

The Radical Populist Pitch of U2's (2009-2011) '360°' Tour

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Abstract

This chapter examines the concept of populism in the context of U2's (2009-2011) '360°' Tour and their fans' responses. Despite the commercial motivations of the tour, U2's music and concerts create a political experience for the fans. The band, and in particular Bono, are well known for their work as musicians, as well as their endeavours to make the world a better place. They use their charisma to influence the activities of the fans, and their support for various socio-political initiatives such as the 'One' campaign, an organisation of more than 9 million people around the world acting to end extreme poverty and preventable disease, particularly in Africa. Moreover, they apply their popular appeal and high profile to secure the support of politicians and government officials for their particular socio-political campaigns. They also use their status to acquire certain privileges and promotional opportunities. However, the band's strategy is not entirely successful due to their occasional misjudgement of local issues and the fact that some fans resist Bono's influence on their activities, as well as the political elements of U2's shows.

Introduction

The summer of 2019 marked the 50th anniversary of the 1969 Woodstock Music and Arts Fair, which attracted over half a million attendees and symbolised the counter-cultural ideals of music, peace, and love (Storey, 2006). This event demonstrates a long history of radical populism within rock music and concerts. The most famous politically and socially informed ‘conscience rock’ spectacle, as Shuker (2008) highlights, was the 1985 ‘Live Aid’ concert, which raised awareness and over \$200 billion dollars for famine relief in Ethiopia and was viewed on television by over two billion people (McPherson 2015, p. 18). McPherson (2015, p. 20) explains that the mid 1980s, and in particular the Live Aid concert in Wembley, were key to the development of U2’s careers as rock superstars and political activists. Featherstone (1991, p. 122) describes events such as Woodstock and the Live Aid concerts as “festive moments, in which the everyday routine world becomes transformed into an extraordinary sacred world” that can “invoke a more direct sense of emotional solidarity.” He suggests these events can “reawaken and reinforce moral concerns such as the sense of common humanity, the sacredness of the person, human rights [...]” This chapter argues that U2’s radical populist pitch promotes a message of peace and unity as a means of raising awareness of global humanitarian issues.

Despite their support for numerous social and political organisations and campaigns, the band have avoided aligning themselves with any particular political party or view. Instead, they have “clung to the more cautious catchall of human rights” (McPherson, 2015, p. 17). U2 can best be described as pacifists. Their advocacy of peace and non-violence and involvement with humanitarian organisations underscores the band’s radical stance. One of U2’s earliest associations with radicalism was their support for the ‘Give Peace a Chance’ exhibit at the Chicago Peace Museum, organised by peace activists. Furthermore, the lyrics of many of U2’s songs are inherently political. Influenced by their upbringing in a divided Ireland, one of the

band's most overtly political songs, 'Sunday Bloody Sunday', refers to events of 1921, where in retaliation for the killing of members of Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Irish Republican Army, armed forces opened fire on crowds attending a football match at the Gaelic Athletic Association headquarters in Croke Park. Twelve people were killed and 60 injured in what became known as 'Bloody Sunday'. A similar event occurred in 1972 in Derry where British Paratroopers opened fire on members of a Civil Rights march, killing 14 people and injuring a further 14. 'Sunday Bloody Sunday' captured the band's response to these events. However, before every performance, the lead singer, Bono, had to state "this is not a rebel song" in order to underline that it was not in support of the Irish Republican Army. The band's philosophy of peace and non-violence led them to perform at a concert in 1998 in support of the 'Yes' vote for the 'Good Friday Agreement' in Northern Ireland. This provided a unique publicity opportunity for Bono to hold up the hands of former First Minister of Northern Ireland and Leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, David Trimble, and John Hume, who was Leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party at that time. This acted as a symbol of unity for the divided communities of Ireland and reinforced U2's advocacy for peaceful resolution of conflict.

U2's music and concerts are full of socio-political messages, which are communicated through the song lyrics, short speeches and visual elements of the concerts. The band seeks support from their global audiences for selected socio-political causes they believe in and feature in their live music performances. Bono is widely acknowledged in the media for championing various humanitarian causes and lobbying key political and business leaders. McPherson (2015, p. 15) highlights that: "Bono has helped wring tens of billions of dollars for the poor out of the U.S. political system and tens of billions more from other developed nations." Bono has received many awards in recognition of this work, including several nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize, the Nobel Man of Peace award, an honorary knighthood and the United

Nations Ambassador of Conscience Award (McPherson, 2015). However, Browne (2013) debates the effectiveness of the singer's humanitarian work, arguing that it perpetuates global inequalities. Despite criticism of the band's efforts to address injustices and inequalities: "few have questioned U2's good intentions and even its leadership in reshaping activism in the modern world" (McPherson, 2015, p. 99).

U2's '360°' tour remains the most successful rock music spectacle in history. It was seen by nearly eight million people, broke numerous attendance records, and contributed to the band's commercial and artistic success, generating a gross profit of approximately £600 million (Billboard, 2011). However, despite the commercial motivations of the tour, U2's shows create a meaningful multi-dimensional experience for the fans and enable the band to connect with their audience, in order to gain support for the various socio-political campaigns they promote within and outside their shows. U2's concerts aim to raise awareness of, and support for, a range of socio-political themes and campaigns. They also offer cultural and political resources that entertain as well as help individuals to make sense of their worlds.

This chapter examines the concept of populism in the context of U2's (2009-2011) '360°' Tour and their fans' responses. It focuses on the relationship between music, politics, and audiences in the production and consumption of a rock music spectacle. The findings draw upon a larger research project, which aimed to develop a better understanding of the concept of spectacle and the 'spectacularisation' of rock music events. The research is underpinned by critical sociology and draws on a blend of netnography and ethnography. The research setting for this chapter focused on four concerts in different geographic regions and in different legs of the tour. The shows included Dublin, which took place in 2009, Istanbul and Moscow (2010), and Pittsburgh (2011). Rich qualitative data were collected in three phases, including preliminary online

research of selected U2-related websites, in-depth semi-structured interviews with 26 fans, which were conducted via Skype, and a qualitative content analysis of documentary material. Interviewees are referred to by pseudonyms to protect their identity. The locations of the concert that they attended are indicated in brackets, following their name. Data gathered from U2-related websites are acknowledged as online comments.

As a long-time fan of U2 since the 1980s, the researcher has extensive knowledge and experience of U2's music and concerts. Researching the spectacle as a fan-scholar combined critical reflexivity with detailed insider knowledge of U2 and their concerts to gain an empathetic understanding of the fans' experiences of the '360°' tour. Firstly, the chapter examines selected theoretical considerations that underpin this research, focusing on the concepts of populism and power. Secondly, the band's promotion of various socio-political causes, narratives and campaigns, and the fans' reactions to them are investigated. Finally, the fans' comments on the role of the band and their producers on their lives, actions, views, and opinions are discussed.

Theoretical Considerations: Populism and Charismatic Authority

Before examining the populist nature of U2's '360°' tour, it is important to outline the theories that underpin the analysis. Firstly, the notion of populism in the context of popular culture is considered. Secondly, selected theories of power are contemplated. Taggart (2000, p. 2) describes populism as a "difficult, slippery concept." He suggests that complex characteristics make general definitions of populism illusive. Populism exists "in different forms [...] and is associated with movements, leaders, regimes, ideas and styles" (Taggart, 2000, p. 5). McGuigan (1992, p. 2) argues that the term populism is normally associated with political as

opposed to cultural dialogue and is commonly considered negatively in both academic and non-academic analyses of culture. This chapter draws on the notion of cultural populism, which “recognises the intervening power of the industry, but which invests audiences with the capacity to reinterpret and subvert its messages” (Street, 1997, p. 18). Culture “acquires political significance through the interpretations put upon it” (*ibid.*). McGuigan (1992, p. 2) defines cultural populism as “diffuse political sentiments associated routinely with certain analytical protocols” (McGuigan, 1992, p. 2). Street (1997, pp. 151-161) distinguishes between conservative populism, which he argues is “creating rather than reflecting the ‘people’ and their pleasures,” and radical populism, which proposes that “people are actively engaged in the consumption of their culture; they are not its passive recipients.” Radical populists view popular culture as “an expression of the interests and tastes of those who make use of it [...] deriving from a desire or need to subvert a dominant ideology” (Street 1997, 169). This chapter argues that U2’s performances constitute a form of radical populism due to the promotion of socio-political themes within their concerts. McGuigan (1992) and Street’s (1997) ideas are useful for examining the socio-political themes and campaigns within U2’s shows as they suggest that audiences can generate meaning from their radical populist pitch. The chapter explores the idea of rock music events as part of a capitalist system of production, which, on one hand, forms a mass cultural product that is consumed by mass audiences; on the other, spectacles such as U2’s ‘360°’ concerts, through their affective power and the meaning the event presents to audiences and their political content, offer active, engaging and, to some extent, rebellious experiences (Grossberg, 1984).

Politics and political ideas, themes and narratives formed a key part of U2’s ‘360°’ tour. To comprehend the relationship between musicians, politics, and audiences, it is crucial to consider the concept of power, which has been a key focus for the most influential social

scientists, including Michel Foucault (1982), Antonio Gramsci (1971), Karl Marx (1990), and Max Weber (1947). This research draws on Max Weber's (1978) understanding of power, which focused on forms and sources of power in terms of coercion and authority. It especially draws upon Weber's (1947, p. 2) notion of 'charismatic authority'. Weber (*ibid.*) suggests there are two forms of charisma. It can be a natural characteristic or can be "produced artificially in an object or person through some extraordinary means." Rojek (2011) has argued that charisma is either mediated or unmediated. He acknowledges that the media frequently label entertainers such as Bono, Mick Jagger, and Beyoncé as charismatic. However, he questions the effectiveness of their charisma and suggests that although stars such as these may be able to "exert a magical effect on stage," this is not as successful when transferred to the political realm (*ibid.*, p. 98). Nevertheless, Weber's ideas are helpful in determining the nature of power in relation to U2 fan communities and music, and the concept of 'charismatic authority' remains useful for understanding the power of celebrity.

Socio-Political Themes, Narratives and Campaigns

Integral to U2's concerts are a number of recurring socio-political themes and narratives. These included world peace, freedom, poverty, and civil rights, which were communicated in the song lyrics, Bono's speeches, and in the show's visual displays. The issues were conveyed in a variety of ways, for example a recorded video message from South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu. This contained a general message of peace and unity and referred specifically to HIV/Aids support in Africa, and the 'One' campaign. Moreover, the band explained their support for a range of political initiatives and organisations, including the 'One' campaign, '(RED)' — which "work[s] with the world's most iconic brands and organizations to develop (RED)-branded products and services" to raise funds for HIV/AIDS programs in Africa

((RED), 2019) —, Amnesty International, and Greenpeace. They also addressed contemporary socio-political issues, for example Amnesty International’s support for the Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, though both Amnesty International and U2 have withdrawn their previous support for the Burmese leader in light of her failure to respond to the persecution of the Rohingya people of Myanmar; and the disappearance of Fehmi Tosuna, a Kurdish construction worker who was detained and subsequently ‘disappeared’ whilst in the custody of Turkish authorities due to his associations with the far-left Kurdish Workers Party or PKK (Amnesty International, 2019).

Fans reflected how these socio-political messages influenced their experience of the shows. They also contemplated their level of support, or resistance, to them. Furthermore, fans expressed their views on the band’s involvement in the various socio-political issues within the ‘360°’ show. For example, Julia (Istanbul) commented: *“Using the power of music which brought 50,000 people together and adding more meaning to what they do. i.e. using this chance to communicate what everyone should care about.”* Julia’s comment supports Featherstone’s (1991, p. 122) assertion that ‘festive moments’ such as U2’s concerts unite people in a form of ‘emotional solidarity’. Similarly, Darren (Moscow) remarked: *“Well the purpose of those [messages] is to enlighten people, to let them know what is happening around the world.”* Moreover, Alex (Moscow) explained:

You go to a U2 concert their agenda is more than the music, that's really, really clear. You don't just go and passively listen to the music and go yeah that was quite pleasant [...] the intention, explicit intention, I think of the band is to be political. I think Bono's particularly kind of clear political agenda, I think it alienate[s] people, I think it encourages people and then there's people like me who it does a bit of both to.

Sally (Dublin and Istanbul) explained that the messages are a call to action: “*they [the band] are always like ‘Hey come on’, ‘you can do things if you are active and you activate yourselves’. ‘The time is now’.*” Furthermore, Sally elaborated:

And also like Bono has plenty of times told that [...] well, it is ridiculous to be a superstar, but if you can make something out of it, you can use it. So you can use it for [...] for [...] getting through some ideas [...] it feeds itself: and they want to [...] they have you [...] you know the word empowerment? When you come to a U2 concert you go to empower yourself, actually. It is an empowerment process, isn't it?

Corner's (2000) notion of 'mediated persona' is useful for comprehending the fans' responses to U2's shows and how they help to empower fans. Corner (2000) proposed three modes of 'mediated personas' that are vital for successful political leadership. Firstly, mediated personas need to be 'iconic', in terms of the presentation of their posture and demeanour in photographs and interviews. Secondly, 'vocal' aspects in terms of what is said (the message), and the influence of how it is said are important (Rojek, 2013a, p. 58). Finally, 'kinetic' elements relating to the use of props, and the camera, to create a 'staged presence' are necessary in order to “dissolve any sense of them and us” (Rojek, 2013a, p. 60). Rojek suggests that Bono's 'mediated persona' attempts to persuade people that “we all share the same worries and fears” (*ibid.*). Similarly, Goodman and Barnes (2011, p.73) refer to artists such as Bono as 'development celebrities', who support and promote social and political causes. They refer to the creation of 'star/poverty' space, which is produced “in and through the materialities of photographs, images and texts that work to create the development celebrity alongside its transnational networks and connections of care and compassion.” These ideas help to explain

Julia's (Istanbul) remarks about the common issues that everyone should be concerned about. Sally's (Dublin and Istanbul) reference to Bono as a superstar denotes his iconic/development celebrity status. Furthermore, Josie (Dublin) explained how "*Bono would talk about Africa.*" Josie's comment illustrates the vocal aspects of Bono's mediated persona. Finally, Alex's (Moscow) reminiscences of the use of African flags within U2's shows demonstrate the kinetic elements of U2's mediated persona, in terms of their use of props and stagecraft to create a sense of unity with that continent. Alex commented that although he was unable to recall the specific socio-political messages, he did remember the band referring to Africa: "*my broad recollections from the 360 shows was it was quite a long [...] um... oh, I know, yes, it was Africa because when they did 'Streets' it was the African flags, didn't they?*"

Fans also commented on the specific themes, narratives and campaigns that were promoted within the shows. For example, fans referred to the band's support for projects addressing HIV/Aids and poverty in Africa. Josie (Dublin) described how Bono explained "*how the politicians would get together to help people with HIV or research for a cure. How they are funding that research. So, it was like more general political views from the band.*" Josie's comment confirms that fans are aware of Bono's support for research into HIV/Aids in Africa.

The band's support for Burmese pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, formed a key part of the '360°' show. Fans responded differently to U2's requests for them to wear masks of Suu Kyi during the event. For example, Sean (Istanbul) explained that he "*wore the mask of Aung San Suu Kyi in order to support her freedom.*" However, many fans were critical of this part of the show. Xavier (Moscow) commented: "*I thought it was a bit gimmicky, you know what I mean?*" Don (Dublin) made a similar comment:

And in the early days there was the whole Aung San Suu Kyi mask arrangement, which I just didn't really think kind of worked well; I am not sure what point it was meant to [...] obviously what point it was meant to deliver. But I am not sure whether every 1 in 50 people or 1 in 100 people putting on a black-and-white mask actually [...] actually delivered anything.

Furthermore, Don added:

And you could see [...] he dedicated the song to her and her visuals were on screen at the time. And you can make the connection between the song and the message; yet he just wants to put up this bloody barrier of, you know, [...] putting the bloody mask on your face while he is doing it.

These comments question the effectiveness of the band's desire to be taken seriously for their artistic and political work. Although Don acknowledges the connection between U2's music and their support for Aung San Suu Kyi, he criticises the band's attempt to encourage fans to support her freedom by asking them to wear a mask of the Burmese leader. Jones (2012, p. 119) explains that every night the band "would make a dramatic call for her [Aung San Suu Kyi] release, as a procession of volunteers from Bono's One advocacy organisation and members of Amnesty International, along with local volunteers paraded around the stage wearing masks with her image on." By refusing to wear the mask of Aung San Suu Kyi, many fans such as Don rejected the means by which the band communicated their support for the Burmese leader.

In addition to commenting on the specific social and political themes and campaigns, fans expressed their views and opinions on the inclusion of these issues within U2's shows. For example, Rick (Pittsburgh) explained:

I like that aspect of U2 shows [...] I happen to be fairly well aligned with a lot of their politics. Although I don't [...] I've never really thought about it or tried to sort out is that part of why I really like U2, for me they're sort of not necessarily connected but I do like that aspect of U2.

Furthermore, some fans explained how they actively supported socio-political initiatives, such as the 'One' campaign and '(RED).' They also acknowledged how they had become more aware of socio-political issues as a result of attending the '360°' shows. For example, Rick commented:

I did sign up to one campaign. I love the concept of the One campaign because they don't ask [...] they're not hounding you for money, they send you stuff and if you want to sign on to a petition or to send your congressmen a note, I do that [...] I respond to One campaign requests and I buy (RED) products whenever I can coz [...] I do believe in that, in what (RED) is doing in terms of buying HIV treatments.

In contrast, some fans expressed their opposition to Bono's political activism. Alex (Moscow) explained:

There's a lot I disagree with. I don't like, you know, I don't agree with Bono's answers to the questions. I wouldn't automatically support something because it was sort of put

forward by the band. I'm pretty fairly critical of a sort of capitalist solution to things and his kind of free market economics, [...] but I agree that he's doing what he believes is right and he wants to help people, and to that extent, I think it's a good thing, so I think they're treading a fine line.

Rojek's (2013a, p. 133) notion of 'celanthropy' is useful for examining the fans' views about the band's efforts to disseminate socio-political messages. Furthermore, his concept of 'moral energy' helps to describe the band's motivations to promote the various socio-political campaigns (*ibid.*, p. 25). Rojek (2013b: p. 25) distinguishes between 'ludic energy', which is 'hedonistic' and is associated with 'dancing [...] shouting, singing etc' and 'moral energy', which he explains is 'disciplined and constructive', and aims to improve society. Alex's (Moscow) remarks about the effectiveness of Bono's solutions to global poverty and HIV/Aids in Africa align with Rojek's (2013a) critique of the use of celebrity power to solve the world's problems. Rick's (Pittsburgh) engagement in U2's political campaigns, however, clearly contradicts this point.

This research demonstrates that U2's '360°' tour provided fans with cultural and political resources that help them to make sense of a range of issues. In this sense, U2's shows delivered a form of radical populism (Street, 1997, p.161). For example, Sally's (Dublin and Istanbul) comments suggested that the political messages within the shows were a call to action and a source of empowerment. Moreover, Alex (Moscow) acknowledged that the shows offered more than live music. He also referred to the explicit political agenda within U2's shows but explained that this attracts, as well as alienates, fans. Alex's remark illustrates the fans' agency in interpreting, accepting or rejecting the political essence of U2's shows, independently from the context in which they were produced (Fiske, 1992).

The Band and their Influence: Leadership and Control

The band, and in particular Bono, utilised their charisma during the ‘360°’ tour to influence the fans and gain their support for various socio-political initiatives, such as the ‘One’ campaign. Moreover, they applied their popular appeal and high profile to secure the support of politicians and government officials for their particular socio-political campaigns. They also used their status to acquire certain privileges and promotional opportunities. Furthermore, U2 expressed their support for, and solidarity with, various artists and political activists, such as Turkey’s Zülfü Livaneli, a local folk singer, by inviting them to perform at their shows.

During the concerts, many fans consent to Bono as their legitimate leader and do not hesitate to follow his instructions to jump, sing and cheer and show their support for organisations such as the ‘One’ campaign and the ‘(RED)’ organisation. Balandier (1972, p. 26) suggests that legitimacy is a “distinctive criterion of authority.” He explains that power develops as a form of domination; however, its effectiveness is limited by the consent that legitimises it (Balandier, 1972, p. 27). Furthermore, Street (2012, p. 76) argues that stars such as Bono are legitimised due to their popular appeal, and portrayal by the media, as the voice of the people. Some fans view Bono as the leader of the U2 community and explained how he is able to make them actively take part in certain activities. For example, Sasha (Pittsburgh) remarked: “I think Bono leads these things. Oh yeah, you do what he tells you to do.”

Vera (Moscow) confirmed Bono’s qualities as a leader:

I think he is special – he is a special person. He is the one who is born to be not only a showman, it is not about the show. He is an artist and he is great. So, he has [...] he has this kind of gift. And he decided that he is going to use this gift to help people and teach people how to love each other. And I strongly believe in it. I know it probably sounds naïve and [...] but I do believe in it.

Weber's (1947) notion of charismatic authority captures Bono's power over the fans' activities, as well as those of other artists such as Zülfü Livaneli. Vera's (Moscow) remarks about Bono's 'gift' as an artist imply that he possesses charismatic authority. Balandier (1972, p. 26) explains that "charismatic domination, [...] is emotional in character and dependent on total confidence in an exceptional man, by virtue of his sanctity, his heroism or his exemplary character". Furthermore, Vera's comments support the notion that Bono acts as a modern-day secular 'shaman'. Cohen (1972, p. 300) explains that the "shaman's authority is attributed by Weber to charisma based upon his magical powers and epileptic trances." Vera's comments suggest that Bono possesses magical powers in terms of his 'special' artistic talent.

Another fan, Ron (Pittsburgh and Dublin), reflected on how Bono uses gestures to influence the actions of the fans: "*But again, it is like Bono: he will do the thing with his hands like [...] 'Mysterious Ways', he will do this thing when he waves his hand to the left and the right and everybody follows him.*" Moreover, Ron remembered: "*Bono is always prompting the crowd to do certain things like [...] like 'Streets', you know, when he started doing that in 1987. He started going up-up-up and everyone just starts jumping up and down.*"

This research reinforces the notion that fans "place themselves instinctively under the authority of a chief" (LeBon, 2003, p. 129). Ron's statement about Bono's instruction to jump, and wave

their hands, acknowledges the effect of his authority over the fans. Similarly, Breda's (Istanbul) admissions about Bono's leadership highlight the effect the singer has on the audience. Furthermore, Ron's (Pittsburgh and Dublin) remarks about how the crowd responded to Bono's gestures and signals demonstrate the impact of his charismatic authority. However, Sally (Dublin and Istanbul) revealed that there was a limit to Bono's influence over her actions:

And well, maybe [...] maybe the limit for me goes like [...] even if Bono says like 'Go in and sign to this site' I won't do it (chuckles) because of the principle I want to choose myself to which [...] things that I sign into. I mean I can [...] I am glad to see their concerts and several of them. But my limit goes there. He says like 'do this' and 'do this' like exactly! So, then I am not very interested in that.

Furthermore, Breda referred to an incident when the Turkish fans booed the singer at the Istanbul concert:

And as I mentioned before, Bono gave his thanks to one of our ministers [...] which we gave 'Boo' [...] many Turkish people thought that Bono was on the side of the ruler party of Turkey: Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the AK Party, and that is why they booed him.

Sally's and Breda's comments demonstrate that not all U2's fans support Bono's populist pitch and political allegiances due to his occasional bad political judgement.

Online discussions also considered how the band successfully negotiated with state officials in order to attain certain privileges. For example, a concert reviewer explained how Bono thanked the Turkish State Minister Egemen Bağış for "helping his band to fulfil its dream of walking

on the Bosphorus Bridge between two continents.” This demonstrates that Bono’s charismatic authority influences state officials, as well as the fans, and other artists. Normally, pedestrians are not permitted to walk across the Bosphorus Bridge. The online comments also highlight how U2’s presence in Istanbul presented the Turkish government with public relations opportunities.

Although Bono’s references to, and associations with, various political elites endorsed his legitimacy as a leader, the success of this strategy is flawed, as fans criticised some of these relationships. For example, Vera (Moscow) elaborated on Bono’s references to Mikhail Gorbachev, who was largely responsible for the end of the Cold War and promoted peaceful international relations:

As I remember, Bono said a lot of things about Gorbachev, that he respects him so much and all those things. But I wouldn’t say that people [...] that people supported this idea [...]. Well, it is not so easy with Gorbachev here because you know [...] I know that Gorbachev is a massive figure, is a massive person in the world, but for many Russians Gorbachev is the one who destroyed the country and made so many people devastated with nothing in their hands. So, I wouldn’t say that it was the right move to praise Gorbachev during the gig in Moscow.

Some fans agreed that part of Bono’s role as a rock star and political activist is to comment on, question and criticise the state’s authority, policies and actions, and respond to political matters during U2’s shows. It appears that others expect Bono to speak on their behalf, which reinforces his legitimacy as the leader of the U2 community and demonstrates their consent to his leadership. For example, referring to the closure of Amnesty International’s temporary

marquees, and detainment of its volunteers by the Russian authorities, one fan claimed online that they will be “*in shock if Bono doesn’t say something publicly about what transpired.*”

The fans’ comments regarding Bono’s influence on their attitudes and behaviour align with the idea of Bono acting as a secular ‘shaman’, and viewing the members of U2 as his ‘disciples’, who cast a spell over the audience, which enchants the fans in order to persuade them to support their socio-political campaigns and organisations. Rojek (2013a, p. 60) explains that “Bono’s manner seeks to draw the viewer into his confidence.” Similarly, Cogan (2006) refers to the band’s, and in particular Bono’s, ability, to seduce their audience. However, Sally’s (Dublin and Istanbul) remarks show the limitations of Bono’s leadership of the fans; her observations reinforce Rojek’s (2011, p. 98) argument that Bono’s authority is not as successful when ‘transferred to politics’. This is evident because although Sally responded to Bono as an entertainer, she resisted his request for support of the ‘One’ campaign. In addition to directing the fans’ physical responses, fans also commented on U2’s and Bono’s influence on their views and stances on various socio-political issues.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the fans’ multi-layered responses to various radical socio-political themes, narratives and campaigns that were disseminated within U2’s ‘360°’ tour. The fans’ comments suggest that U2 and Bono utilised their charismatic authority in order to influence their activities and communicate their radical populist pitch, which focused on values, attitudes and beliefs, such as world peace, unity, and support for HIV/Aids projects in Africa that they promoted within the shows. However, the findings also suggest that despite the appeal of the socio-political aspects of U2’s shows for many fans, some did not agree with the band’s

political position. Furthermore, some fans indicated that these themes and narratives should not have been included within the concerts. As illustrated by Dafna Kaufman in Chapter 14, popular musical forms operate polysemically and these fans attended U2's shows to hear the band's music and were not interested in the socio-political messages within the show; the radical populist pitch of U2's '360°' tour was not entirely successful. However, that also reveals a fundamental contradiction as U2's music is inherently political.

U2's shows offered cultural and political resources that empowered many fans by inspiring and motivating them to support campaigns and organisations such as the 'One' campaign and Amnesty International and heightened their awareness of several global humanitarian issues that were addressed within the shows. In this sense, the political narratives of U2's '360°' tour focused on improving global society, and so in addition to 'ludic energy', the shows produced a form of 'moral energy' (Rojek, 2013b, p. 25) which was framed as a populist pitch to the followers of the band and its charismatic frontman.

The notion of 'charismatic authority' certainly contributes a deeper understanding of the influence of the band on the audiences' activities at U2's shows. This research suggests that Bono acts as secular 'shaman', who is supported by the band members, his 'disciples'. Bono and U2 use their charismatic authority to seek to lead, direct, and persuade their audiences, as well as convince other artists to participate in their events, in order to legitimate their moral leadership of the U2 community.

The findings revealed how the band's and Bono's mediated persona enabled them to achieve their goal of connecting with their audience. The band used their iconic celebrity status, politically motivated speeches and spectacular staging to excite and enchant their fans.

However, the extent of their influence is limited, as some fans demonstrably resisted and defied Bono's political persona and messages. Beyond the site of the rock spectacle the populist message and its reach remain limited. Nonetheless, 'festive moments' such as Woodstock, Live Aid, and U2's '360°' concerts, as populist modes of address, seem to offer transformative experiences akin to religious gatherings, due to their focus on moral concerns and their ability to engender emotional solidarity.

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