

Toward a Salsa Dancing Hegemony:  
Dancing-with Laclau with-Derrida

**ABSTRACT:**

In the present article, the first section recapitulates my “figuration” philosophy of dance, the “dancing-with” interpretive method derived therefrom, and my previous application of figuration to salsa dance as a decolonizing gestural discourse. The second section deepens and modifies this analysis through a reinterpretation of Argentinian philosopher Ernesto Laclau’s concept of hegemony and his dance-resonant interpretations of Derrida. And the final section offers a template for this hegemonic dancing-with in the Birmingham, Alabama Latin dance troupe, *Corazon de Alabama* (Heart of Alabama), as a new strategy for decolonizing and reconstructing social justice.

**KEYWORDS:** Latin dance; post-Marxism; hegemony; decolonization; *Corazon de Alabama*

Before addressing the subject of the present article, a prefatory word about methodology might prove helpful. As a scholarly contribution, this text is situated primarily within a school of philosophy variously known as (European) continental, phenomenological, or hermeneutic, which is dominant in France and Germany but marginalized in the U.S. and Britain. In the latter region, the Anglo-American/analytic school is dominant, which is modeled on the natural sciences and emphasizes precision and clarity. By contrast, the continental tradition is modeled on history, literature, and the arts, and emphasizes meaningfulness and depth. Moreover, and of central relevance for the present article, the latter tradition has been vital in the emergence of decolonizing thought, including in the Global South, and various theorists situated there (including Laclau in Argentina and Derrida in Algeria) have argued that the mainstream Anglo tradition exhibits lingering, unresolved complicities with colonialism.<sup>i</sup>

In the spirit of that marginalized tradition, both the form and the content of the present article attempt to do justice to the dance-like movement one encounters in Laclau’s interpretive engagements with other theorists and also the structure of his central concept of hegemony. More precisely, in Laclau’s partnering with various theorists and schools (including Marxism,

psychoanalysis, deconstruction, and speech act theory), there is a constant shifting and bending of his ideas toward those theorists, which makes sense insofar as his central idea is that the progressive coalition today must unite the literal and figurative flags of our various causes (including those of Black Lives Matter and the LGBT+ pride flag) under one central flag, unconsciously chosen but strategically for the purpose of challenging the current hegemony of global capitalism and replacing it with a new hegemony for social justice.

In short, in trying to choreograph this coalitional social justice hegemony, the concept of hegemony itself is constantly in motion, like a choreographer that is ethically-politically responsible and attuned to the needs of their variously embodied and socially positioned dancers. This phenomenon is reflected in Laclau, for example, in the words of praise offered to him by several of his friends and colleagues, one of whom even uses the rhetoric of dance, noting that “the categories of ‘dislocation’ and ‘empty signifier’ constitute a coherent duet.”<sup>ii</sup> In essence, the concept of “dislocation” in Laclau refers to what happens to a symbol of political identity/struggle when it detaches from its former position, firmly grounded in one subgroup of a political alliance, and shifts into a new position, serving instead as a standard-bearer for the entire coalition. (For example, when “Black Lives Matter” attempts to also stand for queer rights, Indigenous rights, etc.).

Despite this inherent shifting motion within hegemony, however, I do acknowledge the value, for reasons of accessibility, approachability, and rhetorical force, in imposing a greater degree of structure and unified focus for the present investigation. Overall, this focus derives from my overarching project of the last decade, which involves over a dozen journal articles attempting to reconceptualize dance in a way that builds a bridge between philosophers and dance scholars, primarily by showing how (1) dance transgresses the literal/figurative divide

(since philosophers tend to be more interested in dance as figure or metaphor than as literal practice), and (2) valorizing a plurality of dances favored by the marginalized and oppressed (since dance scholars tend to hyperspecialize in one dance genre per analysis, and to prioritize highbrow concert dance such as ballet, modern, and postmodern dance).

As for this newest contribution to that project, among its multiple goals, if I were forced to rank and disentangle them (loosening their dancing embrace), then I would probably say the following. My primary objective, pursued in section one (and at the behest of early reviewers), is an elaboration and modification of the figuration concept of “dance” and “dancing-with” and their application to salsa, which I will now argue can be effectively understood as a tool for constructing political hegemony. My secondary objective, in section two, is a reinterpretation of Laclau’s philosophy, especially his concept of hegemony and his interpretations of Derrida, as a kind of dancing-with that gravitates toward Afro-Latin social dance. And my ultimate objective, in section three, is to further empower a social justice coalition of philosophers, social justice theorists, dance scholars, and activists, by reinterpreting Afro-Latin social dance, specifically a competition and performance troupe from my hometown, *Corazon de Alabama* (Heart of Alabama), as a template for a dancing hegemony of social justice.

### I. Figuration, Dancing-with, and Decolonizing Salsa

For any readers unfamiliar with figuration, dancing-with, and their application to contemporary Afro-Latin dance, the present article developed within a larger project that began with my own philosophy of dance, called “figuration,” in which I constructed, based on eighteen years of experience as a dancer and choreographer, a historically informed philosophy of dance built around four central concepts, or “Moves.”<sup>iii</sup> Building on this new philosophy of dance, I

later published a series of articles exploring dance in relation to the corpus of a canonical philosopher, each subtitled “dancing-with,” after which I abstracted a new social-justice pursuant interpretive method of the same name.<sup>iv</sup> And most recently, I applied figuration to a thematization of the social Latin dance that helped inspire it.<sup>v</sup> More specifically, salsa as a decolonizing and reconstructive gestural discourse in the Deep South city of Birmingham, Alabama, which with its majority Black and Latinx population falls under heading of what Chela Sandoval has termed “U.S. Third World feminism” (since the latter concerns the experience of poor women of color).<sup>vi</sup>

Beginning with figuration, this consists of new interpretations of canonical philosophers, with two major parts: (a) four basic concepts, or “Moves” (capitalized to clarify that it refer to more than just literal dance moves)—namely, “posture,” “gesture,” “grace,” and “resilience”—and (b) seven types, or “families” of dance—namely, “concert,” “folk” (or vernacular), “societal,” “agonistic,” “animal,” “astronomical,” and “discursive.”<sup>vii</sup> Importantly for the present investigation, this cluster transgresses the boundary between literal and figurative dance, including the literal “folk” dance of salsa and figurative “discursive” dance of Laclau’s political philosophy. I will now flesh out the four Moves, keeping in mind that their resonance with existing concepts is deliberate, intended to illustrate that a careful consideration of historical conceptions of dance anticipates (and thereby buttresses) many insights from post-Kantian European and U.S. and Caribbean American philosophy.

First, by “posture,” I mean “the dynamic imitation of stasis” (drawing on Plato, Aristotle, and Nietzsche). The point here is that any living animal, even when not obviously moving, is always covertly moving, at least internally, in the process of maintaining the appearance of rest. Second, by “gesture,” I mean “the carrying-across funding language”

(drawing on George Herbert Mead, Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, and Kristeva). With this strange word-formation I am attempting to suggest the etymological meaning of gesture ('to carry across') insofar as all gesture, including linguistic gesture, is both "funded" (or invested by) and "founded" (or created on the basis of) the movements of bodies. Third, by "grace" I mean "a pleasing figure/ground reversal" (drawing on Avicenna, Friedrich Schiller, and John Dewey). The figure and ground here are the organism and its environment, respectively, because in consummately graceful movement, the environment seems to move seamlessly through the organism. And fourth, by "resilience" I mean "a flourishing recirculation" (drawing on Fanon, Judith Butler, and Deleuze and Guattari). I am attempting here to suggest resilience's etymological meaning of "leaping back" or "jumping again"—in part because this foregrounds its definition as always springing back into shape, always ready for more, persisting through time's deformations.

Having thus constructed the four Moves, I then applied them to what I term the seven "families" of dance. By "families" here, I am attempting to channel Wittgenstein's concept of "family resemblances," which he never, to the best of my knowledge, applied to dance. Wittgenstein uses the phrase "family resemblances" to refer to named phenomena (his preferred example being "games") that appear impossible to define with a complete list of necessary and sufficient conditions, but that can nevertheless be pragmatically understood as constituting a family, in the sense that each of its "family members" possesses what are deemed a sufficient number of traits that are common in that family. Connecting this back to dance, language too for Wittgenstein consists of a family of different games, or 'language games,' which translates the German word *Sprachspiele*, the root of which (*spiele*), according to philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, "originally meant 'dance,' and is still found in many word forms."<sup>viii</sup> Thus, one could

also translate *Sprachspiele*'s "language games" as "language dances." In this sense there is, not one thing called "dance," but rather a family of phenomena which are meaningfully related through a cluster of shared similarities. It is important to note, however, that my own attempt at naming these seven family members of dance represents merely one provisional grouping. I make no claim to comprehensiveness, finality, nor to have found the best possible names for the families I have attempted to identify.

I now turn from figuration to the "dancing-with" method of interpretation that it inspired (both of which, by design, have a strong emphasis on both figurative and literal dance). A given theorist X can be said to "dance-with" with a second theorist Y insofar as X "choreographs" an interpretation of Y which is both (a) true to Y and Y's historical communities, and (b) meaningful and actionable (i.e., facilitating social justice) for X and X's historical communities. In this pursuit, the method of dancing-with involves both (1) a creative "torsion" of Y's thought (particularly in the direction of unconscious, embodied and political factors at work in Y's texts), and (2) a resultant, sympathetic torsion of X's thought toward Y. In this way, X and Y "meet in the middle" like two dancers on the dance floor, to explore the promise of a flourishing partnership. The goal of dancing-with is "poetic social justice," understood as the "poetic justice" of two theorists' mutually empowering each other for maximal social good.

Fleshing out this method further, dancing-with consists of four general guidelines, which I term "strategic positings" (in the sense of "posture" in figuration). The first strategic positing is that social justice is prioritized highly enough by canonical theorists that they "torsion" their expressions of truth. The second positing is that social justice-promotion beyond the theorists' original contexts requires creative interpreters. Thirdly, those theorists would be able to affirm these reinterpretations if they occupied their re-interpreters' embodied positions in today's world.

By this, I mean imagining canonical theorist X as living in same sociohistorical context, and embodied in the same racial, gendered, sexual, etc., ways as theorist Y. Imagine, for example, how Plato's views might change if he were reincarnated in the twentieth century U.S. as a black man (like Du Bois). Finally, the fourth positing is that this engagement requires interpreters to be open to canonical theorists' "un-torsioned" truths.

Rephrasing dancing-with in these concrete terms, imagine two strangers dancing together for the first time. Dancer X approaches Dancer Y, gesturing toward the dance floor, to which dancer Y perhaps responds with a smiling nod of acceptance. Imagine further that Dancer X is a 6'3", 180-lb, white cisman, while Dancer Y is a 5'2", 100-lb, ciswoman of Indian descent. For X to have a satisfying and effective dance with Y, one issue that they must both negotiate is their height difference, especially when X is performing what are called "leads" in the discourse of salsa (movements by the leader which both indicate and initiate other sequences of dance movements for both partners). Additionally, both X and Y must be open to a wide range of possibilities regarding each other's background and circumstances. For example, for all X knows, Y might be attending her first-ever Latin dance; or she might be a professional instructor with fifteen years' experience. For another example, there is always the possibility (especially given the diverse and multicultural makeup of many salsa dance communities), that X and Y are not both fluent in a common language. In fact, the only safe assumptions which X and Y can make are that, given that they have embarked upon a dance together, both will do their best to make that dance a positive experience (if only for the sake of their own individual satisfaction), and each partner will probably make at least some movements which are unfamiliar and challenging to the other.

At this point, a reader might easily misunderstand dancing-with to be a mere restatement of a postmodern strategy sometimes dubbed by critics “creative misinterpretation” (and often associated with philosophers such as Derrida and Foucault). The difference between dancing-with and the average postmodern theory, however, is that dancing-with includes a specific, value-laden comportment. More specifically, dancing-with presupposes an ethical commitment, to a comportment of trust and sympathy with one’s theoretical partners, grounded in the strategic positing by theorist X that theorist Y shares X’s goal of social justice. This is not to say that every dancer is guided by this vision, nor that a partnering social dance such as salsa does not still suffer under the historical weight of oppressive gender, racial, class, disability, etc., dynamics, but merely that the best kind of salsa dancing interactions inspired an ideal which I find productively transferable to the figurative improvisational partner dance of interpretation.

For anyone unfamiliar with that scene, predominantly amateur dancers gather, on an average of once or twice per week, at a bar, restaurant, nightclub, or dance studio, in an event usually lasting around four hours. Speaking as someone who has belonged to many of these social Latin dance communities over a fifteen-year period, the goal of these communities is to make these dances flourish as much as possible, where “flourishing” includes (but is not limited to) large crowds, new people, a friendly atmosphere, and aesthetically satisfying dance encounters. To achieve this flourishing, the average dancer must give each of their partners the benefit of the doubt, and act as if those partners are similarly motivated to achieve this flourishing. The stakes for the dancers, moreover, are quite high, in that all are to some degree vulnerable—physically and mentally—to their partners, any of whom could cause injury, discomfort, and feelings of rejection, unworthiness, etc. That we are not deterred by these high stakes, however, begins to suggest the scope of the benefits involved.



Concluding this first section with a discussion of figuration on the salsa dance that helped inspire it, I have elsewhere surveyed the history of salsa through Juliet McMains' celebrated *Spinning Mambo into Salsa: Caribbean Dance in Global Commerce*, alongside a decolonizing history of salsa's sister-dance, Argentine tango, Argentinian theorist Marta Savigliano's *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*. The former is an historical and (participatory) ethnological study of present-day salsa, with an emphasis on the centrality of race and ethnicity (hereafter, following Linda Martín Alcoff, "ethnorace"), gender and sexuality, and class.<sup>ix</sup> Digging into salsa's musical origins in the Caribbean, McMains notes that salsa music "is a hybrid of many Caribbean musical forms—mambo, *son*, *danzón*, rumba, *bomba*, *plena*—which were themselves syncretisms of Spanish, African and indigenous traditions that shaped Spanish Caribbean culture" (2).<sup>x</sup> Overall, McMains identifies three main eras in salsa's history, namely (1) the mambo dance craze in the 1950s, centered at the Palladium Theater in Midtown Manhattan, (2) what she terms the "kitchen-style salsa" of popular revolt in the 1970s, centered in the streets of the *barrios*, and (3) the global commercial boom stretching from the 1990s to the present, centered in international "salsa congresses" and the worldwide web.

Turning to Savigliano, many of her analyses of Argentina are similarly relevant for Alabama, perhaps in part because of its geographical and historical positioning at the edge of the Caribbean, and because of their shared history of colonization. In Alabama's case, such colonization began with the westward expansion of the penal colony of Georgia and quickly developed into a colonial slave society, until it was occupied during Reconstruction by the justifiable colonizing force of The Freedman's Bureau. It remains the subject of universal ridicule throughout the country, demeaned with labels such as "backwards" and "ignorant," and has been populated, since its founding, with an overlapping succession of ethno-racially

undesirable peoples, from the Creek and Choctaw Native American tribes inhabiting the land at the time of European colonization, to the Africans kidnapped to work enslaved on that land, to today's considerable Latinx population. Foregrounding the latter is the Latinx-created and led dance team *Corazon de Alabama*, to which I will return in my final section.

Coming from her own colonial origins in Argentina, Savigliano's primary concern (similar to McMains' with salsa, but differently positioned geopolitically), is the global colonial market for the "Passion" of the exoticized, colonized "Others," including women of color (Latinas and other) tango dancers.<sup>xi</sup> Crucially, this position of passion, according to Savigliano, is also one of agency. As this is also true of salsa for figuration, what Savigliano writes about the role of the Latin dance of tango as also holds for salsa. To wit, the Latin dance "is not an example, it is the main ingredient in this exercise of decolonization...corporealized in the specificity of sweaty, sensual, fully efforted bodies" (4). Put in the language of the figuration philosophy of dance, my project here is not to use philosophy to illuminate salsa, but rather to partner salsa to Laclau's philosophy, transforming his hegemony in a discursive dancing-with the energetic movements of salsa-dancing body-minds.

To summarize this first section, I have recapitulated the figuration philosophy of dance, the dancing-with method of interpretation derived therefrom, and one prior application of both to the Afro-Latin dance of salsa. The latter application, importantly for the present investigation, reveals salsa to be a potentially decolonizing artform, and a gestural discourse with which to rearticulate demands and templates for social justice, including in the repeatedly colonized space now known as the state of Alabama and its largest city, Birmingham. This contextualization of dance, and its explicit linkages to sociopolitical forces, is crucial for linking figuration, dancing-with, and their application to salsa to the work of the Latin American philosopher Laclau.

## II. Dancing-with Laclau Dancing-with Derrida

In this second section, there is much dancing-with, including Laclau dancing-with Derrida, and the present author dancing-with both. It is unclear which of us, if any, is the choreographer. Perhaps it is a trio, or the beginnings of a small group dance? In support of the latter possibility, I begin with a brief whirl with other Anglophone scholars writing on Laclau. In the spirit of dance's emphasis on situated embodiment, I first foreground Oliver Marchart's helpful insistence that everything for Laclau begins and ends with his early work as a political activist (54).<sup>xii</sup> As noted in an obituary by John Kraniauskas, Laclau was a student leader at the University of Buenos Aires, a member of Argentina's PSIN (the Socialist Party of the National Left), and chief editor for Argentina's socialist journal, *Lucha Obrera* ("Workers' Struggle").<sup>xiii</sup> This magazine was so controversial, in fact, that its offices were once bombed (55). Seeing a continuity from these concrete beginnings to the entirety of Laclau's corpus, Marchart claims that "the very nature of his thought is decisively *strategic*" (55). So too, that of the present investigation, whose end-in-view is always social justice for the colonized, from my hometown of Birmingham and across the world.

Though it is beyond the scope of the present investigation, I want to briefly note three previous applications of Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxist theory to dance. First, Mouffe herself wrote a short criticism of Brazilian choreographer Marcelo Evelyn, in which she coins the term "choreopolitical performances," which in her definition "aim at opening the space for an agonistic encounter," namely between progressives and reactionaries in Brazil.<sup>xiv</sup> Second, Goran Petrović Lotina's chapter in the 2017 anthology, *Performing Antagonism*, centers on Mouffe's concept of agonism, regarding "how the articulatory power of dance is manifested with the context of counter-hegemonic struggle," namely in the "political struggle between complying

forces (those that support hegemonic order) and contesting forces (those that counter dominant hegemony).”<sup>xv</sup> And third, Mariano Gallego criticizes what he sees as the fetishizing of tango as the national dance of Argentina, and instead argues for a new dancing hegemony of cumbia, by far the most popular dance with the Argentinian people today, especially the poor, immigrants, and other disempowered folks.<sup>xvi</sup>

In support of this potential for a progressive new hegemonic dance configuration, precisely the same class differential, regarding the same two dances, also manifests in the U.S. today, for example in Birmingham. Here, too, the cumbia is the least reputable social dance, which is danced primarily in lower-SES, predominantly nonwhite, undocumented immigrant areas, neighborhoods, and especially by the most oppressed Latinx groups, including Mexicans and Mexican Americans. And the tango is most prestigious social dance group in the city, whose official club was founded and continues to be organized by two wealthy physicians, (who organize regular, expensive trips to Argentina advertised as opportunities to dance “authentic” Argentine tango), and whose racial composition is mostly white, with most of its Latinx minority hailing from wealthier Latin American countries. Thus, the potential for an international alliance, between North and South America, and perhaps beyond (given the global popularity of Latin social dance), should not be too quickly discounted. I will return to this example of popular dancing hegemony at length below.

Insofar as Laclau always both performs and discusses his central concept of hegemony—that is, he both (a) attempts to construct a hegemony of post-Marxist theorists, and (b) simultaneously thematizes the construction of hegemony as the proper goal of progressive activists today—one can turn most anywhere in his corpus to understand it. And if one attempts a comprehensive survey of those text, one is rewarded with a more thorough elaboration of

hegemony and several unique formulations thereof, notwithstanding Laclau's insistence that nothing much has changed in his work since *Hegemony and Social Strategy*.<sup>xvii</sup> Thus, while I find something inherently dancing in Laclau's concept of hegemony wherever and however it manifests, I also recognize that it manifests unequally dancingly in different texts, being most pervasive and significant in those centered on interpretations of Derrida.

Laclau's most dance-resonant text is found in Mouffe's 1996 anthology, *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, his contribution being "Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony." Laclau begins there by arguing that deconstruction is "relevant to two dimensions of the political – as opposed to the 'social' – that have acquired an increasing centrality in recent debates."<sup>xviii</sup> The first dimension is "the political as the *instituting* moment of society," and the second dimension is "the incompleteness of all acts of political institution" (47, 48). Elaborating on the first point, Laclau performs his own "deconstruction" of three central political concepts, namely representation, tolerance, and power. As representation is the most prominent of the three in his corpus, I will focus on it exclusively here.

The most arresting aspect of Laclau's deconstruction of representation is his claim that it flows both ways. That is, not only is a political representative responsible to the represented, but also vice versa, which entails a necessary evolution of the identities at both levels, for both parties. Fleshing this out, Laclau claims that "if the represented *need* the relation of representation, it is because their identities are incomplete and have to be *supplemented* by the representative" (49). Though this idea may sound suspect, especially to Global Northern ears, the following clarification from Laclau likely makes it more persuasive:

In many Third World countries, for example, unemployment and social marginalization leads to shattered social identities at the level of civil society and to situations in which

the most difficult thing is how to constitute an *interest*, a *will* to be represented within the political system (49).

Moreover, if one replaces “unemployment” here with “underemployment,” “job insecurity,” and “multiple jobs in the gig economy,” then this phenomenon clearly applies to many in the Global North, too. Laclau proceeds to make exactly that claim, citing “the fragmentation of identities around issue politics” there. In all such cases, he asserts, “the task of the popular leaders consists, quite frequently, of providing the marginalized masses with a *language* out of which it becomes possible for them to reconstitute a political identity and a political will” (49).

It is in the latter claim that I locate the first dance-resonance of “Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony.” To wit, a choreographer is also a leader, one collectively chosen one in the case of democratic dance troupes. And the language by which choreographers reconstitute the identities and wills of their dancers is what dance theorist Judith Hamera, in her ethnological study, *Dancing Communities: Performance, Difference and Connection in the Global City*, calls “technique,” a rich, multimodal language incorporating not only verbal language, but also spatiotemporal positions, postures, gestures, fashion, etc.<sup>xix</sup> Put in terms of Laclau’s first application of deconstruction to the political, a deconstructed society and its self-consciously hegemonic leadership are like a democratic dance troupe, whose leaders are not merely the mouthpieces of the community, but help provide that community with the discourses (qua ways of life) that reshapes it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted for this point to Critchley’s claim that “only those societies that are self-conscious of their political status – their contingency and power operations – are democratic,” and thus that “the distinguishing feature of democratic society is that it is *explicitly hegemonic*. See Simon Critchley, “Is There a Normative Deficit in the Theory of Hegemony?” In *Laclau: A*

It is Laclau's second application of deconstruction to the political, though, that contains the most prominent dance resonances in the essay. "The instant of the decision is a madness, says Kierkegaard," Laclau writes, adding that Derrida too (in his essay, "Force of Law") cites this same quote from Kierkegaard.<sup>xx</sup> The first dance resonance here concerns the fact that Kierkegaard, as I have explored elsewhere, not only spent every night at the theater, but also wrote a bit of dance criticism about one of his favorite performers, and even based his "leap of faith" on the leaps of theatrical dance.<sup>xxi</sup>

This dancing basis for Kierkegaard's leap of faith is buttressed by the fact, noted by Hegel among others, that the same word means both "to leap" and "to dance" in German (*spielen*) and Latin (*saltare*). This point also casts in a new light the "Arab proverb" that Laclau cites repeatedly in his corpus, namely that "nobody can jump outside his own shadow." In one example, Laclau uses this proverb to illustrate his claim that the empty signifier, "in spite of being empty, is still part of a system of signification."<sup>xxii</sup> Substituting "dance" for "jump" here, "nobody can dance outside their shadow," either—which is to say that the choreographer is always a dancer, and must always come from, and return, to their troupe, who in turn must come from and return to the wider community, wherein they perform multiple, conflicting social identities.

Returning to the madness of the political decision, Laclau fleshes it out by taking a "detour through a consideration of the logic of the *lack*," which logic is central to hegemony in his later works. Though conceding that this logic is "not present in the deconstructionist tradition," Laclau insists that they are not "incompatible."<sup>xxiii</sup> By the end of the essay, Laclau

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*Critical Reader*, ed. Simon Critchley & Oliver Marchart, 113-122 (New York: Routledge, 2004),

goes so far as to assert that “deconstruction and hegemony are the two essential dimensions of a single theoretico-political operation” (59). And, perhaps surprisingly, Derrida affirms this claim, heartily endorsing Laclau’s essay in a response thereto in the same anthology.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Elaborating on this logic of the lack, Laclau rehearses his prior definitions of “the subject” as “the distance between the undecidability of the structure and the decision,” and of “dislocation” as “the trace of contingency within the structure.” Put differently, since “no system can be fully protected given the undecidability of its frontiers,” according to Laclau, therefore “the identities within that system will be constitutively dislocated,” and “this dislocation will show their radical contingency.” In this context, he concludes, to deconstruct a structure “is the same as to show its undecidability, the distance between the plurality of arrangements that are possible out of it and the actual arrangement that finally prevailed.”<sup>xxv</sup> First, one deconstructs, then there is a decision, which produces the subject. Putting this point in the terms of dance, wherein the body, identity, movement, and the social are always already deconstructed, or held in undecidable suspense, the choreographer-and-dancers make a decision that retroactively determines who they will have become.

Laclau comes close to this rhetoric himself when he applies this point back to politics, again by way of Kierkegaard. “The moment of the decision, the moment of madness,” Laclau writes, “is this jump from the experience of undecidability to a creative act, a fiat which requires its passage through that experience.” According to this passage, therefore, the political decision = madness = a jump = a Kierkegaardian leap = a leap of dance. And though this might have the ring of false equivalencies, recall that for Laclau politics just is construction of new identities from an assemblage of distinct groups (who share some features but not others, as for example with Civil Right activists and suffragettes, both of whom demanded greater bodily autonomy, but



only one of whom explicitly emphasized race). In Laclau's words, "this act," this "moment of the decision," is "the moment of the subject," and, interpolating my previous point, the moment of dance (54). Boldly put, according to Laclau here, the moment of political institution, the moment of hegemony, is the mad creative act of the choreographer-dancer-troupe. Hegemony is a dance.

Laclau then condenses his conception of the subject into an equation of his own, located in the following claim: "The condition for the emergence of the subject (= the decision) is that it cannot be subsumed under any structural determinism" (55). By logical substitution (of "dancer" for "subject," from my previous point) and a corresponding specification (of "decision" as "dance"), one arrives at the following formula: dancer = the dance. This substitution is paramount for Laclau, remember, because for him the identities that advance progressive politics are new identities reforged in the fires of struggle (not predetermined static identities which independently determine how politics precedes). The rhetoric with which Laclau elaborates his subject-equation is also dance-resonant. The subject/decision (or dancer/dance) "has to be in some way self-determined, because it cannot appeal as its ground to anything different from its own singularity."<sup>xxvi</sup> In dancing terms, each dancer has to self-determine, because the material of their art is nothing other than their own situated body, and there is no transcendental "ground"—only the floor beneath their feet.

Laclau then adds that "we have here something of the nature of a *simulation*," and that to "take a decision is like impersonating God." This means, he clarifies, "to proceed as if one were Him," while fully recognizing that this is an act of "madness" (55). These two qualifiers are even more dance-resonant, in part because one of the oldest meanings of the root of "impersonation" (namely "persona") is a character on stage, which suggests dance via the dancing actors of the foundational ancient Greek theater (as well as contemporary forms such as Bollywood musicals).

The final dance resonance from “Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony” involves Laclau’s invocation of Derrida’s “specter,” in his discussion of psychoanalysis’ “necessary and impossible object.”<sup>xxvii</sup> This object, Laclau insists, must “in some way present in the field of representation but, being an impossible object, its means of representation are going to be constitutively inadequate.” Thus, “whatever assumes that function of representation will,” Laclau asserts, “embody it”—but only “in a spectral way.”<sup>xxviii</sup> This, I interpolate, is exactly what happens in choreography, more precisely via the dancer’s embodiment of the choreographic idea (keeping in mind that the dancer might be the choreographer as well).

Counterintuitively, the dancer’s flesh and blood in this context constitute the specter, while the choreographic idea is that which is embodied. As Laclau writes of hegemony in general, so also in every such choreographic incarnation, “there is no common measure between the incarnating body and the incarnated object” (56). Returning to my example of the solo choreographer-dancer, insofar as every dancer wants to perfectly embody the technique or image of their dance style (to be the best ballerina, say, or the best salsa dancer possible), even their own body will never be able to perfectly realize their choreographic idea of the ideal instantiation of their chosen technique. And even if it could, that choreographer would still not be the last, perfect choreographer within their tradition. Just as there will always be new hegemonies, so there will always be new choreographies, new dances.

The “logic of the spectre (the hauntology)” originally appeared in an earlier text, and the second-most dance resonant in Laclau’s corpus. Entitled “The Time Is Out of Joint,” it appears in *Emancipation(s)* (1996) and is Laclau’s only essay devoted exclusively to Derrida. The dance resonance there (not counting the titular metaphor of being “out of joint,” which foreshadows its discussion of the bodily injuries and deformations so pervasive in dance) is found in Laclau’s

discussion of the two steps that he claims one must take beyond deconstruction to arrive at hegemony. First, “Spectrality presupposes,” Laclau writes, “a weakened form of incarnation”; and second, “a hegemonic relation is one in which a certain body presents itself as the incarnation of a certain spirit.”<sup>xxix</sup>

Thus far, this content is a repetition of what I have already related from Laclau’s later essay. But as “The Time Is Out of Joint” unfolds, one finds dance resonances that are not repeated in his later text, for example in the following passage:

The body is an undecidable point in which universality and particularity get confused, but the very fact that other bodies compete to be the incarnating ones, that they are alternative form of materialization of the same ‘spirit’, suggests a kind of autonomization of the latter (71).

To this dancer’s ears, this above passage recalls the competitions to join a dance troupe, to be featured in a particular dance, and to dance a lead role therein, which in each case involve the autonomy of the choreographer’s ideas as they influence the choice of embodied vehicles. Moreover, the word “spirit,” as suggested by juxtaposition of the phrases “*esprit de corps*” of the “*corps de ballet*,” is a pervasive descriptor in dance, for example in attempts to capture that difficult-to-name “certain something” which one nevertheless immediately recognizes in the appearance of a virtuoso interpreter of a choreographic work (who, by manifesting that ability, tends to rise from the *corps* and be featured as a soloist).

One can also say, of this choreographic idea’s embodiment, what Laclau subsequently says of the hegemonic universal, namely that “its means of representation will be constitutively inadequate, for they can only be particular contents that assume, in certain circumstances, a function of representation of the impossible universality of community” (72). In dancing terms,

recalling my prior point, there will always be another dancer, and there will always be another choreographer, with an idea they cannot cast to their ultimate satisfaction, trying to express something about the communities the dancers represent, for better or worse. There is no last hegemony or dance.

Even more dance-resonant is Laclau's elaboration of the embodiment of the hegemonic universal, claiming that "the fullness of the 'spirit,' as it has no content of its own, can exist only through its parasitic attachment to some particular body; but that body is subverted and deformed in its own particularity as it becomes the embodiment of fullness." This claim also describes what is so disturbing about such dancing films as *Black Swan* and *Dancemaker* (a biopic of celebrated U.S. choreographer Paul Taylor), both of which are grittily-realistic accounts of the vampiric tendencies of choreography, and of the psychophysical deformities suffered by dancers for their art's and masters' sakes.<sup>xxx</sup> Moreover, as in the example of Martha Graham's infamous choreographic tyranny, which led Paul Taylor to leave and found his own new troupe, "the old revolution is present in the new one, not in its particularity," writes Laclau, "but in its universal function of being *a* revolution, as the incarnation of the revolutionary principle as such."<sup>xxxi</sup>

The connections between dance and revolution (both literal and figurative) are numerous, but I will restrict myself to just two examples. Perhaps most famous is the fact that revolution is central to both rebellion (literally) and dance (etymologically), as captured in Emma Goldman's adage that "a revolution without dancing, without 'beautiful radiant things,' [is] not worth fighting for."<sup>xxxii</sup> The reason for this connection is that both dancing and political revolution involve a kind of discipline that activates bodies into turning things around (literally for dance, figuratively for political revolution). That is, both dancing and revolution channel psychophysical energy into activities which might seem chaotically disruptive at the micro-level,

but which reveal themselves, at the macro-level, as strategic deployments of a discipline restructuring existing relationships.

The second example of the dance-revolution connection comes from Laclau's fellow postmodern theorist Michel Foucault, as follows

I draw your attention to Seneca's interesting metaphor, which is well known moreover and refers to the pirouette...philosophy spins the subject around on himself, that is to say it performs the action by which, traditionally and legally, a master freed his slave. There was a ritual gesture in which the master turned his slave around on the spot in order to show, to demonstrate and effectuate his freedom from subjection.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

For Foucault, one could thus say that the enslaved person is danced or pirouetted into freedom (to use a technical term from ballet), in a dancing analogue to Austin's speech act. Or, as Laclau writes, in his similarly dance-resonant conclusion to "The Time Is Out of Joint," "emancipation" is a "performance at which we always arrive late and which forces us to guess, painfully, about its mythical or impossible origins." Nevertheless, he concludes, we must "engage ourselves in this impossible task, which is, among other things, what gives deconstruction its meaning."<sup>xxxiv</sup> In short, the dance of freedom is hard, but we must keep dancing.

To summarize this second section, I have attempted to show that Laclau's philosophy, and especially his concept of hegemony and his interpretations of Derrida. More specifically, given Laclau's centering of this cluster of phenomena—representation, madness, divinity, spirits, revolution, and the Global South—his thought resonates most closely, perhaps, with the populist, ecstatic social dance, infused with Indigenous spirit worship, historically linked to political

revolution in Latin America, namely Afro-Latin dance such as salsa.<sup>2</sup> Thus, I will now conclude with an analysis of one representative dancing troupe, who make their home at the decolonizing Southern edge of the U.S. empire, Birmingham's *Corazon de Alabama*, "Heart of Alabama."

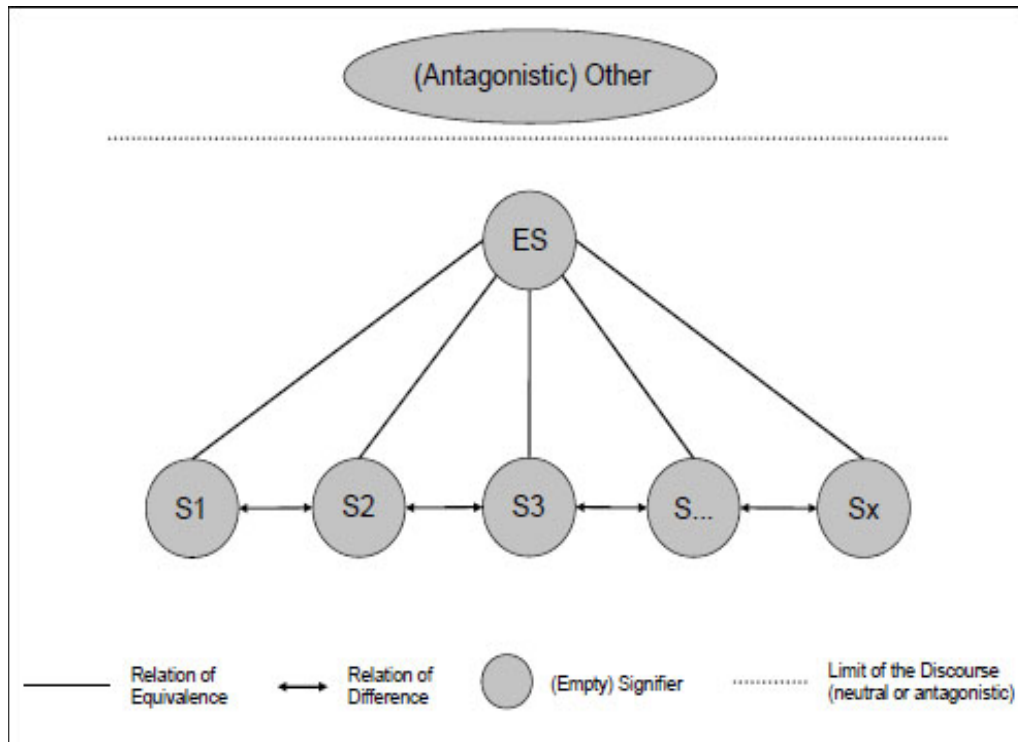
### III. Dancing Hegemony in *Corazon de Alabama*

Before turning directly to the dance troupe, it might be helpful to further clarify my dancing reinterpretation of hegemony, by suggest a creative reimagining of Laclau's diagrams of the latter.<sup>xxxv</sup> To the best of my knowledge, Laclau first uses a version of the above figure in his book *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*.<sup>xxxvi</sup> And though he further refines the diagram in the book *On Populist Reason*, and in a way that is philosophically helpful, it did not stir my imagination in the same way, perhaps because the earlier version intuitively reminded me of a

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<sup>2</sup> For example, Kate Ramsey argues that post-occupation Haiti struck a deal with the global devils, whitewashing the ritual Vodou dances, extracting their explicit sacredness, in order to repackage them as a popular dance that could be marketed to globalized consumers as social Latin dances like salsa. Kate Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law: Vodou and Power in Haiti* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 188. This religious origin is suggested, in part, by the explicit references to Santería (the Cuban equivalent of Haitian Vodou) in the lyrics of the Black "Queen of Salsa," Celia Cruz. See Yvonne Daniel, *Dancing Wisdom: Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Vodou, Cuban Yoruba, and Bahian Candomblé* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 46. For more, see Frances R. Aparicio, "The Blackness of Sugar: Celia Cruz and the Performance of (Trans)Nationalism," *Cultural Studies* 13, no. 2 (1999): 223-236. (Daniel 46).

diagram of a troupe of dancers onstage. For ease of access, I have taken a reconstruction of this diagram by Judith Renner, which comes closer to the original.<sup>xxxvii</sup>



From the imaginative gestalt of this image as a depiction of a group of literal dancers, I will now redescribe it in terms of two different groups of figurative dancers. The first group, in which the dancers consist of Marx-influenced postmodern theorists, the name “Laclau” could be assigned to stand in the position marked by one of the “S” circles at the bottom. In that way, he would be sharing the stage as other theorists such as Derrida. More precisely, each name could be understood as shorthand for a central philosophical concept, such as “hegemony” for Laclau and “deconstruction” for Derrida. Just like a group of literal dancers, who have competed offstage for the honor of being the soloist, the lead dancer standing in front of the rest, so these group of figurative dancers continue to compete for philosophical hegemony. And in Laclau’s case, this

amounts to seeking hegemony for his concept of hegemony, which if successful would be represented on the diagram by “hegemony” being assigned to the position of the empty or floating signifier (“ES”). The second group of figurative dancers consists of contemporary political philosophies and is otherwise structured analogously to the first. The primary difference is that, in this second group, too, the word “Laclau” could be assigned to one of the “S” circles, except that in this case that name would be shorthand, not for “hegemony,” but for “radical democracy.” And the other S circles would be assigned names such as “neo-liberalism,” “libertarianism,” and “communism.”

In both cases, Laclau represents one dancer among many, in a democratic troupe, competing to serve as the choreographer and lead dancer for the dance of contemporary political theory and practice. More generally, in this reimagined diagram, the dancers represent political actors and democratic demands, their costumed bodies represent the universal popular demand, their unique faces represent the particular and democratic demands, the empty signifier represent the choreographer as lead dancer of the troupe, the audience represent the antagonistic Other, the foreground represents the intermittent stage of the political, and the background represents the surrounding community of the sedimented social, to which the dancers return, with their other, non-dancing identities, between revolutionary performances. I am repeating the word “represents” here deliberately, to recall and emphasize Laclau’s deconstructed conception of representation, according to which the representative helps shape the identity and will of the represented. In this case, that means that dance does, and should, reshape our overall political identities and will.

To flesh this out more concretely, imagine this troupe is a group of amateur social Latin dancers, such as my friends who are members of *Corazon de Alabama*, which is a dance troupe



drawn from the ranks of regular attendees as Latin dance socials in the area. The team rehearse on at least a weekly basis, presenting choreographed shows at special performance times in the middle of Latin dance socials as well as at regional competitions called salsa congresses. Their choreography is a combination of partnering and non-partnering moves drawn from improvisational community dancing and formal moves taught by professional choreographers, drawing therein on numerous dance styles and often accentuated with some acrobatic features (such as flips and throws).

Thought in relation to *Corazon de Alabama*, Laclau's hegemony diagram becomes an aerial diagram of their performance at a weekly social dance, or at a local regional competition. This group of people, whose complex demographic identities include white, Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, queer, blue-collar, and undocumented people (and thus most of the spectrum of the rainbow coalition of New Social movements), would represent the dancers in the "S" positions. Their choreographer for a particular piece, who in this hypothetical situation would also be dancing with them as a lead dancer throughout the performance, would represent "ES." And the Other would represent either the rest of the social dancers at a given evening's event, or else the professional judges of a competition.

Having successfully competed with other dancers to be the choreographer of this particular dance artwork (in this proposed, hypothetical choreographic scenario), during practices and rehearsals before a given performance, the current choreographer-dancer now leads them in an attempt to reconstruct the status quo of our social (dance) world, changing the repertoire of moves that we use in our weekly dances, achieving fame and possibly lucrative business opportunities (such as teaching private lessons), and perhaps even altering the overall power dynamics of the various organizations that control Latin social dance in the U.S., including in

terms of representation for disempowered communities in that leadership, such as women, people of color, queer folks, disabled folks, lower-SES people, and undocumented immigrants.

This is not to say, of course, that the team does not (inevitably) reproduce in predominantly unintentional ways the very structures of oppressions (along gendered, racial, class, etc. lines) that most of the members consciously desire to undermine. Moreover, I share with many longtime dancing friends the objection that this newer focus on performance and competition teams problematically saps energy and time from the main community events, and often threatens our more egalitarian spaces with hierarchical and cliquish tendencies. In fact, I am not even recommending or endorsing this phenomenon within the concrete space in which it arose. Rather, I am identifying a pattern in this context which I strikes me as promising for deployment in a larger political space (where there are important dissimilarities, including the kinds of checks and balances that are arguably unique to the most all-encompassing political unit in a society). That is, introducing greater hierarchy and competition into one community space is problematic in part because such hierarchy is arguably defensible (as a necessary evil) where inevitable, which in our world means, above all, at the level of political states and global society. This method is comparable to discovering a new voting system in one's classroom which does not work perfectly there, but which might be resituated in a house of worship or city council.

By way of conclusion, I will now consider four clusters of implications of this dancing conception of hegemony. First, as with all my dancing-with articles, on the surface what is most surprising to many readers is that an analogy between something as seemingly lofty and abstract as political philosophical theory can be connected in an analogy with something as seemingly lowly and concrete as dance. That they can thus be brought into meaningful conversation suggests, then, that such an imagined hierarchy is inaccurate and mutually isolating, and that

such understandings of both philosophy and dance are caricatures that impede their relationship and the powers amplified thereby. Though to have appreciated this in written discourse, the privileged stage of philosophy, is only half the struggle. To complete it, more philosophers (and not just my fellow specialists in the philosophy of dance) must also have more experience with the gestural discourses of dance, coming to appreciate kinesthetically and in a robustly embodied way the philosophical powers of dance. That experience might even convince the philosophers that the hegemonic art form for philosophy should be, not painting or poetry or music (the most popular representatives in philosophy's history), but rather dance.

For the second cluster of implications, to the specific Argentinian philosophy of Laclau and the Caribbean dance of salsa that inspired figuration, I draw on the article that first distilled the method of dancing-with from the articles with that subtitle. For each of the latter articles, I identified one way in which my own philosophy torsions toward my new partner, and one way in which I creatively interpreted their thought in torsion toward mine. With Laclau, I concede the necessity of some arbitrariness and compromise in the process whereby the signifier becomes the empty signifier. And with figuration, I think Laclau would acknowledge that the most impactful factor in determining whether and which signifier achieves hegemony is the creative aesthetic modality of its movements through the community and environment of other signifiers and their contexts. If true, this suggests that when we are trying to build a new hegemony, as progressives are today, we would do well to pay more attention to aesthetic embodied movement in selecting and promoting representatives for our new empty signifier. In fact, and surprisingly, it might even turn out to be the case that it is as dancers/artists (broadly construed) that we most effectively unite for social justice, across our varying other axes of embodiment and social positioning.

Third, shifting from theories to their sociocultural context, this dancing-with Laclau suggests the possibility that something important is shared by (a) his Argentina-inspired political philosophy and (b) figuration as inspired by the Caribbean art of salsa dancing in the former colony of Alabama. Both are thus cultural artifactual representatives of today's Global South (including, in the case of Birmingham, in the sense used by U.S. Third World feminists, given its majority population of colonized people of color). Given my analyses elsewhere of salsa as a decolonizing and reconstructive gestural discourse, figuration's connections to Laclau raise the question as to whether there is (or if not, should be) an explicitly decolonizing dimension to our interpretations and applications of Laclau's philosophy of hegemony. More precisely, perhaps we should be mindful of lingering (potential for) Eurocentrism in his work, which might be challenged in part by recourse to the emphasis on decolonizing self-transformation performed and thematized in Anzaldúa, and elaborated at the communal level by Mariana Ortega in her concept of "becoming-with."<sup>xxxviii</sup> This dimension also recalls Laclau's abovementioned view that hegemonic representation necessitates metamorphoses by both representatives and represented.

Fourth and finally, and here I will use the interrogative form: what would it look like to model our politics on amateur competitive Latin social dance in the Global South? Consider the following features, which could conceivably find an analogue in our political practices: (a) no dancer in the troupe (even its professional choreographer, if they have one) performs in the troupe as a fulltime job, instead having to find time and energy outside that required for their life-sustaining wage work; (b) each dancer needs to be willing and able to partner with any and every other dancer in the troupe, and to be assigned to partners by the choreographer based on their dancing and aesthetic compatibilities (independent of dancers' individual preferences,

conflicts, interest in romantic or sexual pursuits, etc.); (c) every dancer comes from the larger social dance community, and must return thereto when not competing, so they must comport themselves in such a way that does not obstruct that encompassing belonging and world-sharing.

Translated into political terms, (a1) our radical democracy should have no place for fulltime, professional political actors, with everyone instead participating in addition to their everyday work; (b1) political actors should be willing and able to work with other political actors, on a project-by-project basis, as determined by the community (regardless of ideological conflicts, personal differences, etc.); and (c1) every political actor must spend a majority of their time in the larger, encompassing, multicultural community, held accountable thereto, and making sure that the work they do is something that can be understood, appreciated, and taken back up into the larger dance they both do and are. Overall, and to emphasize one vital example, the members of various communities in progressive politics must find a way to share space and create beautiful work together, and in a humble and democratic way that does not demand constant unearned spotlight for one subgroup within the group, nor one group among the community of competing groups.

Yes, Laclau's alternative vision of hegemony does involve conflict and competition among its political dancers. There is also, however, siblinghood within the troupe, the love and affection generated in part from their group solidarity. Though the latter is admittedly reinforced via antagonistic relationships with other troupes, such antagonism fades into the background as the dancers leave the stage, that platform of intermittent political performances, to return to their everyday social lives and identities, having renewed the hard work of decolonizing and reconstructing. In sum, the dancing mobility of the dancer, within and outside the troupe, suggests a version of Laclau's hegemony that is open to all, speaking and moving from different

positions simultaneously, complex and conflicting, and able thereby to become both actor and theorist, the hegemon and the dance.

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Notes

<sup>i</sup> See, for one such example, Gianna Vattimo & Santiago Zabala, *Hermeneutic Communism: From Heidegger to Marx* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

<sup>ii</sup> Yannis Stavrakakis, “Critical Exchange: Ernesto Laclau,” *Contemporary Political Theory* 15, no. 3 (2016): 304-355, 313.

<sup>iii</sup> For excerpted chapters of this dissertation, see Joshua M. Hall, “Core Aspects of Dance: Condillac and Mead on ‘Gesture’,” *Dance Chronicle* 36, no. 3 (2013): 352-371; and “Judith Butler and a Pedagogy of Dancing Resilience,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 54, no. 3 (2020): 1-16.

<sup>iv</sup> See, for two examples, Joshua M. Hall, “Revalorized Black Embodiment: Dancing with Fanon,” *Journal of Black Studies* 43, no. 3 (2012): 274-288; and “An Intimate Trespass of Peregrina Chorines: Dancing with María Lugones and Saidiya Hartman,” *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* (forthcoming).

<sup>v</sup> See Joshua M. Hall, “Afro-Latin Dance as Reconstructive Gestural Discourse: The Figuration Philosophy of Dance on Salsa,” *Research in Dance Education* 22, no. 1 (2020): 73-87.

<sup>vi</sup> For more on the latter, see Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

<sup>vii</sup> See Joshua M. Hall, *Figuration: A New Philosophy of Dance*, PhD dissertation, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, USA, <http://etd.library.vanderbilt.edu/available/etd-07192012-180322/> Accessed 6 October 2021.

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- <sup>viii</sup> See Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weisenheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004), 2.
- <sup>ix</sup> For more on the concept ‘ethnorace,’ created in order to resist the black/white binary and do more justice to Latinx identities, see Lindar Martin Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race Gender and the Self*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- <sup>x</sup> McMains, Juliet. *Spinning Mambo into Salsa: Caribbean Dance in Global Commerce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
- <sup>xi</sup> See Marta Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 2.
- <sup>xii</sup> Oliver Marchart, “Politics and the Ontological Difference: On the Strictly Philosophical in Laclau’s Work,” *Laclau: A Critical Reader*, ed. Simon Critchley and Oliver Marchart (New York: Routledge, 2004), , 54-72, 54.
- <sup>xiii</sup> See John Kraniauskas, John. “Rhetorics of Populism: Ernesto Laclau, 1935–2014.” *Radical Philosophy* 186 (2014): 29-36.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Chantal Mouffe, “Marcelo Evelin, Dance as an Agonistic Encounter.” In *The Time We Share: Reflecting on and through Performing Arts*, ed. Daniel Blanga-Gubbay and Lara Kwakkenbos (New Haven, CT: Mercatorfonds, 2016), 246-248, 248.
- <sup>xv</sup> Goran Petrović Lotina, “The Political Dimension of Dance: Mouffe’s Theory of Agonism and Choreography,” *Performing Antagonism: Theatre, Performance & Radical Democracy*, ed. Tony Fischer and Eve Katsouraki (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 251-272, 252.
- <sup>xvi</sup> See Mariano Gallego, “Identidad y Hegemonía: El Tango y la Cumbia como ‘Constructores’ de la Nación,” *Papeles de CEIC* 2, no. 32 (2017): 1-25.

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<sup>xvii</sup> This is noted by, for example, Norris, as follows: “on Laclau’s own account he has not significantly changed any of the positions he takes there in his more recent work.” Andrew Norris, “Ernesto Laclau and the Logic of ‘The Political,’” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 32 (2006): 111-134, 130n5.

<sup>xviii</sup> See Ernesto Laclau, “Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony,” *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, ed. Chantal Mouffe, 47-68 (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>xix</sup> See Judith Hamera, *Dancing Communities: Performance, Difference and Connection in the Global City* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 2007.

<sup>xx</sup> Laclau, “Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony,” 53. See Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority’,” *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson (New York: Routledge, 1992). For more on Laclau regarding madness and social justice, specifically the Mad Pride movement, see Joshua M. Hall, “Farber’s Reimagined Mad Pride: Strategies for Messianic Utopian Leadership,” *Journal of Medical Humanities* (2022).

<sup>xxi</sup> See Joshua M. Hall, “Religious Lightness in Infinite Vortex: Dancing with Kierkegaard,” *Epoché: A Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23(1): 2018, 125-144.

<sup>xxii</sup> Ernesto Laclau, “Glimpsing the Future,” *Laclau: A Critical Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004), 279-328, 318.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Laclau, “Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony,” 54.

<sup>xxiv</sup> See Jacques Derrida, “Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism,” *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Routledge, 1996), 77-88, 82.

<sup>xxv</sup> Laclau, “Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony,” 54.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Laclau, “Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony,” 55.



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<sup>xxvii</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>xxviii</sup> Laclau, “Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony,” 56.

<sup>xxix</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996), 71.

<sup>xxx</sup> See *Dancemaker*, directed by Matthew Diamond, performances by Andrew Asnes, Rachel Berman Benz, Patrick Corbin, Ross Kramberg, Thomas Patrick, Paul Taylor, and Ted Thomas, Four Oaks Foundation, 1998.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, 72.

<sup>xxxii</sup> For this paraphrase, by Alix Shulmen, see Emma Goldman, *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Shulmen (New York: Humanity, 1996), 15.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981–1982*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2005), 213.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, 82.

<sup>xxxv</sup> This rendering of Laclau’s diagram is found in Judith Renner, “A Discourse Theoretical Approach to Normative Change,” *Discourse, Normative Change and the Quest for Reconciliation in Global Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

<sup>xxxvi</sup> See Ernesto Laclau, “Constructing Universality,” *Contingency, Hegemony, University*, ed. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek (New York: Verso, 2011), 281-307, 303.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Judith, Renner, “A Discourse Theoretical Approach to Normative Change.” In *Discourse, Normative Change and the Quest for Reconciliation in Global Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

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<sup>xxxviii</sup> See, for example, Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2012), and Marianna Ortega, *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self* (New York: SUNY Press, 2016).