

Heini Huhtamella

**SOCIAL CLASS AND MARXISM IN TWENTY
ONE PILOTS' *TRENCH***

TIIVISTELMÄ

Heini Huhtamalla: Social Class and Marxism in Twenty One Pilots' *Trench*
Kandidaatintutkielma
Tampereen yliopisto
Englannin kielen, kirjallisuuden ja kääntämisen tutkinto-ohjelma
Huhtikuu 2020

Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena on analysoida Twenty One Pilotsin vuonna 2018 julkaistua *Trench* -albumia marxistisesta näkökulmasta keskittyen yhteiskuntaluokkiin. Suurin osa albumin kappaleista rakentuvat Dema-nimisen fiktionaalisen kaupungin ympärille. Dema on autoritaarinen kaupunkivaltio, jonka kaksi yhteiskuntaluokkaa, hallitseva luokka ja alaluokka, on erotettu selkeästi toisistaan. Tämä tutkielma analysoi Deman yhteiskuntaluokkia sekä tarkastelee puhujan asenteita molempia yhteiskuntaluokkia kohtaan. Hallitsevan luokan muodostavat yhdeksän piispaa ja alaluokan muodostavat kaupungin asukkaat sekä kaupungin ulkopuolella asuvat kapinalliset, Banditot. Hypoteesina on, että analysoitavat tekstit sisältävät itsessään marxistista kritiikkiä, kuvaten piispojen hegemoniaa negatiivisesti ja osoittaen kritiikkiä Deman hallitsevaa luokkaa kohtaan.

Levyä analysoidaan multimediaalisena kokonaisuutena, jossa huomioon otetaan kolme Dema-narratiivia parhaiten kuvaavaa kappaletta: "Jumpsuit", "Levitate" ja "Nico and the Niners", levyn mainostamisessa käytetyt kirjeet Clancy-nimiseltä fiktionaaliselta Deman asukkaalta, sekä kolmen edellä mainitun kappaleen musiikkivideot. Analyysi pohjautuu siis kappaleiden sanoitukseen, kirjeiden tekstiin ja musiikkivideoiden visuaaliseen tarinaan, sekä kaikkien näiden luomaan kokonaisuuteen. Teoreettisena taustana käytetään kulttuurintutkimusta ja marxistista teoriaa. Kulttuurintutkimuksen osalta teoria keskittyy musiikkiin poliittisena vaikuttajana, sekä siihen, kuka voi tehdä musiikista poliittista. Marxisin osalta tarkastellaan käsitteitä ideologia ja hegemonia, jotka ovat keskeisiä tutkielman analyysille ja auttavat analysoimaan yhteiskuntaluokkien välisiä eroja ja suhteita.

Analyysi paljasti, että hallitsevan yhteiskuntaluokan hegemonia nähtiin tekstissä selkeästi ongelmallisena ja sitä pyrittiin vastustamaan ja pakenemaan. Ratkaisuksi hegemonian kumoamiselle tekstissä nousi alaluokan yhteisöllisyys ja järjestäytyminen. Tutkielma avaa mahdollisuuksia myös jatkotutkimukselle esimerkiksi mahdollistamalla albumin marxististen näkemysten analysoimisen oikeaa yhteiskuntaa heijastelevana kokonaisuutena, sekä aineistopohjan laajemman analysoinnin esimerkiksi käyttämällä analyysissa useampia kappaleita tai perehtymällä tarkemmin esimerkiksi kirjeiden sisältöön.

Avainsanat: Yhteiskuntaluokat, ideologia, hegemonia, marxismi, Twenty One Pilots

Tämän julkaisun alkuperäisyys on tarkastettu Turnitin OriginalityCheck –ohjelmalla.

ABSTRACT

Heini Huhtamella: Social Class and Marxism in Twenty One Pilots' *Trench*
Bachelor's Thesis, Bachelor of Arts
Tampere University
Degree Programme in English Language, Literature, and Translation
April 2020

The purpose of this study is to analyse Twenty One Pilots' 2018 album *Trench* from a Marxist point of view, focusing on the portrayal of social classes in the text. Most of the songs on the album are linked to a fictional city of Dema. Dema is an authoritarian city-state with two clearly separated social classes: the ruling class and the subordinate class. This thesis will analyse the social classes and the speaker's attitudes towards them. The ruling class constitutes of nine bishops and the subordinate class is formed by the people of Dema as well as the rebels living outside of the city. I argue that the analysed texts in themselves present Marxist critique by describing the bishops' hegemony as problematic.

The album is analysed as a multimedia entity where the focus will be on the three songs that best portray the Dema-narrative: "Jumpsuit", "Levitate", and "Nico and the Niners", the letters written by a fictional Dema-citizen called Clancy that were used in promoting the album, and the three songs' music videos. The analysis is thus based on the song lyrics, letters, and the visual story portrayed in the music videos. The theoretical background of the analysis is cultural studies and Marxist theory. Cultural studies will present music as a political tool and discuss who can make music political. Marxist studies are used to present two important terms: ideology and hegemony, which are essential to the analysis and help analyse the differences and relationships between the two social classes.

The analysis shows that the ruling class' hegemony is seen as negative in the texts and resistance and escaping from Dema are two major themes in the album. However, a solution is also presented: the subordinate class, as a supportive community, is seen as a counterforce to the bishops' hegemony. This study also opens new possibilities for further study: it enables further study of the album and the additional material attached to it and allows the study of the album as a reflection of real society.

Keywords: Social class, ideology, hegemony, Marxism, Twenty One Pilots

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Theoretical background: Music and politics.....	5
2.1. Music as a political tool – cultural studies.....	6
2.2. Marxist theories on ideology and hegemony.....	7
3. Dema: political structure and vulture-culture	10
4. Banditos and the rebellion	13
5. Conclusion.....	16
Bibliography	17

1. Introduction

Dissidence and political statements are quite common in alternative genres of music such as punk or hip hop, but not often associated with mainstream music. Despite this, the American duo Twenty One Pilots seem to include themes of class struggles and dissidence against the ruling class on their latest album *Trench* (2018). Most of the songs on *Trench* are linked to a fictional totalitarian city called Dema, which is ruled by nine bishops and surrounded by walls. The city was first introduced in letters written by a fictional man called Clancy; the letters were used to promote the album before its release and a link to an online page¹ with these letters was hidden on Twenty One Pilots' homepage for the fans to find. Clancy begins by telling the reader how he used to admire Dema and serve their leaders with pride, contributing to society by taking care of the tasks given to him. However, the totalitarian rule becomes overbearing and makes Clancy feel trapped within the city's walls. Therefore, he begins to dream about freedom and starts planning an escape to the other side of the city's walls: Trench.

This storyline continues in the song lyrics of *Trench*. In this thesis, the focus is on the analysis of three of the songs on the album that best express the social critique within the Dema narrative (in chronological order): "Jumpsuit", "Levitate", and "Nico and the Niners". All these songs also have music videos that further expand the Dema narratives of both the song lyrics and the dmaorg.info -letters. As understanding the Dema -narrative requires knowledge of all these different modes of media, the songs will be analysed as multimedia entities². In analysing the three different "texts", the letters, song lyrics, and music videos, I will argue that the fictional city of Dema and its power structures and class differences, as well as the themes of escaping and rebelling, express Marxist critique within the lyrics.

¹ In addition to these letters there are pictures on this website; however, due to the scope of this study, they will not be analysed in this thesis.

² However, I will only focus on text and video, excluding music from my research, as I do not have a sufficient understanding of the mechanics of music to analyse it.

Even if the band has gained great international popularity, there is very little study on the Twenty One Pilots' songs. Most of the studies found online are bachelor's theses and the few studies that have been done seem to focus on the band's earlier albums, such as *Blurryface* and *Vessel*. In addition to there not yet being any research on *Trench*, the topics this thesis will focus on have not been connected to the band's earlier production. Previously Twenty One Pilots have been known for religious topics, such as struggling with faith, or mental health, as the band members actively discuss struggling with mental health issues and fighting mental illness both in their music and in social media. Political and social criticism is thus a fresh viewpoint to analyse the band's work from.

To help with the analysis, two useful theories will be introduced first: cultural studies and Marxist theories. Cultural studies introduce popular music as a political tool and help in understanding who can make music political. Marxist studies will introduce two important terms used in the analysis: ideology and hegemony. The analysis is then divided into two chapters: first the speaker's attitudes towards the rulers and the political structure of Dema, and then the Banditos and the subordinate class' rebel community. All the while the analysis will carry the notions of ideology and hegemony to prove that the bishops' capitalist hegemony is seen as problematic, but also that the lyrics offer a solution to this in community and rebellion.

2. Theoretical background: Music and politics

This chapter introduces the theoretical background to this thesis: both cultural studies and Marxist theories help illuminate and analyse how songs portray criticism towards societies and why the politicisation of popular music is an important topic to focus on. I will begin by giving a general introduction to music as a political platform and the works of John Storey and then move onto the more specific Marxist concepts on ideology and hegemony used in my analysis.

2.1. Music as a political tool – cultural studies

This chapter discusses popular music, its connections to politics and its importance as a platform for expressing dissidence. I will employ John Storey's book *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Cultures: Theories and Methods*, which explains why popular music is an important medium for expressing political ideology and discusses what makes music political.

As Storey points out, "popular music is everywhere" (118). Wherever we go, popular music follows us as radios and streaming platforms such as Spotify play the top 100 hits of the moment wherever we go. Thereby the genre has plenty of power, and it reaches huge audiences, conveying its messages to them. This is something the politicians have taken note of. For example, The Beatles, Bob Dylan, and Bruce Springsteen have been used, or at least there have been attempts to use them, to improve politicians' images (Storey 134). Politicians can not only use music to their advantage, but they have also tried to restrict the topics present in popular music with censorship (134-35). Furthermore, artists themselves can use popular music for political purposes with theme and genre choices (135), as well as partaking in musical communities' politically driven organisations and events such as Live Aid (136). However, even if artists can often affect whether their music can be read as political, it is not always possible. As an example, Storey discusses U2 having to clarify several times that their song "Sunday, Bloody Sunday" is not to be used in celebration of the IRA as the Irish Americans continue to read the song as political (135). Thus, in the end, it is usually the reader who can interpret the artist's work as either political or non-political.

In addition to politicians and artists using popular music for their own goals and people being able to read texts as political even when they are not meant to be, the music industry also tries to benefit from merging music with politics: "The music industry has its own definition of political pop music: political pop as sales category. Certain pop – rap, or the work of Billy Bragg, for example – is marketed as political. Since the mid-1960s, record companies have been comfortably making money out of politics" (Storey 135). Although politics sell, the companies do not want to take

unnecessary risks and thus prefer to market a bigger entity, such as genre or artist, as political, and in this way maximize their profit and minimize the risks of making politically inclined music (Storey 136). Audiences are to expect political notions in certain genres or artists, but in others, it could cause great reprehension.

Trench is a political album because it can be interpreted as such and because the lyrics themselves imply Marxist criticism: the critique towards the fictional city and its societal classes give the reader ground for a political reading. Because the critique is present in the texts, both the reader and the writer have made these songs political. Although publishing political music such as this is a risk for the record company, as the band is mainstream and does not fit into any one genre already marketed as political, the ambiguous nature of the criticism mitigates the possible backlash – interpretation is still needed to have a Marxist reading.

2.2. Marxist theories on ideology and hegemony

This chapter will focus on Marxist views on ideology and hegemony that are two of the most important terms used in my analysis. Marxist theory will help analyse the social classes of Dema and allow a detailed study of the differences between the rulers and the subordinate class. I will use three books for this: *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction* by Michael Freeden to present Marxist views on ideology, and *Marxism and Literature* by Raymond Williams and *Marxism and Media Studies – Key Concepts and Contemporary Trends* by Mike Wayne to discuss Marxist views on social classes and hegemony.

At the beginning of his book, Freeden presents the two great Marxist thinkers, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and their views on ideology. Marx and Engels seem to have thought of ideology as pure philosophy that is poorly executed in the real world. They referred to a camera obscura in their discussions of ideology, claiming that ideology was merely “an inverted mirror-image of the material world, further distorted by the fact that the material world was itself subject to

dehumanizing social relations under capitalism” and that its role was “to smooth over those contradictions [of pure philosophy and the real world] by making them appear as necessary, normal, and congruous” (Freeden, 5). They also argued that ideology is mainly the ruling class’ tool of “exercising control and domination”: the ruling class would claim ideological theories as universal truths and use them to their advantage in pursuing their interests (6). This works because even the subordinate class is convinced of the ideology and made to believe that any action justified by the ruling class’ ideology must be necessary and good (6). Freedden also offers criticism of Marx and Engels’ ideas because instead of the entire ruling class, ideologies usually originate in much smaller groups: “The Marxist linking of ideology to power relations as well as to the manipulation of the masses has often resulted in the identification of a professional group of ideologues, and even in the detection of the impact of single individuals” (10). Today ideology is seen as a much more complex concept than in the traditional Marxist sense: anyone can partake in creating new ideas and ideologies. Even if Marxist views on ideology have received criticism in the real world and have become outdated, they work perfectly in totalitarian Dema where the ruling class consists of only nine bishops.

The topic of class differences and ideology continues as we move onto Williams’ book about Marxist literary theory and the concept of hegemony. In a traditional sense, hegemony has referred to domination in the political field, especially in international relations, but Marxism extended this notion of domination to relations between social classes: the ruling class has hegemony over the subordinate class (Williams 108). Williams introduces Antonio Gramsci, who adds social and cultural elements into the definition of hegemony, thus connecting it to the two big Marxist concepts of “culture as a whole social process” and ideology as an “expression or projection of a particular class interest” (108). Gramsci also claims that the term hegemony goes beyond culture as he relates “the whole social process” with power: inequalities between classes enable the ruling class to define the society – the lives of their own, and the subordinate class (108). He also claims that it goes beyond ideology because of the “wholeness” of the social process: “What is decisive is not only

the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, but the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values” (108-09). There are two views of ideology: that only the ruling class has pure knowledge of the ideology, or that the subordinate class only has the ideology and is unable to think outside of it (109). As a result, the ruling class has an advantage because they can manipulate the ideology and with the ideology, the people. However, hegemony is not merely ideology and it is important to remember that hegemony extends to every aspect of one’s life. It is a “culture, but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes” (110). Although the ruling class has a huge role in creating a hegemony, Williams reminds that a hegemony needs to be actively maintained, further developed, and defended: it is a process that faces constant resistance and challenge from counter-hegemonies and alternative hegemonies (112-13). In this thesis the hegemony is Dema and the counter-hegemony the Banditos, leaving the people of Dema to ponder between these two. The bishops need to constantly work to maintain their hegemony, the Banditos need to constantly work to offer an alternative to Dema.

The concepts of ideology and hegemony are similar but not interchangeable, as Wayne informs in his book: “. . . the struggle for hegemony also requires the dominant class to make real concessions to the claims of subordinate classes”, meaning that to ensure the hegemony’s power, the ruling class needs to consider the subordinate class’ wishes and integrate some of their demands into their ideology and hegemony (Wayne 178). In doing this the hegemony prevents resistance from an unsatisfied subordinate class. Dema has failed in this, as there is no instance of concessions done by the bishops present in the texts. Instead, the bishops seem to use the “dull compulsion of economics”, tiring the subordinate class with work to minimise the “time and energy required to engage in oppositional politics” (179).

3. Dema: political structure and vulture-culture

As a theoretical background has been set, I will now move onto the analysis of the song lyrics. The analysis will not only focus on the criticism of Dema as a restrictive political system but also on the people of the society, acting like vultures and taking advantage of others. This chapter will focus on the bishops' hegemony and the internalisation of the bishops' ideology in Dema's citizens.

Dema is portrayed as restrictive and anxiety-inducing. As Clancy's letters discuss Dema in more detail than the songs, they give the most insight into how the people might resent the city: the letters express the citizens' negative view of Dema through the descriptions of the opportunistic mandate of the city and its totalitarian leaders, as well as through the prison references. In the song lyrics of "Nico and the Niners", the speaker states that "Dema don't control us" but Dema is not referred to in the songs nearly as extensively as in the dmaorg.info letters and the music video for "Nico and the Niners". In the music video, Dema resembles a sterile facility, perhaps a prison with its grey rectangular apartment buildings or an industrial estate with the exhaust pipe-like towers. The picture it relays to the viewer is not warm or home-like, but rather mechanic and cold. What is more, Clancy even compares Dema to a prison in his letters to stress the pressure of confinement and surveillance within Dema. He refers to Dema as "the dreamless existence we've been sentenced to" (dmaorg.info, the third letter from the bottom), the word "sentence" suggesting a prison sentence. Together with the external similarities between Dema and an industrial facility, the walls, and the bishops overlooking the population, the reference to prison is clear.

The song "Nico and the Niners" begins with the words "We denounce Vialism, you will leave Dema and head true East", reversed so that the voice is played backward. Vialism is also introduced in Clancy's letters as the mandate of Dema, but it is not further explained. As the name Vialism derives from the word vial, a small container, this could be a reference to the walls surrounding Dema and confining the people. This interpretation complies with the notion in the letters that instituting Vialism "effectively reversed the hope that many arrived with" (dmaorg.info, third

letter from the bottom), as well as Clancy's frustrations of being locked up: ". . . It's this quiet wonder that my mind tends to ets [*sic*] lost in. This hope of discovery alone has birthed a new version of myself; A better version, I hope, that will find a way to experience what's beyond these colossal walls." (dmaorg.info, the second letter from the bottom) Vialism is also the visible part of the bishops' ideology, which the citizens have internalised: trusting in the bishops' ideology numbs the people to the negative aspects of the hegemony.

Clancy also describes the rulers of Dema in his letters: as previously mentioned, Dema is ruled by nine bishops and, as Clancy mentions "our region" and "our bishop" in the first letter, it is likely that each bishop rules their own area of Dema. As a punishment for not following the rules, the bishops use "smearing" (dmaorg.info, the third letter from the bottom), which we see taking place in the "Jumpsuit" music video. A bishop wraps his hands around the neck of the punished (in the music video this is a person who escaped Dema) and spreads black paint there. This symbolises silencing the troublemaker and humiliating them by having to carry the mark publicly on their neck. Clancy also describes the smearing to cause the punished to forget "their memory of something more" (dmaorg.info, the third letter from the bottom): the bishops use this punishment to control the people and smother any ideas of rebellion and escaping. The bishops have also given the inhabitants duties and Clancy tells that they enjoy being able to find consistency in the work, but they are mandatory and the people ". . . all worked to represent our [the people's region's] bishop with honor. . . ." (dmaorg.info, first letter from the bottom), confirming that the society revolves around Dema's capitalist leaders, who own all the means of production, instead of its people. Dema's inhabitants have no free will, nor any other purpose but to work for their capitalist leaders, and as Marx and Engels claimed, they have internalised the bishops' ideology and believe that working for them without any pay, aside from basic upkeep, is an essential part of how a society must function. However, because the bishops have not made any concessions, people like Clancy and the speaker begin to doubt the hegemony.

A common symbol throughout the Dema narrative is the vulture, a scavenger bird usually seen in nature documentaries with their whole heads covered in blood after feeding on a carcass. As vultures have developed to be the best scavengers with their large body mass and ability to fly, they have lost the ability to hunt for themselves (Dooren 23). Because of this, the animal is completely dependent on other animals' misfortune to survive, and circling vultures have become a sign of misfortune or imminent death. The vulture metaphor in the texts is connected to both the bishops and the society.

When the speaker in "Levitate" discusses their doubts about the rebellion against Dema, it is stated that "Now they know it like we both knew for some time I'd say", most likely referring to the bishops who are then described as vultures with "[They're] smirking at fresh blood, they're circling above". The connection between vultures and the bishops resumes in the music video in which the Banditos (the rebels who have fled Dema and now keep camp in Trench) return to their camp from a rescue mission to find it burnt and terrorised in the dark. In between shots, there are clips of vultures in a dark, smoky environment that resembles the camp. The only people who could have terrorised the camp are the bishops, as there is no one else in Trench, and thus the vultures in the dark reflect the bishops going through the camp while the Banditos were gone, looking for anyone who might be left behind. The vultures are also seen in the same shot with the banditos: when the Banditos gather together to listen to the singer rap the vultures hang back in the edges of the light coming from the bonfire, again waiting for someone to step away from the crew. The vulture-like tendencies of government officials carry over to "Nico and the Niners" as well, where the speaker claims that "they [the bishops, or the ruling class as a whole] want to make you forget". As already stated in the previous analysis chapter, the bishops use smearing to make a person forget about their hopes for better. Like most governments, the bishops want the people to forget all that is wrong in the system, and for them to focus on the topics that the government deem important and has succeeded in, thus taking advantage of the people's loss of hope.

What is more, the speaker expands the vulture metaphor to cover the whole society in the lyrics of “Levitate”: “Don’t feed me to the vultures, I am a vulture who feeds on pain”, thus revealing that the speaker himself knows that he is part of the vulture-like culture. In the chorus of “Levitate”, the speaker states that “though I feed on things that fell /you can learn to levitate with just a little help”, admitting to not only allowing the vulture-like actions of the bishops but also partaking in them himself by accepting the bishops’ ideology as their own. As Dema is surrounded by walls, levitating is used to depict the escape from Dema, hence stating that even if the speaker acts like a vulture and thus complies with the hegemony, he can escape. However, it is never clarified whether escaping Dema – or any toxic society – would put an end to this kind of behaviour.

4. Banditos and the rebellion

Whereas the first part of the analysis focused on Dema and its political structure and leaders, in this chapter I will focus on the Banditos and the resistance against Dema. As briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, the rebels who fled Dema and now live in Trench are called Banditos, portrayed in the music videos as dressed in camo and earthy colours with yellow tape over their clothing and scarves covering their faces. This suggests that the Banditos are trying to hide from the bishops but wear yellow to depict the hope that the Bandito community symbolises since yellow is considered a symbol of hope and optimism (Morton). Jumpsuits are mentioned multiple times in the lyrics as rebel clothing, so they are considered as typical Bandito-clothing, promoting the notion that the Banditos represent the lower-class or Dema since jumpsuits are traditionally worn by the working-class. This chapter will focus on the analysis of the Banditos and the community as a symbol of hope.

In “Jumpsuit”, when the speaker of the song lyrics is wandering in Trench after having escaped Dema, he sees the Banditos on a cliff for the first time. At the same time, he is doubting whether the bishops are good or bad: “Spirits in my room, friend or foe? Felt it in my youth, feel it when I’m old.” Just like Clancy, the speaker has always wondered about Dema and the dominant

ideology upheld by the bishops, that even he has grown to internalise as his own. Before he can conclude or discuss the topic with the Banditos, he sees a bishop riding towards him. Because the trip through this new land has been hard: “I can’t believe how much I hate, pressures of a new place roll my way”, the speaker does not run from the bishop. Instead, as the bishop catches him and smears his neck, he expresses passive resistance: “I’ll be right here but you’ll have to grab my throat and lift me in the air. If you need anyone. I’ll stop my plans, but you’ll have to tie me down and then break both my hands.” The bishop might have caught him but if he can speak and write, he will tell stories of the bishops’ terror.

As the bishop starts to take him back to Dema, they walk past a yellow flower and when the speaker looks up he sees the Banditos throwing yellow flower petals at them, spreading hope, and he seems to have a revelation as he ponders again: “I can’t believe how much I hate, pressures of a new place roll my way. Jumpsuit, jumpsuit cover me. Oh jumpsuit, jumpsuit cover me!” The colours in the music video suddenly become brighter and the speaker starts running away from the bishop, having found hope in the Banditos’ silent support and being now willing to join them in their rebellion. The speaker falls and it is left uncertain whether the bishop catches him. At the beginning of the music video for “Levitate”, he is seen walking down from the cliff with the Banditos and it becomes apparent that he was not captured by the bishop. Still, as he walks with them to their trashed campsite, he states: “My heart is with you hiding but my mind’s not made, now they know it like we both knew for some time I’d say”. Here we see the internalization of the dominant ideology again: even when he has escaped Dema and knows in his heart that it was the right thing to do, he still wonders if it would be better to follow the bishops. This song is about the speaker fighting this internalization as he understands that he can “levitate” and leave Dema’s walls. He even encourages the listeners to join them: “Now show up, show up. I know I shouldn’t say this but a curse from you is all that I would need right now, man”, because he needs the support of his fellow Banditos to gain the courage to turn against the society he has grown up in. In the music video, as the speaker gains

confidence in his decision to join the Banditos he spends time with them at their campsite, dancing and sitting at a bonfire until at the end a bishop's hands appear from the darkness and drag the speaker away from the camp.

This story continues in "Nico and the Niners" where the speaker, having been brought back to Dema, is now sure of his decision to join the Banditos, as the song begins with a reversed voice stating: "We are Banditos. You will leave Dema and head true east. We denounce Vialism." The East has an important meaning in the lyrics: because the sun rises from the east, it is seen as a metaphor for new beginnings and hope. Throughout the song the lyrics "East is up" repeat, announcing the beginning of a new time, the beginning of a revolution. This is shown in the music video where the Banditos break into Dema to free the speaker. The speaker again relies on his peers when he keeps singing throughout the song how his "jumpsuit takes [him] higher", professing how the Banditos, as a community that the jumpsuit represents, are essential to the rebellion. At the beginning of the video, the speaker holds a yellow flower in his hands, looking out the window and waiting for the Banditos; he knows they are coming because they have sent a message: "East is up, I'm fearless when I hear this on the low". The speaker has had to hide the flowers, his hope, in a wooden box, but his rebelliousness has only grown as for the first time he clearly states: "When bishops come together, they will know that Dema won't control us!" The bishops coming together refers to a ceremony the bishops have during which the Banditos break into Dema. During this ceremony, the Banditos meet with the speaker and they create a diversion for their escape by organising a performance in the middle of Dema and celebrating their small victory in advance: "[And] start a concert, a complete diversion. Start a mob and you'll be quite certain we'll win but not everyone will get out." Because the subordinate class have internalised the bishops' ideology, it would be impossible to completely overthrow Dema, and even smuggling too many people out of Dema at once would be a risk because of the bishops' surveillance; however, this is a victory for the

Banditos as at the end of the music video the Banditos and the speaker walk out of Dema and towards clear blue skies.

As the bishops' ideology is internalised by the citizens of Dema, turning against them is hard: even when an individual decides to leave Dema and turn their back on everything that it represents, a proper community is needed to support that decision in the long run. An individual cannot survive alone outside of the society but needs the Banditos' support to remain hopeful and survive in Trench. The subordinate class need to form an alliance and defend each other to resist the leading powers.

5. Conclusion

The bishops, the ruling class, and their way of governing Dema are described as something solely negative with all the references to prisons and vultures and the negative implications of the song lyrics. In contrast, the Banditos are described as a picture of hope with the reference to the yellow flowers, even when the speaker experiences doubt about whether to join them or remain with the bishops. The team spirit of the Banditos and the community feeling is also the mainstay of the whole rebellion against Dema. All these allow the reader to easily read the text as Marxist: as a fight against the capitalist ruler and the rise of the subordinate class.

In conclusion: subordinate class starts to doubt the ruling class and the ideologies and culture spread by the ruling class, and begins to agree with the counter-hegemony, the Banditos. The songs (and the multimedia additions) clearly describe the fight between a capitalist hegemony and the Banditos' counter-hegemony from the subordinate class' point of view, thus criticising the ruling class and the current culture of the hegemony.

Bibliography

Primary sources:

dmaorg.info. Twenty One Pilots, 2018, http://dmaorg.info/found/15398642_14/clancy.html,
Accessed 9.4.2020.

Twenty One Pilots. "Jumpsuit." *Trench*, Fuelled by Ramen, 2018. *Spotify*,
<https://open.spotify.com/album/621cXqrTSSJi1WqDMSLmbL>.

---. "Levitate." *Trench*, Fuelled by Ramen, 2018. *Spotify*,
<https://open.spotify.com/album/621cXqrTSSJi1WqDMSLmbL>.

---. "Nico and the Niners." *Trench*, Fuelled by Ramen, 2018. *Spotify*,
<https://open.spotify.com/album/621cXqrTSSJi1WqDMSLmbL>.

"twenty one pilots - Jumpsuit (Official Video)." *YouTube*, uploaded by twenty one pilots,
11.7.2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOUBW8bkjQ4>

"twenty one pilots - Levitate (Official Video)." *YouTube*, uploaded by twenty one pilots, 8.8.2018,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uv_1AKKKJnk

"twenty one pilots - Nico And The Niners (Official Video)." *YouTube*, uploaded by twenty one
pilots, 26.7.2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMAPyGoqQVw>

Secondary sources:

Dooren, Thom van. *Vulture*. Reaktion Books, 2011.

Freeden, Michael. *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2003

Morton, Jill. "Color Voodoo #1: A Guide to Color Symbolism." Colorcom, 1997.

Storey, John. *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Cultures: Theories and Methods*. Edinburgh UP, 1996. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,uid&db=nlebk&AN=9582&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Wayne, Mike. *Marxism and Media Studies - Key Concepts and Contemporary Trends*. Pluto Press, 2015.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford UP, 1977.