Beyond Populist Borders: Embodiment and the People in Laclau's Political Ontology

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Abstract

Taking as a point of departure Ernesto Laclau's proposition that populism exposes the logic of the political, I explore how articulation and embodiment work in *On Populist Reason*. I argue that Laclau's model of meaning making set limits to the understanding of politics that are primarily embodied, such as those involving popular mobilizations, but also nationalist investments in border making. Ultimately, I propose some complementary keys for bridging his theory with questions of embodiment to account for the bodily dimension through which many antagonisms are currently mobilized as well as the uses of the body for making democratic claims.

Keywords

Bodily Politics, Borders, Democracy, Populism, Psychic Investment, Sovereignty

Introduction

It has become a truism that one of the most salient characteristics of contemporary times is the rise of national-populist impulses, as they keep gaining ground by the re-articulation of the unity of the people against the figure of the alien—in particular, the migrant. From Donald Trump's obsession with the wall at the Mexican border to Matteo Salvini's statements about migration, accompanied by further justifications for not letting humanitarian rescue ships disembark in Italy or Malta, it is clear that anti-migration sentiments are taking hold of the contemporary political imagination. It is in light of this prevailing trend that I propose to consider the operations performed by the migrant as a political signifier in populist politics and renewed manifestations of nationalist discourses.

In so doing, my aim is to highlight the difference between populist logics and right-wing nationalist manifestations of populism. To this end, I draw on Ernesto Laclau's theory of populism and consider how populist logics might also connect to emancipatory projects enabling the articulation of popular demands in the name of democracy rather than nationalism, as we can see, for example, in the case of Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's open approach to migration from Central America. In all these configurations of the people, the establishment of a border structuring the political field around the people and its enemies is key. However, as Laclau argues, this border does not necessarily have to invoke an alien. On the contrary, the populist logic could equally challenge the exclusionary borders that limit certain democracies, taking the populist logic in an inclusive direction.[1] In order to address the different manifestations of populism, I also examine those political mobilizations that expose the impulse to limit democratic principles of freedom and equality within the securitarian state.

I contend that to analyze different configurations of the people, it is important to take into consideration that configuring borders requires embodied dynamics. The constitution of the people and its others (be they migrants, the political elites, or both) entail processes of representation that implicate the corporeal presence and actions of the subjects involved, as well as an affective circuit that prompts subjects' engagement with them. My point of departure for this consideration is, on the one hand, the so-called refugee crisis, and the practices of rejection at the borders enacted by the European Union and its member states; and on the other hand, the recent waves of protests against austerity and repressive measures in Spain.

To the extent that, for Laclau, populism points to the moment of the performative constitution of the people (and its enemies), populist reason evokes the kernel of those emancipatory (but also reactionary) political forms that claim to represent the people in an antagonistic relationship with a constitutive outside. This claim to representation is a politically productive one. For Laclau, populist reason presents us with an exemplary case that illuminates the contingent formation of political subjects and the key work of representation. However, when approaching the violent scenes that migration opens up, rather than only focusing on the ways in which the migrant is being othered by representational means, I look at the affective and embodied dimension that is central for that rhetorically produced other to effectively become a constitutive other. What I propose to scrutinize are the entangled dynamics of discourse and affect by which certain embodied practices come to occupy the space of the constitutive outside that makes the construction of a people possible, in this context a

national people. My first move is a Laclauian one to the extent that, contrary to the idea that nationalism is a *response* to migration, where a causal sequence is established, I turn this around to argue that the signifying power of the migrant is what permits the renewal of nationalism. As for the mobilization of, and against, the Spanish securitarian state, insofar as the horizon of democracy revolves around the government of the people by the people, some claims to democratization might give us a key to consider how we can conceive democracy's populist moment.

By paying attention to the body of the people, or in other terms, the ways in which the people is embodied by different political practices, I examine expanded notions of representation and articulation in dialogue with Laclau's political ontology. While the notion of articulation is pivotal to Laclau's political ontology, based as it is on a performative approach to representation, his reflections on embodiment are mainly limited to his work on populism and emerge only elliptically in his consideration of incarnation, especially in relation to the figure of the leader. As far as articulation and incarnation are concerned, however, Laclau's analytical model relies on Lacanian-inspired linguistic notions of meaning making, which, I argue, undermine the analytical power of his approach.

With these lines of inquiry in mind, I address the performativity of migration as a political signifier in the first section and argue that Laclau's Lacanian turn set limits to his grasp of forms of doing politics that are primarily embodied, such as those involving national investments in bordering practices. In the second section, I examine Laclau's theorization of populism, while distinguishing its different manifestations. Drawing on Wendy Brown's consideration of the psychic labor enacted by nationalist impulses, I propose an expanded notion of articulation in the third section. Finally, countering anti-populist liberal and progressive arguments, I show the potential of Laclau's framework for analyzing those political instances where the body is also centrally mobilized for making democratic claims.

Migration and Citizenship: The Performativity of Political Signifiers

It has been argued that to be a migrant is the result of an ascribed position, rather than just a given sociological descriptor.[2] As such, one may understand it as a particular form of interpellation, one that is clearly traversed by colonial legacies, race and class. For instance, being interpellated as an expat, rather than an immigrant, depends on the positions you occupy in relation to other categories, and in this sense, one may also argue that the category of migrant is in itself an intersectional one. If migration works in this way, it is because being a migrant is more a matter of becoming than just a given legal status. This form of becoming, formed and repeatedly ascribed over time, is not a fixed one. Rather, it shifts meanings across different geopolitical and historical contexts. The way the idea of migration has been negotiated in Europe might be a case in point. A stark example of this functioning is the way in which migration is ascribed within public discourse to those who might be second or third generation descendants of migrants, and who continue to be imagined as non-belonging others despite being nationals or citizens of a European state.[3]

What the category of migration seems to be doing in the current context—shaped by a discourse of "deserving" and "undeserving" subjects—is to designate different modalities of non-belonging regardless of the actual legal status one may attain. Common to these current figures of non-belonging is that they have been punctuating the migrant as the other of an ideal citizen.[4] But it has not always been the case that migration was so central to the definition of the borders of the nation-state, or citizenship more generally. Rather, migration has been signified differently depending on the historical and geographical context. For instance, civilizational projects in postcolonial Latin American states at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth involved active policies to attract European migrants as the best way to build the modern nation-state. The pathways for citizenship were made particularly easy for these Europeans as they were imagined as the ideal citizen-subjects for those imagined modern nations. Within the modernist political imaginary of the late-nineteenth-century Latin America, in order to become properly modern, Latin American nations had to be "civilized," and one way of achieving this goal was to make sure white Europeans populated them. "Civilization and Progress" was the motto that justified the parallel genocide of native populations, hygienist policies concerned with the criminalization of other subalterns, and the nationalization of European (white) newcomers.[5]

Engin Isin's theorization of citizenship as an always already exclusionary *practice* is pertinent here.[6] For Isin, citizenship is not just a construct that relies on the production of non-citizens, but a contested practice that needs to be continuously performed, and where "acts of citizenship" performed by "non-belonging others," who nonetheless take part in the life of the *polis,* are constantly risking and challenging its boundaries.[7] I will come back to the question of the boundaries of citizenship in the next section, foregrounding its tension with the notion of the people in relation to the liberal democratic state. For the moment, I want to highlight that Isin's

argument implies that the boundaries of the polity that we assume to be in place are politically contested all the time. That is, just like the migrant, the self-identity that migration is said to jeopardize is a performative formation. They are positions whose political meaning is not only relational, but most importantly the effect of a set of practices of signification always at risk of being undone.

This fact should remind us of the contingent flexibility of signifiers—in this case, the citizen and the migrant—whose political productivity depends, precisely, on their un-fixed character. One can take this point to refer to a generally unspecified theory of performativity, but this might not tell us much about how to interpret the political struggle for the meaning of signifiers. Following Isin, one could look for those disruptive moments where an "act of citizenship" emerges, and which is precisely defined by its capacity to undo an established political framework.[8] Rather than pointing to isolated disruptive acts, one can emphasize the logic of resignification, which is based on the iterability of repeated practices over time.[9] Judith Butler's theory of resignification points to the always haunting risk that inhabits the possibility of reiterating a practice shaped by regulative discourses against their terms. According to Butler, reiteration can (and, more often than not, does) happen in ways that diverge from—and potentially might subvert—the established meaning of embodied identity categories created by regulative discourses.

Although not necessarily in contradiction to Butler's performative theory, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe adopt a somewhat different approach to the relation between performativity and power. For them, the performativity (and the subsequent un-fixity) of signifiers is linked to struggles for hegemony.[10] The performative life of signifiers is revealed by the fact that their signification in a specific conjuncture is the result of the capacity for hegemonizing, and therefore provisionally stabilizing, their meaning. A meaning that, given its contingent and ultimately exclusionary character, keep signifiers open to further struggles for what they may signify, as in Butler's case.[11] However, while in Butler's approach to performativity, the embodied dimension of signification is key, Laclau's approach to the performative power of social discursivity increasingly tended to rely on articulations between signifiers linguistically defined.

This limits the scope of articulatory practices in which the people, the nation, or a claim to democracy are enacted in ways that cannot be easily translated into clear signifiers in the first instance. Such is the case, for instance, with the international women's strikes of the past few years, headed by a transversal plurality of movements with no common demands to determine.[12] Or, to take another example, the everyday embodied doing of the border at the EU's Mediterranean coastline, supported by a bureaucratic and architectural militarized infrastructure. To consider this limitation in Laclau's approach, it is necessary to explore the way in which Laclau theorizes the articulation of the people.

For Laclau, the contents that become associated through a political articulation depend on the struggle over signifiers. In *On Populist Reason*, he insists on the performative power of *the name* to produce these articulations, which are specified by both their linguistic and affective dimensions.[13] Adopting a definitive Lacanian stance, in that book, Laclau states: "It is only with the Lacanian approach that we have a real breakthrough: the identity and unity of the object [say, a chain of equivalences or 'the people'] result from the very operation of naming… [and where] the name becomes the ground of the thing."[14] Laclau is pointing here to the idea that, as a signifier, the people is what gives unity and identity to a heterogeneous ensemble. In so doing, Laclau not only brings to the fore his ontological claim about the rhetorical foundation of the people (and society, for that matter). He also grants these particular signifiers the particular quality of being *a name*.

Laclau here radicalizes Saussure via Lacan. In Laclau, the recourse to the name is not so much intended to address the question of referentiality ("the thing,"), but to emphasize the void and singular character of the signifier the people (as in proper names), as well as its capacity to create the collective that it names. A few pages later, Laclau adds:

> The unity of the equivalential ensemble, of the irreducibly new collective will in which particular equivalences crystallize, depends entirely on the social productivity of a name. That productivity derives exclusively from the operation of the name as a pure signifier; that is to say, not expressing any conceptual unity that precedes it.[15]

If, for Laclau, populism is exemplary in that it reveals like no other political logic something about the ontology of the political, this is related to the key place that naming has in the contingent articulation of heterogeneous demands into the demands of *the people*. In this way, Laclau's populist reason directs us to the ontological dimension of the political pointing at two constitutive elements that are key for my argument. Firstly, the political is characterized by the primacy of the signifier over the signified, hence the performative character of politics. This feature points as well to the primacy of the political over the social: it is naming, the political act *par excellence*, that gives identity and unity to the social, and not the other way around. Secondly, the

performative formation of the people exposes the retroactive and totalizing effect of naming. Specifying the psychic dimension of articulations, it is naming that allows Laclau to homologate the logic of hegemony to that of Lacan's *object petit a*. This concept is defined as the partial object that metonymically resembles the lack in the Other, and therefore propounds desire, which in turn can never be fully attained.[16]

Understood in this way, the partial object (the name that comes to represent the people) does not merely evoke an impossible totality, that is, the impossibility of a people (or a society) that is not already mediated by contingent articulations and concomitant exclusions. Rather, in Laclau's words, that partial object "becomes the name of that totality." As he remarks: "Lacan's object petit a is the key element in a social ontology. The whole is always going to be embodied by a part. In terms of our analysis: there is no universality which is not an hegemonic one."[17] It is this radical investment that makes any contingent articulation possible, be it populist or not. In this regard, Laclau asserts: "No social fullness is achievable except through hegemony; and hegemony is nothing more than the investment, in a partial object, of a fullness which will always evade us because it is purely mythical."[18]

Laclau affirms that investment is embroiled in his concept of articulation, and that his notion of discourse involves both words and actions; that is, it is not reduced to words and images.[19] However, the clear logic of difference that structures signification and the power of the name relies on a linguistic model of discourse. More to the point, he further specifies this model in rhetorical terms—where substitution and displacement, metonymy and metaphor, and paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes become more central.[20] But the embodiment of this logic of articulation may turn out to be messier than we may expect at first glance. Embodiment is surely a culturally mediated process and is therefore traversed by the order of the signifier. However, embodiment also highlights that this process is psychically mediated, producing an imaginary relation to our bodies; that is, a relation structured by fantasy. This imaginary dimension of embodiment, albeit socially informed, cannot be fully brought to consciousness. Further, in embodied collective actions unspoken fantasies are also played out, but in such a way that the imaginary relation emerges in between bodies rather than in strictly subjective terms.[21]

A close look at the so-called "push back practices" (in Spanish, "devoluciones en caliente"), systematically practiced at the border between Spain and Morocco in Ceuta and Melilla and other points of the southern border of Europe, might help to illustrate my point. Many of us have seen numerous images and short videos of these scenes in the news. There, the images are usually focused on—mostly—black young bodies trying to climb the fences, struggling to cross to the other side in defiance of concertina wire; only to be received by security forces personified—mostly—by masculine bodies in uniform, armed with batons and other equipment, prepared to beat and catch those who manage to cross the fence, and kick them out of Spanish territory. Often, the news clips show the runs, the chaos of such moments, with plenty of images of border police beating and wrenching the men from the fences and dragging them across the ground to the other side.[22]

Importantly, when closely attending to these practices, questions about where and what is the border immediately emerge. As an abstract spatial signifier, the border appears to be clear-cut. But watching these scenes, we can see that the border has to be done, and so it involves a performative—violent, costly and arduous—work of bordering both at the level of the political imaginary as we have seen in relation to the boundaries of citizenship, but also at the level of infrastructures and embodied practices.[23] The border is a signifier, a set of sedimented practices, whose ontological effects, when examined from the point of view of these violent scenes, reveals itself as a contested liminal space. In this sense, its operation resembles the logic of key political signifiers and articulations, where semantic borders for instance between "us" and "them," are blurred, contextual, and contaminating each other. These signifiers are constantly negotiated, and the struggle over their meaning is part and parcel of the tough work required to arrive at the logic of difference that is key to signification. Here we see that, albeit involving very different implications, both as embodied practice and at the level of the political imaginary, the spatialized borders of identity are flooded with liminality—the border is in fact also a *threshold*.[24]

The scene described above mainly points to national bordering, a practice that is not necessarily populist. But my point here is to illustrate the work of embodied articulations, which, as I will show, the populist logic exposes most clearly, arguing that when embodying the people, signifiers tend not only to signify beyond themselves, but most significantly, they do so in multiple, contradictory and undetermined ways.

On Names and the Investment in the People

Laclau grants populist reason a privileged place as "the royal road to understanding the ontological constitution of the political."[25] This does not imply that populism should be elevated to any special ontological position as equivalent to the political. Neither does Laclau grant any privileged status to populism as a mode of doing politics. It is true that, inspired by the experience of transversal popular movements in Latin America, he defended populism as a potentially emancipatory politics. This is so because populist reason describes a particular logic for shaping the political field by which popular demands excluded from the institutions of liberal democracy could be articulated. But, for Laclau, populism is not a particular regime, nor does it have a political orientation; it can be right-wing, left-wing, authoritarian, and so on.

What are the main features of populism understood as a political logic so that it can encompass such a broad range of possibilities? Three aspects are key to my examination of the relation between populism, nationalism and democracy, and in particular, to my argument about the centrality of embodiment and affect in the articulation of demands**.** In the first place, according to Laclau, populism responds to a form of social heterogeneity that cannot be contained by institutions; populism is prone to emerge when existing institutions cannot absorb society's demands. More specifically, populism surges when multiple demands form a particular chain of equivalence, such that each demand has nothing in common with the rest other than signaling the failure of institutions to address said demands. It is to the extent that the chain of demands is articulated in confrontation with existing institutions, that these demands could be considered popular.[26] The populist logic emerges precisely as that instance capable of articulating those popular demands, that is, demands that the democratic system cannot properly address. Hence, populism's anti-system nature.

In the second place, the populist logic is typified by the division of the political field into two antagonistic camps: the people versus the dominant elite, those from below in opposition to those at the top. What is characteristic of populism is that, instead of presenting a hegemonic articulation that claims to represent the whole, it materializes through an articulation among those who recognize themselves as not part of that whole, those whom the institutional claim to wholeness cannot contain without going through some significant change. At this point, we can start to see the difference between the kind of wholeness that applies to an imagined citizenry, and those who, through the popular articulation of demands described above, come to see themselves as excluded from it. However, as plebs, their demands have to be presented at the same time as those of the populus (the people as the representative of some form of wholeness).[27] This poses a tension between a political field that has to remain divided for populism to operate and the need to represent some form of totality.

The structuring role of a divided political field into two antagonistic camps explains why, once in power, populist movements need to keep antagonism alive, thus constantly mobilizing this division and polarizing camps around any matter of decision. This does not exempt populists either in power or battling to be in power from addressing some form of wholeness. This makes populist forms of antagonism particularly volatile, and especially prone to the national as the site that can provide some stability to this tension. This is so to the extent that the nation can easily work as a signifier that allows for the expansion of the part beyond itself. For instance, the articulation of a collective will might be based in a claim for popular sovereignty, delineating a potentially emancipatory terrain, or as Chantal Mouffe would argue, enacting the democratic (and egalitarian) principle of democracy.[28] However, past and present populist experiences show that this popular sovereignty has been associated with national sovereignty more often than not, and in both progressive and reactionary ways.

Last but not least, for the particular populist articulation of demands to happen, a third element is needed: the leader. The leader is usually incarnated in a person, but arguably the leader is also the name of a symbol; what matters about the leader is their operation as a name, a symbol around which popular demands coalesce. Through this transformative amalgamation effected by the symbolic operation of the leader, the people is performatively configured. Through the name incarnated by the leader as a symbol, a people comes into being. At stake here is the task of hegemonic struggles and the articulation of signifiers that would give life to a sustainable "we (the people)" capable of defining the terms in which the political field is shaped. Central to this third aspect Laclau equates the logic of hegemony to that of the *object petit a*, as mentioned earlier. This homologation is important because, while the connection with the leader is based on identification, the leader is also an object of love. As such, the symbolic dimension incarnated by the leader appears as the embodiment of a mythical fullness, for which the leader becomes an *object petit a*.[29] This is especially relevant when examining the centrality of embodiment and affect in populist articulations, as well as the configuration of the people and its constitutive outside.[30]

In this incorporation of Lacan's perspective on the dynamic of desire to tackle the question of the centrality of investment for politics, Laclau mainly retains the ontological gap between *Das Ding* and the *object petit a*, and the subsequent structurally provisional and incomplete character of hegemonic sutures.[31] However, as argued in

the previous section, his approach to signifying chains and the power of naming develops in a direction that tends to reduce the scope of the notion of discourse to a more rigid understanding of signification. From the Laclau and Mouffe of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, where signifying practices are closer to Foucault's notion of discourse, to Laclau's turn to the Lacanian model of the *object petit a*, there is a movement towards a more strictly linguistic understanding of articulation that makes it more difficult to read bodily practices (including actions) as forms of articulation of demands, or even political discourse more broadly.[32] As for his theorization of populism, the body only appears to seriously matter in relation to the persona of the leader, but this attention to the leader's body is immediately overshadowed by the fact that what matters of this body is that it incarnates a name. Effectively, in *On Populist Reason* the political work of the leader tends to be condensed in their name and the logic of love/identification. The leader is a symbol invested with the capacity of representing an absent fullness.[33]

Laclau's focus is mainly on the process of the configuration of emptied signifiers that allow for the *identification* with a leader or a highly charged imagined notion of the people, associated with what could work as symbols representing it. These symbols could represent the people as the dispossessed, but they may well also refer to whiteness or Christendom. This will depend on how the boundaries of the people are shaped. This means that together with this indentificatory investment there is a parallel work of *dis-identification and projection*, paving the way for different forms of antagonism that sustain such articulation.

In the current context, one could suggest that the association between the popular and the national tends to be articulated in such a manner that the resentment against the global elite and the frustrating impact of the neoliberal globalization of capital become entangled with, or displaced by, the hostility towards non-nationals and others marked by their non-belonging. Here antagonism is no longer between those below and those at the top, but becomes a matter of in and out. Benjamin De Cleen and Yannis Stavrakakis argue that this distinction between horizontal (in/out) and vertical (down/up) articulations of antagonism is key to differentiating nationalist from populist formations.[34] Further, Stavrakakis suggests that in nationalist articulations, "the people" works as a surrogate for a transcendental idea of the nation, rather than as a nodal point of articulation of heterogeneous demands.[35] In this way, Stavrakakis tries to save populism from nationalist trends, emphasizing the emancipatory potential of populist discourses.

While I agree with the political commitment of this gesture, it remains true that, while antagonism can be embodied by migrants, the outsiders, *or* the elite, it can also be embodied by *a combination of them*. Antagonistic figures can be complex and contradictory, encompassing the elite to the extent that the people identifies itself as the dispossessed, but also the migrant to the extent that the dispossessed-people finds a site of identification in the national as well. In this case, we have both vertical and horizontal forms of antagonism working together. This makes it difficult to argue for a clear-cut distinction between down-up democratically oriented articulations and in-out nationalist ones. A case in point is the experience of Latin American populisms of the post-World War II era, among them Peronism, which served Laclau as a privileged object of study. Through the call to a "national and popular" movement, the Peronist people defined itself against the oligarchs and the workers and left militants "contaminated by foreign" communist and socialist ideas.

Whether structured in national or popular terms, or in a combination of both, following Laclau, this antagonistic other can only become *constitutive* to the extent that it operates as a threat that risks the complete destruction of my own identity, if not my whole being. This other has to be one whose inclusion or existence comes to represent my own undoing. And this in two senses, as the scene of constitutive antagonism involves two intertwined, but analytically distinguishable dimensions. The first dimension relates this undoing to the idea that the other's identity radically *negates* mine. The relation with this other is not one of opposition. More significantly, this undoing is utterly destructive because "this presence shows the contingent character of that identitary investment."[36] That is, it disintegrates the whole order of signification within which my identification took place. Therefore, the question about this menacing presence involves, together with the work of dis-identification and projection, the affective mobilization of anxiety and aggression and the problem of how to translate this aggression into politically more or less acceptable terms.

This point leads to my argument that, while it is true that Laclau does take the affective dimension of politics into account, this tends to be formally subsumed in the general form of investment, defined as "the differential cathexes of a signifying chain."[37] Investment is crucial in this formulation because it is at the core of what supports a contingent articulation of heterogeneous signifiers. As Laclau states: "hegemonic totalization requires a radical investment… and engagement in signifying games that are very different from conceptual apprehension."[38] However, identification and investment do not work in univocal ways, as he specifies when analyzing the relationship to the leader. Thus, it may well be the case that the general claim about investment

does not offer enough analytical insight to apprehend the kind of complex and multifaceted psychic work that is at stake here. I do agree on the statement that there is a libidinal element in the process of signification, which, without libidinal attachments, cannot happen. But, by making a general statement about investment, Laclau's argument leaves us with the task of analyzing the kind of investments that give concrete life to the formal affirmation that political attachments have a psychic dimension. We need to remember that the productivity of a political analysis of constitutive antagonism relies to a great extent on our ability to identify it not just as producing one political effect (i.e., exclusion, production of a homogenized self-identity), but rather, as producing a contextual set of effects and affects that might vary depending on specific meanings and, most importantly, multiple *investments* in them.

On Borders and Bodies Doing Politics

The question of investment is important for my argument because it marks the limits of trying to give content to political signifiers, and it demands that we pay attention to the fact that these signifiers are politically productive insofar as they are in excess of what they signify. This excess is related to the fact that political signifiers are overdetermined, not least by a history of conflicts and associations for which we cannot give a full or ultimate account. I want to take up this idea of excess to tackle the question of affect and embodiment to which I turn to in this section.

My point could be summarized as follows: while, according to Laclau, the logic of the empty signifier explains the representational logics that are proper to the political, political signifiers become embodied in ways that also produce affectively invested sites, which are taken up by the people in ways that exceed what can be said about them in verbally articulated terms. With this proposition, I do not mean that we can separate the logic of representation from investment. As stated earlier, Laclau himself makes clear that these two instances are inseparable.[39] Rather, I am concerned with the excess that the libidinal economy of the very logic of representation produces. In other words, I am interested in that facet of libidinal investments that, despite being mobilized and enacted by representation, cannot be totally captured by representational means.

Let us go back to the violent bordering practices in the Mediterranean I described in the first section. What are we to make of these scenes? In order to analyze the hideous and hard work that doing the border in the face of its undoing entails, it might be apt to pay attention to myriad powerful investments in border making, ones that might be able to give us some insight into what is at stake in the violence required to confront the bodies (of others who have put themselves) on the line. Psychically, what has to happen for politically-invested securitarian subjects to be prompted to act and bear these acts? We might be able to criticize nationalist discourses that unleash violent attitudes toward the other, but other layers and other kinds of implications might have to be taken into account for thinking how a subject is prompted to exercise such violence onto another subject: there, beating, hurting, dragging these bodies through the dirty earthy border ground out of "their" territory. This is a subject position that, enacted through an embodied performance, undoubtedly calls for an account of its collective and social dimension. Further, what allows global audiences to bear witness to what is going on at the borders with relative indifference, when not taking part in these violent actions themselves? The so-called refugee crisis and the dreadful systematic increase of deaths, with more and more people drowning in the Mediterranean day by day, but also dying in detention centers, reflect the heightening of this trend.[40] This indifference might evoke questions of ambivalence and anxiety. Certainly, the question of aggression I referred to in the previous section comes to the fore, for it seems to be the threat of one's own undoing that mobilizes and justifies the destruction of lives that is at stake here.

To elaborate on the psychosocial dimension of current practices of bordering, linked as they are with nationalist formations, I draw on some of the arguments Wendy Brown develops in *Walled States*, where she proposes that walls work as psychic containers.[41] I propose that one could extend Brown's discussion of psychic containment to understand current impulses toward heightened borders and presumably populist national fantasies. As she puts it: "In the face of an increasingly unbounded and uncontrolled global order, walls figure containment that exceeds mere protection against dangerous invaders and that pertains instead to the psychic unmanageability of living in such a world."[42] Brown argues that walls—physical and imaginary borders in my case—are indicative of the erosion of the nation-state. As such, they reveal their own vulnerability in the light of unstoppable flows of capital, information, goods, people, cultures, the increasing primacy of neoliberal rationality as the ultimate sovereign authority, and the relatively recent legitimacy of supra-national legislative and judiciary powers and International Human Rights Law. This situation attests to the concrete political ways in which we can think of the permeability, liminality and, in her words, porosity, of the border.[43]

As a scene of embodied struggle against the liminality of the border (which promises, and systematically fails, to provide an all-powerful illusion of a bounded self), Brown makes it possible to argue that there is more to say about the exploitation of xenophobia and racism, key to othering the outsider, migrant or refugee. For instance, we can point to the fact that borders mobilize *the psychic work of displacement*. As a mechanism of defense, the myriad inarticulate associations produced by displacement are not inconsequential or without lingering political effects. Drawing on Freud's early theory of defense and Anna Freud's further extension of it, Brown proposes that walling works as a defense mechanism against a number of possible sources of anxiety and painful experiences associated with the demise of state-sovereignty. In particular, experiences connected to the violence of exploitation as well as the frustrations of contemporary globalized and precarious life in relation to which national states have demonstrated their impotence.[44]

In our terms, such forms of displacement that call for nationalism and heightened borders work as a mechanism of defense against the anxiety associated to frustrated demands that have proved to be once and again inaudible to liberal democratic institutional ears. As a defense operation, the obsession with borders and the resurgence of nationalist populist formations may be said to stage contemporary anxieties about sovereign impotence in a displaced way, both at the level of the national and in regards to the subject. This anxiety relates, in Laclauian terms, to the ontological impossibility of self-identity, only precariously stabilized by the investment in a surrogate symbol of it.

The work of displacement is made clear in the ways in which nationalist outbursts project internal conflicts outward, and the ways in which, in the aftermath of the violence of colonization and globalization, aggression is reversed and projected onto the alien violence "out there." This work of psychic displacement is also reflected in the political deflection of Europe's own violent acts, even if in the case of Europe it is not only the nation that is at stake. Certainly, the transposition is valid to the extent that questions of sovereign impotence and loss of identity are also played out at the European scale. "As a form of psychic defense," these practices could be understood, as Brown suggests, "as an ideological disavowal of a set of unmanageable appetites, needs and powers."[45] If the "alien" threatens my own undoing, this threat emerges as a condensation of multiple aggressive forces that did not originate in the alien in the first place. For instance, displacement is pivotal to the European Union's dismissal of its own murderous policies, as attested by 2015 European Agenda on Migration.[46] This is a directive that does not actively demand the criminalization of rescuing and humanitarian activities, and yet, it does entice states to do so. Such displacement gives way to the disavowed exercise of violence by further restricting the field of the human, shadowing the humanity of the other in the figure of "a mass of deprived populations flooding Europe," "a plague," "an avalanche," or a "security threat." It also operates through the externalization of border patrols, as in the case of the ominous deal with Turkey and other countries a few years ago to do the European Union's dirty work.

In moments of institutional crisis such as this—and it is pertinent to recall that this is one of the conditions of emergence of populism—the articulation of conflict assumes alternative forms; in particular, embodied ones, very much in a similar way as when psychic conflict cannot be articulated in language and is then expressed by "acting it out." In these cases, we may well bear witness to political imaginaries that are somatized in the form of symptoms. But it may also be at stake in the disavowed centrality of violence, framed as one of protection and survival. At this point, politically articulated signifiers cannot fully account for the work of displacement effected through psychically embodied practices, for they seem to be in excess of what these political signifiers mobilized by displacement are set to cover up.

Displacement is clear in right-wing national-populist discourses that charge migration with the "unsustainable pressure on national economies that have ceased to be national or on welfare states that have largely abandoned substantive welfare functions."[47] But another layer of defense might be at stake here. Drawing on Freud's *The Future of an Illusion*, Brown links the wish for protection and containment to Freud's work on the child's wish for parental omnipotence in the face of its own helplessness.[48] In the face of our own vulnerability and dependence—which resonates with infantile experience—the wish for cutting off ties with the suffering of others could then be interpreted as a wish to disavow our own vulnerable and precarious lives. Indeed, the fantasy of impermeability that lies at the center of bordering practices could be understood as a way of denying our own vulnerability, thus projected onto the other.[49] However, it might also point to a state of intensified fear, if not an element of collective *paranoia*. The figuration of migration as a threat to security (rhetorically intensified by the figure of illegal migrants and their association with criminal activities, illegal trafficking and terrorism) is a cry informed by, and contributing to, contemporary fantasies of imminent total destruction (of an imagined self, "our" lifestyle, traditional family values, or democracy). As Brown suggests, doing the border mobilizes a fear of *mass immigration* deemed to imperil an imagined purity, locating in the future the dissolution of (an already damaged) identity, national or otherwise.

Brown emphasizes that walls are a theatrical and spectacular ritualistic performances of failed sovereignty. It is fair to insist that borders are also sites of intense political struggle. If borders are porous, it is partly because people keep trespassing them all the time, risking the boundaries of citizenship, as Isin would argue.[50] When looking at the figurations of self and other in bordering practices, the focus on projection is not necessarily one that depoliticizes migrants' and allies' struggles. Migrants are not just projected figures of the self: they are organized, they negotiate and contest state interpellations, they defend and enact their rights, they also protest, and their crossings can be understood as a way of resisting disciplinary and regulatory powers. It may well be the case that it is in the light of these practices of resistance that paranoid ideation and its spectacularly violent and theatrical materialization is unleashed.

As these embodied investments in borders show, the political subjects that such bordering produces are made not just out of political articulations of representational contents. While political signifiers need to be invested to produce such articulations, the empty signifier cannot fully explain the logic of defense and affective displacements at stake here. An articulation does not depend solely on substitution, condensation and displacement of contents, but also on the dissociation and displacement of affects once associated to such contents, as shown by the case of intensified fear and aggression that amount to paranoid-like articulations. Indeed, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of paranoid hostility speak to specific formations of identity (after all, defenses are formative of the subject) and antagonistic struggle where the extension of others' rights, and even their visible existence, is experienced not just as an attack on one's own privilege or living opportunities, but as an act of full destruction.[51] Defensive aggression finds in different articulations of political struggles staged by migrants condensed sites where destructive fantasies are crystallized. In this way, destructiveness is not just externalized, but self-fulfilled, as destruction is enacted by means of this very same externalization.

Referring to paranoid tendencies in an article discussing populism could be a dangerous move for it risks pathologizing populism, precisely what Laclau warned against.[52] However, to assert that contemporary paranoid-like practices of bordering might be co-substantial with populist configurations of identity, whether national or of the people, is far from arguing that there is an intrinsic relation between paranoia and populism.[53] Notwithstanding some nationalist populist formations, paranoid tendencies are not exclusive of populism, nor are they more proximate to it (they can be easily found in either authoritarian or democratically established institutional dynamics). Any rigid formation of identity, and in particular the people, might present some defensive characteristics; and at first sight it may seem that over-defensive practices aimed at establishing the borders of the people and democratic imaginaries do not seem to sit well together. However, in the next section I counter the idea that paranoid-like affects are proper to populism, and thus populist affects might explain anti-democratic contemporary trends. To this end, I show that this defensive aggressive logic is pivotal to the securitarian state, which, despite manifesting profoundly anti-democratic characteristics, is framed as a formation aimed at sustaining democratic forms of government.

Democracy and Populism

Arguably, the psychosocial dimensions of the border and the associated investments in the national are at the forefront of current contested formations of the people. This leads us to another trend we are witnessing today: the decline of democratic imaginaries. This decline is associated with a post-liberal turn and associated securitarian and punitive dynamics.[54] In mainstream progressive media and political discourse, it is also insistently repeated that the decline is related to populist logics mobilizing entrenched manifestations of nationalism.[55] What is significant about this trend, in my view, is how human values are mobilized to defend violent policies and politics. We are witnessing a perverse form of resignification by which current violent trends against migration, for instance, are enabled by recourse to humanist ideals. Similarly, the recourse to the rule of law allegedly in defense of liberal democracy has been actively mobilized to clamp down on democratic mobilizations and claims, popular movements, and social protests, as well as to enable impediments to mobility, enhanced surveillance, and the heightened rigidity of borders.

The alleged intrinsic superiority of the "rational" rule of law and democratic institutions over populism is to a great extent based on the view that the "irrationality" of populism is the cause of our dreadful political moment. But this seems to forget too quickly the use of constitutional means and the defense of the rule of law for proceeding to the criminalization of claims to democracy and the relevance of embodied dimension of politics. The criminalization of social protest we have seen intensifying in light of the massive mobilizations that started spreading across regions since 2011 seems to prove this point well. Exemplary in this regard are the sanctioning of anti-terrorism Acts and, in Spain, the Security Law, which has entailed the heightening of censorship, but also, and especially, the expansion of the kinds of embodied forms of protesting and manifestations that might

now be deemed criminal acts. The Security Law—popularly called "la ley mordaza" (The Muzzle Law)—does not primarily target what is claimed, but rather specific ways of *doing* politics, that is, embodied street actions or cultural practices that directly challenge democratic institutions or exceed institutionalized political means.[56]

Another case in point that illustrates the centrality of embodied forms of political articulation relates to the measures adopted by the Spanish state to contain the massive mobilizations for the referendum on the independence of Catalonia in 2017. Regardless of how one views the Catalan movements for independence and the timeliness of the referendum, it is worth highlighting that the Catalan leaders have been imprisoned, accused of sedition and/or rebellion. Most significantly, the basis for this accusation has been the alleged *violent bodily actions* enacted by protesters during the mobilizations for the referendum. This legal accusation follows the repressive way in which the Catalan crisis was handled by the Spanish state, and reflects the embodied dimension of the antagonism that emerged between Spanish state-nationalism enacting all sorts of anxieties related to the fate of national unity, and the nationalist call for independence in Catalonia crystallizing a wide and highly contradictory set of popular demands.

During this crisis, we have seen a set of entangled oppositions defining democracy as *either* the rule of law reduced to legality and procedure *or* the manifestation of the popular will marking the limits of the legal apparatus through the referendum and the presence of the people on the streets. This opposition prompted the question if popular sovereignty—key to democracy—was better represented either by the Catalan and Spanish parliaments or by the people exercising their right to civil disobedience. Significantly, it was also framed as a confrontation between rational and irrational ways of doing politics. (Liberal) democracy enacted in the parliament through reasoned and law-abiding arguments on the one hand, unruly bodies mobilized by affective attachments to fantasies of an impossible future on the other. These unruly bodies were enacting popular demands deemed impossible from the point of view of liberal democratic institutions, and therefore dismissed for allegedly being led by populist impulses.

This political configuration could be understood as a populist moment, as Chantal Mouffe proposes.[57] Here, I echo Laclau's and Mouffe's arguments that populism should not be dismissed as a deviation of politics, for this liberal democratic dismissal ultimately conceals an elitist position that reverberates in a long history of fear of the masses. Indeed, one of Laclau's aims in offering an analytical—rather than a normative— theory of populism was to show the elitist ethos underlying critiques of populism as an aberrant political phenomenon of ignorance, irrationality and mass manipulation. This does not imply, however, an argument in favor of just any manifestation of populist logics. I agree with Mouffe and Laclau that there can be both emancipatory and reactionary forms of populism. Although I do not quite agree with Mouffe that we can so easily distinguish between left- and right-wing populisms, or with Laclau, that we can so neatly separate their emancipatory manifestations. Instead, I would propose that a way to orient us within this map would be to pay attention to how the chain of equivalence manages the link between the popular (as the part without part) and the national (as a horizon of wholeness). We may attend as well to the heterogeneity within the people, always in tension with the call for wholeness. Both aspects are linked to the articulation of demands, but also to the displacement and condensation of affective resonances attached to them. These resonances might tend to more open or rigid forms of closure of the people as a site of identification, that is, the configurations of borders that grant the people a self-identity, most apparent in embodied politics.

As I have tried to show, in popular experiences where symbolism acquires a privileged dimension, it may be that the affective and diffuse resonances of the symbol, while facilitating the articulation of demands, propound a political sensibility that is not reducible to demands. In popular mobilizations and protests such as the ones described in this section, affective resonances and embodied feelings are activated in ways that do not necessarily lead to sustained articulations, and it would be difficult to identify a clear boundary between regressive and progressive tendencies in them. However, they are not inconsequential. When the democratic institutional order of representation falters and dissent becomes irrepresentable, political mobilizations might indicate the fissures of (the logic of) representation, that is, the dislocated nature of representation, always already trying to contain a figural sense of wholeness whose closure is constantly pierced from within.

Looking at this panorama, it becomes clear that we cannot blame populism for the decline of democracy, even if we cannot ascribe a neatly emancipatory impulse to it. Instead, in this populist moment, there is a displacement of the sites and forms of struggle for the meaning of democracy, where conflicting passionate attachments to the idea of the people and related notions of democratic government and representation have to be fought—some of them ethno-nationalist; others more oriented to ideas of human rights; and multifaceted contradictory calls to the people in between. If we dismiss populism altogether, we are dismissing—and therefore have already lost—the struggle. The struggle for the meaning of democracy requires that we look at how the logic of bordering—

central to the struggle for the meaning of signifiers, and the configuration of the people—is also inscribed in these bodily ways, defining the struggle for the field of thinkable demands too.

Conclusion

To summarize, the starting point of my argument has been that there is more to say about the self-other analytics of power, and one way to explore this is by looking at the embodied—even haptic or somatized—dynamics of this opposition. Secondly, I made the point that part of the rhetorical effects mobilized by the exploitation of such opposition—stark in the case of the work that migration is doing for nationalism—is to produce *affects* that open us up to a political work that take a grip on the subject (rhetorical effects affect us) beyond what an analysis based on representational discursive logics can contribute. Along these lines, my last point has been that the contemporary populist moment is revealing the fact that the struggle for the meaning of democracy in the face of the securitarian state is being played not just beyond so-called democratic institutions, but also in bodily ways.

It is in this context that the myriad rhetorical and affective/psychic associations mobilized by the practice of bordering necessary to the configuration of any political identity (i.e., national and/or popular) become key—be they anxiety, fear, paranoia, murderous feelings, infantile fantasies of all-powerful protection. The imaginary borders of nations and the people are played out centrally in our bodies—as in the case of the struggles for, and impediments to, mobility, and in popular protests. In its literal sense, the border crosses territories, but it is enacted by collective and socially configured bodies as well. Hence the renewed obsession for setting limits to what bodies are allowed to do: in mobilizations, in crossings, but also in relation to how desire and pleasures could be lived—the Christian and reactionary campaigns against so-called "gender ideology" are a clear case in point.

These impulses can be propounded in the name of liberal democracy, the defense of national identity, and they can be mobilized by recurring to a rigid understanding of the rule of law or in populist manifestations of popular demands. In all these cases, they demand that we look again at how imaginary borders, be they national, cultural, racial, gendered, sexual, are inscribed, scripted on our bodies. There are formations of the people that require bodies to stay put and in place, as in the case of some nationalist manifestations of populism. But there are also formations of the people whose embodied articulations open up relational bonds that might pose a limit to rigid and defensive bounded selves. Rather than relying on paranoid impulses, these manifestations of populism demand bodies to be re-imagined in more radical democratic ways.

Notes

[1] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 139-154.
[2] On the conceptualization of migration as a performative practice and the associated concept of "migratization" as the ascription of migration, see Alyosxa Tudor, "Cross-fadings of Racialisation and Migratisation: The Postcolonial Turn in Western European Gender and Migration Studies," *Gender, Place & Culture* 25, no. 7 (2018): 1057-1072.
[3] Fatima el-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
[4] On the idealized figure of the citizen, see Leticia Sabsay, "The Limits of Democracy: Transgender Sex Work and Citizenship," *Cultural Studies* 25, no. 2 (2011): 213-229; and in relation to the "proper migrant," and a deconstruction of the good and the bad other, Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon, 2004).
[5] See Walter Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 51-90; Hilda Sabato, "On Political Citizenship in Nineteenth Century Latin America," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (2001): 1290-1315; and Jorge Salessi, *Médicos, Maleantes y Maricas: Higiene, Criminología y Homosexualidad en la Construcción de la Nación Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Beatriz Viterbo, 1995).
[6] Engin Isin, *Being Political: Genealogies of Citizenship* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002): 1-5, and 275-283.
[7] Engin Isin, "Theorising Acts of Citizenship," in *Acts of Citizenship*, Engin Isin and Greg Nielsen, eds. (New York: Zed Books, 2008), 15-43.
[8] Isin, "Theorising Acts of Citizenship," 20-28.
[9] Leticia Sabsay, *The Political Imaginary of Sexual Freedom* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 113-116.
[10] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985). Laclau and Butler made explicit their divergent views on the performativity of

social discourse in their own exchanges. As both of them suggested, they are in agreement in their fundamental theoretical-political projects, but also part on an overarching difference that could be succinctly described as whether to interpret performativity in structural or social terms. See Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Reinaldo Laddaga, "The Uses of Equality," *Diacritics* 27, no. 1 (1997): 3-12; and Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Critical Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000): 28-73 and 268-286.

[11] Sabsay, *The Political Imaginary*, 102-104.

[12] On this topic, see for example Nuria Alabao, et. al., *Un Feminismo del 99%* (Madrid: Contextos, 2018).

[13] On this evolvement in Laclau's political ontology, see Jason Glynos and Yannis Stavrakakis, "Encounters of the Real Kind: Sussing Out the Limits of Laclau's Embrace of Lacan," in *Laclau: A Critical Reader*, Simon Critchley and Oliver Marchart, eds. (London: Routledge, 2004), 201-216.

[14] Laclau, *On Populist Reason,* 104-5.

[15] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 108.

[16] Lacan, Jacques, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan XIII: The Object of Psychoanalysis: 1965-1966*, trans. Cormac Gallagher (London: Karnac, 2002), 84-97.

[17] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 115.

[18] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 116.

[19] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 106.

[20] Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations*, 53-78.

[21] I develop my approach to embodiment in Sabsay, *The Political* Imaginary, 180-202 and 223-235.

[22] For a brief critical account of the history of the fences of Ceuta and Melilla, see C.A.S.I.T.A. (Loreto Alonso, Eduardo Galvagni and Diego del Pozo Barriuso) in conversation with Juan Guardiola, "Diffractions at Borders," in *Border Thinking: Dissasembling Histories of Racialized Violence*, ed. Marina Griznik (Vienna: Sternberg Press, 2017), 206-217.

[23] These scenes raise many questions about what is going on at these European borders, from the use of bodily violence and the blurred boundaries between legality and illegality with respect to both national and international laws, to questions of gender and racialization, not to mention the mediatization of these violent encounters and spectatorship. Willingly or unwillingly, when a spectator is exposed to these scenes they are thrown into a situation that turns them into witnesses, opening up a pertinent inquiry into their ethical-political position as a witnessing "third." On this last point, see Stephen Frosh, "Beyond Recognition: The Politics of Encounter," *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society* 20, no. 4 (2015): 379-394.

[24] I refer to the chronotrope of the threshold developed by Mikhail Bakhtin. I have elaborated on this notion in previous work to address the openness and permeability of the embodied subject. The proposal for thinking through this lens is meant to evoke that instance of subjectivity where boundaries between self and other are not easily discernible, one that the language of law and rights cannot address. Sabsay, *The Political Imaginary*, 222-245.

[25] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 67.

[26] Laclau differentiates between popular and democratic demands, and this distinction has been matter of debate within Laclauian scholarship. In "Why Call Some Demands Democratic," Laclau makes an argument that highlights the prevalence of the logic of equivalence in the first case, in contrast to the prevalence of the logic of difference in the latter. To the extent that any form of articulation of demands is based on the combination of these two logics, this scheme could allow us to see that the populist logic is not one of either/or, but rather a matter of degree in a continuum whereby populist logics can emerge in combination with democratic ones. Similarly, the confrontation with existing institutions, central to the articulation of popular demands, should also be understood as a matter of degree. Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 125-128.

[27] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 93-94 and 224-225.

[28] Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000), 1-10, and 37-45.

[29] Paula Diehl, "The Body in Populism," in *Political Populism: A Handbook*, Reinhardt C. Heinisch, Christina Holtz-Bacha and Oscar Mazzoleni, eds. (Baden-Baden [Germany]: Nomos, 2017), 361-372.

[30] I made steps towards this line of inquiry in Sabsay, "Permeable Bodies: Vulnerability, Affective Powers, Hegemony," in *Vulnerability in Resistance*, eds., Butler, Judith, Zeynep Gambetti and Leticia Sabsay (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 278-302.

[31] Laclau follows Joan Copjec here, as he states in *On Populist Reason*, 112-113, and again develops this line of argument in Laclau, Ernesto, "Ideology and Post-Marxism," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11, no.2 (June 2006): 103-114. On the relationship between *Das Ding* and the *object petit a*, see Joan Copjec, *Imagine There's No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 25-39.

[32] On the proximity of Laclau and Mouffe to, and later abandonment of, the Foucualdian approach to discursive practices, see Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 105-122, and 170.

[33] Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations*, 18

[34] Benjamin De Cleen and Yannis Stavrakakis, "Distinctions and Articulations: A Discourse Theoretical Framework for the Study of Populism and Nationalism," *Javnost - The Public* 24, no. 4 (2017): 301-319.

[35] Yannis Stavrakakis, "Three Challenges in Contemporary Populism Research," *Social Europe*, May 22, 2018 accessed February 19, 2019, https://www.socialeurope.eu/three-challenges-in-contemporary-populism-research

[36] Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations*, 122.

[37] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 111.

[38] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 71.

[39] Yannis Stavrakakis has made this point clear when discussing Laclau's conceptualization of hegemony in opposition to the post-hegemony thesis. Stavrakakis, Yannis, "Hegemony or Post-Hegemony? Discourse, Representation and the Revenge(s) of the Real," in *Radical Democracy and Collective Movements Today: The Biopolitics of the Multitude versus the Hegemony of the People*, eds., Alexandros Kioupkiolis and Giorgos Katsambekis, (London: Routledge, 2014), 111-132.

[40] "The List: It's 34,361 and rising: how the List tallies Europe's migrant bodycount," *The Guardian*, June 20, 2018, accessed February 19, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/20/the-list-europe-migrant-bodycount

[41] Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 117-121.

[42] Brown, *Walled States,* 118.

[43] Brown, *Walled States,* 21-25.

[44] Brown, *Walled States,* 123-131.

[45] Brown, *Walled States,* 130.

[46] European Commission, *A European Agenda on Migration* (Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions), May 13, 2015, document retrieved February 19, 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration_en

[47] Brown, *Walled States,* 82.

[48] Brown, *Walled States,* 131.

[49] See Butler, Gambetti and Sabsay, "Introduction," 3-5; and Sabsay. "Permeable Bodies," 284-287, both in *Vulnerability in Resistance*. [page? Has this already been cited in full?] I have completed the reference, the book is cited in full in EN 30

[50] Isin, *Being Political*, 1-5.

[51] Laclau describes the specific case of ethno-populism as one based on an articulation where the specific characteristics of a particular community are claimed as representative of the national whole, basing his analysis on the constitution of national-states. In this sense, it would not be applicable to the situation analyzed here. However, the denial of the multicultural character of European nation-states does indicate the presence of ethnic elements that could lead to such a form of articulation, thus laying bare its unspoken imagined whiteness. Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 187-199.

[52] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 16-20.

[53] See the classic study of Richard Hofstader from 1965, and reprinted relatively recently, Richard Hofstader, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008). For a psychological analysis of paranoia in relation to the populist leader and the masses, see Robert S. Robbins and Jerrold M. Post, "The Paranoid Political Actor," *Biography* 10, no. 1 (1987): 1-19.

[54] On the "democratic deficit" prompted by neoliberalism, see Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015); and particularly in relation to the link between neoliberalism, post-democracy, and populism, Mouffe, Chantal, *For a Left Populism* (London: Verso, 2018), 10-21. On neoliberal securitarian practices, see also Zeynep Gambetti and Marcial Godoy-Anativia, eds., *Rhetorics of Insecurity: Belonging and Violence in the Neoliberal Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2013). And on the recent inflections of neoliberalism in the Americas suggesting a rolling distancing from its liberal premises, see Gisela Catanzaro and María Stegmayer, "Inflexiones del neoliberalismo y sus efectos sobre la subjetividad: imperativos y paradojas de una nueva discursividad pública en la Argentina reciente," *Revista de la Carrera de Sociología* 8, no. 8 (2018): 4-31; and Wendy Brown, "Neoliberalism's Frankenstein: Authoritarian Freedom in Twenty-First Century 'Democracies'," *Critical Times* 1, no. 1 (2018): 60-71, accessed January 22, 2019, https://www.ctjournal.org/index.php/criticaltimes/article/view/12

[55] De Cleen and Stavrakakis, "Articulations and Distinctions," 301-319.

[56] On the notion of concerted action, see Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

[57] Mouffe, *For a Left Populism.* For an abbreviated formulation of her argument, see Chantal Mouffe, "The Populist Moment," *Open Democracy*, 21 November, 2016, accessed 19 February, 2018, https://www.opendemocracy.net/democraciaabierta/chantal-mouffe/populist-moment