; Le Monde. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/united-kingdom/article/2022/12/09/harry-and-meghan-repeat-accusations-of-racism-against-royal-family_6007201_135.html#

Émile Durkheim. (1965). *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: Free Press.

Ensminger, D. A. (2016). *The Politics of Punk*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Flacks, R. (1999). *Culture and social movements: Exploring the power of song*. In Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association.

Friebel, R., Yoo, K. J., & Maynou, L. (2021). Opioid abuse and austerity: Evidence on health service use and mortality in England. *Social Science & Medicine*, *298*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114511

Frye, J. (2024, February 1). *Democracy & Abortion Access: How Underrepresentation of Women in State Legislatures Threatens Freedom | Shanker Institute*. Www.shankerinstitute.org. https://www.shankerinstitute.org/blog/democracy-abortion-access

Gamson, W. A. (1992). *Talking Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Genius. (2024). *IDLES Tangk Album Lyrics and Tracklist*. Genius. https://genius.com/albums/Idles/Tangk

Getty Images. (2023). [Photograph]. https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12053517/Not-King-protesters-unfurl-flags-shout-anti-monarchy-slogans-Coronation-route.html

Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. University Of Pennsylvania Press.

Goodwin, J., & Jasper, J. M. (2015). *The Social Movements Reader : Cases and Concepts* (Third). Wiley Blackwell.

Gusfield, J. R., LarañaE., & Johnston, H. (1994). Identities, Grievances, and New Social Movements. In *New social movements : From ideology to identity* (pp. 3–35). Temple University Press.

Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*. Sage.

Hall, S., Evans, J., & Nixon, S. (Eds.). (2013). *Representation* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Hart, C. (2010). *Critical discourse analysis and cognitive science New perspectives on immigration discourse*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Hawkes, J. (2024, February 21). *IDLES: "All I'm interested in is love. Uncomplicated, uncompromised love songs."* Dork. https://readdork.com/features/idles-interview-mar24/

Heywood, A. (2013). *Politics* (4th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Hudson, H. N. (Ed.). (1856). *The complete works of William Shakespeare*. James Munroe & Company.

IPSOS. (2023, March 29). *Monarchy/Royal Family Trends - Monarchy v Republic 1993-2023*. IPSOS. https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/monarchyroyal-family-trends-monarchy-v-republic-1993-2023

Jäger, A. (2022). *From Post-Politics to Hyper-Politics*. Jacobin.com. https://jacobin.com/2022/02/from-post-politics-to-hyper-politics

Johnston, H. (2014). *What is a social movement*. Polity.

Jones, D. (2024, April 22). *Fat White Family's Lias Saoudi hits out at IDLES for "grandstanding on that woke ticket."* NME. https://www.nme.com/news/music/fat-white-familys-lias-saoudi-hits-out-at-idles-for-grandstanding-on-that-woke-ticket-3749375

Joseph–Salisbury, R., Connelly, L., & Wangari-Jones, P. (2020). "The UK Is Not innocent": Black Lives Matter, Policing and Abolition in the UK. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, *40*(1), 21–28.

Kirk, A., Leach, A., & Voce, A. (2020, July 13). Black British history: the row over the school curriculum in England. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jul/13/black-british-history-school-curriculum-england

Koca, B. T. (2016). New Social Movements: "Refugees Welcome UK." *European Scientific Journal, ESJ*, *12*(2), 96. https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2016.v12n2p96

Labor Arts. (2023). *Pyramid of the Capitalist System*. Laborarts.org. https://www.laborarts.org/collections/item.cfm%3Fitemid=428.html

LAMY, P., & LEVIN, J. (1985). Punk and Middle-Class Values. *Youth & Society*, *17*(2), 157–170. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118x85017002003

Lang, K., & Gladys Engel Lang. (1961). *Collective Dynamics*. Thomas Y. Crowell.

Lez Henry, W. (2021). Black Lives Matter, decolonisation and the legacy of African enslavement. In *Social Problems in the UK: An Introduction* (pp. 25–42). ROUTLEDGE.

Lichterman, P. (1999). Talking identity in the public sphere: Broad visions and small spaces in sexual identity politics. *Theory and Society*, *28*(1), 101–141. https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1006954611027

London School of Economics and Political Science. (2021, November 9). *Austerity linked to rise in number of opioid-related deaths in England*. London School of Economics and Political Science. https://www.lse.ac.uk/News/Latest-news-from-LSE/2021/k-November-21/Austerity-linked-to-opioid-related-deaths

Machin, D. (2010a). Semiotic Resources in Sound: Pitch, Melody and Phrasing. In *Analysing Popular Music: Image, Sound, Text*. Sage.

Machin, D. (2010b). Discourses of Popular Music. In *Analysing Popular Music: Image, Sound, Text*. SAGE.

Mackay, F. (2015). *Radical Feminism*. Springer.

Marcus, G. (2011). *Lipstick traces : a secret history of the twentieth century*. Faber and Faber. (Original work published 1989)

Martin, G. (2023). *Social Movements and Protest Politics*. Taylor & Francis.

McDonough, B. (2021). Precarious work, the new "gig economy" and unemployment. In S. Isaacs (Ed.), *Social Problems in the UK: An Introduction* (pp. 134–159). ROUTLEDGE.

Mead, J. (2023). [Photograph]. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/13/hundreds-gather-in-parliament-square-to-protest-migration-bill

Melia, M. (2021). [Photograph]. https://www.alamy.com/london-uk-pro-immigration-and-kill-the-bill-demonstration-protesters-rallied-against-government-legislation-aimed-at-curtailing-disruptive-protests-downing-street-whitehall-london-uk-image447615198.html

Merriam-Webster Dictionary. (2024a). *Definition of Atonal*. Www.merriam-Webster.com. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/atonal

Merriam-Webster Dictionary. (2024b). *Definition of LEGATO*. Www.merriam-Webster.com. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/legato

Merriam-Webster Dictionary. (2024c). *Definition of STACCATO*. Www.merriam-Webster.com. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/staccato

Merriam-Webster Dictionary. (2024d). *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Merriam-Webster.com. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/on%20tick

Mills, C. W. (1939). Language, Logic, and Culture. *American Sociological Review*, *4*(5), 670. https://doi.org/10.2307/2083575

Mohamed, E. (2024, August 2). *Southport stabbing: What led to the spread of disinformation?* Al Jazeera; Al Jazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/8/2/southport-stabbing-what-led-to-the-spread-of-disinformation

Mohdin, A., Swann, G., & Bannock, C. (2020, July 29). How George Floyd's Death Sparked a Wave of UK anti-racism Protests. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/29/george-floyd-death-fuelled-anti-racism-protests-britain

MOORE, R. (2004). Postmodernism and Punk Subculture: Cultures of Authenticity and Deconstruction. *The Communication Review*, *7*(3), 305–327. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714420490492238

Musolff, A. (2017). Dehumanizing metaphors in UK immigrant debates in press and online media. In *Contemporary discourses of hate and radicalism across space and genres* (pp. 41–56). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

NBC News. (2023, May 6). *Protesters arrested during Charles's coronation sign not everybody is crazy about the royals*. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/charles-king-coronation-protesters-arrested-apathy-rcna83175

Noyes, D. (2018). Blaming the Polish Plumber, Blaming the French Voter: Bogeys and Attributions of Belief in Liberal Politics. *The Journal of American Folklore*, *131*(522), 426. https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.131.522.0426

O'Hara, C. (1999). *The philosophy of punk : more than noise!* Ak Press.

Occupy LSX. (2011a). *Economics Statement*. Occupylondon.org.uk. https://occupylondon.org.uk/about/statements/statement-on-economy/

Occupy LSX. (2011b). *Initial Statement*. Occupy London. https://occupylondon.org.uk/about/statements/initial-statement/

Orrin Edgar Klapp. (1962). *Heroes, villains, and fools*. Prentice-Hall.

PA Media. (2023). [Photograph]. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-65466825

Pateman, C. (1980). Women and Consent. *Political Theory*, *8*(2), 149–168. https://doi.org/10.1177/009059178000800202

Perry, A. (2024). *IDLES interviewed: "He's not my king."* Mojo. https://www.mojo4music.com/articles/stories/idles-interviewed-i-dont-like-occupying-other-countries-an-unelected-leader-or-the-house-of-lords/

Perry, F. (2018, November). *Danny Nedelko: A Beautiful Immigrant*. Fred Perry. https://www.fredperry.com/subculture/articles/danny-nedelko-a-beautiful-immigrant

Pichardo, N. A. (1997). New Social Movements: A Critical Review. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *23*(1), 411–430. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.23.1.411

Pittam, D. (2019, December 13). *General election 2019: How Dennis Skinner lost his Bolsover seat*. Bbc.com; BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/election-2019-50777371

Poverty and Social Exclusion. (2023, February 24). *Austerity kills | Poverty and Social Exclusion*. Poverty.ac.uk. https://www.poverty.ac.uk/images/austerity-kills

Reclaim the Night: Home. (2022). Www.reclaimthenight.co.uk. http://www.reclaimthenight.co.uk

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2001). *Discourse and discrimination : Rhetorics of racism and antisemitism*. Routledge.

Republic. (2024a). *About*. Republic. https://www.republic.org.uk/about

Republic. (2024b). *Republic Shop*. Republic. https://www.republic.org.uk/shop/#!/Citizen-Not-Subject-White-Premium-T-Shirt/p/586376266/category=138556301

Roth, A. (2016, July 10). The Polish plumbers who annoy Brexit supporters come from towns like this one. *Washington Post*.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/the-polish-plumbers-who-annoy-brexit-supporters-come-from-towns-like-this-one/2016/07/10/0ff923fc-3d4d-11e6-9e16-4cf01a41decb_story.html

Saini, A. (2023, July 30). *Britain's Racism Isn't America's*. Foreign Policy. https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/07/30/race-black-lives-matter-us-uk-britain-american-culture-wars-tomiwa-owolade/

Santino, R. (2017). *Watching IDLES smash a table load of china up in their new video is oddly therapeutic - Loud And Quiet*. Loud and Quiet. https://www.loudandquiet.com/listening-post/watching-idles-smash-table-load-china-new-video-oddly-therapeutic/

Sawn-off Shotgun noun | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. (2024). Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/sawn-off-shotgun

Serhan, Y. (2023, May 6). *Anti-Monarchy Protesters Arrested at King Charles' Coronation*. Time. https://time.com/6277591/anti-monarchy-protesters-arrested-king-charles-coronation/

Simpson, D. (2023, December 4). *"Forty years on, nothing's changed": Fun Boy Three on The Lunatics Have Taken Over the Asylum*. The Guardian; The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2023/dec/04/fun-boy-three-terry-hall-lunatics-have-taken-over-the-asylum-ronald-reagan

SIPA USA. (2023). [Photograph]. https://www.alamy.com/london-uk-06th-may-2023-protesters-hold-not-my-king-and-citizen-not-subject-placards-during-the-demonstration-anti-monarchists-staged-a-protest-in-trafalgar-square-during-the-coronation-of-king-charles-iii-calling-for-the-monarchy-to-be-abolished-in-the-uk-photo-by-vuk-valcicsopa-imagessipa-usa-credit-sipa-usaalamy-live-news-image550819342.html

Skolnik, J. (2017, March 6). *A History of Anti-Fascist Punk Around the World in 9 Songs*. Pitchfork. https://pitchfork.com/thepitch/1460-a-history-of-anti-fascist-punk-around-the-world-in-9-songs/

Sky News. (2023a, May 6). *King's coronation: Protesters boo as monarch is crowned with more than 50 arrested*. Sky News. https://news.sky.com/story/kings-coronation-anti-monarchy-group-leader-among-activists-arrested-on-way-to-protest-site-12874307

Sky News. (2023b, May 6). *Meet the coronation protesters gathering in central London ahead of the King's coronation*. Sky News. https://news.sky.com/video/kings-coronation-anti-monarchy-protesters-gather-in-trafalgar-square-12874302

Slow, O. (2023, May 3). *Coronation protests allowed, security minister Tom Tugendhat says*. Bbc.com; BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-65466825

Snow, D. A., & Benford, R. D. (1988). Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization. *International Social Movement Research*, *1*, 197–217.

Snow, D. A., Rochford, E. B., Worden, S. K., & Benford, R. D. (1986). Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation. *American Sociological Review*, *51*(4), 464–481. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095581

Street, J. (2003). "Fight the Power": The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics. *Government and Opposition*, *38*(1), 113–130. https://doi.org/10.1111/1477-7053.00007

Street, J., Worley, M., & Wilkinson, D. (2018). "Does it threaten the status quo?" Elite responses to British punk, 1976–1978. *Popular Music*, *37*(2), 271–289. https://doi.org/10.1017/s026114301800003x

Stuckler, D., Reeves, A., Loopstra, R., Karanikolos, M., & McKee, M. (2017). Austerity and Health: the Impact in the UK and Europe. *European Journal of Public Health*, *27*(4), 18–21. https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckx167

Tagg, P. (1982). Nature as a Musical mood category. *Norden's Working Paper Series* . http://www.tagg.org/articles/xpdfs/nature.pdf

Tatar, M. (2002). *The annotated classic fairy tales*. Norton.

Taylor, H. (2023, May 6). What is anti-monarchy group Republic and what other royal events has it protested at? *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/may/06/who-are-anti-monarchy-group-republic-and-what-other-royal-events-have-they-protested-at

Taylor, V., & Whittier, N. E. (1992). Frontiers in social movement theory. In A. Morris & C. Mcclurg Mueller (Eds.), *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (pp. 104–129). Yale University Press.

Tillett, M. (2017). *Reclaim the Night*. Manchester Historian. https://manchesterhistorian.com/2017/reclaim-the-night/

Tilly, C. (2008). *Contentious performances*. Cambridge University Press.

Turner, S. (2021). [Photograph]. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-derbyshire-59451817

Wajnryb, R. (2005). *Expletive Deleted: A Good Look at Bad Language*. Simon and Schuster.

Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2001). *Methods of critical discourse studies*. Sage.

Worley, M. (2017). *No future : Punk, politics and british youth culture, 1976-1984*. Cambridge Cambridge University Press.

Wright, M. C. (1940). Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motive. *American Sociological Review*, *5*(6), 904–913. https://doi.org/10.2307/2084524

Yahoo. (2023, May 6). *Anti-royal Protests Break Out on Coronation Day*. Yahoo. https://autos.yahoo.com/anti-royal-protests-break-coronation-083634184.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAACV06gcvLMGDnQr07B8eVx4CrgBpX3hIzDgCCn--DVxpEf1un9MU_fqr_HjBEml2rsQUxeS4K093EnyAJ8OeJEnfN1dUUrshXjnPkk0riJ_5fKaQc8WmbFUnr7jjc40ZnUNuxVX3dP5Uex2SsiwC_g8VszPBwt076dhKs56jdBqX

Yinger, J. M. (1977). Presidential Address: Countercultures and Social Change. *American Sociological Review*, *42*(6), 833. https://doi.org/10.2307/2094571

YouGov. (2018). *Who are the monarchists?* Yougov.co.uk. https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/20809-who-are-monarchists

YouGov. (2024). *YouGov / Republic Survey Results* . https://assets.nationbuilder.com/republic/pages/739/attachments/original/1705435727/YouGov_January_2024.pdf?1705435727

Zagorski-Thomas, S. (2019). Analysing the Product of Recorded Musical Activity. In *The Routledge companion to popular music analysis : expanding approaches*. Routledge.