

Toward an Inclusive Populism? On the Role of Race and Difference in Laclau's Politics

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Abstract

Does the recent success of Podemos and Syriza herald a new era of inclusive, egalitarian left populism? Because leaders of both parties are former students of Ernesto Laclau and cite his account of populism as guiding their political practice, this essay considers whether his theory supports hope for a new kind of populism. For Laclau, the essence of populism is an “empty signifier” that provides a means by which anyone can identify with the people as a whole. However, the concept of the empty signifier is not as neutral as he assumes. As I show by analyzing the role of race in his theory, some subjects are constituted in a way that prevents their unmediated identification with the people. Consequently, Laclau's view should be read as symptomatic of the problems with populist logic if its adherents are to avoid reproducing its exclusions and practice a more inclusive politics.

Keywords

populism, race, resentment, empty signifier, Ernesto Laclau

When the avowedly populist party Syriza won the Greek elections in January 2015, many believed it to portend a new political era.¹ Combined with the success in regional elections of the Podemos party in Spain, they saw an era of left-wing populism dawning in Europe—one that would reinvigorate grassroots political participation and oppose the technocracy of the European Union without relying on the exclusionary policies and scapegoating rhetoric

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of the radical right.² Not only did both parties campaign against austerity policies and in favor of rebuilding the welfare state, but their platforms explicitly opposed xenophobia and discrimination.³ The shared intellectual heritage of Syriza and Podemos further reinforces the image of a unitary rising political force; leaders of both parties are not only former students of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe but continue to cite Laclau's theorization of populism as guiding their political practice.⁴ This is no cursory engagement; Pablo Iglesias, the Secretary-General of Podemos, recently said, "in *On Populist Reason*, Laclau proposes a very useful tool . . . for a practical interpretation of the autonomy of politics."⁵ Furthermore, Íñigo Errejón, the director of strategy and communication for Podemos, wrote a political science dissertation in which Laclau's conception of populism played "a central theoretical role" while Rena Dourou, the Syriza-affiliated mayor of Athens, studied Laclau's work as part of her MA program in "Ideology and Discourse Analysis" at Essex University, where Laclau taught at the time.⁶ Such direct and acknowledged influence by contemporary theorists is rare in politics and raises important questions.⁷ If these parties are taking Laclau's account of populism as a guide to orient them, then that conception requires careful scrutiny. Does Laclau's theory provide a plausible analysis of populism generally? Insofar as Podemos and Syriza purport to offer a more inclusive, egalitarian populism, is there any reason to think that Laclau's theory can help them to sustain these hopes? Or should Syriza's governing coalition with the rightwing, anti-immigrant Independent Greeks party be regarded as not just a pragmatic move that contradicts its self-presentation but evidence of a deeper theoretical problem?⁸ In this essay, I argue that Laclau's account can help us understand populism in two ways: first, through what his argument shows on its own terms and, second, because of how the account wrongly embeds populist assumptions in its political ontology, through what its limits and exclusions inadvertently reveal. Consequently, rather than using it unmodified as a tool for understanding politics, his view should be read as itself symptomatic of problems with populist logic if we are to avoid reproducing its exclusions and instead practice a more inclusive politics.

Populism is a famously slippery concept that seems to elude efforts to find an empirical or historical essence that can usefully characterize every instance of it.⁹ Laclau's theory makes an important contribution on its own terms because he identifies populism with a certain way of thinking about politics rather than with the purportedly fixed identities of its agents or the history of any specific movement. Laclau's theory instead seeks to identify and understand "political logics rather than social contents."¹⁰ As a result, his "minimal unit of analysis would not be the *group*, as a reference, but the socio-political *demand*" (OPR, 224, emphasis original). This is a key move in understanding the nature and structure of populist appeals. In Laclau's

account, some popular demands become what he calls an “empty signifier” that provides a means by which anyone can identify with the people as a whole. In practice, some people will inevitably be left out of the resultant political identity—notably those who are the target of popular demands—but who gets left out is a contingent byproduct of the particular empty signifier around which people organize. For those who accept Laclau’s analysis, the political success of an egalitarian, inclusive populism thus hinges on employing an empty signifier that can unify a majority of the people against a wealthy minority.

This account illuminates important elements of populism, including its conceptual elusiveness. For example, Laclau’s analysis helps explain why self-consciously populist movements like the American Tea Party can promote shared insurgent identities that appear to be at odds with the prosperous circumstances observers would ascribe to individual participants. However, contrary to the hopes of those who would appropriate Laclau’s account for an inclusive politics, the concept of the empty signifier is not as neutral as his theory presumes; because some subjects are constituted with a racial identity that prevents their unmediated identification with the people as a whole, its exclusions are not merely contingent byproducts. Consequently, when Laclau entrenches features specific to populism in the nature of the political itself, he both naturalizes the racial dimensions of hegemonic identity and locates marginalized identities as outside politics and unrepresentable, thereby reinscribing their marginalization. In doing so, Laclau accurately captures the populist mindset, but by ontologizing certain contingent features and making populism necessary, he directs our attention away from what can be oppressive about populist movements and insulates them from criticism. Reading Laclau’s exclusions against his own conclusions, I argue that the populist identification of equality with homogeneity is the source of the racial resentment that characterizes many populist movements but which Laclau insistently overlooks. When equality and homogeneity are identified, being different is readily interpreted as either a sign of inferiority or a claim to superiority; claims to be different *and* equal look like special pleadings deserving of resentment. Addressing these serious problems will require a different conception of the relationship between equality and difference than the one endorsed by Laclau; if the leadership of Syriza and Podemos seek to develop and sustain a more egalitarian and inclusive form of populism, they must break with his account and rethink the role of the empty signifier.

Laclau’s Ontological Logic

Before arguing that the empty signifier structurally excludes some groups from politics, it is important to look carefully at how and why Laclau argues

that it is the key to understanding not only populism but all politics. Laclau's important contribution is to see populism as exemplifying how political identities are constituted in relation to each other rather than pre-given. This facilitates understanding politics as not merely the conflict of pre-existing interests, but as also shaping those interests, which Syriza and Podemos see as key to their electoral strategy. This production of identity takes place in the context of a system of signification, since self-understanding involves representing the subject to itself. Understanding Laclau's account of populism consequently requires some consideration of his complex account of signification. He offers the most succinct formulation of his view when he writes, "the concept of populism that I am proposing is a strictly *formal* one, for all its defining features are exclusively related to a specific mode of articulation—the prevalence of the equivalential over the differential logic—independently of the actual *contents* that are being articulated . . . 'populism' is an ontological and not an ontic category."¹¹ Here Laclau introduces not only the key concepts of his approach but also their distinctive terrain. For Laclau, the failure of empirical and historical approaches to populism is inevitable because they are looking for the wrong things; by remaining on the level of contingent ontic characteristics, they fail to see how these characteristics arise out of necessary ontological categories. Laclau sees populism as exemplifying the nature of representation itself and, by arguing on this level, he seeks to show that the empty signifier is a central and ineradicable category that illuminates the nature of politics more generally.

Thus, we should reconstruct his approach to populism as beginning with the quite general question, what determines the particular identity of something within a system of signification? As the above quote indicates, Laclau asserts that there are two kinds of logic operative in all signification and thus in politics—the *logic of difference* and the *logic of equivalence*. The identity of anything is constituted by both its equivalence with other equally signifiable things and its difference from all other things that are signifiable. But this means that the identity of everything implicitly rests on some conception of "all things that are signifiable"—and Laclau argues that that idea cannot itself be signified in a stable way. As a result, the identity of any sign or subject can only be provisionally determined if a particular sign comes to stand for the system of signification itself. This is what Laclau calls the empty signifier—and its emergence requires the equivalence of all signifiable things to prevail over their differences. Laclau thus places the idea of a provisional homogenous totality at the heart of signification and draws important political consequences from this.

To see how Laclau reaches this conclusion, it helps to divide his argument about the logics of difference and equivalence in representation into five parts. First, in order for a sign to mean something, it needs to be differentiated from all other signs so that they form a complete system of

signification; knowing how to use the sign for “apple” requires knowing that it is different from the sign “orange” and so on. Second, putting a sign in relation to the totality of other signs requires understanding what is excluded from that system. That is, knowing how to use the sign for “apple” also requires knowing that some things just aren’t signs at all; following Ferdinand de Saussure, Laclau argues that signification only makes sense if we can grasp its limits. But the idea of a limit to signification gives rise to a problem. As he puts it, “if what we are talking about are the limits of a *signifying system*, it is clear that those limits cannot be themselves signified, but have to *show* themselves as the *interruption* or *breakdown* of the process of signification.”¹² In short, anything that can be represented as the limit cannot actually function as the limit; for example, we cannot demonstrate the limits of representation simply by putting the word “apple” on one side of the limit and an actual piece of fruit on the other because this demonstration is itself representable, so I haven’t gone outside the signifying system itself.

Third, and consequently, the limit cannot simply be something different from the system of signification in any ordinary way, since (according to the first premise) what constitutes the system is the way each of its elements is different from the other; it must be different in a way that is excluded from the system. What is needed is something that cannot be made to stand for something else. Laclau says this exclusion gives an antagonistic character to the relation to the outside and calls this “something that the totality expels from itself in order to constitute itself.” Rather remarkably, Laclau then applies this in an unmediated fashion to politics and, as a parenthetical aside, adds, “to give a political example: it is through the demonization of a section of the population that a society reaches a sense of its own cohesion” (OPR, 70). I will return later on to the question of whether Laclau is entitled to draw this conclusion, but for now, Laclau’s “political example” at least provides a vivid illustration of one of his central claims about signification as such.¹³ It is easy to slide into anthropomorphizing here since it is difficult to think about antagonism outside of human motivation, but what Laclau wants to indicate is something like a relation of potential negation. The very idea of something that cannot be signified is an affront to the idea of a *complete and total* system of signification that includes everything. From this antagonistic relation to the outside of the system, Laclau argues that each part of the system—though originally constituted by their differences from each other—are all rendered “equivalent to each other—equivalent in their common rejection of the excluded identity” (OPR, 70). The equivalence of each unit must prevail over their differences in order for the system constitute itself as a totality, even as each unit must also remain distinct in order to have its own identity.

What resolves this tension? Answering this question leads to the fourth step in Laclau’s argument about identity, which characterizes the system to

which these elements belong as “a failed totality, the place of an irretrievable fullness. This totality is an object which is both impossible and necessary. Impossible, because the tension between equivalence and difference is ultimately insurmountable; necessary, because without some kind of closure, however precarious it might be, there would be no signification and no identity” (OPR, 70). In short, the necessity of signification requires the *practice* of closure to resolve the tension between equivalence and difference—despite its impossibility. However, just because resolution is impossible on the conceptual or ontological level, any practical closure is necessarily temporary and provisional.

How can something be accomplished in practice if it is impossible in theory? This is the fifth step of Laclau’s argument—the introduction of the empty signifier, which is the lynchpin of his account of populism. Representing the system of signification as a whole establishes its identity, but the only means of representation are the elements of the system itself. In order for a part to stand for the whole, a particular signifier must somehow lose its content while retaining its function so that “it is only by privileging the dimension of equivalence to the point that its differential nature is almost entirely obliterated—that is emptying it of its differential nature—that the system can signify itself as a totality.”¹⁴ Recall the way I used “apple” as an exemplary sign; when we focus on “apple” as a sign of other signs, using it to represent the possibility of representation, then the content that it signifies (a fruit) recedes and I instead begin to regard it as a sign equivalent to all other signs and different from things that aren’t signs. What I’ve done there is privilege the logic of equivalence over the logic of difference in order to signify the identity of an impossible totality (the system of signification) using a particular sign (apple).

Note that the practical closure of identity requires a homogenizing and polarizing logic that renders everything interior to the system the same and everything exterior to it different—and moreover, different in the same way, so that no part of the system has a particular relation to it. The shape of Laclau’s approach to seemingly self-contradictory political identity thus comes into view. The tension between difference and equivalence in each sign is resolved by having a single sign stand for signification as such and that empty signifier is thus both (emptily) particular and (provisionally) universal. But are political subjects in tension between difference and equivalence in the same way signs are? And is the identity of an individual likewise determinable by an empty signifier?

The Triumph of Equivalence

Before answering these questions about political subjects, there are a number of objections one might raise to Laclau’s argument about identity on the level

of signification. One might start with its initial acceptance of key premises from structuralist accounts of signification. Though these premises are accepted in order to be deconstructed, their subsequent subversion is only consequential if their initial validity retains some force. But this can be rejected; concept use need not rely only on difference from other signs in order to be meaningful, but can be supported by a network of conventions and practices that do not ordinarily need to be represented.¹⁵ Even if we accept his appropriation of Saussure, we can still raise questions about the relationship between Laclau's account of the constitutive exclusion and his solution to the undecidability it introduces into the identity of each element in the system. Laclau favors a decision in favor of closure, however temporary, so that each element gets defined in relation to an empty signifier that aspires to totality. Jacques Derrida arguably pursues a different solution that tends toward a non-antagonist openness to the outside so that identity is never affirmed as closed and independent.¹⁶ Nevertheless, I want to bracket these questions about signification considered on its own. Even if we reject the necessity of the empty signifier to achieve representation as such, it may still possess a kind of explanatory efficacy in political matters. After all, it should be unsurprising if some dynamics change when we are considering not the identity of a sign, but a subject. And, indeed, Laclau adds some key ideas to explain how the logics of difference and equality motivate people to embrace populism. In particular, Laclau draws from Jacques Lacan to argue that individuals are driven by an ontological need to experience an "unachieved fullness" associated with a homogenous community.

As noted above, Laclau constitutively ties identity to representation; my identity as a subject depends on how I represent myself to myself, but this process of representation also has tensions that need to be stabilized—in the first instance by a name. Using Lacan's account of the *objet petit a*, Laclau argues that "the identity and unity of an object result from the very operation of naming. This, however, is possible only if naming is not subordinated either to description or to a preceding designation. In order to perform this role, the signifier has to become, not only contingent, but empty as well" (OPR, 104). In other words, I need a name in order to be individuated, so the name cannot track a pre-established identity or unity; however, in order to play that role, the name cannot have content and so must be empty in the same sense considered above. Constituting my identity as a particular subject thus identifies me with both a totality (the complete distinctness and unity produced by naming) and a lack (produced by the emptiness of the name); the process that gives me an identity can only make me representable to myself on the condition that that representation is empty and so needs to be filled. Laclau associates this need with the desire for the "mythical wholeness of the mother/child dyad" (OPR, 114)—a time in which I can imagine myself whole precisely because I was not fully individuated. So just by being constituted as

a subject, I experience both a lack and a drive to stop being an individual by filling that lack and becoming whole “again.” However, the only way that this drive can operate is by picking out a particular object to be directed toward since wholeness is not instantiated anywhere in experience. Lacan takes the breast as the archetypal object of this drive, but it could be any object that then receives an affect disproportional to its own content; for Laclau, it will be “the people.”

In short, Laclau has offered an ontological argument about why the identity of individuals also stands in need of some resolution, as individual elements of any system of signification did. In addition, he has offered a theory to explain how and why individuals will themselves be driven to resolve their identity. Being moved by a drive to fill a lack means individuals are seeking something that they do not have. Now we can see the significance and grounds of Laclau’s claim that the *demand* is at the center of populism and political identity. Identity is not pre-given but provisionally, repeatedly resolved in politics and the demand is the vehicle of that process, which shapes our relations and how we understand ourselves. A demand begins as the request for something, and when a request is refused, it may then become a distinct claim for a particular thing by an individual or a defined group of individuals; Laclau calls these *democratic demands*, since they are the kind of claims one finds in a direct democracy. While the satisfaction of democratic demands may meet the particular ontic need they are meant to address, we cannot fantasize about them meeting our ontological need for wholeness; they are too particular and too obviously not part of a totality of the kind we are driven to seek. Meeting that ontological need requires linking demands in chains of equivalence. This not only makes the demands less different from each other, but it also begins to imply a group agent that is making all these demands, so Laclau calls them *popular demands*. As the generality of the demands grows, the group identified with begins to approximate the people as a whole.

Because of the logic of equivalence, popular demands can culminate in a hegemonic empty signifier which represents the demands of the entire people and which can plausibly play the role of an identifiable totality that enables us to fantasize a return to wholeness. Laclau writes, “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” (OPR, 116). And, as the logic of equivalence determined the identity of the system of signification because all signs were equally different from what was outside signification, so here does the logic of equivalence determine the identity of the individuals as equal in the face of a constitutive difference with those at whom the demand is directed.¹⁷ While those identities will vary widely depending on which demands emerge as empty signifiers, note that these identities will necessarily include what

Slavoj Žižek calls “an implicit admission of impotence” since demands are generally directed at a powerful entity that has a capacity you lack.¹⁸ There is again a kind of paradox here; as the idea of the unsignifiable both determined the limit of the system of total signification and negated the idea of it as total, the political empty signifier claims to represent the totality of the people and yet it is making a demand directed to somebody or some group whose very existence negates the claim to represent everyone. If we accept Laclau’s claim about the affective drive to wholeness, it is not difficult to imagine the relation between the individuals in a populist movement and the object of their demands as an antagonistic one indeed.

The Exclusions of Laclau’s Logic

At its heart, Laclau’s account of populism concerns this resolution of individual identity through identification with an empty signifier that stands for the demands of the people as a whole and against those who thwart its wholeness. Equivalential logic prevails over different democratic demands to such an extent that individuals move from identifying with particular policy aims to identifying with a particular conception of the people. Syriza and Podemos have explicitly oriented their electoral strategies around this account, but we can also see its utility by considering another recent populist movement: the US Tea Party.¹⁹ Research and polling finds that the Tea Party is majority male and overwhelming white with incomes that are higher than average.²⁰ Such comparative prosperity cuts against the idea of populism as a movement of underdogs and suggests that the movement might be characterized by a bourgeois self-image of achievement and privilege. Instead, as Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol, and John Coggin argue, Tea Party activists “define themselves as workers, in opposition to categories of non-workers they perceive as undeserving of government assistance.”²¹ To many observers, this seems absurd given the socioeconomic composition of the movement.²² Indeed, as Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin note, “in Massachusetts, a third of Tea Party members we surveyed were students, unemployed people, or retirees. . . . Thus, the definition of ‘working’ is an implicit cultural category rather than a straightforward definition.”²³ But this shouldn’t lead us to dismiss the Tea Party’s populism as hypocritical or deluded. Simply dismissing their identification as workers means overlooking the role that politics itself plays in determining our identities, interests, and even desires. Laclau provides a theory that takes this aspect of politics seriously.

However, what determines who counts as a “worker” if not working itself? While an empty signifier tends toward universality, it still retains some content and omits some groups, including the targets of popular demands. What determines whom the Tea Party counts as a non-worker? Empirical

research suggests that a key role is played by racial resentment—a category that is strikingly absent from Laclau’s work. Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin write, “Racial resentment stokes Tea Party fears about generational societal change, and fuels the Tea Party’s strong opposition to President Obama. In this respect, it is telling that immigration worries Tea Party activists almost as much as the avowed flagship issue, deficits and spending.”²⁴ Such racial resentment is common in populist movements, which poses two challenges to Laclau’s theory as explained so far.²⁵ First, his account of the affect that leads subjects to populism centers on an ontological drive to identify with the totality of the community. How can he explain race as an obstacle to such identification? Second, note whom the popular demand is here directed against—not powerful elites but a group that is generally less powerful and wealthy than the populist movement itself. How can Laclau explain this choice of target?

Using Laclau’s categories, we might say that the racial resentment of the Tea Party is an affect associated with what they perceive to be a refusal to accept the equivalential logic of their empty signifier, the American worker. But this simply redescribes the phenomenon in his terminology; it doesn’t explain why racial difference appears to this populist movement in a way that provokes antagonism. For Laclau’s explanation of this, we need to turn to his discussion of the Tea Party’s predecessors in American history—the 1964 and 1968 presidential campaigns of George Wallace. Like the Tea Party, Wallace’s supporters were overwhelming white, older, and, to the surprise of many at the time, were very often members of the middle class rather than the working class.²⁶ Further, like the Tea Party, Wallace’s campaign was motivated by racial resentment, though Laclau goes to some lengths not to describe it that way.²⁷ Laclau draws his account of Wallace’s campaigns from the work of Michael Kazin, whom he quotes as saying Wallace’s supporters were “not overtly racist” (OPR, 137)—this about a politician who came to national prominence in 1963 for proclaiming “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever!” when he was inaugurated as governor of Alabama.²⁸

Yet rather than investigate precisely what role race might play in the constitution and affect of populism—how populist identity might be tied to an affect of racial resentment even as it disavows explicit inequality—Laclau marginalizes the topic.²⁹ Laclau domesticates Wallace’s campaign by describing it as one that tried to “abandon the lunatic fringe” and emphasizes that “he was even the first presidential candidate to present himself as a worker” (OPR, 137). Most remarkably, Laclau explains Wallace’s appeal by asserting that whites “felt under-represented—asphyxiated between an almighty bureaucracy in Washington and the demands of several minorities” (OPR, 137). This claim includes some notable exceptions to Laclau’s official story. This is one of the very few times that Laclau touches on the experience

of being the *target* of a demand. White men are figured as being the object of “the demands of several minorities,” but the movement being described is not, as it was before, the group making the demands; rather it is now the experience of having demands placed upon them that drives individuals into populism. Perhaps consequently, Laclau’s language suggests an abandonment of his precept that the name precedes the object since here, the feeling of asphyxiation and under-representation is figured as driving people’s identification with Wallace rather than vice versa. Officially, naming retrospectively organizes affects into a newly comprehensible totality, but Laclau’s claim here is prospective; he writes, “some kind of radical discourse *had to* emerge which was able to inscribe those demands” (OPR, 137, emphasis mine). That explanation takes white people’s feelings as fixed points that are reified as pre-political affects in a way that stands in no clear relation to Laclau’s official story, which centers on the drive to fullness. In the next section, I argue that Laclau’s willingness to diverge from his own argument when the salience of racial identity becomes undeniable is not idiosyncratic but rooted in the logic of his argument.

The Persistence of Difference

Why does Laclau go to such lengths to marginalize and rationalize the role of racial resentment in populism? Why does he reproduce the perspective of white men and naturalize the exclusion of people of color from populism? I argue that it is because the experience of racialized subjects shows that Laclau’s account of affect and the empty signifier is neither universal nor universalizable. In Laclau’s paradigmatic case, the empty signifier is utterly contingent since the name brings the object into being. This implies the name itself is *neutral* in that the lack it brings is assumed to be universal in character. The particular object of the radical investment of affect is thus completely undetermined; this is, he says, what makes it radical (OPR, 115). This makes it seem that any identity is possible, as when he writes, “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” (OPR, 108, emphasis mine) or “there is *nothing* in the materiality of the particular parts which predetermines one or the other function as a whole” (OPR, 115, emphasis mine). Yet the racial composition of the Tea Party is not contingent nor can everyone identify with its empty signifier in the same way.

Laclau’s assumption of the neutrality of naming and thus of radical contingency leads to an implied voluntarism—that the name one receives is freely assumed or that whether one identifies with the empty signifier is up to the subject. This implicit voluntarism is difficult to maintain when considering cases in which subordinated identities are clearly imposed.³⁰

Consider the experience that W. E. B. Du Bois described as “double-consciousness.” Laclau can certainly pose Du Bois’s famous question, “How does it feel to be a problem?” since every subject experiences themselves as a problem in his account. Those who can unproblematically identify with the hegemonic empty signifier have a ready solution to this problem, though, and while their drive for fullness will never be fulfilled, they can tell themselves a story about how their particular social identification plays that role. But consider the experience Du Bois describes when, as a child in an otherwise white school in Massachusetts, a girl refused to accept a card from him because he was black. Du Bois writes, “it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil.” Du Bois describes the resulting mentality as double-consciousness, “this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro.”³¹ Straightforward identification as simply an American worker is not possible for Du Bois.

What tools does Laclau have in his framework to describe the situation faced by the African Americans and immigrants who are both denied access to the Tea Party’s empty signifier and made the object of its resentment? Laclau uses two concepts to think about difference and populism: the “unevenness of the social,” which pertains to the differences that persist among those identified with the empty signifier, and heterogeneity, which describes those differences that exceed the space of representation organized by the empty signifier. Recall that individuals need to be made equal by the empty signifier; social relations begin as relations of difference and those differences can be tenacious, especially when the discourses to which they belong are institutionalized or habitual. Differences that persist among those who identify with the empty signifier are not fundamentally antagonistic since everything within the space of representation is representable simultaneously. There is thus no necessary conflict between their identity, even when their relations are characterized by difference and disagreement. For Laclau, the explanation for these local conflicts is found outside the purely political realm of representative claim-making and in the unevenness of the social. He writes, “these uneven structural locations, some of which represent points of high concentration of power, are themselves the result of processes in which logics of difference and logics of equivalence overdetermine each other.”³² These conflicts can shape identity since they materially affect what people have and who they think has equivalent interests, but they are not conflicts in which the identity of the participants is necessarily at stake. The idea here is that one can be a man or a woman, a libertarian or an evangelical Christian, but so long as one can still identify as

an American worker, the empty signifier can nevertheless render each member equivalent.

What about those whom the Tea Party defines as non-workers, though—those who are not identified with the empty signifier and so outside “the people” in some sense? Laclau’s concept for explaining this relation refers not to simple difference but social heterogeneity. Relations of difference, he says, “need a space within which that difference is representable, while what I am now calling heterogeneity presupposes the absence of that common space” (OPR, 140). By invoking the idea of a space outside of representation, Laclau creates a structural parallel between social heterogeneity and the constitutive exclusion of the unrepresentable that stands in antagonistic relation to the system of signification. However, there are crucial differences. Laclau explicitly draws his conception of heterogeneity from Lacan’s account of the Real and, rather than assigning heterogeneity a *necessarily* antagonistic relation to representation, he instead says that heterogeneity is the *condition of possibility* of antagonism. What is heterogeneous is simply outside of a common space of representable difference; because it is outside of difference, its existence is in a certain sense inexplicable from within the dominant discursive framework. For that reason, he notes, “If . . . heterogeneity is primordial and irreducible, it will show itself, in the first place, as *excess*” (OPR, 223, emphasis original). At first, there is nothing to say about the heterogeneous; it is simply more than the established means of representation can handle. But this indicates a breakdown. As noted above, in a space of representation that is completely determined by a hegemonic empty signifier, nothing is in a constitutively antagonistic relation since each element is equivalent. However, such a perfectly structured society is impossible since “the field of representation is a broken and murky mirror, constantly interrupted by a heterogeneous ‘Real’ which it cannot symbolically master” (OPR, 141). In other words, we should not map the common space of representation onto a spatial picture of a society and place the heterogeneous outside it; rather, experience that exceeds the dominant space of representation is pervasive, though that does not always mean that the excess undermines the dominant discursive regime.

Laclau notes two different ways that heterogeneity can destabilize a hegemonic regime antagonistically, one that applies to members of the system and another to those excluded by it. First, he argues that a worker’s resistance to the terms of his employment relies on heterogeneity since “antagonism is not inherent in the means of production but it is established between the relations of production and an identity which is external to them” (OPR, 149). This worker is defined in the first instance by the common space of representation in which there are not constitutive antagonisms—Laclau claims that the idea of resistance is not necessarily contained within the identity “seller of labor-power”—and so, in order to

contest the dominant order, a worker needs to have reference to some experience or identity that exceeds the logics of equivalence and difference that constitute the relations of production (e.g., treatment with dignity in accord with a different social logic).³³ That is a case of someone marked as normal coming to occupy an antagonistic identity, while the second case concerns individuals who are marked as excessive from the start. Laclau invokes Marx's concept of the *lumpenproletariat* to stand in for all those "outsiders of the system, the underdogs—those we have called the heterogeneous—who are decisive in the establishment of an antagonistic frontier" (OPR, 150). They can provoke antagonism and destabilize the dominant regime simply by existing since the hegemonic empty signifier has no place for them and so they illustrate its representative insufficiency. In the next section, I consider the adequacy of these concepts for understanding the relations among political, racial, and class identity.

Laclau's Depoliticizing Ontology of Race

Can the unevenness of the social or heterogeneity be used to describe populism's relationship to racial identity? At times, Laclau seems to suggest that race is part of the unevenness of the social; in discussing potential identification, for example, he considers the hypothetical case of unions supporting an anti-racist campaign "because there is a relation of *contiguity* between the two issues in the same neighborhood" (OPR, 109, emphasis original). This seems to suggest that race is one more form of particular difference that can enter into chains of equivalence and potentially become linked to popular demands. At other times, Laclau seems to assume that race should be assimilated directly to heterogeneity, as when he describes blacks as among "those sectors which were heterogeneous vis-à-vis the main space of political representation" during the time of the People's Party, when Du Bois was first writing the pieces that make up *The Souls of Black Folk* (OPR, 204). If Laclau's account of race oscillates between these two registers, it may be because neither is sufficient; assimilating race to the social fails to account for the non-contingent exclusion of raced groups from identifying with the hegemonic empty signifier while marking those groups as heterogeneous tells us nothing about how being marked as unrepresentable or excessive shapes the formation of those subjects.

What Laclau misses about Du Bois's experience is that the name he was given was not neutral. As with Laclau's paradigmatic case, there is a constitutive lack, but it has a different character—one that makes it impossible for a hegemonic empty signifier to stand for fullness, since the subject has been constituted not simply as lacking, but as *split*. The name Du Bois has involuntarily been given—and that Laclau effectively reinscribes—identifies Du Bois not only with an empty totality but also with what Laclau called "a

preceding designation”; a racist society takes Du Bois to be unalterably determined by his blackness and these expectations mark his subjectivity even through his resistance to them.³⁴ Because Laclau fails to account for double-consciousness and assumes every subject can be determined by some empty signifier (even if no one signifier can determine everyone), he does not provide an adequate account of how representations are associated not only with equivalence but also with difference. Laclau’s failure to confront this case leaves it to haunt the margins of his account, as race unavoidably comes up, only to be shunted aside without confronting the challenge it poses for his account.³⁵

This inadequacy becomes most apparent in Laclau’s very brief discussion of what he calls “ethno-populism,” which he treats as an exceptional case. He writes, “All the cases to which I have referred concerned the construction of an *internal* frontier in a *given* society. In the case of ‘ethno-populism’ we have an attempt to establish, rather, the limits of the community” (OPR, 196, emphases original). But Laclau’s attempt to make this an exceptional case fails, since he acknowledges that heterogeneity is shot through society and not geographically locatable; he is able to distance himself from the implications of that acknowledgement by taking as his paradigm case the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, which attempted to translate ascriptions of heterogeneity to geography (i.e., ethnic cleansing). But why is that an exception rather than the natural culmination of the populist logic Laclau traces? Laclau argues that ethno-populism represents a break from populism because in this case “the emptiness of the signifiers constituting the ‘people’ is drastically limited from the very beginning. The signifiers unifying the communitarian space are rigidly attached to precise signifieds” (OPR, 196). But this is a serious misreading of how racist discourse works—one that, in effect, accepts the racist’s description of reality. To accept that racist representations really attach “to precise signifieds” is to say that there is a pre-political fact of the matter about who belongs to an ethnicity which representation then maps onto; functionally, it is like suggesting that the girl who refused Du Bois’s card was responding to a real difference between races rather than constituting racial difference through her action. Again, at a crucial place where Laclau tries to use his concepts to account for race, he breaks with his own ontological method, which holds that the name precedes the object. Discourses of race and ethnicity plainly do not track pre-existing classifications, but produce them.³⁶ Laclau’s argument goes wrong here for the same reason that it is so difficult to account for double-consciousness within his framework. Difference and particularity are always associated in his account; it takes the logic of equivalence to make something a representative totality and so those marked as different from the norm are always defined only as what is excluded from representation and never represented directly. As a result, when Laclau insists that “the political becomes

synonymous with populism” (OPR, 154), some identities become entirely unrepresentable within his politics.

Privileging the logic of equivalence likewise leads Laclau to overlook the racial dimensions of both hegemonic identities and empty signifiers that aspire to hegemony, such as the implicit whiteness of George Wallace’s worker. On Laclau’s view, there is no good reason for a putatively class-based, anti-elite identity like “worker” to be associated with a racial identity; denying its own specificity is intrinsic to the populist aspiration to universality while racial logic overtly aims to assert divisions between specific identities. For him, the only identity constitutively opposed to “worker” should be the parasitic elite defined as its antagonist. As Stuart Hall has observed, Laclau’s break from the economic idea that class identities are pre-politically fixed seems to lead him to embrace the opposite view of “society as a totally open discursive field.”³⁷ But to describe the relationship between race and class as completely contingent leaves one unable to understand societies in which they are invariably articulated together. This conjunction may be historically contingent in the broadest sense, but for us, in Hall’s slogan, “[r]ace is . . . the modality in which class is ‘lived.’”³⁸ Against the background of histories of racial and colonial domination which shaped economic opportunities globally, to identify as a worker is always also to be raced in some way, for example, as a white worker or a black worker. As noted above, many members of the Tea Party are jobless or retired, but nevertheless identify as workers; the implicit whiteness of being a worker makes it possible to suture those claims together just as it also makes it possible to make the category of “immigrant” opposed to the category of “worker” even though immigrants are often employed for very arduous labor.³⁹

Unlike political identities that are produced out of demands for change, whiteness naturalizes and legitimizes existing hegemonic power, which means that populist movements organized around implicitly racialized empty signifiers can reinforce rather than disrupt the status quo. Because he associates representation with equivalence and equality, Laclau lacks a conceptual language for describing the way that racism establishes a hierarchy of domination that, in Hall’s words, “constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belonging and otherness.”⁴⁰ From the perspective of white supremacy, the racial other is neither beyond representation nor a potential social equal, but represented as naturally different and inferior, whether due to biology or culture; such a relation is not imagined as antagonistic so long as the hierarchy is kept in place. Because Laclau lacks a concept for representing difference directly and thus dismisses the relation between race and class as simply contingent, the whiteness of George Wallace’s “worker” is invisible to him and the populist animus directed at the powerless becomes an exceptional case. Applying Hall’s insight into the entwined representation of race and class thus facilitates a

clearer perspective on the affects associated with the populist production of identity.

Resentment, Hierarchy, and the Nature of Equality

The articulation of class and racial identities together has significant consequences for the hope that populism can unify people against economic elites without activating racial divisions. Paul Gilroy puts the point succinctly when he writes, “Nationhood is not an empty receptacle which can be simply and spontaneously filled with alternative concepts according to the dictates of political pragmatism.”⁴¹ One cannot simply develop a populism along class lines and overlook race since racial identity is already built into the populist logic described by Laclau. If Syriza and Podemos want to offer a different kind of populism, they need another account of political affect and identity—one that makes space for subjects to be simultaneously different and equal. Accepting Laclau’s equation of equality and homogeneity produces racial resentment since the insistence on the part of oppressed groups that they be regarded as different *and* equal stands as an affront to populist political logic; it smacks of special pleading. The key is the foundational relation he established between difference and equivalence. By Laclau’s binary account, to become equivalent to something is to be made homogenous with it; equality and difference are thus opposed from the very start. In his discussion of signification, Laclau does identify a point at which difference and equality coexist—when each element of the system is different from each other but equal with respect to the constitutive exclusion—but he says that equivalence must go on to subvert difference in order to make the system a homogenous totality. Laclau translates this assumption into politics when he argues that the identity of individual subjects can only drive toward wholeness by cathecting to an object, identity, or demand that functions as an empty signifier for a social totality.

Laclau is a true exponent of the populist logic of the Tea Party because he echoes and ontologizes their insistence on homogeneity and on seeing difference as always a threat to unity. Difference is resented because of the way equality and homogeneity are unnecessarily yoked; being different thus becomes necessarily either an assertion of superiority or the basis for attributing inferiority. This is importantly compounded by the way that the empty signifier is built out of demands. The structure of populist logic identifies the subject with a position of powerlessness since identity is based on making demands on others who are presumed to have the power to satisfy them.⁴² As a result, it comes as another affront when women and people of color construe white men as powerful actors and make demands of them on that basis. This clashes with the fundamental populist self-understanding as “the people” but *not* “the powerful.” The predictable result is resentment on

the part of white men; from their perspective, these other groups are not playing by the rules and want to be rewarded for it. Racial resentment and immigration anxieties are thus ever-present within populist movements and not for contingent reasons. Within a populist logic, difference can never appear as a potential basis for unity, as when people's contributions to a common project are valued precisely *because* they are different.

Laclau's insistence that the drive to unachievable fullness represents the totality of political affect wrecks havoc on his political analysis. Consider his account of the motivations of the supporters of Jean-Marie Le Pen's French National Front. Laclau considers why former Communists and socialists would vote for an anti-immigrant nationalist, but rather than acknowledge the obvious role of racial resentment, he claims, "the ontological need to express social division was stronger than its ontic attachment to a left-wing discourse" (OPR, 88). This appeal to ontology is unpersuasive because it fails to explain why Le Pen's racist discourse met that need better than did the alternatives; it also comes dangerously close to insulating racism from critique since it suggests a racialized fear of others is a constitutive fact of human subjectivity. Perhaps most importantly, it ignores the fact that this purportedly ontological need does not arise in any unmediated fashion but is itself already political. Laclau argues, "when people are confronted with radical *anomie*, the need for *some kind* of order becomes more important than the actual ontic order that brings it about" (OPR, 88, *emphases original*). But what counts as disorder is different for different people and, moreover, is not a neutral ontological matter but always depends on a normative conception of order.⁴³ To describe an influx of immigrants into France as a case of disordering again implies that racial and ethnic difference is a real particular and not itself a matter of politics and representation. Ascribing white votes to an ontological need doesn't explain their action; it just re-describes them in a way that makes it seem as though it could not have been otherwise. If we accept that difference and unity are opposed and that difference thereby is associated with chaos, it should not surprise us to find that hierarchy is needed for stability. And, indeed, despite Laclau's advocacy of radical democracy, a strangely sympathetic invocation of Hobbes lies at the heart of his logic. He writes, "An assemblage of heterogeneous elements kept equivalentially together only by a name is, however, necessarily a *singularity*. . . . [A]lmost imperceptibly, the equivalential logic leads to singularity, and singularity to identification of the unity of the group with the name of the leader. To some extent, we are in a situation comparable to that of Hobbes's sovereign" (OPR, 100).⁴⁴

If Syriza and Podemos want to avoid an exclusionary and hierarchical conception of the political, they should not adopt Laclau's account of populism but rather see it as symptomatic of a mistaken understanding of the

meaning of difference in politics. We might see Alexis Tsipras, the prime minister of Greece and president of Syriza, implicitly making such a break when, in defending Greece's acceptance of refugees, he attacked the neo-fascist Golden Dawn party for "stoking the most extreme populist instincts" and added "[e]ven populism and trying to win votes must have some limits."⁴⁵ Tsipras here suggests that sustaining Syriza's inclusive politics requires leaving populism behind, but that may not be the only possibility. Even if we accept Laclau's account of subject formation, there is no reason to think that the absent fullness of the mother-child dyad can find its expression only in a longing for the homogeneity of an entire society. If some totality needs to play a role in our identity, it is contingent if the totality we seek is associated with the boundaries of a really existing political society or state. When it comes to political subjects, the logics of difference and equivalence are thus not in constitutive tension since the identity of an individual subject can be provisionally determined without necessary reference to a homogenous totality of all subjects. As a result, individuals can be equal in some respects, but different in other respects without this difference being a threat to their equivalence. This opens up the possibility of exploring, in Stuart Hall's words, how "a politics can be constructed which works with and through difference, which is able to build those forms of solidarity and identification which make common struggle and resistance possible but without suppressing the real heterogeneity of interests and identities."⁴⁶ Laclau's populism offers an appealing account of how political identity is constructed and mobilized, but a more inclusive populism will only be possible when difference and equality can be thought together and "the people" can be represented without rendering them homogenous.

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Notes

1. Marcus Walker, Jason Douglas, and William Horobin, "Europe's Populists Hail Syriza Win in Greek Elections From Left and Right," *Wall Street Journal*, January 27, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/europes-populists-hail-syriza-win-from-left-and-right-1422320824>.
2. Giles Tremlett, "The Podemos Revolution: How a Small Group of Radical Academics Changed European Politics," *The Guardian*, March 31, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/31/podemos-revolution-radical-academics-changed-european-politics>.
3. See Syriza's founding declaration at <http://www.syriza.gr/page/idrytikh-diakhryksh.html> and Podemos's 2015 platform at <http://unpaiscontigo.es/wp-content/plugins/programa/data/programa-es.pdf>. Podemos's December 2015 platform even includes a proposal to outlaw discrimination against people with celiac disease.
4. See Tremlett, "Podemos Revolution"; and Dan Hancox, "Why Ernesto Laclau Is the Intellectual Figurehead for Syriza and Podemos," *Comment Is Free*, February 9, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/09/ernesto-laclau-intellectual-figurehead-syriza-podemos>.
5. "Interview: Spain on Edge," *New Left Review* 93 (May–June 2015): 23–42, at 27.
6. Errejón, "Ernesto Laclau, Theorist of Hegemony," *Verso Blog*, April 30, 2014, <http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/1578-ernesto-laclau-theorist-of-hegemony>; and David Howarth, "The Success of Syriza in Greece Has Been Driven by Marxism, Populism and Yes—Essex University," *The Independent*, January 29, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/the-success-of-syriza-in-greece-has-been-driven-by-marxism-populism-and-yes--essex-university-10010806.html>.
7. Though the republican theorist Philip Pettit played a similar role for the government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero from 2004 to 2011. See José Luis Martí and Philip Pettit, *A Political Philosophy in Public Life: Civic Republicanism in Zapatero's Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).
8. Helena Smith, "Syriza's Tsipras Sworn in After Greek Government Formed with Rightwingers," *The Guardian*, January 26, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/26/syriza-forms-government-rightwing-independent-greeks-party>.
9. For a survey of such efforts, see Francisco Panizza, "Introduction: Populism and the Mirror of Democracy," in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. Francisco Panizza (New York: Verso, 2005), 1–31, at 2–9.
10. *On Populist Reason* (New York: Verso, 2007), 7. Hereafter cited as *OPR*.
11. Laclau, "Populism: What's in a Name?," in Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, 32–49 at 44. Emphases original.
12. Laclau, "Why Do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?," in *Emancipation(s)* (New York: Verso, 1996), 36–46 at 37. Emphases original. Laclau echoes Jacques Derrida's critique of structuralism here. See Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (New York: Routledge, 2001), 351–70.

13. For a persuasive critique of Mouffe's similar appropriation of Derrida's argument for agonistic politics, see Arash Abizadeh, "Does Collective Identity Presuppose an Other? On the Alleged Incoherence of Global Solidarity," *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 1 (February 2005): 45–60.
14. "Why do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?," 39.
15. I am gesturing at Wittgenstein here. And Laclau too gestures briefly at Wittgenstein when he wants to insist on the materiality and practical nature of discourse, as when he writes, "our notion of 'discourse'—which is close to Wittgenstein's 'language games'— . . . is embedded in material practices which can acquire institutional fixity" (OPR, 106; but see also references at OPR, 13, 117, and 168). But if this is the case, then it's not clear why he is entitled to the sense of a total system that he employs in the foundational steps of his ontological argument, since much of Wittgenstein's project is to show that such concepts have no independent force when philosophers take them out of their home in everyday practice and fix them as rigid concepts.
16. See Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).
17. There is a notable slippage here. Because of the analogous structural incompleteness of the name and the empty signifier, Laclau assumes that they function similarly; as discussed below, he likewise assumes that the name of the leader can also satisfy needs generated by the incompleteness of individual identity. But Laclau does not defend this functional fungibility, and teasing them apart may be another way to move his conception of populism in a more inclusive and democratic direction. I thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this possibility.
18. This leads Žižek to reject populism since a properly revolutionary or emancipatory politics would move beyond demands. See "Against the Populist Temptation," *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Spring 2006): 551–74.
19. More recently, Donald Trump's presidential campaign has become the primary vehicle for the Tea Party's populist politics. See S. A. Miller, "Donald Trump Enjoys Support of Tea Party Movement That Refuses to Fully Embrace Him," *Washington Times*, November 22, 2015, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/nov/22/donald-trump-enjoys-support-of-tea-party-movement/> and Wendy Rahn and Eric Oliver, "Trump's voters aren't authoritarians, new research says. So what are they?" *Washington Post*, March 9, 2016, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/09/trumps-voters-arent-authoritarians-new-research-says-so-what-are-they/>.
20. Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol, and John Coggin, "The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism," *Perspectives on Politics* 9, no. 1 (March 2011): 25–43, at 27. See also Kate Zernike and Megan Thee-Brenan "Poll Finds Tea Party Backers Wealthier and More Educated," *The New York Times*, April 14, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/15/us/politics/15poll.html>.
21. Williamson et al., "The Tea Party," 32.
22. E.g., see E. J. Dionne, "Populism of the Privileged," *Washington Post*, April 19, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/18/AR2010041802724.html>.
23. Williamson et al., "The Tea Party," 33.

24. Ibid., 34.
25. Hans-George Betz, "The New Politics of Resentment: Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe," *Comparative Politics* 25, no. 4 (July 1993): 413–27; Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London: Hutchinson Education, 1987), chapter 2.
26. Joseph Lowndes, "From Founding Violence to Political Hegemony: The Conservative Populism of George Wallace," in Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, 144–71, at 158.
27. This is despite relying on Michael Kazin's account of Wallace's campaign, which Kazin describes as "driven by pure resentment." See Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 239.
28. Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 222–23. Laclau distorts Kazin's account, which here refers specifically to two of his own acquaintances and not Wallace's supporters as a whole.
29. Laclau's own experience of populism came in Argentina, which he notably describes as "an ethnically homogenous country" (OPR, 215).
30. Two essays from between *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* and *On Populist Reason* engage this question indirectly, but preserve the implicit voluntarism. That is because they are framed as questions about what political strategy multiculturalists and feminists should pursue; in those essays, the particularity of identity is understood basically as a form of self-assertion and so what is at issue is how one should think about one's relation to universal norms and claims. See "Universalism, Particularism and the Question of Identity" and "Subject of Politics, Politics of Subject" in *Emancipation(s)*, 20–35 and 47–65 respectively.
31. Du Bois quotes from David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams, eds., *The Souls of Black Folk* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 37–38. See also Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), especially chapter 4. For a Lacanian account of a similar experience, see Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), chapter 5.
32. "Empty Signifier," 43. See also Laclau, *New Reflections on The Revolution of Our Time* (New York: Verso, 1990), 32–33, where race and gender are described this way.
33. See also Laclau, *New Reflections*, 5–10.
34. For a similar analysis of Fanon, see Homi Bhabha, "Interrogating Identity: Frantz Fanon and the Postcolonial Prerogative," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 40–66.
35. Gender and the masculinity of populism are likewise omitted. Linda Zerilli seeks to rectify this in "The Universalism Which Is Not One," in *Laclau: A Critical Reader*, ed. Simon Critchley and Oliver Marchart (New York: Routledge, 2004), 88–109.
36. See, e.g., Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
37. See "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall Edited by Lawrence Grossberg," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (New York: Routledge, 1996), 131–50, at 146.

38. Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance," in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. Houston A. Baker, Jr., Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 16–60, at 55. Paul Gilroy adds that gender can similarly be understood as the modality in which race is lived. See *Black Atlantic*, 85.
39. On the political construction of "immigration problems," see Etienne Balibar, "Racism and Crisis," in Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, trans. Chris Turner (New York: Verso, 2011), 217–27.
40. See "New Ethnicities" in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 163–72 at 167.
41. Gilroy, *Ain't No Black*, 55.
42. On the pleasures of this, see Wendy Brown, "Wounded Attachments," in *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 52–76.
43. See Benjamin Ardit, "Populism is Hegemony is Politics? On Ernesto Laclau's *On Populist Reason*" *Constellations* 17, no. 3 (2010): 488–97; Etienne Balibar, "Is There a Neo Racism?," in Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, 17–28.
44. This leads Andrew Arato to call Laclau's view a "justification of dictatorship" in "Political Theology and Populism," *Social Research* 80, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 143–72, at 167.
45. See "Statement of Greek President on Refugee Crisis (9/6/15)," available online at [http:// www.syriza.gr/article/id/62298/Statement-by-the-President-of-SYRIZA-on-the-refugees-.html](http://www.syriza.gr/article/id/62298/Statement-by-the-President-of-SYRIZA-on-the-refugees-.html).
46. Hall, "New Ethnicities," 166.

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