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**Abstract**

Way, L.C.S. (2018). *Popular Music and Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies – Ideology, Control and Resistance in Turkey Since 2002*. London: Bloomsbury. 216 pages; ISBN: 9781350016446; £85.50 (hbk), £26.09 (ppb); £ 25.04 (e-book).

Music is always related to power. It can create emotive allegiance to nation states, religions, and other powerful institutions. It can also be subversive and challenge power. For this reason alone, critical discourse studies should perhaps pay more attention to it than it has, so far, though there have been exceptions. A special issue of *Critical Discourse Studies*, for instance, analysed the ‘bestirring’ role of music in Nazi Germany (Machin and Richardson 2012), Khomeini’s banning of music in 1979 (Leone 2012) – music is ‘like a drug’ and ‘betrays our country and our youth’, Khomeini declared - and the powerful role of music in contemporary consumer culture (Graakjaer 2012). Overall, however, the critical study of musical discourse has only just begun. If it is now getting a new impetus, this is to a large extent due to the pioneering work of Lyndon Way, both in an edited book based on a symposium at CADAAD 2014 in Budapest (Way and McKerrell 2017) and in his new book, *Popular Music and Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies – Ideology, Control and Resistance in Turkey since 2002* (Way 2018).

The new book is, in part, a report from the field. As a musician and academic who has lived and worked in Turkey for many years, Way has experienced the relation between power and music in Turkey close up and first hand, and this can be felt everywhere in his book. He describes, for instance, how he travelled, with a group of friends, to attend a concert by the Marxist oriented Grup Yorum, only to be met with busloads of helmeted police who arrested the band members and dispersed the concert goers with water cannons, and he documents how the Turkish regime, clearly afraid of the power of music, has continually sought to control it, by refusing permission for concerts and festivals, blocking bands from access to broadcasting, and censoring and arresting musicians or forcing them into exile. At the same time, the regime uses the power of music itself, for instance during elections, when ‘vans and buses in the colours associated with each party drive through crowded urban

streets blasting out their political messages with the accompaniment of music', music that includes 'Islamic rap, rock-inspired music, and a variety of songs with roots in more Turkish traditional sounds' (p. 65). But the book is not only a report from the field and a thorough account of the recent political and musical history of Turkey, it also astutely analyses how the music of power and the power of music work – for instance in chapters on the use of music during election campaigns (chapter 5), on a concert of the already mentioned Grup Yorum (chapter 6), on the videos of politically inspired rock groups (chapter 7), and on online videos of the Gezi Park Protests, many of which edited footage of the protests to music (chapter 8).

As the title of his book indicates, Way's approach is multimodal – he pays attention not only to the music, but also to the lyrics and the visuals, for instance the dress, body language and audience interaction in concert performances and the images in music videos, exploring how these semiotic modes interact, and how images can anchor and politicize politically less explicit lyrics, for instance in Hayko Cepkin's 'My Storm', where the lyrics describe a love affair and 'have no obvious political reading', while the visuals 'tell the story of a struggle to break from the social conformity advocated as part of AKP's conservative ideology' (p. 117). The music, too, plays a critical role, using rock power chords 'with connotations of subversion and rebelliousness' and an 'up front' vocal style (p. 119). Way's emphasis on the political meanings of music is important, as much of the literature on popular music has focused on the lyrics of protest songs or on the youth cultures from which popular music genres stem, rather than on the music itself. Critical music analysis, Way stresses, is important, not only because music is easily remembered and recognized and can create an empowering sense of solidarity and cohesion in communities, but also because music can convey meanings and values. In his analysis of the music used in Erdogan's 2011 election campaign, for instance (p. 68ff), Way shows how the theme of 'unity' is expressed, not only by the lyrics ('we have travelled together' and 'followed the same path'), but also musically, by a unison of modern acoustic guitars and traditional Turkish instruments such as the oud and the zither, and by melodic lines that symbolize that 'travelled path' by first going down, through difficult times as it were, then up, towards a brighter future. However, Way stresses, music and image not only unite, they also exclude and divide. Collages showing members of the different groups which the AKP election ads seek to unite focus mostly on rural regions and religiously conservative groups, and the music excludes rock-related instruments such as electric guitars, preferring traditional instruments such as the shrill pipe, folk drums and bağlamas (p. 69ff). In some ways the approach of the Grup Yorum is not dissimilar from that of the AKP. Here, too, there is a stress on unity and solidarity. In the concert Way analyses, the audience is invited to join in unison singing, and the band blends rock and traditional Turkish music in a genre called Özgün, using electric guitars and drums as well as traditional Turkish instruments. The group's lyrics are explicitly political and anti-capitalist ('they work you like a slave', 'they steal your children's bread'), projected images show Marxist poets, musicians and political figures and footage of police storming a house where a revolutionary group held hostages, and the group members' gestures and dress are deliberately provocative and defiant.

Similar strategies are used in the music videos of other groups. A video of the group Kizilirmak, whose work highlights the plight of minorities such as the Alevi and the Kurds, shows portraits of resistance heroes and scenes from Alevi villages and uses a *zulna*, a traditional Kurdish instrument. In videos of the Gezi Park protest, footage of the protest is accompanied by music which, again, emphasizes unity, but also energy, through ascending melodies and lively tempos. Lyrics are sometimes changed, e.g. Depeche Mode's 'Enjoy the silence' becomes 'Enjoy the Teargas', but often it is the music rather than the lyrics which most clearly expresses the spirit of the protest – the solidarity of unison singing, the rallying cry of an ascending melody, the power of low-pitched guitar riff, the authenticity of vocal grittiness and lack of polish (chapter 8).

In his final chapter, Way draws the threads together, asking just how music articulates politics. Three core themes emerge: *authenticity*, representations that 'represent musicians as important, sincere and singing from the heart' (p. 176); *unity*, which can be found both in the music of power and in protest music, but which, in each case, also 'draws on discourses of division and polarization' (ibid); and *populism*, 'a simplification of issues and policies, reduced to popular sentiment' (p. 177), in which, Way says, drawing on Laclau (2005), 'the people' and 'the elite' are 'empty signifiers' that can take on different meanings in different contexts. This link between popular music and populism is borne out by an analysis of online posts commenting on videos of protest music, which often amount, Way says, to little more than a 'poorly informed shouting match rather than a Habermassian coffeeshop' (p. 174). This, together with the most recent post-coup developments in Turkey, does not make for a happy ending, although Way stresses that the internet, as opposed to the heavily government-controlled or silenced traditional media, at least allows different viewpoints to be aired. It is to be hoped that the book will, as it should, succeed in engendering discussion and debate on these critically important issues.

## References

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