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## **Becoming the People: A Critique of the Populist Aesthetics of Homogeneity**

Margarita Palacios

### **Abstract**

Although Ernesto Laclau argues that heterogeneity is at the core of homogeneity, I argue that his account of heterogeneity ultimately pulverizes it. In his work, heterogeneity either becomes colonized (invisible and disavowed), or it becomes excluded (highly visible, penalized and anxiety provoking). Laclau's uncritical deployment of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and its modernist epistemological dualism, I argue, lead him to not only theorize heterogeneity as racialized/feminine excess that needs to be excluded for meaning to emerge, but also, to conceptualize populism as the performative homogenizing production of the (phallic) signifier of the "One." My paper stresses the political and conceptual problems of such a formulation.

### **Keywords**

Affect; Aesthetics; Feminization; Heterogeneity; Laclau; Populism; Racialization.

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## **Becoming the People: A Critique of the Populist Aesthetics of Homogeneity**

### **Introduction: The Limits of Heterogeneity in Laclau's Theory of Populism**

The concept of heterogeneity has always informed the work of Ernesto Laclau. Its different theorizations (particularly through the concepts of antagonism, dislocation and social heterogeneity) accounts for both the impossibility of closure of a system of meaning and what allows meaning to emerge. As Laclau and Mouffe argued during the 1980s, the political takes place within the antagonistic gap opened precisely by heterogeneity. In Laclau's words: "It is the very lack within the structure that is at the origin of the structure. This means that we not only have subject positions within the structure, but also the subject as an attempt to *fill* these structural gaps."<sup>1</sup> The filling of these gaps takes place through hegemonic formations that involve logics of articulation, nodal points and relations of equivalence; as well as exclusion of, and antagonism with, that which appears as a threat to a given hegemonic formation. Put differently, Laclau confronts us with an ontological dimension of the social characterized by an intrinsic and unavoidable lack and by an ontic expression of this ontology. The latter consists in the permanent creation of provisional hegemonic closures that cover (discursively and as we will see later, also affectively) the antagonistic gap. The first refers to the realm of the political (or ontological) and the second to the realm of politics (the contingent or ontic). Although Laclau's theory only addresses the relation between the *logics* of these dimensions - asserting that their *content* will be defined by the specificity of contingent hegemonic struggles - I argue that this operation involves something rather different. Through scrutinizing the concept of heterogeneity in the work of Laclau, I argue that the realm of the ontic or contingency is already "overdetermined" by the ontology. As we will see in detail in

what follows, heterogeneity ultimately refers to what exceeds the limits of representation. In this sense, and given the Kantian and Lacanian influences in Laclau's theory of populism, I argue that the lack is *not without a content*, as certain bodies and identities are always already signified as lacking what it takes to belong to the "system" of meaning. This raises fundamental questions as per the status of contingency in any hegemonic formation, but most evidently, in the hegemonic formation of populism. Populism, I will argue, constitutes a symbolic, affective and aesthetic renewal of racisms and heteronormative patriarchy. Although at first sight one might think that this only characterizes right-wing populisms (where migrants in particular are nowadays targeted with exclusionary and punitive discourses and policies), in my paper I do not distinguish right and left populism. Although discursively they present themselves in different –even antagonistic ways - their modus operandi and epistemological assumptions, remains exactly the same: the singularization of heterogeneity.<sup>2</sup>

Let us slowly start unpacking these ideas. Having dismissed any emancipatory or a teleological process that would result from a dialectical resolution, and arguing that society is organized around a constitutive lack, it is no surprise that Laclau would focus on the study of populism. According to him, this hegemonic political formation succeeds in both the production of a needed homogeneity in the context of highly heterogeneous contemporary global capitalism (through the construction of the empty signifier 'the people'), while at the same time, being emancipatory, transgressive and anti-status quo. As Laclau explains, this hegemonic formation takes place through the articulation between the particular and the universal: "Something which does not cease to be particular has to demonstrate its right to identify its own particular aims with the universal emancipatory aims of the community."<sup>3</sup> In this case, the particular plebs

would claim the universality of the people: “There is a fullness of a community which is missing. This is decisive: the construction of the ‘people’ will be the attempt to give a name to that absent fullness.”<sup>4</sup> In Laclau’s account, because the relation between particularity and universality is marked by a space of irreducible heterogeneity that guarantees the radical contingency of any hegemonic articulation, there is no definite answer to the question regarding which form of particularity will be capable of embodying totality. As a result, hegemonies are always “unstable and undecidable.”<sup>5</sup> Linda Zerilli comments, “demonstrating the imbrication of the universal and the particular, Laclau shows why it is a matter not of choosing one over the other but of articulating, in a scrupulously political sense, the relation between the two.”<sup>6</sup>

In this paper, I examine the tensions that emerge in this process of articulation, particularly focusing on the concept of heterogeneity. More specifically, by showing how Laclau’s thought is profoundly bound to modernist ontological conceptions of totality and border (and its related epistemological dualisms), I argue that his claim to radical historicism has an important blind spot. The significant links and similarities between Laclau’s conceptualization of the heterogenous and what has been broadly theorized in post-colonial, ‘race’ and gender theory as *racialized feminine threat*<sup>7</sup> shows us that, instead of instability and undecidability, what we have is *over-determination* and *foreclosure* of populist articulations and embodiment. Indeed, to counteract this threat, the radical investment of the signifier of the “one” (or phallic function of signification) is required to secure the process of singularization of the multiple and the nominalization of the heterogeneous.<sup>8</sup> This (ontological) grammar of threat and border, I argue, informs populist articulations in their inevitable racialization and feminization. This operation does not only affect the logics of antagonism (with what remains excluded from the chain of equivalence) but also the workings of the

“interior” of the identity. Citing Franz Fanon,<sup>9</sup> I call this logic the epidermalization of the social, as heterogeneity either becomes colonized (invisible and disavowed) when included within the populist hegemonic formation; or, it becomes excluded (highly visible, penalized and anxiety provoking) if located on the other side of the antagonistic frontier. My conclusion is that, far from emancipatory and anti-status quo, populism secures instead the very conditions for the reproduction of power.

Ignoring the political implications of these conceptual choices, Laclau puts forward a conceptualization of populist embodiment and spatialization that both fails to account for the structural exclusions that inaugurated the modernist-democratic project in its construction of the nodal point “man” (or the human),<sup>10</sup> and for the way these exclusions are reproduced in the very process of (populist) homogenization. That is, in spite of Laclau’s quick dismissal of Claude Lefort’s liberal conceptualization of the ‘empty space’ of democracy (by arguing that emptiness is not a datum but a political construction), he seems to be equally oblivious of the exclusions and histories of embodiment of that empty space.<sup>11</sup> In my view, the distribution of the emptying of articulated demands in the construction of the empty signifier of ‘the people’ becomes yet another platform for increasing inequality and exclusion. My argument is not only that there is a history of unevenness of power that makes certain populist articulations more likely to succeed in their hegemonic struggle over others, but that the very ontology in which the theory is built upon, already “indicates” a type of racial/sexual exclusion associated to the paradigm of totality, border and threat. Populism, in this context, (re)instaurates an homogenizing aesthetic regime of total visibility, so as to secure the working of its fantasy of homogeneous plenitude.

In what follows I start by examining Laclau’s definition of heterogeneity in its various formulations to subsequently show how heterogeneity is cancelled out through

the totalizing discursive and affective performative operation of populism. In the third section of the paper, I analyze the logics of embodiment that derive from Laclau's theorizing of spatialization, and I finish with a critique of the aesthetics of homogeneity that inform populism.

### **The Opening Up: The Promise of the 'Real'**

I would like to start by showing the relevance of the concept of the real – as what guarantees heterogeneity - in the work of Ernesto Laclau. In their book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe present the notion of antagonism in order to account for the structural openness of the social.<sup>12</sup> For them synonymy, metonymy and metaphor are the primary terrain where the social – and the subject within it - becomes constituted.<sup>13</sup> Although the permanent displacement of meaning accounts for radical historicity, ultimately some forms of fixation and an antagonistic frontier are required for meaning to emerge, according to Laclau and Mouffe. Accordingly, “the practice of articulation consist in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meanings; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity.”<sup>14</sup> Among the elements that participate within the system, and that relate with the outside element in the same antagonistic way, a relation of equivalence is constituted: though each of their identities is different, they are analogous in their relation of exclusion with the same outside. The increase of the logic of equivalence among them involves a process of emptying of their meaning, allowing for one of the single elements to represent the system's totality, even if inadequately. This is what Laclau later called the “empty signifier.”<sup>15</sup> According to Laclau and



Mouffe, the logic of hegemony consists in the power of over-determining the meaning of the elements (originally in a situation of dislocation or instability) at play.

It is important to remark, however, that antagonism, “far from being an objective relation, is a relation wherein the limits of every objectivity are shown.”<sup>16</sup> The concept of objectivity and its limits are central in this argument: objectivity depends on the construction of equivalences and the existence of an antagonistic frontier. As objectivity has a limit (something/someone exceeds or lacks objectivity), full articulations are ultimately impossible: “as we have demonstrated, the social only exists as a partial effort for constructing society, that is, an objective and closed system of differences – antagonism, as a witness of the impossibility of a final suture, is the ‘experience’ of the limit of the social. Strictly speaking, antagonisms are not internal but external to society; or rather, they constitute the limits of society, the latter’s impossibility of fully constituting itself.”<sup>17</sup>

As Slavoj Žižek, Paula Biglieri and Gloria Perello have shown, already in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* the importance of Lacanian thought is evident in the conceptualization of heterogeneity as an unavoidable fissure that is constitutive of the social: “Laclau and Mouffe have, so to speak, reinvented the Lacanian notion of the Real as impossible; they have made it useful as a tool for social and ideological analysis.”<sup>18</sup> I would add here - although I will expand on this later – that the Kantian inspiration in their notion of border and totality as conditions for signification is also clear. It is in Laclau’s *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, however, that a full-blown Lacanian turn can be discerned.<sup>19</sup> In that book, Laclau starts defining the subject as constituted by a lack.<sup>20</sup> As we will see in what follows, Kantian/Lacanian thought will also inform Laclau’s *On Populist Reason*, this time, through a direct engagement with the work of Joan Copjec.

Lasse Thomassen explains how the new theorizing of heterogeneity, this time through the notion of dislocation leads towards the rethinking of interiority and exteriority as always marked by a fissure: “Heterogeneity stands ‘in an undecidable tension between internality and externality’ vis-a`-vis the boundaries of the discourse;” that is, nothing is purely internal or purely external.<sup>21</sup> To a certain extent, the notion of dislocation dissolves the border that separates the inside from the outside, as heterogeneity (different from antagonism) is never a pure outside that threatens the existence of the identity. Internality too is threatened by heterogeneity, and as such, it inhabits the very logic of the internal hegemonic constitution.<sup>22</sup> Different from a dialectical model that supposes a coherent unfolding of antagonisms and their reversals, on this view, it is the political articulation of heterogeneous elements what becomes constitutive of the social. If the previous concept of antagonism resulted from the articulatory practice of producing equivalences, the concept of dislocation hints towards an experience of excess, or what precisely escapes articulation or even antagonistic social relations: “Heterogeneity is excessive and undecidable (...) it escapes the attempt to conceptualize social relations in antagonistic terms. Yet the ‘exclusion’ of the heterogeneous from the antagonism also makes the antagonism possible.”<sup>23</sup> Mobilizing this conceptualization of dislocation in his study of populism, Laclau defines the heterogeneous as what remains outside not only of a particular system of representation, but what remains outside of the space of representation as such: “the kind of outside that I am now discussing presupposes exteriority not just to something within the space of representation, but to the space of representation as such. I will call this type of exteriority, social heterogeneity. Heterogeneity, conceived this way, does not mean *difference*, two entities, in order to be different, need a space within which that difference is representable, while what I am now calling

heterogeneity presupposes the absence of that common space.”<sup>24</sup> This radical fissure, in the context of the constitution of ‘the people’, means that heterogeneity cannot be erased through any sort of dialectical homogenization.<sup>25</sup>

Heterogeneity, or so it seems, is now firmly secured in this theoretical framework. However, and as we will see in the following section, Laclau’s commitments to order (as a sociological category) and to totality (as a philosophical and psychoanalytic one) lead him to cancel heterogeneity and favor instead, singularity. Most importantly, it is precisely this radicalization of the Kantian-Lacanian understanding of social heterogeneity – as what remains outside of the field of representation - that in my view ends up cancelling the radical openness of the social. That is, although the notion of social heterogeneity secures the instability of any identity, I argue that the dichotomy between representation (or social objectivity) and its limits, precludes such radical instability. Instead, certain identities and bodies are already being signified as repositories of lack, with or without a border, coherence, limit and even intentionality.<sup>26</sup>

We have now established the problematic relation between this understanding of social objectivity (or the possibility of meaning) and the enlightenment/modernist definition of what constitutes “man” or the “human.” In this sense, we can now argue that populist fantasies of plenitude are not that different from colonial fantasies where, upon the colonial (mis)encounter, a particular type of (racial and sexual) Western subjectivity emerges in counter-distinction from the colonized “Other.”<sup>27</sup>

### **The Closing Down: Populist Fantasies of Plenitude**

Already in the opening of *On Populist Reason*, Laclau tells us that populism is not to be ascribed to a particular political phenomenon but to a social logic that ‘cuts across’

many phenomena. He states: “Populism is, quite simply, a way of constructing the political,”<sup>28</sup> or more bluntly: “populism is the royal road to understanding something about the ontological constitution of the political as such.”<sup>29</sup> This constitution of the political is accomplished through a certain identification and movement from the particular to the universal, where the plebs become the populous, conceived as an ideal totality.<sup>30</sup> This is not a logical-conceptual operation (i.e., an abstraction), but an attribute-performative one, where the name becomes the ground of the *thing*.<sup>31</sup> The thing that is born is “the people.” As we anticipated in the previous section, according to Laclau, “Totality is the condition of signification as such,”<sup>32</sup> even if this will always be a failed totality. By critiquing traditional epistemology and mobilizing a framework of populist performativity, Laclau actually argues that identity (in this case, popular identity) does not precede, but results from the process of representation. As such, the empty signifier ‘the people’ is something different than the image of a pre-given totality, it is what *constitutes* that totality.<sup>33</sup> In this sense one could go one step further and claim that populism is not “just” a particular type of social order, it is what constitutes order in the first place.

Mobilizing the same argument as the one presented above, Laclau tells us that totality is both impossible and necessary: impossible, because the tension between equivalence and difference is ultimately insurmountable; necessary, because without some kind of closure, however precarious it might be, there would be no signification and no identity.<sup>34</sup> However, for Laclau, totality is not a ground but a horizon: “we need a *plebs* who claims to be the only legitimate *populous*.”<sup>35</sup> Laclau continues: “But we also know something else: that the popular symbol or identity, being a surface of inscription, does not *passively express* what is inscribed in it, but actually *constitutes* what it expresses through the very process of its expression. (...) An assemblage of

heterogeneous elements kept equivalentially together only by a name is, however, necessarily, a *singularity*. The less a society is kept together by immanent differential mechanisms, the more it depends, for its coherence, on this transcendent, singular moment.”<sup>36</sup> And the extreme form of this singularity, Laclau tells us, is an individual. Indeed, he argues, almost imperceptibly, the equivalential logic that takes place in the constitution of the people leads to singularity and identification of the unity of the group with the name of the *leader*.<sup>37</sup>

For Laclau (as for Mouffe),<sup>38</sup> this performative act of constitution of the people shows his commitment to provide a theory of populism that fits with his radical historical approach as opposed to any form of essentialism. Nevertheless, my argument is that this account of historicity remains framed by the epistemological/ontological logic of populism. Furthermore, the definition of social objectivity provided in the theory makes the political and social converge in one single moment whereby any threat to political stability becomes a threat to social objectivity and meaning, and thus, it becomes existential. It is unsurprising, then, that the effort of annulling the threat of the heterogeneous in this antagonistic context appears as framed within a religious rhetoric of sacrifice.<sup>39</sup> The reduction of the logic of the political to the logic of antagonism is what Andrew Arato has interpreted as Laclau’s political theology: “This can be shown precisely in relation to Schmitt’s political theology, which Laclau either assumes (..) or rediscovers in his desire to justify and disguise his own version of authoritarian politics. The ‘frontier of antagonism’ of Laclau is Schmitt’s friend-enemy conception of politics.”<sup>40</sup>

According to Laclau, the success of the performative operation of populism produces a certain indivisible nature of sovereignty while moving from the *conceptual* order (that accounts for the logic of difference) to the *nominal* one characterized by

singularity and cohesion. The problematic political implications of this process of singularization/nominalization are remarkable, and I will return to them in the following sections. Laclau brings Hobbes to this discussion and explains how, for Hobbes, who like himself saw the danger of radical disorder and the need of a process of singularization that guarantees order, only a natural singularity could become the sovereign.<sup>41</sup> Laclau remarks that the difference is that for Hobbes this was about ruling, “while we are talking about the constituting of signifying totality”<sup>42</sup>. He continues by arguing that it is possible for a ruling signifying totality to keep its plurality, as, for example, in Nelson Mandela becoming the symbol of the South African nation. “However, the symbolic function of unification of the group around an individuality – and here I agree with Freud - is inherent to the formation of a ‘people.’”<sup>43</sup>

This totalizing operation will depend on the “social productivity” of the “name”.<sup>44</sup> To put it differently, the unity of the political (in this case achieved by the mobilizing of the signifier ‘the people’), is a retroactive effect of its naming. But this is only fully achieved if some qualitative change - a force - takes place: a radical affective investment. Laclau claims that, “in a situation of radical disorder, some kind of order is needed, and the more generalized the disorder is, the less important the ontic content of that which restores order becomes. That ontic is *invested* with the ontological value of representing order as such”<sup>45</sup>. This striking quote reminds us that, although Laclau has defined heterogeneity as ultimately irreducible, he is, at the same time, providing an account not only *of* but *for* totality: as we have seen throughout this section, the process of singularization (and constitution of a totality through the taming of heterogeneity) is the condition of meaning, identity and order for him. As we will see in this and the following sections, the affective investment follows the same logic

of the particular-universal as presented above. The part (the plebs) becomes the whole (the populous). And when affect and desire enter into the scene, the struggle for cohesion is not just political and existential, it is also libidinal.

In the second part of Chapter 4 of *On Populist Reason* (“The People and the Discursive Production of Emptiness”), and after having engaged with and distanced himself from crowd theorists at the beginning of the book, Laclau clears a space for his theoretical intervention on affect. The study of the role of the leader and the processes of identification and libidinal investment thus play a central role from the start in Laclau’s account of populism. However, this early reference to Freud acquires a much more significant and central dimension later on in the book when he asks how partial objects (of desire) become a trace of a totality of a (lost) enjoyment. As Laclau explains, the “general ontology”<sup>46</sup> of signification and affect evolves around the aspiration to wholeness, or totality. By doing this, Laclau explicitly equates his theory of populism to the logic of desire as theorized by Lacan: “The logic of the *objet petit a* and the hegemonic logic are not just similar: they are identical.”<sup>47</sup> Indeed, according to Laclau, affect is not something that exists on its own, independently of language; on the contrary, affect is required in the signification process. In order to explain this, Laclau turns to Lacanian Joan Copjec, who theorizes the relation between the particular and the universal from the perspective of the irretrievable fullness of the dyad mother/child and the un-representability of the primordial mother. In Copjec’s words: “the lost Thing is not an *impossibility of thought*, but a *void in Being*: it is not that the mother escapes representation or thought, but that the *jouissance* that attached me to her has been lost, and this loss depletes the whole of my being”<sup>48</sup>. If *jouissance* is not lost, this is because traces of it remains in the partial objects that can become a totality. Interestingly, Copjec stresses that the partial object does not represent the

totality, it *becomes* the totality. Thus, a partial object is not a part of a whole but *a part, which is the whole*. In this way, the partial object ceases to be a partiality evoking a totality, and becomes – using our earlier terminology - the *name* of the totality:

The partial object or object of lack is the one that emerges out of the lack, the void, opened by the loss of the original Plenum or *das Ding*. In place of the mythical satisfaction derived from being at one with the maternal Thing, the subject now experiences satisfaction in this partial object.<sup>49</sup>

Laclau moves quickly to make the parallel argument that the mythical wholeness of the mother/child dyad corresponds to the unachieved fullness evoked – as its opposite - by the dislocations brought about by the unfulfilled demands. He says: “In political terms, that is exactly what I have called a hegemonic relation: a certain particularity which assumes the role of an impossible universality.”<sup>50</sup>

By aligning himself with Freud’s understanding of processes of identification with the leader and with Lacan’s theory of desire, Laclau has set up a very particular grammar for the understanding of populism in its pivotal and impossible relation between the particular and universal, not only politically and existentially as mentioned earlier, but also libidinally: the experience of lack – or void in being - supports processes of identification, however, crucially also processes of othering. As the loss of *jouissance* is not complete, but is mobilized by particular objects of desire, Laclau tells us: “There is no populism without affective investment in a partial object.”<sup>51</sup>

Here the concept of fantasy becomes crucial. As the extensive literature in this field demonstrates,<sup>52</sup> fantasy operates through narratives of loss and the possibility of recovering fullness, and more importantly, it is also an experience of jealousy, desire



and hatred. My argument here is that populism, in its sameness and singularity -like any proto or openly authoritarian social formation that has cancelled difference- fosters and reproduces the logics of social antagonism. In this sense, it is pertinent to ask what types of open and disavowed forms of antagonism are fostered by the production of the people. Which is the part that will embody the whole? How do these libidinal dynamics inform othering in populism? What is the affect that accompanies the experience of the “heterogeneous”?

By bringing the notion of fantasy in here, I am also pointing to the affect that, according to Lacan, does not lie: anxiety. Although in Laclau’s text, object-*a* has been mobilized to understand the libidinal attachment to the partial object that represents the totality (i.e., desire and fantasy), this same object-*a*, in the work of Lacan, is also that which produces anxiety. In his *Seminar X*, Lacan draws a graph of double entry naming the two corresponding vectors ‘movement’ and ‘difficulty’<sup>53</sup>. Anxiety, in this graph, is located at the point of greatest movement and greatest difficulty, and, as Lacan argues, as an affect – and different from inhibitions and symptoms – it is not repressed, as all that the affect does is “to affect.”<sup>54</sup> Later in the same Seminar, and differentiating anxiety from fear and nervousness, he develops his ‘graph of anxiety’, where object-*a*, the ‘object of anxiety’, becomes the central topic of the Seminar. In this graph, Lacan situates anxiety in the middle between desire and *jouissance*, while explaining that anxiety ‘affects’ when the boundaries between them start to be erased. As explained by Nestor Braunstein, “desire points to a lost and absent object; it is lack in being, and the craving for fulfilment in the encounter with the lost object [...] Jouissance, on the other hand, does not point to anything, nor does it serve any purpose whatsoever; it is an unpredictable experience, beyond the pleasure principle, different from any mythical encounter”<sup>55</sup>. That is, if desire refers to lack, lack in being,

jouissance is positivity. In Lacan's graph of anxiety, the relation – or needed disjuncture – between these two realms is explained within a 'castration' paradigm: Lacan argues that anxiety appears when castration is lacking. As I have elaborated elsewhere<sup>56</sup>, if desire is mobilized by lack and framed by fantasy anxiety signals a presence, this means that instead of the necessary lack that puts desire in motion, the subject is 'asphyxiated' by the proximity of the object cause of desire. Anxiety signals a failure in symbolic reality, a disappearance of the fantasy support of desire.

This brief detour through the problem of anxiety serves two purposes. Firstly, as a reminder that the fantasy of totality and its mobilized desire depend upon a primal 'phallic cut' or, we can call it, the construction of a border. If such a border starts to disappear, anxiety 'affects'; and, as Lacan says, it either manages to restore the weakened border (and to reinstitute fantasy), or, the subject embraces, through the *passage a l'act*, the undifferentiated death drive. The graphics of this fantasy scenario appear almost literal in Donald Trump's discourse about the need to build the wall in order to separate the USA from Mexico. His rhetoric against the perceived "migrant caravan" as a human river threatening to flood American soil is remarkable. As Paul Verhaeghe argues in his essay 'The Riddle of Castration Anxiety: Lacan beyond Freud,'<sup>57</sup> clinical experience shows that anxiety is experienced as 'fear of being devoured, falling into the void, immixture with the other; in short: the fear of disappearing in the enjoyment of the Other'<sup>58</sup>.

Secondly, the detour through the problem of anxiety serves to highlight that the way Laclau theorizes affect is caught between two problematic poles: a totalizing fantasy (of wholeness depending on the existence of the border) and anxiety. One could say, and using Laclau's terms, populist totality is not just a fantasy: it is the (phallic) fantasy *par excellence*. As such, it requires the constant vigilance of the

antagonistic frontier not only in relation to the chain of equivalence, but also and fundamentally, with what is considered the condition for the existence of the chain as such: the border that keeps the anxiety provoking threat, at bay. As I will show in the following sections, this has significant repercussions in the aesthetics and embodiment of populism.

### **Sexualized/Racialized Social Choreographies**

Although Laclau could hardly be considered an author of the ‘sensible’, there is still a significant conceptualization of embodiment and of the construction of topographies and even choreographies of the social in his account of populism. Not only is affect central to Laclau’s account of populism, but hegemonic articulations consist of the possibility of *hegemonizing time by space*. In Laclau’s words: "The spatialization of the event's temporality takes place through repetition, through the reduction of its variation to an invariable nucleus which is an internal moment of the pre-given structure"<sup>59</sup>. That is, meaning *is* the production of a topography, where time, or the possibility of disruption, becomes tendentially eliminated. As David Howarth puts it: "Temporality must be conceived as the exact opposite of space. The “spatialization” of an event consists of eliminating its temporality."<sup>60</sup>. Oliver Marchart adds, "while we can speak of the hegemonization of time by space (through repetition), it must be emphasized that the opposite is not possible: time cannot hegemonize anything, since it is a pure effect of dislocation"<sup>61</sup>. In this sense, time belongs to the category of the ‘political’ (ontological and negative, and, as we will see, heterogeneous racialized/feminine), and as time is never eliminated, space is ultimately, impossible.

Now, following Husserl and Jameson, Laclau uses the concept of sedimentation (of hegemonies) to refer to the sedimentation of forms of objectivity whereby the

forgetting of the origin is needed in any successful hegemonic articulation.<sup>62</sup> As Marchart comments, in Laclau's terminology, this is understood as a fixation of meaning in topographies that need to be conceptualized as "sedimentations of power and which spatialize the temporal movement of pure dislocation into a precise *choreography*"<sup>63</sup>. This crucial concept of sedimentation informs us that social spaces are always marked by the exclusionary political acts that inaugurated them, although these exclusions are concealed, forgotten, 'sedimented', 'occluded', precisely by their repetition. In this sense, any social space, Howarth argues, always remains potentially a 'heterotopia', that is, marked by heterogeneity.<sup>64</sup> Following this reasoning and going back to Laclau's theory of populist singular totalization, one could argue that particularly populist hegemonies (in their capacity to show the ontological constitution of the political as such) consist attempts to *eradicate heterotopia* while aiming at the coincidence of time and space.<sup>65</sup>

This conceptualization of temporality (and spatialization) also inspired Lacan's theory of sexuation, which famously holds that women is 'not-all' and that therefore only the *masculine structure* (marked by a void or limit) allowed for the constitution of a symbolic space. To clarify this, a quick detour through Lacan's theory of sexuation is necessary. Without going into great detail, it suffices for the purposes of the argument here to remember that in his seminar XX, Lacan<sup>66</sup> introduced two sets of opposed propositions, one describing the masculine, and one describing the other side, the feminine structure. The phallic function, according to Lacan's translation of the Freudian concept of castration, refers to beings who surrender their access to *jouissance* upon entering language.<sup>67</sup> However, this surrender is of a different kind: on the feminine side, the positing of a limit is impossible: "Lacan answers that the woman is not-all because she lacks a limit, by which he means she is not susceptible to the

threat of castration; the ‘no’ embodied by this threat does not function for her.”<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, “a universe of men is possible only on the condition that we except something from this universe. The universe of men is, then, an illusion fomented by a prohibition: do not include everything in your all!”<sup>69</sup> The masculine position is, thus, characterized by a limit, or a negative element that is not included in the series of elements that constitute the totality.

Lacan’s theory of sexuation follows closely the Kantian antinomies – mathematical and dynamical - that address the aporia of the relation between universality and particularity (or pure reason and empirical experience in relation to time, space, atomism; spontaneity or casual determinism and necessity of being). As Hook has explained, in mathematical antinomies (i.e., feminine), the existence of an ‘all’ was relegated to impossibility due to the fact that no limit could be found, whereas that was not the case for the dynamical structure (i.e. masculine), where a boundary-line of a sort, accounted for a demarcation. In his words, “the limitlessness of the phenomena in question prevents the boundaries that such a meta-position, such a demarcation of the ‘all’, would require”<sup>70</sup>. What this means is that perception requires a negative judgment. It is only when our perceptions come to refer themselves to this lost object that they can be deemed objective. In other words, without the limiting function of the phallus, representation or the perceptual field vanishes as objectivity depends on the existence of a limit. In Kant’s words “If that void, and consequently space in general as *a priori* condition of the possibility of appearances, be set aside, the entire sensible world vanishes”<sup>71</sup>.

This shows, in my view, a persistence of an epistemic dualism in the case of Laclau (as in Lacan), insofar as the ‘object’ must be accounted for in its separatedness. This moment of separation (or, to use Laclau’s term, ‘nominalization’) is the moment

of the constitution of the totality where heterogeneity is concealed – abjected - for the emergence of ‘the people’. Furthermore, and as seen above, the constitution of this totality takes place through the evacuation of temporality and the heterogeneity it involves.

It is central to underline the impossibility of disentangling sexuality and racialization, particularly in the context of capitalism, colonialism and slavery. In contrast to Copjec, who argues that the primal mother remains unsignified (and as such it opens us to an experience of ethics and sublimation beyond the castrating Oedipal morality<sup>72</sup>), Black Studies theorists argue that blackness remains an “irresolvable abjection”<sup>73</sup>. Achilles Mbembe, for example, states that what escapes signification (when conceived as pure negativity) is the black body. In his last book, *A Critique of Black Reason*, he says: “Let us say for now that race is a form of primal representation. (...). Taken to its limits, race becomes a perverse complex, a generator of fear and torments, of disturbed thoughts and terror, but especially of infinite suffering, and ultimately, catastrophe.”<sup>74</sup> He continues: “The Remainder, the ultimate sign of the dissimilar, of difference, and the pure power of the negative- constituted the manifestation of existence as an object (...) The Black Man, a sign in excess of all signs and therefore fundamentally unrepresentable..”<sup>75</sup>.

In in his *Stolen Life*<sup>76</sup>, while scrutinizing Kant, Fred Moten argues that “the regulative discourse on the aesthetic that animates Kant’s critical philosophy is inseparable from the question of race as a mode of conceptualizing and regulating human diversity, grounding and justifying inequality and exploitation, as well as marking the limits of human knowledge through the codification of quasi-transcendental method, which is Kant’s acknowledged aim in the critical philosophy”<sup>77</sup>. The aesthetico-scientific concept of race, according to Moten, becomes

what guarantees, but at the same time endangers, the systematicity of Kant's philosophy. Now, if this 'non-wholeness' has been theorized as feminine ethics by Copjec, for Fred Moten, it constitutes the space of black art:

Black art stages it, performs it, by way of things breaking and entering and exiting the exclusionary frame of the putatively ennobling, quickening representations to which they are submitted, paradoxically, as the very enfleshment of the un- or sub representable; by way of parts improperly rupturing the w/holes to which they will have never belonged or never have been fully relegated but by which they have been enveloped.<sup>78</sup>

It is this experience of 'fugitivity', limitless non-wholeness that Kant, Lacan and Laclau see as a threat to the stability of representation, subjectivity and meaning formation in general. Needless to say, unrepresentability and abjection (heterogeneity and the anxiety it provokes), in both its sexualized and racialized constructions, inform violent and exclusionary fantasies of threat and stolen enjoyment. The epistemology and ontology of the racialized feminine-excess requires a border to exclude it, and that is the function of the racialized patriarchal populist hegemony.

As it is possible to see, Laclau's theory of spatialization gives an account of how sedimentation of power takes place through the construction of topographies: these topographies work by repressing, concealing and disavowing what appears as anxiety provoking: "infinity" or the feminine-racialized threat. As such, bodies and spaces become not only primordial sites of repetitions (citation, iteration of 'meaning'), but also sites of projected fantasies because of the affective investment mobilized in these processes of identification.

Following a different argumentative route and mobilizing the Derridean notions of iteration, decision/undecidability and citation, Thomassen argues that, in hegemonic relations, objects “are already signified in a particular way”<sup>79</sup>. Although the selection of the signifier that will represent the whole is contingent, it is not arbitrary: “The particular signifiers are not equally able or likely to take up this task because it takes place in an already partly sedimented terrain permeated by relations of power.”<sup>80</sup> As such, it is unlikely that certain groups (or demands) would be able to claim to represent the totality. Although Thomassen’s and my own arguments converge, it is important to stress here how they address a different problem: while Thomassen looks at the historical unevenness of power, I add a reading of the concept of the heterogeneous (infinite feminine/racialized threat) that allows me to see that there is an overdetermination in the very articulatory logic of populism. McKean points to something similar when arguing that Laclau remains undecided regarding racial difference:

This seems to suggest that race is one more form of particular difference that can enter into chains of equivalence and potentially become linked to popular demands. At other times, Laclau seems to assume that race should be assimilated directly to heterogeneity, as when he describes blacks as among ‘those sectors which were heterogeneous vis-à-vis the main space of political representation’<sup>81</sup>.

In other words, we can say that there is a constitution of the social and political (a nominalizing/exclusionary performative attribute operation of the phallic function of signification) *and* the operation of citation and rearticulation where certain privileged



signifiers and particularities will either become included in equivalential terms of the empty signifier or excluded and remaining at the other side of the antagonistic frontier. It is interesting to note that Laclau dismisses Lefort's liberal conceptualization of the 'empty space' of democracy, by arguing against him that emptiness is not a datum but a political construction<sup>82</sup>. How could such careful thinker as Laclau be oblivious of the constitutional exclusion (as per Kantian-Lacanian terms he mobilizes in his theory) and of the subsequent histories of embodiment, the topographies and choreographies of that '*empty space*'? In the context of the current and historic indigenous struggles in the south of Chile and Argentina, Laclau's claim about Argentina being an "ethnically homogeneous country"<sup>83</sup> only indicates, once again, a certain problematic dismissal of heterogeneity.

### **Populist Aesthetics and *Epidermilization* of the Social**

We are now ready to address directly some questions regarding the aesthetic-politico regime that populism fosters, and how the sensible gets articulated. Let us recall that, for Rancière, politics

consists in reconfiguring the distribution of the sensible which defines the common of a community, to introduce into it new subjects and objects, to render visible what had not been, and to make heard as speakers those who had been perceived as mere noisy animals"<sup>84</sup>.

However useful this definition is, as it points towards the embodied dimension of any hegemony, it is also important to see its limits. Following Laclau, we need to theorize the radical affective investment that accompanies the distribution of the sensible, and

therefore, a more complex account of the sensible is needed. Jared Sexton's definition of libidinal economy is particularly useful: "the economy, or distribution and arrangement, of desire and identification (their condensation and displacement), and the complex relationship between sexuality and the unconscious"<sup>85</sup>. Additionally, visibility in the context of the racialized order that characterizes our society becomes a marker of exclusion and scrutiny. Feminist philosophers<sup>86</sup> have long critiqued the Lacanian 'paternal metaphor' together with scopic-economy of the primacy of the visual, while 'race' theorists have argued that to become visible doesn't guarantee recognition or even survival<sup>87</sup>. For the black body, for example, to appear means exposure, scrutiny and greater vulnerability. Franz Fanon talked about epidermilization to describe racial visibility in relation to the white-gaze that over-determines it.<sup>88</sup> In his engagement with Fanon in *Red, White and Black: Cinema and the Structure of the U.S. Antagonisms*, Frank Wilderson "interrogates the assumptive logic and metacommentaries on political and libidinal economy, and their articulations in film, through a subject whose structure of dispossession (the constituent elements of his or her loss and suffering) they cannot theorize: the Black, a subject who is always already positioned as Slave"<sup>89</sup>. It is this renewal of epidermilization of the social, I would like to argue, that characterizes the distribution of the sensible in populism. Interestingly though, it operates through a double mechanism of invisibilization and hyper-visibility.

Although risk and securitization have informed public debate in the last decades (in the context of terror threat, mass shootings in the USA and certainly in debates about refugee crisis around the world), the contemporary populist turn has added yet a new ingredient. Particularly in the USA, but certainly also in the leftist populist governments as experienced in Ecuador, and still currently in Venezuela and Bolivia, the 'populous' of populism governs through an illusion of immediacy (as the

singularity claims to represent the totality) and absolute sovereignty. Often – if not permanently - they operate bypassing formal mechanisms of representation and accountability (as highlighted by critics such as Arato<sup>90</sup>). However, their logic and functioning require and depend on *hyper-representation/repetition* or the mediated hyperbolic function of the image: that is, the constant affirmation of the existence of ‘the people’ requires both its permanent visual validation as well as a permanent representation of its threat. As such, this aesthetics will demand the creation of a regime of ‘total visibility’, as its fantasy of *homogeneous plenitude* requires the aesthetics of clear borders and transparent interiors, in order to extract contaminating and threatening mestizo/foreign-bodies as per the case of the US, or the bodies of political and other dissidents as in the case of Latin America. As shown before, this aesthetic regime, and using Luce Irigaray’s term ‘scopic economy,’ attempts to reconfigure, re-instaurate the totality – the whole - at the social level, while fixing individual subjects, at the same time, to clear and identifiable identities.<sup>91</sup> Clean, slick, ‘authentic’; the whole informs the part; hermetic and immobile. Populist aesthetics epitomizes the above-mentioned problematic framework. Although borders are securitized as a reaction to anxiety (“our society is becoming polluted and threatened”) it is worth mentioning here that, because of the imposition of its antagonistic aesthetics of hyper-visibility, the outcome is the proliferation of the experience of disavowed suffering, associated to the effects of the penalizing logic of those who have become occluded and hyper-visible, subjected to surveillance and excluded.

### **Conclusion: Beyond Identification and Anxiety**

Throughout the paper, I have attempted to engage conceptually, epistemologically and politically with the work of Ernesto Laclau. At a conceptual level, I have tried to

destabilize the distinction between difference and antagonism by arguing that there is an intrinsic ambivalence between them. My argument has been that, when remaining inside the articulatory chain, heterogeneity becomes colonized, disavowed and invisible. In a different context, Jose Muñoz reflecting upon his own life said:

I was able to enact a certain misrecognition that let me imagine myself as something other than queer or racialized. But such a mis-recognition demands a certain toll. The toll is one that subjects who attempt to identify with and assimilate to dominant ideologies pay every day of their lives. The price of the ticket is this: to find self within the dominant public sphere, we need to deny self<sup>92</sup>.

As we know, if visible and acknowledged, heterogeneity is excluded and posited at the other side of the antagonistic frontier, while being signified as repository of threatening lack/excess. Furthermore, I have argued that, even if securing the instability of any hegemonic formation, heterogeneity still seems to mostly serve the function of mobilizing its opposite: homogenization. That is, Laclau provides a grammar of, and for, social order and cohesion, as heterogeneity must be reduced and repressed for meaning to emerge.

Epistemologically, I argue that uncritically mobilizing a theory of lack/excess informed by Kantian-Lacanian psychoanalysis (that sanctifies the un-representability of the racialized-feminine threat and the phallic function of signification) can only produce inequality and exclusion. Although Laclau correctly reads the antagonistic logics of patriarchal social order in its fantasy of plenitude and singularity, he – like Lacan - mistakes this extremely well sedimented ‘epistemology’ for an ontology of the

social. I have also argued that this particular understanding of heterogeneity (that derives from Kantian philosophy and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory) overdetermines hegemonic articulations in their inevitable racialization and feminization.

The political worries of a framework that praises populism in its capacity to subvert power while at the same time naming populism as ‘the’ way of constituting the social are many. The fantasy of immediacy, the aesthetics of homogenization and the absolute sovereignty that derives from the identification with singularity can only be accompanied in a libidinal economy of threat and anxiety. In this context, marking and defending the border as well as eliminating its unruly heterogeneity, becomes a central political and aesthetic task. Nowadays, this discourse sounds all too familiar across the globe, most evidently in the Brexit vote that aimed primarily to eliminate free movement from the rest of the European Union to the UK; the open repression (promised and delivered by Trump) aimed at migrants arriving to the USA/Mexico border; Austria’s plans to ‘clamp down’ on refugees making it harder to become citizens; the refusal of Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland to accept refugee quotas; and many others.

We are left with some important challenges: how to rethink the social and the subject within it, without reinstating repression, anxiety and antagonism as the condition of possibility of meaning and identity. For Laclau the only possibility is for a particularity to be articulated as a totality, and be part of the logics analyzed throughout this paper. There are many other ways of thinking the social and the affective/aesthetic experience outside of the Laclauian framework. In my view, a critique of this type of conceptualization inevitably shows the need to rethink heterogeneity beyond the dualistic conception of particularity-universality and subject-object that inform the totalizing operation of the signifier of the “one” as presented in

Laclau's political ontology. This requires a very different conceptualization of the real (what escapes linguistic determinacy). For example, the starting point in this case would no longer need the conceptualization of an antagonistic border that conceals a foundational "lack", but the acknowledgement of the irreducible and relational experiences of "being-with" that characterize the social world. What if the Kantian-Lacanian framework is abandoned, and the real -instead of negativity and threat- becomes a promise, an opening, an invitation? Although Laclau rightly criticizes metaphysical understandings of representation by embracing instead the concept of performativity, he forecloses the field of the social to the nominalizing power of language. Instead, I suggest exploring concepts of flesh, diffraction, diffusion, and infinity, as presented by various critical approaches that refuse the ontology of singularization and embrace instead the ethics and promise of embedded and embodied intertwined multiplicities.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Ernesto Laclau "Identity and Hegemony: The Role of Universality in the Constitution of Political Logics", in *Contingency, Universality and Hegemony. Contemporary Dialogues in the Left*. Butler, J., Laclau, E. and Zizek, S. (London & NY: Verso, 2000), 58.

<sup>2</sup> The examples of autocratic governments of Ecuador, Venezuela and Bolivia, speak for themselves. Although in these cases the populist leader uses heterogeneity as political propaganda and, indeed, they succeed in their clientelistic relation to various social groups, Correa, Chavez and Morales governed without institutional mediation while renewing the Latin American patriarchal and authoritarian archetype.

<sup>3</sup> Laclau, "Identity and Hegemony", 46.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>5</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*. (London: Verso, 1996), 15.

<sup>6</sup> Linda Zerilli, “This universalism which is not One”, *Diacritics*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Summer, 1998), pp. 2-20, p. 4

<sup>7</sup> See for example: Fred Moten, *Black and Blur. Consent not to be a single being*. (Duke UP, 2017); *Stolen Life. Consent not to be a single being*. (Duke UP, 2018); Achilles-Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, (Duke UP, 2017); Frank Wilderson, *Red, White and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms*. Duke UP, 2010; - Meyda Yegonoglou, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*. Cambridge University Press, 2008; Margarita Palacios, *Fantasy and Political Violence: The Meaning of Chilean Anti-Communism (VS Verlag, Wiesbaden: Germany) 2009 and Radical Sociality: Studies on Disobedience, Violence and Belonging*. Palgrave, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London-NY: Verso, NY, 2005); Derek Hook, ‘Restoring Universality to the Subject: Lacan’s Kantian Logic of Sexuation’, *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, 2009; 7, pp. 151-167; Joan Copjec, *Read my Desire. Lacan against the Historicists*, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1994) and *Imagine there is No Woman. Ethics and Sublimation*, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology UP, 2002); Elizabeth Grosz, E. *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction*, New York: Routledge; 1990); Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*, (New York: Norton, 2007)

<sup>9</sup> Franz Fanon, *The wretched of the earth*. (New York: Vintage Print, 1963) and *Black skin, white masks*. (New York: Grove Press Print, 1952).

<sup>10</sup> Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 117.

<sup>11</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 164-5; Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).

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<sup>12</sup> Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London and New York: Verso, 1985).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>15</sup> Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, 1996

<sup>16</sup> Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 122.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>18</sup> Slavoj Žižek, “Beyond Discourse-Analysis”, in *New Reflections of Our Time* (Verso, London, New York, 1990), 249. Paula Biglieri and Gloria Perello, “The Names of the Real in Laclau’s Theory: Antagonism, Dislocation, and Heterogeneity”. *Filozofski vestnik* | Volume XXXII | Number 2 | 2011 | 47–64

<sup>19</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, London: Verso, 1990; Biglieri, *The Names of the Real*.

<sup>20</sup> Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, 55.

<sup>21</sup> Lasse Thomassen, *Antagonism, hegemony and ideology after heterogeneity* , *Journal of Political Ideologies* (October 2005), 10(3), 300. For Laclau on dislocation, see Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London: Verso, 1990): 39-41, 44-5, 65.

<sup>22</sup> Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 152-3

<sup>23</sup> Thomassen, *Antagonism, hegemony and ideology*, 300

<sup>24</sup> Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 139-40

<sup>25</sup> Thomassen in this same text offers the example provided by Glenn Bowman’s study of Palestinian nationalism while showing how the Palestinian nation is defined through its antagonistic relationship with the state of Israel (Thomassen, 295). However, he argues that Palestinian identity is not only constituted by this external antagonism, it is



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also internally divided even if these are subsumed to the antagonistic frontier vis-à-vis the state of Israel. In this case, the antagonistic frontier and its resulting fullness of the lost Palestinian identity reveals not an essence, but its essential lack. In this sense, Thomassen argues that antagonism can be seen as ideological insofar as it conceals the dislocatory character of identity by externalising the dislocation onto an external antagonistic force.

<sup>26</sup> Moten, *Stolen Life*.

<sup>27</sup> Yegenoglou, *Colonial Fantasies*.

<sup>28</sup> Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, xi

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 99-100.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>38</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *For a Left Populism* (London & New York: Verso, 2018)

<sup>39</sup> Margarita Palacios, "On Sacredness and Transgression: Understanding Social Antagonism". *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society* 9, 3 (2004): 284-297(14)

<sup>40</sup> Andrew Arato, "Political Theology and Populism". *Social Research*, Vol. 80, No. 1, Political Theology? (Spring, 2013), pp. 143-172, 156.

<sup>41</sup> Laclau, *New Reflections*, 62.

<sup>42</sup> Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 100.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 114

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>48</sup> Copjec, *Imagine there is no Woman*, 35.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>50</sup> Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 115.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>52</sup> Yegenoglou, 2008, op.cit; Jason Glynos and Yanis Stravakakis, “*Lacan and Political Subjectivity*. Fantasy and Enjoyment in Psychoanalysis and Political Theory” *Subjectivity* (2008) 24: 256; Palacios, 2009, 2013, op.cit; Edward Weisband, *The Macabresque. Human Violation and Hate in Genocide, Mass Atrocity and Enemy Making* (Oxford UP, 2018)

<sup>53</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Seminario X: La Angustia* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1962), 22.

<sup>54</sup> Roberto Harari, *Lacan’s Seminar on Anxiety. An introduction*. Other Press, 2001), 13.

<sup>55</sup> Nestor Braunstein, ‘Desire and Jouissance in the Teachings of Lacan’ (edited by Jean-Michel Rabate), *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 106-107.

<sup>56</sup> Palacios, *Radical Sociality*.

<sup>57</sup> Paul Verhaege, “The Riddle of Castration Anxiety: Lacan beyond Freud”, in *The Letter. Lacanian Perspectives on Psychoanalysis*, 6(Spring): 44-54, 1996.

<sup>58</sup> Verhaeghe, *The Riddle*, 48.

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<sup>59</sup> Laclau, *New Reflections*, note 18, p. 41. On Laclau's theorization of time and space, see also Samuele Mazzolini's contribution to this symposium.

<sup>60</sup> David Howarth, Space, Subjectivity, and Politics Author(s): Source: Alternatives: Global, Local, Political, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Apr.-June 2006), pp. 105-134, 111.

<sup>61</sup> Oliver Marchart, *Art, Space and the Public Sphere(s). Some basic observations on the difficult relation of public art, urbanism and political theory*, in Andreas Lechner and Petra Maier (Eds.), *stadtmotiv\** (Wien: selene 1999), 4.

<sup>62</sup> Laclau, *New Reflections*, 34.

<sup>63</sup> Marchant, *Art, Space*, 4.

<sup>64</sup> Howarth, Space, Subjectivity

<sup>65</sup> In what one could consider a modernist or neo-Kantian 'surprising agreement', it is interesting to note that in a different context, Adorno argued something similar to Laclau in relation to the truth of music, asserting that it consisted in its ability to not lose itself to (empty) time, but instead act upon it, and thus follow the law of movement: "The self evident, that music is a temporal art, that it unfolds in time, means, in the dual sense, that time is not self-evident for it, that it has time as its problem. It must create temporal relationships among its constituent parts, justify their temporal relationship, synthesize them through time. Conversely, it itself must act upon time, not lose itself to it; must stem itself against the empty flood (...) What one terms musical form is therefore its temporal order. The nomenclature 'form' refers the temporal articulation of music to the idea of its spatialization" (Theodor Adorno, "on Some Relationships between Music and Painting", *Music Quarterly* 79, n.1, 1995, 66). It was indeed the lack of temporal coherence of jazz and its improvisation that led Adorno to claim that improvisation counts as one of those attempts to "break out of the fetishized commodity world which want to escape that world without ever changing it"

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(Theodor Adorno, *On Jazz*”, Discourse 12, N. 1. 1989, 54) thus, in what he calls a ‘disenfranchised subjectivity’ (Ibid, p. 54) sinks deeper into the commodity world.

PLEASE REVISE HIGHLIGHTED TEXT Of course, Laclau would not claim that spatialization (or the coincidence of time and space) is emancipatory or truth revealing. However, Laclau’s claim could be considered more radical as, without it, there would be no meaning or social order.

<sup>66</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Seminar XX: Encore. On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge*, (New York: Norton, 1998)

<sup>67</sup> Joan Copjec, *Read my Desire. Lacan Against the Historicists* (Cambridge: MIT, 1995), 216.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>70</sup> Derek Hook, ‘Restoring Universality to the Subject: Lacan’s Kantian Logic of Sexuation’, *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, 2009; 7, pp. 151-167, 161.

<sup>71</sup> Immanuel Kant, “The Antinomy of Pure Reason”, in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, (Revised Second Edition, Palgrave, 2007), 401.

<sup>72</sup> Copjec, *Imagine there is no Woman*

<sup>73</sup> Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake. On Blackness and Being*, (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2016), 106.

<sup>74</sup> Achilles Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017), 8.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>76</sup> Moten, *Stolen Life*.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 67.

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<sup>79</sup> Thomassen, *Antagonism, hegemony and ideology*, 295

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 295

<sup>81</sup> Benjamin McKean, *Toward an Inclusive Populism? On the Role of Race and Difference in Laclau's Politics*. *Journal of Political Theory*, 2016, p. 1-23, 14.

<sup>82</sup> Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 164.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 215

<sup>84</sup> Jaques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents* (Polity UP, 2004), 25.

<sup>85</sup> quoted by Frank Wilderson, *Red, White and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms*, (Duke UP, 2010), 7.

<sup>86</sup> Most notably Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

<sup>87</sup> For a discussion of visibility/erasure in the context of post-conflict societies, see Margarita Palacios, *The Aesthetics of Memory: Ruins, Visibility and Witnessing*. *The Sociological Review*, 1-19, 2018.

<sup>88</sup> Franz Fanon, *The wretched of the earth* (New York: Vintage Print, 1963) and *Black skin, white masks* (New York: Grove Press. Print, 1952).

<sup>89</sup> Wilderson, *Red, White and Black*, 7.

<sup>90</sup> Andrew Arato, *Populism, the Courts and Civil Society* (December 4, 2017).

Available at SRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3082596>

<sup>91</sup> Reference to Irigaray

<sup>92</sup> José Esteban Muñoz, "The White to Be Angry: Vaginal Davis's Terrorist Drag," *Social Text*, No. 52/53, *Queer Transexions of Race, Nation, and Gender* (Autumn - Winter, 1997), pp. 80-103, 80.