

Populists as performers of crisis: Le Pen's case during the 2017 presidential campaign

Introduction

Among the many phenomena that define contemporary politics, populism holds a special significance. Historically restricted to two main areas of the world, Western Europe and Latin America, the last decade has seen populism turn into a truly global phenomenon (de la Torre 2014, Moffitt 2016, Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017). Indeed, beyond the usual distinction in the literature between a Latin American left-wing populism characterised by clientelism, mass movements and charismatic leaders (Weyland 2001), and a European right-wing populism characterised by xenophobia, nativism and anti-immigration parties (Mudde 2006), many other countries have experienced the rise of populist actors in recent years. From Thaksin Shinawatra in Thailand (Phongpaichit & Baker 2008) to Narendra Modi in India (Chakravartty & Roy 2015), from Jacob Zuma in South Africa (Mathegka 2008) to Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines (Curato 2017), the electoral success of populism has been spectacular.

This rise of “the populist *zeitgeist*” (Mudde 2004) in democracies takes place in the context of a multiplicity of crises. From the financial crisis that paralysed the global economy to the environmental crisis triggered by climate change, including also the recent migration crisis which is at the heart of many political debates in European countries, one could extend the list much longer. Most relevant to the issue at hand, various authors have suggested the emergence of a crisis of a faith in democracy (Kellner 2015, Zakaria 2013). Because electors everywhere in the world are becoming increasingly cynical towards their representatives, it thus seems fairly logical to argue that such a crisis has set the stage for populism to capitalise on this growing disaffection against the political elites.

This position has found echoes in the specialist literature on populism where several prominent scholars have for example argued that has “some degree of crisis [...] is a necessary precondition for populism” (Laclau 2005a: 177) or that populism “surges most strongly in contexts of crisis” (Roberts 1995: 113). This paper however seeks to question this idea that populism is a political phenomenon that emerges in times of crisis, turning this position upside-down by instead arguing that populist leaders actively perform the narrative of a society in crisis. In other words, rather than conceiving “crisis as a trigger of populism, we should also think of how populism attempts to act as a trigger for crisis” (Moffitt 2016: 114). In order to develop the argument that populist actors are in effect ‘performers of crisis’, this paper will in particular study the case of Marine Le Pen during the 2017 presidential campaign in France.

Leader of the far-right Front National (FN), which she inherited from her controversial father Jean-Marie Le Pen, Marine Le Pen is one of the most prominent populist leaders in Europe. Her electoral performance for the 2017 election was unprecedented for a far-right party candidate in the history of the Fifth Republic in France. While she did not win the presidency, her achievement should not be diminished. By toning down the xenophobic register that made her father famous in an attempt of “dédiabolisation” (de-

demonisation) of her party and by embracing a strategy that appealed to a broader audience than in her 2012 presidential campaign, Le Pen not only reproduced her father's performance in 2002 to reach the second round of the presidential election but registered the highest electoral scores ever for her party, getting 21% of the votes in the first round in a very close race with three other major candidates and 33% in the second round, losing against newcomer centrist politician Emmanuel Macron.

In order to make the empirical case for Le Pen as a performer of crisis, this paper's structure is four-fold. It will in a first time develop a literature review acknowledging the most influential approaches to populism, assessing their strengths as well as their shortcomings in understanding contemporary populism. In a second time, it will make the case for the approach of populism as a performative political style by highlighting its specificities and relevance, developing and adapting Moffitt's three core features of the populist political style into three broad type of performances: performances of identity, performances of transgression and performances of urgency. In a third time, as the core feature of populism relevant for understanding the articulation of crisis, I will develop the latter concept of performances of urgency, using notably the insights of the Copenhagen School on securitisation. The final section will then include several empirical examples of qualitative analysis illustrating the concept through Le Pen's case during her 2017 presidential campaign. Although this analysis cannot claim to be exhaustive, it will illustrate Le Pen's performances of urgency using two complementary sources: one of her most important campaign speeches in Paris on the 17th of April 2017, as well as her first official campaign clip.

Populism: a literature review

Historical background

Populism, just like all of the puzzling concepts of political studies, is a highly contested term. Indeed, a distinctive feature of the literature on populism is that not only scholars axiomatically acknowledge this contestability, they often start their argument by "acknowledging the acknowledgment" (Panizza 2005: 1, Moffitt 2016: 11) in what can lead to even higher levels of meta-reflexivity. There are many factors accounting for this conceptual instability: firstly, populism is rarely a label used by political actors to identify themselves, and is on the contrary often used in contemporary politics as a way to undermine the credibility of a rival political personality or party (Canovan 1981: 3). In this sense, 'populism' has become a common yet empty signifier that is often used by mainstream parties or the media to qualify an immense variety of actors.

Secondly, even the movements that historically do identify themselves as populists are sometimes far from what is commonly understood as populism. The epistemological origin of the concept comes from '*populus*', the Latin origin of the word 'the people', and it is for this reason indeed that the 1890s "People's Party" in the United States adopted 'Populists' as their nickname in order to show their filiation with the people. If we go back even further in time, in the 1860s, the other movement to embrace populism as a qualification is *narodnichestvo* (народничество) in Russia, from the Russian *narod* (народ), "people, folk". While these movements had of course in common an intrinsic reference to the people, they were both very different from each

other, as respectively an agrarian movement formed to oppose the demonetisation of silver and as an intellectual group who believed that the peasants would be the class leading the social and cultural revolution in Russia, as well as very different from what the scholarly literature now labels as populist.

The early academic literature on populism was faced with the problem of defining the conceptual borders of the phenomenon and it is hence not surprising that the pathbreaking collection from Ionescu and Gellner (1969), who brought together scholars from a diversity of academic backgrounds to define the concept, did not manage to settle on one specific definition for populism, describing it among others, as a movement, an ideology or even a pathological syndrome. Later on, with the emergence of a greater variety of cases in what was labeled 'new' or neo-populism (Taggart 1996) in Europe and Latin America, including figures like Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands, Alberto Fujimori in Peru, Silvio Berlusconi in Italy or Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, the literature started to settle in five different approaches to define populism.

Populism as an ideology

The first and most mainstream approach to the study of populism is led by Mudde who developed a succinct and clear definition of the concept as "a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated in two homogenous and antagonistic camps, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people" (Mudde 2007: 23, Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017: 5-6). This definition draws implicitly from the morphological approach to ideology developed by Freeden (1996, 2003) who contrasts "full" or "thick" ideologies, like socialism or liberalism, with "thin" ideologies. Mudde argues that conceiving populism as a 'thin ideology' allows to account for the variability and malleability of the phenomenon, as well as understand why it has been witnessed in many forms: "Thin-centred ideologies such as populism have a restricted morphology, which necessarily appears attached to - and sometimes is even assimilated into - other [thick] ideologies" (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017: 6), like socialism, nationalism or liberalism.

While the ideological approach of populism has proven useful as the basis of many empirical works and was one of the most notable attempts to bridge the regional gap which characterised most of the fragmented literature on populism, it however suffers from many flaws which were notably developed very convincingly by Aslanidis (2016). The first and most important one is its binary aspect: either the ideology of a movement or leader is populist, or it is not. This dichotomous perspective implies an essentialist conception of populism while also not providing with a nuanced portrayal of such a complex phenomenon. One more important critique relates to the weak foundations of the distinction between 'thinness' and 'thickness' regarding ideologies, and extends to the methodological inconsistencies it creates. In Freeden's work itself, the threshold to separate 'thin' from 'thick' ideologies remains extremely unclear: "Freeden does not provide a comprehensive set of defining attributes for full (thick) ideologies; nor does he provide any operationalisation" (Aslanidis 2016: 90). Moreover, his definition of 'thin-centred ideology' is also so broad that it can encompass any political notion with

a small number of common core assumptions, which implies the list of ‘thin ideologies’ could potentially be endless.

Populism as a strategy

The second approach, which is particularly popular among scholars focusing on Latin American populism (Roberts 2006), envisions populism as a strategy. In his influential text, Weyland presents populism as “a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers” (Weyland 2001: 14). This definition, which is indeed very adapted to analyse the succession of Latin American populist leaders, has several strengths. Firstly, it shifts the focus of analysis to the head figure of populist movements, focusing more on the leader than on either party or movements which are seen as secondary. In Weyland’s words, “The central role of personalistic leadership, which allows the leader great latitude for opportunistic calculations and manoeuvrings, also gives populism the striking unpredictability, shiftiness, and disorganization in the exercise of government power and in public policy-making that observers have noted” (Weyland 2017: 60). Secondly, it redirects the analysis away from the intrinsic values and ideology of the populist actor and towards their relationship with their followers, hence developing a more processual and less static way to conceptualise populism.

However, this approach also suffers from several flaws, and most importantly its unsuitability to analyse many cases outside of Latin America, a weakness willingly acknowledged by Weyland (2017: 62). Indeed, one of its main starting points is that populist leaders thrive in political contexts with low organisation and institutionalism. The cases of many successful populist leaders in Europe, like Geert Wilders in the Netherlands or the Le Pen dynasty in France, show that populism is not incompatible with party organisation and a strong persistent institutional background. Another important weakness that I would like to showcase is that the strategic approach of populism highlights the importance of the ‘followers’ of a populist leader at the detriment of the broader focus on ‘the people’, an otherwise commonly accepted factor in every other definition of populism. The last but nonetheless extremely significant flaw of this approach is its lack of account for symbolical and performative elements of populism, by focusing nearly exclusively on the material factors of politics, providing eventually what has been qualified as “an incomplete account” (Hawkins 2010: 39) of the phenomenon whose defining characteristics go beyond mere materiality.

Populism as a discourse

Hawkins is one of the most notable proponents of a third popular approach which conceptualises populism as a discourse opposing ‘the people’ against ‘the elite’ (Hawkins 2010) or ‘the oligarchy’ (de la Torre 2010). Populism is thus “a discourse, invoking the supremacy of popular sovereignty to claim that corrupt elites are defrauding ‘the People’ of their rightful political authority. It becomes an anti-elite discourse in the name of the sovereign People.” (Aslanidis 2016: 96) The discursive approach’s most substantive contribution to the literature on populism is twofold. Firstly, as a common point shared with the ideological approach, they disrupted the focus on

the material aspects of politics by emphasising the importance of discursive elements, and redirected the analytical focus on the study of text. Secondly, in contrast with the two approaches discussed above whose theoretical underpinnings imply that populism is a dichotomous phenomenon (either a politician is a populist, or one is not), the discursive approach sees populism as “a gradational property of specific instances of political expressions” (Gidron & Bonikowski 2013: 8). By exploring the grey area between what used to be two distinct poles, advocates of the discursive view were among the first to argue that a political actor could be ‘more or less’ populist, thus opening the door for more sophisticated analyses of this complex phenomenon.

That being said, the discursive approach also has important weaknesses. Because its proponents typically use content analysis as their method of choice and lean towards the quantitative side of the epistemological divide, their findings suffer from shortcomings that they willingly acknowledge (Pauwels 2011) like questionable reliability, possible coding bias or irregular sampling. In other words, “while this is certainly a promising method for *measuring* populism, it does not provide us with an overarching conceptual approach for *understanding* populism.” (Moffitt 2016: 22). I also concur with Moffitt when he argues that the discursive approach does not “go far enough in taking account of what else is vital to populism’s appeal (...): visual, performative and aesthetic elements (...) that contribute to the affective or passionate dimension of populism” (*ibid.*). Indeed, the definition of discourse underpinning this discursive approach remains very limited and exclusively focused on text.

Populism as a political logic

In contrast with most of the scholars in the ideological, strategic and discursive approaches, the aforementioned Laclau on the contrary advocated the merits of qualitative framework for populism and spearheaded another major approach which defines populism as a political logic (Laclau 2005a, 2005b). Unlike all of the approaches described above, Laclau’s perspective was not developed with primarily empirical analysis as its final objective, but instead aimed to challenge the theoretical premises underlying commonly accepted views of populism. His starting point is that antagonism is fundamental for politics and that every political debate or project has to start with the division of two opposing groups. These groups are constructed when several unsatisfied socio-political demands collide and aggregate, recreating a division implying “an essential asymmetry between the community as a whole (the *populus*) and the underdog (the *plebs*)” (Laclau 2005a: 224). He argues that populism is the logic through which this aggregated demand both constructs ‘the people’ and draws an “antagonistic frontier”, while being embodied by “the leader which becomes a symbol-maker” (Laclau 2005a: 160) of a radical alternative to the *status quo*. Understood this way, populism is not simply a political logic, it is *the* logic of the political, which means that at a very fundamental level, Laclau claims that *all* politics are populist: “If populism consists in postulating a radical alternative within the communitarian space, a choice in the crossroads on which the future of a given society hinges, does not populism become synonymous with politics? The answer can only be affirmative” (Laclau 2005b: 47).

One of the main strengths of this approach is that it shifts the theoretical focus from populism as a phenomenon that exists *a priori*, towards a conception of populism as something being done and enacted. This conception “acknowledges that populists do not speak to or for some pre-existing ‘people’ but arguably bring the subject known as ‘the people’ into being through the process of naming, performance or articulation” (Moffitt 2016: 24). Another of its strengths is that, beyond the purely textual analysis used by advocates of the former approach to populism as discourse, Laclau (1980: 86) conceptualises discourse as the “ensemble of the phenomena in and through which social production of meaning takes place”, which means that his analysis focuses on both textual and non-textual elements of populism.

In spite of these theoretical innovations, the approach of populism as a political logic suffers from several flaws. Firstly, Arditì (2010) criticised in his book review provocatively titled “Populism is Hegemony is Politics?” the inconsistencies in Laclau’s broader conception of politics throughout his career: in a pathbreaking text he co-wrote with Mouffe (Laclau & Mouffe 2001), he argued that his Gramscian understanding of hegemony was the name for all forms of politics, and one can quickly see how the argument he later made about populism as the overarching logic of politics can conflict with this prior account and lead to conceptual slippage and confusion. Secondly, there have been recent counter-examples to Laclau’s argument with movements like *Occupy* or the Spanish *Indignados* that voluntarily distanced themselves “from populist modes of discourse, organisation and representation by refusing to articulate demands through a leader, or not articulating concrete demands at all” (Moffitt 2016: 25). Finally, because of its extremely wide-reaching conceptualisation, populism as a political logic poses many problems, especially when it comes to empirically applying the theory, and has thus been criticised as both vague and insufficiently precise.

Populism as a performative political style

This broad overview of four of the main strands of research on populism leads us to the fifth one, the approach of populism as a performative political style which has been chosen as the basis for the theoretical framework of this paper. The term ‘political style’ has been used in many occasions in the specialist literature on populism (Taguieff 1995, Kazin 1995, Knight 1998, Canovan 1999, and Jagers & Walgrave 2007), but it took much longer to coalesce into a full-fledged approach like the others discussed above, notably because its use of the concept has been varied and inconsistent, usually relegating style as nothing more but an extension of discourse, rhetoric or even strategy. Taguieff (1995: 9) for example both argues that populism “does not embody a particular type of political regime, nor does it define a particular ideological content. It is a political style applicable to various ideological frameworks” but defines it at the same time “as a type of social and political mobilization, which means that the term can only designate a dimension of political action or discourse”, thus conflating both approaches to strategy and discourse while remaining unclear about his own definition of political style.

The cohesive approach to populism as a performative political style was first hinted at in a short collaborative article written by Moffitt & Tormey (2014), which was expanded in depth in a recent book written by Moffitt (2016). Before developing a specific

definition of populism as a political style, Moffitt clarified his conception of political style in general: by synthesising the insights from Hariman (1995), Ankersmit (2002) and Pels (2003), he claims that political style can be understood as “the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performances made to audiences that are used to create and navigate the fields of power that comprise the political, stretching from the domain of government through to everyday life” (Moffitt 2016: 38). This definition combines both the rhetorical (including spoken and written language, argumentation and associated modes of delivery, including tone, gestures and body language) component of Harriman’s definition with the aesthetic (including images, fashion, self-presentation, design and ‘staging’) component of Pels and Ankersmit’s definitions, while emphasising the co-constructed nature of political performances.

The conception of populism as a political style is an analytical choice that is influenced by all of the former approaches to populism. From the ideological approach, it is a definition that accounts for the multi-faceted nature of populism and the great diversity of empirical cases by assuming that it is a political style that can be embraced by all kinds of political actors. From the strategic approach, it stresses the relational nature of populism as something that is not located within the convictions of the leader but rather is created through the relationship between leader and her audience. From the discursive approach, it emphasises the non-binary nature of populism, one can borrow more or less from the repertoire of populist performances. Finally, and most importantly, it is based on Laclau’s performative understanding of the ‘people’ as being actively constructed through the performances of the leader.

This paper builds on and adapts Moffitt’s approach to assert the interdisciplinary nature of his framework. Indeed, by ontologically focusing on the populist style as a repertoire of political performances, a deep, even if unacknowledged by Moffitt, connection is being constructed with the academic discipline of performance studies. In other words, this paper seeks to adapt the stylistic approach in a way to modestly contribute to the growing literature exploring the intuitive connection between theatre and politics, or, as Rai and Reinelt (2014) called it, the “Grammar of Politics and Performance”.

By identifying twenty-eight cases of politicians generally accepted as examples of populist leaders in the specialist literature on populism, Moffitt inductively deduced three core features that constitute the populist political style: (1) “An appeal to ‘the people’ versus ‘the elite’”, (2) “Bad manners”; (3) “Performance of crisis, breakdown or threat”; (Moffitt 2016: 45). By adapting these elements to assert their interdisciplinary nature, I thus argue that the repertoire of populism as a political style is based on three types of performances: (1) performances of identity, (2) performances of transgression and (3) performances of urgency.

Firstly, performances of identity constitute the foundational element of the populist political style. While identity is arguably central to any political performance (Schechner 2013: 40), in the case of populism, these performances revolve around the appeal to ‘the people’ against ‘the elite’, or at a more basic level to the construction of an ‘us’ against ‘them’. Going back to the etymological roots of populism, the opposition between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’ is a characteristic that is generally acknowledged

by most of the scholars studying populism, beyond their definitional differences¹. This feature of populism showcases the core tendency for populist actors to performatively articulate a dichotomic vision of society, inspired by Laclau's (2005a: 160) concept of "antagonist frontier", which often include 'others', like immigrants or minority groups in the case of far-right leaders, which are associated to the 'elite' into this elusive enemy camp threatening the survival of 'the people'. These performance of other and self may thus carry implicit racial or religious connotations for example. In addition to these performances of identity dividing 'us' from 'them', another layer of identity lies in the populist leader's performance of self as both an ordinary member of 'the people' and as an extraordinary individual embodying within herself the unity of her audience.

Secondly, performances of transgression constitute another core features of populism as a performative political style. By transgression, what I mean is the violation of a social, cultural or political norm. That implies that populist actors voluntarily break conventions to create a specific performative effect. Moffitt (2016: 57) captured one of the aspects of the transgressive nature of populism by developing the concept of 'bad manners'. Defined as a general disregard for appropriate ways to act on the political stage, 'bad manners' suggest that rather than trying to place populism on the left-right scale, it would be more productive to analyse it from the perspective of Ostiguy's (2009) spectrum classifying politics culturally from 'high' to 'low' which "has to do with ways of being and acting in politics" (Ostiguy 2017: 77). On the one hand, the socio-cultural 'high' has become a standard and is usually considered the attribute of mainstream politicians, which are expected to have, for example, a developed vocabulary, a sophisticated understanding of society, a capacity to debate rationally, and so on. On the other hand, because populist actors seek to distance themselves from the 'elite' that is at the heart of their vision of society, they will transgress these implicit norms by choosing performances drawn from the socio-cultural 'low', including for instance personal attacks, acting or presenting themselves in an unusual and more 'colourful' way than regular politicians, lowering their vocabulary or even swearing.

Because performances of urgency, the third and final core feature of the stylistic approach to populism are the key component explored in this work on populist actors as performers of crisis, the concept will be developed in length in the last main section of this paper. Before moving on to this discussion, I wanted to develop more in-depth the difference between two complex concepts underpinning this theoretical framework.

Performance and performativity

Indeed, at the heart of the interdisciplinary approach used throughout this paper lies the distinction between performance and performativity. Because those concepts have not been problematised above, the contested and complex nature of these concepts, as well as their multiple definitions, requires a detailed discussion. Going back to the very root of the concept, a "performance implies any action that is conducted with the intention of being to some degree witnessed by another" (Rowe 2013: 8), it is what Richard Schechner (2013: 28) called "showing doing". Although the concept has

¹ The only notable exception to this are, as mentioned during the literature review, the proponents of the strategic approach (Weyland 2017: 62) who shift the focus from 'the people' to followers of the populist leader.

historically been associated with the language of theatre, such a broad definition expands its relevance to encompass a much broader set of phenomena. Indeed, "performance is a very inclusive notion of action; theatre is only one node on a continuum that reaches from ritualisation in animal behaviour (including humans) through performances in everyday life [...] to rites, ceremonies and performances of large-scale theatrical events" (Schechner 1977: 1). Another important distinction must be drawn between whether something "is performance" or can be analysed "as performance" (Schechner 2013: 38). In the former case, something "is" a performance only if the social context and norms of the time and space agree that it is. On the other hand, the latter definition is a much broader frame since any social act implying an actor and an audience can be studied "as performance". Taylor (2003: 3) echoes this stance when she argues that "performance also constitutes the methodological lens that enables scholars to analyse events *as performance*".

Politics in particular can be productively studied as performance: every aspect of the political life involves a performance of some sort. From official ceremonies organised by government to the protests of its opponents, from the public process of legislation in parliament to the story-telling surrounding the private life of politicians, from the campaign speech of a candidate to the very choice of her clothing, performances are a fundamental feature of politics. Political performances are defined by Rai (2014: 1-2) as "performances that seek to communicate to an audience meaning-making related to state institutions, policies and discourses". To put it differently, because "politics is a social necessity that is evident at all levels of society, [political performance is] a brand of "showing doing" with some degree of political intent behind both the act and (potentially) the witnessing." (Rowe 2013: 11).

Performativity (and the associated adjective 'performative') on the other hand refers to a related yet different concept, which acts as a link with poststructuralist research in which it is also central (Hansen 2013). Originally coined by philosopher of language Austin (1962) within his theory of speech acts, in which he theorised the power implied by the utterance of words, performativity was notably developed and extended by Butler (1988, 1990) in her influential works where she famously argued that "gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 1988: 519). Austin and Butler's conceptualisations of performativity, often respectively called 'thin' and 'thick' definitions, have been heavily discussed and many competing (and at times contradictory) definitions consequently emerged. In this work, the definition used is that of performativity as "a philosophical term [...] to mark the efficacy, success or failure of performance at achieving its intended effects (Rai 2014: 17). Put differently, "where performance is an act [...], performativity is the enactment based on that act" (De Vries et al. 2014: 285). This hence implies that "performativity is a discursive mode through which ontological effects [...] are established." (Bialasiewicz *et al.* 2007: 408).

Understood this way, performance and performativity are symbiotically linked: performances constitute the site on which performativity comes into action while performativity produces the ontological effects of performances. It is this core dynamic that is lying in the heart of the stylistic approach to populism, even if it was not explicitly

mentioned by previous authors. Thus, Laclau and Moffitt's conceptualisations of populism as including the phenomenon by which the populist leader "bring the subject known as 'the people' into being through [the] performance" (Moffitt 2016: 24) are based on the concept of performativity without naming it. It is this final precision that allows the approach developed above to be not only a "political style" in the superficial sense of the term but a "performative political style" with ontological effects that constitute the core focus of the empirical analysis.

Performances of urgency: crisis and securitisation

Populism and crisis: from an external to an internal relationship

Just as is the case for many other aspects of the phenomenon, the literature on populism has been fragmented regarding populism's relationship with the concept of crisis. As Moffitt argued, scholars can be placed along three main stances along a spectrum: those "who clearly draw a causal link between crisis and the emergence of populism; those who are unsure about the link; and a small few who argue that there is little to no link between the two phenomena" (Moffitt 2016: 114-115). Scholars from the first group, arguing that a crisis is a catalyst, or even for some "a necessary precondition" (Laclau 2005a: 177), for the emergence of populism, are mostly associated with either the political logic approach (Stavrakakis 2005, Panizza 2005) or the strategic approach (Weyland 1999, Roberts 2006). For proponents of the former approach, it is only in times of crisis of the hegemonic logic that populism has the opportunity to emerge as an alternative to the status quo. For advocates of the latter approach, crises are a propitious time for leaders to step up and assert their charismatic authority. On the other end of the spectrum are scholars like Arditì (2007) or Knight (1998) that firmly reject this link between crisis and populism for being "at best a rough tendency or correlation" (Arditì 2007: 63) on the grounds that the very concept of crisis is dubious, poorly defined and thus "lacks explanatory power" (Knight 1998: 227). Halfway between these two positions are authors, mostly from the ideological approach (Mudde 2007, Kaltwasser 2012), who do not deny the potential for a link but remain sceptical as to whether crisis is a relevant concept since "most of the authors do not bother to articulate what constitutes a crisis" (Mudde 2007: 205).

The key difference that makes the stylistic approach stand out from other approaches is that it sees crisis as an *internal* component of populism. "Despite their differences, all of these approaches - whether arguing for strong, weak or no causality at all in regards to the relationship between crisis and populism - perceive crisis as *external* to populism" (Moffitt 2016: 117). Building on the criticisms that the concept of crisis lacks clarity and definitional boundaries while also being itself a product of complex causality, the stylistic approach shifts the focus on crisis as an objective and measurable phenomenon "towards a view of crisis as a phenomenon that can be experienced only through mediated performance, whereby a systemic failure is elevated to the level of perceived 'crisis'" (Moffitt 2016: 118).

Such an ontological shift in perspective acknowledges that there is not one single universal understanding of crisis that can be objectively defined, but rather a multiplicity of potential phenomena linked to their specific cultural, social and political context which have to be symbolically mediated, in other words framed, for them to emerge as

a crisis. This definition thus emphasises the performative dimension of the concept of crisis in the sense that the very concept of crisis comes into being through the performances of a political actor to a specific audience. That is not to say that crises have no basis whatsoever and, in order to develop this idea, I follow Hay's (1999) distinction between failure and crisis. For him, a systemic failure is "an accumulation or condensation of contradictions" that make a system unable to be perpetuated², "whether perceived or not", while a crisis is "a condition in which failure is identified and widely perceived, a condition in which systemic failure has become politically and ideationally mediated" (Hay 1999: 324).

Performances of urgency

This internal conceptualisation of crisis can thus be linked to the notion of performances of urgency. Indeed, because "a failure does not automatically necessitate a demand to act with immediacy and decisiveness" (Moffitt 2016: 120), it is through the mediation of a political actor that will performatively construct the vision of a society that reached "a crucial point that would tip the scales" (Koselleck 2006: 358) that the perception of a crisis will emerge and imply the urgency to act and solve that crisis.

This performative move constitutes the third and final characteristic of populism as a political style: performances of urgency. In order to turn the crisis into "a moment of decisive intervention" (Hay 1999: 323), populist actors will thus 'spectacularise', to borrow Moffitt's (2016: 120) term, the failure of the system as a way to foster an impetus to act promptly. One could argue that, since elections are for example always framed as a decisive moment of choice for the electors to be mobilised meaningfully, such performances belong more generally to the repertoire of any political actor. However, what characterise populist politicians is the extreme to which these performances of urgency are brought. As noted by Taggart (2004: 282), "the idea of living at a turning point in history is an important one for populist ideas", which means that the notion of urgency is much more fundamental and central in the populist performance than it is for other actors. More than just a decisive choice, populist actors mobilise the concept of crisis as a "situation that necessitates a vital decision that is seen as so significant and all-encompassing as to both change and delineate the course of history" (Moffitt 2016: 119).

Securitisation: the Copenhagen School and beyond

For readers that are familiar with security studies, this discussion of the concepts of crisis and of performances of urgency will immediately bring to mind the cognate concept of "securitisation". Engaging with authors using this concept will refine even further the analytical frame developed throughout this paper, contributing to a refined understanding of the purpose of these performances of urgency.

² Hay's notion of failure is purposefully designed in a broad sense in order to capture the multiplicity of potential roots of a crisis. Indeed, one can talk of a failure of "the financial system, political system, public policy, democracy, representation, masculinity and so on" (Moffitt 2016: 120)

Securitisation as a concept was developed by the so-called Copenhagen School of security studies, which notably includes Buzan, De Wilde and Wæver. In their most influential work (Buzan *et al.* 1998), they criticised the mainstream realist conception of security which assumed security to be an objective fact located at the level of the nation-state which had to deal with a variety of external threats. Wæver in particular put forward the concept of securitisation, arguing that security was a speech act: an intersubjective construct located in its own utterance. “Security is an illocutionary act, a ‘self-referential’ practice; its conditions of possibility are constitutive of the speech act of saying ‘security’” (Wæver 1995: 55). For him, security issues do not exist *a priori* but are instead socially framed and constructed through a ‘securitising move’ which fosters a feeling of urgency.

The former definition is rooted in Austin’s performative theory of speech acts (Austin 1975) that was already mentioned above. In his model, any sentence can convey three kind of acts which overall constitute a speech act: “(i) locutionary — the utterance of an expression that contains a given sense and reference; (ii) illocutionary — the act performed in articulating a locution [;] (iii) perlocutionary, which is the ‘consequential effects’ or ‘sequels’ that are aimed at evoking the feelings, beliefs, thoughts or actions of the target audience.” (Balzacq 2005: 175). In the words of Habermas (1984: 289), this distinction can be summed up as “to say something, to act in saying something, to bring about something through acting in saying something”.

Austin’s typology is crucial in assessing the limits of Wæver’s definition. Building on Stritzel (2007) who already criticised the under-theorised nature of the links between the actor at the origin of the securitising move and her audience, Balzacq argues that security is not an illocutionary act but rather a perlocutionary act. That is a crucial distinction since perlocutionary acts are not self-referential: their performativity is rooted in the relationship between speaker and audience. Illocutionary acts, on the other hand, like the classic example of the utterance of “I do” during a wedding, produce performative effects if and only if the four “felicity conditions”³ outlined by Austin (1962: 14) are met at the same time. Such a shift allows securitisation as a concept to be more realistic, less restricted by these conditions that are rarely met in practice, as well as more focused on the way the actor performs security in relationship to an audience within broader social context.

The author that allows this discussion of securitisation to be tied to the prior concept of performances of urgency and to the broader interdisciplinary framework of this paper is Salter (2008), who introduced a dramaturgical model of understanding securitisation. Arguing that Buzan *et al.* (1998) themselves already use dramatic language at the heart of their concept, he furthers Balzacq’s criticism by introducing the notion of

³ “(i) a preparatory condition determined by the existence of a ‘conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances’;
(ii) an executive condition to determine whether the procedure has been fully executed by all participants;
(iii) a sincerity condition that posits that participants in this conventional procedure must have certain thoughts or feelings, and ‘must intend so to conduct themselves’;
(iv) a fulfilment condition determined by whether participants ‘actually so conduct themselves subsequently’” (Austin 1962: 49)

dramaturgical analysis as a way to add to this model “a more nuanced understanding of audience–speaker co-constitution of authority and knowledge, the weight of social context, and the degree of success of (de)securitization” (Salter 2008: 321-322).

Such a dramaturgical understanding of securitisation enables to understand the concept of crisis through the light of their purpose. By ‘spectacularising’ a failure of current politics and turning it performatively into a crisis, populist actors “radically simplify the terms and terrain of political debate and advocate strong leadership and quick political action” (Moffitt 2016: 114) as a way to bypass ‘politics-as-usual’ and present themselves as the only ones holding the solution to the crisis. These performances of urgency are accompanied by a portrayal of every other political actor as either unwilling, unable or altogether ignorant of the crisis. Once the securitising move accepted, the securitised issue becomes an existential threat which short-circuits the deliberation process of politics and depicts immediate reaction as the only valid option to tackle it.

Marine Le Pen as a performer of crisis

In this final part of the paper, I specifically look at Marine Le Pen’s 2017 presidential campaign to illustrate the theoretical point made throughout the paper. In order to embrace both the textual and non-textual elements of her performances of urgency, I will use two types of empirical sources⁴ that will be analysed qualitatively. Both of them can be found in the appendix section at the end of the paper. Firstly, I will analyse relevant excerpts of Marine Le Pen’s speech for her “grand meeting” at the Zénith hall in Paris on the 17th of April 2017. Secondly, I will analyse Le Pen’s first official campaign clip. Through the combined analysis of these two complementary sources, I do not seek to make an exhaustive list of the many ways Le Pen performs crisis, instead, I will aim to draw the outline of a holistic portrayal of her performances of urgency.

Performing through words

Marine Le Pen’s speech on the 17th of April is especially important for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it takes place in the Zénith, the second largest performance hall in Paris, which means that, as a speech taking place in the French capital, it is one of her rallies with the most attendance as well as a speech with a strong media coverage. Secondly, it takes place six days only before the first round of the presidential election, which enhances even further its importance as one of her last opportunities to convince potential electors to make their choice in her favour.

In her speech, the first major performance of crisis takes place in the very first lines of her text: “We are no longer in the campaign, but at the time where fate is being decided” [i]⁵. Illustrating the concept of crisis as “a crucial point that would tip the scales” (Koselleck 2006: 358), she immediately adds that “Sunday’s election is historic” [i] and that “What is at stake [...], is a challenge to civilisation” [i]. Using emphatic terms like “fate”, “historic” and “civilisation” is a way for Le Pen to ground her speech in *gravitas*,

⁴ All translations are mine and as faithful as possible to the original French meaning.

⁵ Direct quotes of the speech are followed by a different pagination (i, ii, iii and so on) referring to that of the speech itself.

highlighting that this election is not a choice about her as an individual but about France as a whole. It allows for the rest of her narrative about the country to unfold with a sense that France currently undergoes a crisis and that this election is the tipping point which will see it resolved or not.

This is crystallised in the simple binary choice that she claims all French people must face between two visions of France: “Either the France that is being reborn, or the France that is sinking” [i]. Before any further word on her own vision or by what she means by “being reborn”, she draws an apocalyptic portrayal of what would happen to the country if her opponents were to triumph. She lists “a fragmentation into communities”, “cities and villages overwhelmed by the weight of immigration”, “a challenge to our lifestyle”, “a collapse of our civilisational values”, “growing inequalities” and finally France becoming “a vague region locked in the EU prison” [i]. The previous enumeration of ‘disasters’ to come illustrates what are for Le Pen the systemic failures, in Hay’s (1999: 324) definition as an “accumulation of contradictions” that are being showcased and linked together in order to emphasise the multi-faceted nature of the crisis that France is facing. Because this stylistic device associates a variety of apparently unrelated issues, the clear message sent through her words is that the crisis is more complex and threatening because it is both migratory, ideological, civilisational, economic and institutional.

Several minutes later, she uses one of the mottos of her campaign: “Give France back to us” [i], arguing that this message is a “call” she heard from the French people in every city she visited. This simple sentence is a way to link the potential threat looming in the future that she highlighted above to the current situation. It is not only that France is in danger after the election, but also that France is already in a state of disarray. Furthermore, because this motto implies that France has been taken away from the French people, it includes the underlying question of who or what took the country away from its citizens. This command, that she repeats another time later with mild swearing (“Rendez-nous la France bon sang!” [ii]), fosters the sense that the current situation ought to be changed immediately. She argues that this situation even translates into “a legitimate anguish of no longer being at home” for “inconsolable patriots” who “cry in suffering because they see their country adrift” [i]. In this case, the use of strong emotional terms (“anguish”, “inconsolable”, “cries of suffering”) can be interpreted as a way to bring an emotional dimension to her performance of crisis, appealing more to the sensitivity of her voters than to their rationality.

Later in the speech, Le Pen uses an anaphora of France as being unfairly deprived of many essential parts of its identity: “Deprived of choices”, “Deprived of sovereignty”, “Deprived of law”, “Deprived of territory”, “Deprived of rights”, “Deprived of social security”, “Deprived of factories”, “Deprived of public services”, “Deprived of jobs” [iii]. Anaphora, as a rhetoric device based on repetition, seeks to make Le Pen’s point stick, anchoring in the collective mind the image of a country that lost everything. As a follow-up to this empathetic call establishing the pitiful state of France, she adds threat to her representation of crisis by introducing the notion of a “society under siege” [ii], “where law (...) does not apply anymore” [ii], evoking the French suburbs where the only rules that apply are those of “gangs, drugs and mafias” [ii].

The main factor leading to this situation of social crisis, she argues, is “mass immigration”, which she calls an “oppression” [iv] and successively links in another anaphora to “delinquency”, “Islamism” and “terrorism” [iv]. Later on, she identifies the culprits, the ruling political elite who, under the influence of European “bureaucrats” led to the emergence of an “open door France” [iv] where any criminal organisations (“mafias”, “terrorists”) “send their soldiers of hate through the flows of migrants” [iv]. In this light, it is clear that “immigration” is at the heart of the securitising move of Le Pen, a characteristic she shares with other right-wing populist leaders (Mudde 2007). This claim that “mass immigration” has become a threatening issue for France is underpinned by the explicit message that there is a clear “impetus to act” (Moffitt 2016: 120) promptly to quell this crisis.

The end of her speech then goes back to this key performance of the urgency to act, echoing the message of her first words: “What is at stake, and I chose my words carefully (...), is a challenge to civilisation” [vi]. Le Pen then mirrors her initial argument where she opposed two choices, focusing again on the multiplicity of disasters to come if she were to lose (“endemic violence”, “social brutality”,... [vi]), emphasising that choosing her means choosing France.

Performing through images and sound

After this first account of Le Pen’s performances of crisis based on the brief analysis of textual elements, looking at her first and most important campaign videoclip enables a glimpse into very different, yet complementary, insights on Le Pen as a performer. The main reason for that is the difference in both format and purpose of the performance. On the one hand, a campaign rally is a platform that enables a lengthy exposition of a political actor’s stance and opinions through speeches that usually last a couple of hours. On the other hand, a campaign video clip’s length must be short and fast-paced to convey most of its information succinctly. It aims to introduce the candidate and must hence catch the attention of the person who watches quickly, which means that it cannot hope to be as exhaustive and in-depth as a speech. Another important difference between those two formats is that of the audience, which is crucial for the performative approach developed above: the audience in a rally is already convinced by the claims of the political leader and usually comes as a way to support one’s candidate, whilst a campaign video clip is aimed towards a broader audience, extending the audience beyond the usual constituency of the candidate.

In this two minutes long video clip, Marine Le Pen develops a *mise-en-scène* that is thus very different from her usual speeches. In a very intimate and personal register, she develops her life story, emphasising her personality and past with little to no mention of her party affiliation and of concrete policies that she seeks to implement. From the epic background music that rises *crescendo* to the trailer-like combination between close-ups, aerial long shots, and slow-motion shots, this video makes use of a variety of codes borrowed from Hollywood movies to depict Le Pen in a heroic yet intimate setting.

However, several elements echo the stances held in her speeches, demonstrating another facet of her style as a performer of crisis. Firstly, for each of the personal

characteristics that she highlights, she links it to the broader context of a societal crisis. She thus links being a woman with “the ever-increasing restrictions on liberty in our country through the development of Islamic fundamentalism” (vii), claiming to feel it like “an act of violence”. Similarly, when she emphasises her status as a parent, she associates it with “(worries) about the state of the country (...) that we will leave as legacy to our children” (viii). Finally, her mention of her professional background as a lawyer is linked to “a particular sensitivity to the fate of victims faced with the impunity of criminals” (viii). What is most insightful here lies in what is implicitly evoked through each of these links: respectively the idea that Islamic fundamentalism is increasingly rising in France, the observation that the country is currently in a dire situation and lastly that the perspective that the French legal system is not working properly as many crimes remain unpunished.

Even when she seeks to perform and embody the codes of *cliché* femininity, emphasising her empathy and compassion, she portrays these elements through a negative frame: France being insulted, and French people suffering from insecurity, violence and poverty. Depicted symbolically as the embodiment of France, as her shots next to the Eiffel Tower and to a Joan of Arc statue demonstrate, Le Pen subtly develops the idea of a society in crisis through the underlying messages of her text. This then leads her to a stance, that recalls her speech, where she argues that the “choice for the upcoming presidential election is crucial, fundamental. It is a determining choice for civilisation”. Just as she did during her rally, she imbues these statements with a sense of *gravitas*, illustrating Hay’s (1999: 323) conception of crisis as “a moment of decisive intervention” while performing the urgency of the choice that the French electors must make.

After having performatively constructed the crisis that France is facing, Le Pen once again mirrors her speech by presenting the electors with a radically simplified alternative: the choice to “continue with those who have lied, failed and betrayed, who have misled the people and lost France”, deepening more explicitly her bleak representation of a France whose elite have failed the people, and the choice to “restore order to France”. As one of her campaign mottos, “Remettre la France en ordre”, which recalls in some way Donald Trump’s “Make America Great Again”, allows Le Pen to step up and assert her political leadership. It is notable that, in the extension of this claim for leadership, the video concludes on a shot of Marine Le Pen steering a sailing boat, a very obvious metaphor to her abilities to guide the country through the storm ahead.

The main difference between her performances of urgency in the Paris rally and in this video clip lies in the much more implicit and subdued nature of the threat that she securitises. While immigration was explicitly stated in her speech to be the systemic failure that needs to be dealt with, the video clip uses much more indirect ways to express this, focusing more on the subtext of a looming threat than on a direct depiction of the threat.

Conclusion

All in all, the qualitative analysis of these two different sources demonstrate that, while performing crisis can take very different forms depending on the format and the context through which this performance take place, it is a central and fundamental component to Le Pen's style as a populist actor. The recurrence of themes and formulations, although with slight variations, in both her speech and in her campaign video clip illustrate that the performative construction of crisis is one of the crucial elements around which she articulates her argument.

More generally, this paper has sought to make the case for the approach of populism as a performative political style by exploring in detail one of the three core features of the populist style: performances of urgency. As a concept linking both crisis and securitisation, it focuses on two main aspects. Firstly, it seeks to provide an understanding of the way a populist actor 'spectacularise' a certain set of systemic failures and turn them performatively into a crisis. Secondly, it tackles the implications that such a performance of crisis holds as a securitising move, that is the simplified vision of politics underlying this concept of crisis and its consequences. By successfully performing the securitisation of a systemic failure which becomes a crisis, populist actors seek to impulse an impetus to act promptly in order to solve it. It is the subtle interplay between this call to act urgently, propelled by the very notion of crisis, and the populist portrayal of self as the only alternative to solve it that this concept seeks to explore in detail.

Furthermore, the other main purpose of this paper was to showcase, as well as modestly contribute to, the interdisciplinary potential of using concepts at the intersection of political science and performance studies. Reading populism through the lens of performativity, the key concept developed throughout this paper, is a productive endeavour that explores in a unique way the co-constitutive relationship between the populist leader and the 'people'. While such an approach challenges in-depth most of the ontological, epistemological and methodological tenets of the literature on populism, its insights open new ways to comprehend the multi-faceted and versatile nature of populism.

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Appendix

Campaign speech for the “grand meeting” at the Zénith of Paris (Excerpts)

Mesdames, mesdemoiselles, messieurs,

Chers compatriotes,

Dans six jours, dans six petits jours, aura lieu ce premier tour de l'élection présidentielle. Nous ne sommes plus tout à fait dans la campagne, mais à l'heure où le destin se fixe. Nous sommes à l'heure des choix.

Ces jours de fête pascale sont des jours où le jour devient plus long que la nuit. Ce sont des jours qui nous amènent à la lumière. Le rendez-vous de dimanche est historique. Historique pour la France, historique pour notre peuple, historique pour notre nation. Ce qui se joue dimanche prochain, je l'ai dit, je l'ai répété inlassablement dans cette campagne car je crois que c'est la vérité, c'est un enjeu de civilisation

Ce qui se joue, c'est un enjeu de civilisation. Dimanche, le choix est simple, soit la France qui renaît, soit la France qui sombre. Soit la nation française, soit la vision post-nationale que défendent tous mes adversaires, c'est-à-dire concrètement le morcellement en communautés, la submersion de nos villes et de nos villages sous le poids d'une immigration planétaire, la remise en question de nos modes de vie, l'effondrement de nos valeurs de civilisation comme l'égalité hommes-femmes, un creusement sans fin des inégalités et de la précarité, l'éclatement de notre droit du travail par entreprises, la transformation de notre pays, la France, en une vague région enfermée dans la prison de l'Union européenne, à laquelle l'ensemble de mes adversaires veut ajouter un cadenas supplémentaire. La fin donc de l'indivisibilité, de la souveraineté et de l'égalité dans la nation française.

Nos poursuivants pensent que la France a fait son temps, qu'il faut passer à autre chose, tout bazarder, se fondre dans le grand magma de la mondialisation sauvage. Et puis il y a les patriotes qui savent. Des patriotes qui savent, ou plutôt qui sentent profondément que le temps de la France est devant elle. Ils portent en eux la conviction que c'est en étant elle-même que la France protège le mieux ses enfants, c'est en étant elle-même qu'elle les arme et les unit pour affronter la mondialisation. Ils savent que c'est en étant libre, souveraine, affranchie de toutes les tutelles supranationales que la France est grande, qu'elle est juste avec les siens, qu'elle défend les petits, qu'elle n'oublie personne. Et pour tous les peuples du monde, c'est en étant elle-même que la France apportera au monde ce qu'on attend d'elle. Le respect des peuples, une diplomatie équilibrée, le refus d'une soumission à des blocs, bref un message de paix et d'indépendance. Ici, dans cette élection, nous portons un projet fraternel d'union du peuple français, union autour de nos filiations intimes, de notre patrimoine immatériel, nos traditions, notre belle langue, notre culture, notre art de vivre, notre conception du monde et de l'homme, de nos valeurs. Le seul projet en réalité qui respecte à la lettre notre devise nationale : « Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité ». Jaurès le disait avant nous : « *A ceux qui n'ont rien, la patrie est leur seul bien.* » Et chaque patriote, chaque Français a donc le droit de proclamer que la France est sienne.

Rendez-vous la France ! Cet appel, mes amis, je l'ai entendu partout où je suis allée. De Lille à Ajaccio, d'(...) à Bordeaux, de Metz à (...). Cet appel, mes amis, est un message du cœur. Cet appel qui sort de vos poitrines est celui d'un peuple tout entier, de notre peuple. Un cri d'amour, un cri de bon sens qui veut dire que la France est nôtre et que nous sommes responsables, tous, de notre chez-nous. Et bien sûr car si les Français ne s'inquiètent pas de la France, qui le fera à leur place ? Cet appel que vous lancez exprime aussi cette angoisse légitime qui nous étreint de ne plus être en effet tout à fait chez nous en France. Cet appel, je l'entends comme un cri de souffrance, de patriotes inconsolables de voir leur pays à la dérive. Une souffrance que je partage avec vous, une souffrance dont je veux témoigner, une souffrance que je veux voir disparaître, une souffrance que je veux transformer en espérance. Et ce sentiment que nous ressentons et que nous, nous osons exprimer, n'échappe plus à personne.

Cet appel est une revendication lorsqu'on se sent dépossédé, injustement dépossédé. Dépossédés de nos choix, notre souveraineté ayant été transférée à d'autres, à des bureaucrates à Bruxelles, dans les couloirs de la Commission, à Francfort, dans les travées de la Banque centrale européenne. Des bureaucrates dont nous connaissons à peine le nom et que nous n'avons pas élus, des technocrates qui œuvrent chaque jour contre les nations sous l'influence des lobbies et d'une finance mondialisée qui a tous les arguments, y compris sonnants et trébuchants, pour les convaincre de tel ou tel choix, des technocrates qui ont tous les pouvoirs à cause des traités que l'ensemble de mes principaux concurrents à cette élection ont signé, fait ratifier, parfois même contre votre volonté comme ce fut le cas au sujet du traité de Lisbonne.

Dépossédés de nos lois, par des chefs qui courent à la capitulation et à la soumission. Dépossédés de notre territoire, nous ne décidons plus qui vient s'installer chez nous. Dépossédés de nos droits, les Français ont parfois moins de droits en France que des étrangers même clandestins. Dépossédés, mes chers amis, dépossédés de notre système de solidarité qui meurt de ne plus être national mais mondialisé et qui souffre terriblement d'une politique qui a éteint la croissance. Dépossédés de nos usines, délocalisées, de nos services publics, fermés, de nos médecins de famille qui n'ont pas de successeurs. Dépossédés de nos emplois, détruits par la concurrence déloyale, dépossédés de notre histoire, dépossédés de notre mémoire et, finalement, dépossédés de notre espérance.

On est chez nous. Cela signifie qu'on ne veut plus voir une France où la loi de la République ne s'applique plus, des cités où les caïds font régner la loi des bandes, des gangs, de la drogue et des mafias. Ces territoires perdus de la République qui ne sont pas perdus pour tout le monde où déjà deux sociétés se font face : l'une assiégée, la nôtre, et l'autre conquérante et parfois exclusive qui rêve d'installer définitivement ses règles à la place de celles de notre République. Rendez-nous la France, bon sang ! Cela signifie que les Français veulent être un peuple libre, un peuple souverain. Les Français veulent décider par eux-mêmes de leur destin, de leur priorités, de l'organisation et du fonctionnement de leur société, de leur modèle économique, de leur système de protection sociale. Qu'ils veulent vivre en France comme des Français sans se laisser imposer des mœurs, des coutumes, des lois et même maintenant des paysages qui ne sont pas les leurs. En France, on respecte les femmes, on ne les interpelle pas dans la rue avec des propos grossiers, outrageants, on ne leur interdit pas l'espace public, on ne les frappe pas, on ne leur demande pas de se cacher sous des voiles, parce qu'elles seraient impures.

[Interruption des Fémen] Ces extrémistes d'extrême gauche marchent sur la tête. On voit là l'inversion totale des valeurs qui viennent perturber un meeting de la seule femme qui défend les femmes !

Femmes de France, je vous appelle à relever la tête avec moi pour défendre vos droits. En France, on boit du vin si on en a envie, on pense et on s'exprime librement, on entend sonner la cloche au lointain mais on se voit reconnaître le droit de critiquer une religion ou d'en changer sans avoir peur.

C'est aux Français et à eux seuls de décider qui entre et qui sort de notre pays, qui s'y installe et qui n'y est pas le bienvenu. C'est aussi aux Français, mes chers amis, de décider qui devient Français et qui n'en est pas digne. Mais, mes amis, ce « on est chez nous » est aussi un cri d'espoir parce qu'il est un formidable appel de ralliement des patriotes, un cri de révolte devant ce qui est présenté comme inéluctable. Ah, les médias du système n'aiment pas que vous proclamiez votre amour de la France. Eh bien moi, je vous en félicite, je vous y invite, je vous en remercie. Cet appel, il est une réponse à ceux qui voudraient que nous ayons honte d'être Français. Eh bien nous en faisons un appel de fierté, d'affirmation de nos droits, de nos affections, de nos libertés, de notre amour de la patrie. Un droit que nous reconnaissons à tous les peuples du monde qui ont comme nous le droit de défendre leur identité, leur modèle social, leur héritage, leur langue, leurs traditions. La France a le droit d'être la France chez elle comme tous les autres peuples du monde le sont chez eux. Les Français ont des droits chez eux justement parce qu'ils sont chez eux, parce qu'ils sont les propriétaires de la France, pas des occupants précaires, pas des occupants sans droit ni titre. Nos titres, nous les tenons de nos parents et des parents de nos parents. Comme ceux d'ailleurs qui nous ont rejoint dans la famille France, que la France a adoptés et que nous traitons comme nos égaux. Et nous voulons poursuivre cette belle aventure qui s'appelle la France. Nous sommes des débiteurs, cela parce que des générations d'hommes et de femmes ont travaillé et souffert et parfois sont morts pour leur transmettre un pays libre qui est le nôtre. Nous avons le devoir de transmission, le devoir de solidarité nationale des plus fortunés vers les plus

humbles, le devoir d'égalité aussi, toutes les communes de France ont droit à la France, à la République, à ses services publics, à sa vitalité économique, à un Etat qui est là et qui remplit ses devoirs.

Oui, la France a le droit de préserver et de retrouver sa souveraineté nationale, c'est-à-dire la liberté de décider pour elle-même. Elle a le droit à son identité nationale, c'est-à-dire à son être profond. Elle a le droit de se perpétuer, c'est-à-dire qu'elle a droit à la continuité historique que personne ne peut interrompre. Vous l'avez compris, vous l'avez compris, nous n'entendons pas nous laisser faire, ni maintenant, ni jamais. Nous ne croyons pas, nous, à la fatalité historique. L'histoire est écrite par les hommes, par ceux qui refusent de se laisser porter par la marche tranquille des événements, de se laisser balader par les courants dominants, de se laisser promener par les modes du moment. L'histoire est faite par ceux qui osent, qui agissent, qui impulsent le mouvement, et en démocratie entraînent et rallient la majorité du peuple. C'est ce qui est en train d'arriver avec les patriotes puisqu'après une longue marche, nous voilà aux portes du donjon qu'il nous faut conquérir. Il ne faut rien lâcher, il ne faut rien lâcher !

Mes chers compatriotes, la France a besoin de vous et vous répondez présents. Depuis plusieurs décennies, nos prétendues élites ont abandonné l'idée d'un génie propre de la France. Plus de culture française mais un modèle mondialiste, une sorte de sous-culture mondiale qui vise à rendre les hommes uniformes, à rendre la diversité des cultures du monde anachronique, à ne concevoir les rapports humains qu'en termes marchands. C'est ce qui a pu faire dire à M. Macron, décidément bien pressé, trop pressé d'en finir avec mille cinq cents ans d'histoire de France, que la culture française n'existait pas. Ce monde gris, ce monde terne, ce monde reformaté et inhumain, nous n'en voulons pas ! Les institutions européennes de Bruxelles, les médias et ces prétentieux moralisateurs qui se présentent comme les élites veulent nous faire croire que la France n'est plus rien, qu'elle n'est plus capable de rien sans l'Union européenne, sans l'Allemagne, sans les Etats-Unis, tout ce beau monde-là bien cravaté, souvent né tout habillé, clame que pour s'en sortir la France devrait renoncer à ce qu'elle est, à son modèle et vous à ce que vous êtes. (...) Comment croire que le laisser-faire total, le laisser-aller total, le laisser-passer total peuvent être une solution ? Je sais, en 1968, des révolutionnaires de salon nous ont dit : « *Il est interdit d'interdire* », ils ont prôné la jouissance sans entrave. Aujourd'hui, ces principes se traduisent simplement. La seule règle qui vaille, c'est la liberté totale de commercer et de spéculer. Bref, la loi du marché. La marchandisation du monde, des produits low cost fabriqués par des travailleurs low cost pour des profits qui, eux, je vous rassure, ne le sont pas, et un chômage qui ne l'est pas non plus. Ils ont créé leur monde parfait, parfaitement inhumain où l'on fait fabriquer par des esclaves pour vendre à des chômeurs. Écoutez ce que disent mes poursuivants, messieurs Macron et Fillon : ce qui compte ce n'est pas la France mais l'économie. La France ne décide plus de rien mais se soumet aux logiques du marché. Amusante leçon d'ailleurs au passage hein de la part d'anciens ministres et d'anciens premiers ministres qui ont laissé à la France après leur passage aux responsabilités plus de chômage, moins de pouvoir d'achat, plus de CDD précaires et de petites retraites, plus d'impôts et beaucoup, beaucoup plus de dettes. Ah c'est vrai, leur programme est approuvé par monsieur Gattaz qui traduit, calculette à la main, ce qui est primordial ce n'est pas la France mais mon compte en banque. L'économie pour l'économie et tant pis pour la France. Pas le bonheur des français mais celui des marchés. Leurs sous avant vous.

Nous, nous pensons que l'économie doit être au service des hommes et non l'inverse. Nous croyons que la France est une nation politique qui a vocation à protéger le petit et à éclairer le monde. Nous pensons que l'économie ne peut aller à l'encontre de l'identité nationale. De plus en plus de pauvres, étudiants, salariés, fonctionnaires, chômeurs, retraités, de moins en moins de riches mais de plus en plus riches. C'est un programme qui n'est pas le nôtre, nous refusons le laisser aller total. Nous croyons, vous l'avez compris, dans le primat du politique, dans la force de la démocratie et de la décision politique pour changer les choses. Nous y croyons tellement que je réhabiliterai le référendum et créerai la proportionnelle aux élections ainsi que le référendum d'initiative populaire. Avec le laisser-aller, on retrouve là les vieilles lubies d'essence ultralibérale que les Cohn-Bendit et Attali, ces radoteurs grisonnants, les soutiens de M. Macron, espèrent encore nous faire avaler. Nous, nous allons définitivement tourner cette page que MM. Sarkozy et Fillon n'ont pas su refermer pendant leur quinquennat. Nous allons tourner le dos à ces inepties ringardes.

Je suis la candidate de la protection et la protection nécessite des règles. La protection entendue comme les frontières, celles qui justement demain devront protéger nos agriculteurs, nos ouvriers, nos

salariés, nos industriels de la concurrence déloyale d'importation qui ne respecte ni les mêmes normes sanitaires, ni les mêmes normes sociales ou environnementales. Celles qui devraient protéger nos travailleurs du travail détaché qui crée une priorité étrangère à l'emploi, celles qui permettent de sanctionner l'évitement fiscal des grands groupes qui font leurs bénéfices ici mais préfèrent payer leurs impôts ailleurs. (...) Des règles qui protègent, entendues comme la règle de droit qui est rappelée à tous et qui s'applique sans faiblesse face au laxisme qui est devenu la règle dans notre pays. Les règles qui protègent à l'école, avec la restauration de la sécurité dans tous les établissements, avec le retour de l'autorité du maître et du professeur. Avec la transmission effective aux jeunes enfants de savoirs définis comme nécessaires à sa vie d'adulte et à son épanouissement personnel : lire, écrire, compter, la connaissance de l'histoire de notre pays, de ses valeurs, de son drapeau, de son hymne. (...). Pour finir, j'ai beaucoup plus de chanteurs autour de moi que monsieur Macron. Les règles mes chers amis, les règles qui. En France, c'est de la bureaucratie pour les petits mais le laissez-faire pour les gros. Les protections écologiques aussi qui encouragent un développement. Révolution de la proximité fondée sur les exploitations agricoles à taille humaine. Les règles, les règles qui refusent la marchandisation du monde et des êtres humains.

Revenons quelques instants à la question des frontières parce que l'Union européenne nous inflige quand même la double peine : l'absence de frontières physiques avec l'irresponsable traité de Schengen. Nous avons donc effacé nos frontières physiques et fait de nos pays des halls de gare pour toutes les migrations du monde. Je mettrai fin à Schengen et restaurerai nos frontières nationales. (...) Nous avons ouvert la porte de la maison France aux mafias, aux terroristes qui ont vite compris le bénéfice qu'ils pouvaient tirer de notre incroyable impuissance et ont envoyé leurs soldats de haine au travers des flux de migrants pour frapper au cœur de notre pays. Et contrairement à ce qui nous avait été dit, les frontières extérieures de l'Europe, elles, n'ont jamais été protégées, jamais. Vous imaginez bien : ce n'est pas aujourd'hui que ça va avoir lieu, vous imaginez bien que la Grèce ruinée ou l'Italie submergée sont proprement incapables de résister à cette pression migratoire qui ne fait que commencer.

C'est aussi sciemment, en vertu de son utopie mondialiste, que l'Union européenne s'est lancée dans l'absurde intégration de la Turquie. On voit là un autre danger de l'Union européenne, qui se conçoit comme sans limite tout en maintenant un principe de libre circulation généralisée des personnes. Demain, pourquoi pas, l'adhésion à l'Union européenne du Maroc ou de l'Algérie et la porte ouverte à la libre circulation des ressortissants du Maghreb en France ? (...)

Chers amis le rôle du politique est de fixer des règles, des repères, et, comme le rappelait Pascal : « *Le propre de la puissance est de protéger.* » Moi, je vous le dis : j'entends vous protéger. Ma première mesure comme présidente de la République sera de remettre des frontières à la France. Parce qu'enfin, mes amis, la situation est trop grave. Chaque jour, ce sont des centaines d'étrangers supplémentaires qui rentrent chez nous pour s'y installer, pour vivre chez nous avec l'intention de vivre comme chez eux. On ne peut plus laisser faire. Pour beaucoup de Français, l'immigration massive est une oppression. L'immigration massive n'est pas une chance pour la France, c'est un drame pour la France (...) Ca l'est aussi objectivement pour les étrangers eux-mêmes à qui nous n'avons plus rien à donner. Par leur incurie, nos dirigeants créent une terrible méprise autant qu'une épouvantable tragédie. L'immigration n'est vue comme une chance que pour ce grand patronat qui profite de la main d'œuvre importée pour faire baisser les salaires et laisser le coût social de l'immigration à la charge des Français. (...)

Derrière l'immigration massive, il y a la délinquance, derrière l'immigration massive, il y a l'islamisme, derrière l'immigration massive, il y a le terrorisme. (...) J'assume totalement cette clarté et cette fermeté : le fiché « S » étranger est expulsé vers son pays d'origine. Le fiché « S » binational est déchu de sa nationalité et expulsé vers son pays, le fiché « S » français est poursuivi pour intelligence avec l'ennemi et condamné à de la prison et à l'indignité nationale qui le prive de tous ses droits. (...) Je réformerai le code de la nationalité pour qu'on ne puisse plus devenir français quasiment par hasard. (...) Etre français, cela s'hérite ou se mérite. (...) Etre français, c'est un honneur. Il faut arrêter la carte d'identité fabriquée à la photocopieuse. Il faut arrêter la nationalité française accordée à des individus qui, lorsqu'ils la demandent à 18 ans, ont déjà un casier judiciaire et long comme un jour sans pain. Etre français, c'est un privilège, et je souhaite le marquer avec l'instauration de la priorité nationale à l'emploi et au logement social. (...) Le terreau du terrorisme dans notre pays, c'est l'islamisme. (...)

L'insécurité pourrit la vie quotidienne. J'engagerai le retour de l'autorité et de l'ordre républicain partout, dans certaines cités, dans les rues et les transports, dans les écoles, dans les services des hôpitaux eux aussi maintenant touchés par la violence. (...) Nous mettrons en œuvre la tolérance zéro avec une application stricte et systématique de la loi républicaine. Trois principes : la certitude des poursuites, la certitude des sanctions, la certitude des peines. (...) Nous rétablirons les peines planchers, nous augmenterons les moyens de la justice pour accélérer le traitement des dossiers et construirons 40 000 places de prison en cinq ans. Pour en libérer d'ailleurs immédiatement, je passerai des accords bilatéraux avec leur pays d'origine afin que les criminels étrangers purgent leur peine de prison dans leur pays. J'en profite pour dire à nos compatriotes d'origine étrangère ainsi qu'aux étrangers qui vivent en France tout à fait dignement, qui travaillent, qui ne créent de torts à personne qu'ils n'ont strictement rien à craindre de ma présidence. Bien au contraire. Chers compatriotes d'origine étrangère qui aimez la France, mes adversaires développent le communautarisme pour faire de vous de la chair à pâté ; moi, je ne vous considérerai que comme français, intégralement, totalement français. Nous ne regarderons pas votre origine, ni votre couleur de peau, ni votre religion. Vous serez des citoyens français avec les mêmes droits et les mêmes devoirs que n'importe quel citoyen français. (...)

Ce sont des dizaines de décisions politiques de bon sens que nous mettrons en œuvre pour enfin remettre notre pays en ordre. Toutes répondent à une condition : une France indépendante. Toutes suivent une même philosophie : l'amour et la protection des Français. L'amour de la patrie. C'est le socle, le postulat, la ligne de conduite de mon projet. Ce projet, il est global, il est fondamental. Il est, en ces circonstances, je le crois, vital. Il est fort d'une cohérence parfaite, d'une parfaite constance, il est protecteur et généreux, il est ambitieux et puissant, il connaît notre histoire et nous projette vers l'avenir. Comme disait le général de Gaulle, le 6 juin 1944, à l'heure où le pays se délivrait de l'Occupation et de la servitude : « *Derrière le nuage si lourd de notre sang et de nos larmes, voici que reparaît le soleil de notre grandeur.* »

Avec ce projet, nous referons de notre pays une puissance majeure, avec une diplomatie libre, majeure elle aussi, une armée fière, restaurée, moderne. Mon projet présidentiel, ce n'est pas seulement des mesures, c'est une ligne fondatrice : l'intérêt national. Le fil rouge de mon action, c'est le bonheur des Français, leur liberté, leur prospérité, la justice, leur sécurité. (...) Des dizaines de décisions seront immédiates, immédiates avant même et juste après les élections législatives, et notamment celles visant à nous protéger du terrorisme. Tout de suite après l'élection, le rétablissement et la sécurité aux frontières, les fichés « S », l'arrêt des régularisations de clandestins, le gel des crédits affectés à l'aide médicale d'Etat.

Mais aussi après les législatives, celles portant sur l'emploi, le pouvoir d'achat des classes populaires et des classes moyennes, avec une baisse immédiate de l'impôt sur le revenu, la défiscalisation des heures supplémentaires, le relèvement des petites retraites.

Enfin, dès les premiers mois, là encore, vous voterez pour améliorer notre Constitution et donc notre démocratie par référendum afin d'y intégrer la priorité nationale, la proportionnelle, la création du référendum d'initiative populaire, l'interdiction du communautarisme, la promotion et la défense de notre patrimoine historique et culturel, la baisse forte du nombre de députés et de sénateurs, le budget minimum de 2 % du PIB pour notre défense nationale, la supériorité des lois nationales sur les traités européens antérieurs.

(...) Je ne vous propose pas, comme M. Macron, de vous précipiter dans la violence de la mondialisation avec son cortège de libre-échange ravageur et l'immigration incontrôlée et incontrôlable. (...) Je serai la présidente qui vous protège, je serai la présidente de la République française, une République vraiment française. Alors, je vous le dis, n'ayez pas peur, n'ayez plus peur d'être français. S'il y a danger avec moi, ce n'est certainement pas pour vous – vous avez tout à regagner –, c'est pour les profiteurs du système, c'est pour la caste, c'est pour l'oligarchie mais surtout pas pour vous qui faites les frais de leurs erreurs et de leurs trahisons depuis des années.

Vous le voyez, je vous l'ai dit au début de mon propos, dans cette élection, ce qui se joue, et je pèse mes mots et j'y reviens inlassablement, c'est un enjeu de civilisation. Soit la France, notre patrie, son mode de vie, son unité, sa souveraineté, sa fierté, son identité nationale ; soit le renforcement d'une société de divisions, un pays ouvert à tous les vents, une société minée par une violence endémique

où dominera la loi du plus fort. Celle des caïds, des mafias, des féodalités. Une société de la brutalité sociale pour les jeunes comme les vieux, un pays contrôlé par la grande finance. Cette élection, c'est en quelque sorte un référendum : pour ou contre la mondialisation sauvage, pour ou contre la France ? (...) Je ne trahirai pas, je ne faiblirai pas, je ne tremblerai pas, je serai là pour la France, je serai là pour vous. Pour ce qui me concerne, comme le clamait le poète Henri de Régnier : « *Il me semble (...) / Sentir dans l'ombre , près de moi, avec tendresse, / La patrie aux doux yeux qui me prend par la main. »*

Nous, nous les patriotes, nous marchons décidés, sûrs des forces de notre peuple, sûrs de la justesse de notre combat, sûrs de n'accomplir dans cette élection que notre devoir de Français. Nous allons écrire une nouvelle page glorieuse de notre si beau pays, la France, alors aux urnes citoyens ! Vive la République, vive la France !

Verbatim transcript – Official campaign video clip

French:

"D'aussi loin que je me souviens, j'ai toujours ressenti un attachement, viscéral, passionnel à notre pays, à son histoire. J'aime la France. J'aime du plus profond de mon cœur, du plus profond de mon âme, cette nation millénaire qui ne se soumet pas, ce peuple impétueux qui ne renonce pas

Je suis une femme, et comme femme, je ressens comme une violence extrême les restrictions des libertés qui se multiplient dans tout notre pays, à travers le développement du fondamentalisme islamiste.

Je suis une mère, et comme des millions de parents, je m'inquiète chaque jour de l'état du pays, du monde que nous laisserons en héritage à nos enfants.

Je suis une avocate, et j'ai gardé de mes années de barreau un attachement profond au respect des libertés publiques et une sensibilité particulière au sort des victimes confrontées à l'impunité des criminels.

Au fond, si je devais me définir, je crois que je répondrais tout simplement que je suis intensément, fièrement, fidèlement, évidemment française. Je reçois les insultes à la France comme si elles m'étaient adressées directement, qu'il s'agisse de l'insécurité, ou des violences, ou de la misère qui touche de trop nombreux compatriotes. Je ressens les souffrances des français comme autant de souffrances personnelles.

Le choix que vous ferez lors de l'élection présidentielle à venir est crucial, fondamental, c'est un véritable choix de civilisation. Soit vous continuez avec ceux qui ont menti, failli, trahi, qui ont égaré le peuple et perdu la France. Soit vous décidez de remettre la France en ordre. Oui, je veux remettre la France en ordre.

Je veux que les français puissent vivre en sécurité dans une France respectée et je veux que les français puissent vivre protégés dans une France prospère. Je veux que les français puissent vivre unis dans une France fière. Je veux que les français puissent bien vivre dans une France durable. Je veux que les français puissent vivre leurs rêves dans une France juste.

C'est tout le sens de mon engagement. C'est ce pourquoi je me bats. C'est le projet que je mettrai en œuvre à la tête de l'état, en votre nom. Au nom du peuple.

English:

For as long as I can remember, I have always felt a visceral, passionate attachment to our country and its history. I love France. I love this age-old nation which cannot be subdued with all my heart and all my soul and its spontaneous and tenacious people.

I am a woman, and as such I experience the ever-increasing restrictions on liberty in our country through the development of Islamic fundamentalism like an act of violence.

I am a mother, and like millions of parents I worry each day about the state of the country and the world that we will leave as a legacy to our children.

I am a lawyer, and my years at the Bar have left me with a deep-seated attachment for the respect of civil liberties and a particular sensitivity to the fate of victims faced with the impunity of criminals.

Essentially, if I had to define myself think I would say quite simply that I am intensely, proudly, loyally and resolutely French. I suffer insults to France as if they were addressed to me directly. Whether it's a question of insecurity and violence or the poverty which affects too many of our fellow countrymen, the suffering of the French people touches me personally.

Your choice for the upcoming presidential election is crucial, fundamental. It is a determining choice for civilisation. Either you continue with those who have lied, failed and betrayed, who have misled the people and lost France, or you decide to restore order to France. Yes, I want to restore order to France.

I want the French to live freely in an independent France. I want the French to live safely in a respected France. I want the French to live protected in a prosperous France. I want the French to live united in a proud France. I want the French to live well in an enduring France. I want the French to live their dreams in a just France.

This is the full meaning of my commitment. This is what I am fighting for.
This is the pledge I will take as Head of State... in your name...
In the name of the people.