

Hating the people! An anti-populist passion: The case of the Argentinean political alliance 'Let's Change'

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ABSTRACT The aim of this article is to contribute to the understanding of anti-populist formations through exploring the way in which they are structured. The hypothesis that guides this inquiry is that hatred is the affect that structures anti-populism. First, anti-populism is defined by contrasting it to a minimum basic definition of populism. Second, studying – as a case study – the latest and current anti-populist formations in Argentina (the political alliance called *Cambiamos* – Let's Change). In this regard, following the 'evidential paradigm' of Carlo Ginzburg some speech pieces of supporters, leaders and mass-media journalist linked to 'Let's Change' are picked up. Third, drawing upon Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical tools within the general theoretical framework provided by Ernesto Laclau these pieces are analysed to determine how hatred is the affect which structures anti-populism. Finally, conclusions related to the political effects of anti-populism on the political and the democratic practices are delineated.

Populism has been playing a main role in the scene of the political and academic debate during -at least- the last twenty years. Considering that the global context was overwhelmingly dominated by the Washington Consensus, which in turn had narrowed the field of political intervention, it unexpectedly returned to the political arena in Latin America in the late 90s. Initially it was considered an anachronic remain, let us say a typical expression of peripheral countries without any broader significance. However, its fast spread over Latin American governments, and the later appearance of the so-called populist leaders, movements and governments in Europe and the United States, gave the term a prominent place in the international discussions in the media, academic and political debates. Such proliferation of political expressions characterised as populist led, for instance, theoreticians such as Chantal Mouffe (2018) to affirm that we are experiencing a 'populist

moment'. Needless to say, that the worldwide avalanche of books, articles, papers and populism experts is enormous.

But after all these years of incessant growing interest in populism not much has been said of anti-populism. At least we can say that compared to the amount of academic production regarding populism, the reflections about anti-populism are few. The aim of this article is to contribute to the understanding of anti-populism. To do so, we will enquire about how anti-populist formations work. In order to develop our hypothesis about how this kind of political expression is structured, we will draw upon some Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical tools within the general theoretical framework provided by Ernesto Laclau (2005), to study –as a witness case– the last and current anti-populist formation in Argentina (the political alliance called Cambiemos –Let's Change–¹ that put a businessman into the Presidency of Argentina between 2015-2019, and since then it is leading the political opposition).

The argumentative strategy will be the following: first, we will briefly map the debate around populism. This will allow us to delimitate how we understand anti-populism as well as to settle the importance of considering what kind of affect is involved in this type of political formations. Second, after contextualizing the Argentinean case, we will follow the 'evidential paradigm' (Carlo Ginzburg; 2008) by picking some speech pieces of supporters, leaders and mass-media journalist linked to 'Let's Change' to analyse through a set of psychoanalytical tools how hatred is the affect that structures anti-populism. Finally, we will delineate some conclusions regarding the political effects that anti-populism has on political and democratic practices.

Mapping Populism, Delimitating Anti-Populism

There are only two dimensions in the understanding of populism with which almost all of the researchers studying this phenomenon would agree: it encompasses 'the people' (the underdog, the oppressed, the poor, etc.) antagonising with the elites (the oligarchies, the establishment, the rich, etc.), and second, that 'the people' has a leader². Beyond this basic minimal definition what we have is a controversy. Drawing a general outline, we can mention the following summarised list of different and sometimes opposing positions: the early works from the sociology of modernization's approach –considering the Latin American case– turned populism into a deviation from a 'correct' social and political path of liberal and market oriented development, that ought to be avoided or at least corrected (Gino Germani, 1956; Torcuato Di Tella, 1965); and those who studied populism as an anomaly, but this time from a class conflict's perspective. For instance, Emilio De Ípola and Juan Carlos Portantiero (1981) considered –again in reference to Latin America– that populisms were a 'betrayal' of the popular struggles, because they had transformed them into national-statist forces tied to capitalism. Peter Worsley (1969) and Margaret Canovan (1999) worked on the relationship between populism and democracy, introducing the novelty of not seeing populism as a threat to democracy or some kind of deviation. For Worsley the core of the populist relation between the leader and the people referred to a general idea of participation that should not be considered a priori as an authoritarian defect without first taking into account the context of its emergence. Meanwhile Canovan underlined that populism was a constitutive dimension of democracy that emerges in the ineradicable gap that every liberal democratic regime has between its two faces: the

redemptive one and the pragmatic one. Returning to and taking up the Marxist critique, Slavoj Žižek (2009) –as usual through his psychoanalytic perspective– rejected any populist democratic dimension by affirming that it holds a ‘long-term proto-fascist tendency’ inasmuch as it always projects the constitutive antagonism of any social being onto a positive identity whose elimination would bring absent fullness back. Close to Žižek’s position, Éric Fassin (2017) also warned the left not to fall under the ‘fascist seduction’ of populisms because, in any case, it brings about the worst right-wing authoritarian elements: the fantasy of ‘the people-as-one’, which dissolves the minority plurality into an homogeneous popular unity. Far from considering populism as an exclusive right-wing (fascist) alternative, Chantal Mouffe (2018) – based on a partisan nature of politics– understood the present Western European affairs as a return of the political in the guise of a ‘populist moment’, that can turn either to the left or to the right. A successful strategy, in the current context, for the left would be to embrace the populist dimension and to compete with the right-wing over certain signifiers. Mouffe’s wager is to interpellate those who vote for right-wing populisms, since there is no such thing as an irreducible identitarian essentialism, and they could thus be attracted by a call from the left. If right-wing populism could put into question the post-political arrangements that hollowed out social democracy in Europe, then it could be the left-wing populism’s turn to do the same in pursuit of an egalitarian social justice that provides an alternative to neoliberalism. Yannis Stavrakakis (2015, 2017a, 2017b) basically understood populism as a form of politics capable of acquiring different (political) orientations (either to the right or to the left), that is to say, one authoritarian and exclusionary, the other one democratic and inclusionary. Jorge Alemán (2016, 2019) rejected the possibility of a right-wing populism because, from his psychoanalyst point of view, populism is a kind of political formation that, facing the limitless and uninterruptedness of the neoliberal totalizing circuit, attempts to install a circuit-breaker (the people) that would enable the establishment of frontier effects through the articulation of a variety of elements that never cancel the difference. Following Alemán, it has further been argued that what is subsumed under the motus ‘right-wing populism’, in any case, should be better understood as post- or neo-fascism (Paula Biglieri, 2019). Another vector of the debate has been the one asking whether populism has only a rupturing dimension and therefore is the antithesis of institutions. Against that extended opinion, Valeria Coronel and Luciana Cadahia (2018) have explored what kind of institutions populisms create, taking into account that once in power, they attempt to include the irruption of popular forces within their institutional arrangements. We also found a set of researchers who questioned another extended opinion, that is, the idea that populism only has an exclusive national dimension. Benjamin De Cleen et al, have analysed transnational populism as the kind of political formation that attempts to construct a people that transcends national borders and seeks to go beyond the conjunctural necessities and particularities of each separate people-nation, the case example would be DiEM25 (De Cleen et al, 2019). In this path, but slightly different, Luis Blengino (2019) distinguished reactionary populisms—supported by nationalist and xenophobic authoritarianism—from emancipatory populisms, whose distinctive characteristic is their transnational dimension. For emancipatory populisms there is no possibility of successfully emerging from their antagonism with local oligarchies if they don’t embrace the international context as their framework for the struggle.

The list could be much longer, but we would like to mention just one last perspective: the research of those who consider that populism is a constitutive dimension of politics. Most of these

works are related to the Essex School. First, we have to mention Laclau's own work where he develops the idea that populism, far from being a marginal phenomenon, is 'inscribed in the actual working of any communitarian space' (Laclau, 2005: x). And although it has been considered a 'dangerous excess', populism has its logic which in turn is the logic of politics itself. In any case, it is that kind of 'excess' that makes politics itself, because politics for Laclau has to do with dealing with the constitutive antagonism that pervades any communitarian space. If any political practice is a collective practice which always implies –to some extent– antagonising by creating a chain of equivalence of diverse demands in relation to some otherness, populism is its utter way. Populism is the kind of hegemonic articulation that involves the (antagonistic) construction of a large chain of equivalence (the people) that divides the social space into two places of enunciation (the people vs. the elites), and the people and its leader functioning as the way of giving a voice to the demands of all those affected by the experience of a lack (of response) within the established communitarian space. This is the reason why Oliver Marchart (2018) –when reflecting on Laclau's political ontology– asserts that antagonism has an ontological status in his theoretical development, and that 'Populism is the clearest expression of the logic of antagonism, which, in turn, is the defining feature of the political' (2018: 23). In a third text, Biglieri and Gustavo Guille (2017) have argued that politics and populism contaminate each other. Every populist articulation necessarily implies an hegemonic articulation and, consequently, the logics of equivalence and difference that generate frontier effects when enacting antagonism. These two logics –that do not coherently fit together– and their frontier effects are constitutive of politics and populism, from there their mutual contamination. Once the notion of contamination is introduced, the possibility to delimitate conceptual areas (or of any kind of sphere) as absolutely pure and pristine is cancelled. However, they insist –following Laclau– that it is still possible to establish some characteristic for populism: the experience of a lack; the inscription of that lack as a demand; the privilege of the logic of equivalence over the logic of difference bringing about 'the people'; the antagonistic division of the social space into two; and the emergency of a leader.

This last perspective allows us to think that populism is as old as politics itself: it nests in the very being of politics. Therefore, considering the minimum understanding mentioned above, we may say that the antagonism between the people (and its leaders) and the elites is as old as politics too. But if populism is as old as politics, we could say the same about anti-populism. Antoni Domènech (2004) has finely traced back and described that since classical Greece, the elites' despise for any configuration of the people and its leaders – what he called the 'demo-phobia' – when they were antagonising with them in order to promote changes in the status quo. And this is the point we wanted to reach: what is anti-populism all about? The answer can be very simple if we stick to the minimum understanding of populism: anti-populism would be the negation of the people and its leader and their antagonism with the elites. But we could go a step further and affirm that if we accept that populism is a constitutive dimension of politics, we could also say it the other way round that anti-populism is the negation of a constitutive dimension of politics: in particular, the mise-en-scène of the way in which the 'underdog, the dispossessed, the oppressed' deal with the antagonism that transverse any social order. Even more, anti-populism represents the logic of anti-politics, that is to say, the fantasy that it is possible to achieve the aim of a communitarian space without any antagonism. It is a way of constructing the social that attempts to eliminate any equivalential play by matching up the organisation of social particularities within the limits of the community. It is

obvious that there is no room for the tandem the people/leader, they constitute an always unacceptable excess that, in the case of emergence, must be domesticated. Having said this, it seems that there is still something else implicated in the rejection of the people and its leaders that can be grasped in any anti-populist expressions. Our suspicion is that it has to do with the affect involved in that kind of political formation. After all, if we are considering anti-populism in an obvious relation to populism, we cannot underestimate what a series of scholars have already studied about populist formations: the importance of affects. (Laclau, 2005; Glynos and Stavrakakis, 2004; Biglieri and Gloria Perelló, 2019). Then, the questions that arise are: what is the place of affect in anti-populist formations? What kind of affect is involved in anti-populism? We will develop a few provisional answers to these questions using psychoanalytical tools to analyse a set of ‘clues’ –following the method of the ‘evidential paradigm’ of Carlo Ginzburg (2008)– gathered from the speeches of supporters, media and political leaders of the last and current Argentinean case of anti-populist formation, that is, the political alliance ‘Let’s Change’.

Hatred: an Anti-Populist Passion

‘Let’s Change’ is the name of the (neoliberal/conservative) political alliance that took a businessman to the Presidency; Mauricio Macri governed the country between 2015-2019. It is an alliance of political parties that enjoys the support of the dominant mass-media group (Clarín), the financial establishment, the biggest corporations gathered in the Argentinean Business Association and the Agrobusiness corporations. It came to power after 12 years of populist (Peronist) governments led by Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007) and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2015), and it was beaten in the presidential elections in October 2015, after Macri’s failed attempt to be re-elected. Since December 10th 2019 when the new President Alberto Fernández and (now) Vice-President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner came into office in Argentina, ‘Let’s Change’ has become the main political opponent of the new populist articulation.

We have picked this Argentinean case because it can be considered a paradigmatic country of populist –and anti-populist– politics. At least, since the emergence of the ‘first Peronism’ (the period between 1943-1955 which had the leading roles of Juan Domingo Perón and his partner Eva Duarte de Perón), Argentinean politics have been shaped in populist terms: its social space is characterised by the social division between Peronist vs. anti-Peronist, which is synonymous of populist vs. anti-populist³. Therefore, anti-populism has a long history which is marked by different failed attempts to domesticate or straightly eradicate populism. After the coup d’état that overthrew Perón in 1955, these attempts included political practices such as banning –during eighteen years– Peronism from the public life for eighteen years (forbidding the Peronist party to participate in any election, to organise political rallies, participate in workers or students unions etc, as well as any kind of public expression – it was even prohibited to mention the word Perón or any other word related to Peronism in public; chasing, incarcerating and even killing Peronist leaders or grass-root political activists; military conditioned ‘democratic governments’ sprung up from elections where Peronism had been excluded; coups d’état that gave birth to different civil-military dictatorships, including the last one between 1976 and 1983 the outcome of which was a genocide (30.000 disappeared, most of them Peronist political activists), etc⁴.

However, the period that started in 1983 which was characterised by fully free-elected governments, seemed to have finally put an end to populism⁵. This led scholars such as Silvia Schwarzböck (2015) to affirm that the period that started after the military left power should better be described as ‘post-dictatorship’ rather than a ‘transition to democracy’ or a ‘return to democracy’ (as the canon of Argentinean political scientists have always affirmed). This is because this author considers that the last civil-military dictatorship did not end when the military abandoned government, but it continued in form of a post-dictatorship⁶. Meaning that the political project of the last civil-military dictatorship turned out to be victorious as the popular field capitulated and a right-wing way of life was established: the clearest example of this was the oxymoron of the non-populist Peronist’s governments of Carlos Menem (1989-1999) embracing a neoliberal agenda. Following Schwarzböck, we assert that the genocide had its effective (temporal) effects: the defeat of populism. The absence of the people was the post-dictatorship’s mark, but this absence was interrupted when a new populist formation arose, led by the Peronists Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner⁷. Sigmund Freud, in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), had already warned us:

Since we overcame the error of supposing that the forgetting we are familiar with signified a destruction of the memory-trace — that is, its annihilation — we have been inclined to take the opposite view, that in mental life nothing which has once been formed can perish — that everything is somehow preserved and that in suitable circumstances (when, for instance, regression goes back far enough) it can once more be brought to light. (Freud, 1930: 4)

The Kirchners put an end to the post-dictatorship political arrangements pervading the democratic regime by reactivating the populist (memory) traces that historically characterised politics in Argentina. What followed was a reactivation of anti-populism too. And in the context of (the Kirchnerista) reactivation of populism, the novelty of ‘Let’s Change’ was that for the very first time a neoliberal and conservative alliance achieved presidency through a free election (that is to say, without appealing to a coup d’état or manipulating the election through political proscription). However, we can inscribe ‘Let’s Change’ as an anti-populist alliance because it kept its basic historically defining traces: the rejection of the people and its leaders, which in turn also leads us to find hatred as the (historically) involved affect. Let us analyse the following pieces of speech:

‘They [the Kirchneristas] made an average employee believe that their average salary was enough to buy mobile phones, plasma-screen TVs, cars, motorbikes, and even to take trips abroad. That was an illusion. That was not normal.’ (Javier González Fraga, Macri’s appointed president of the Bank of the Nation in ‘Let’s Change’ government, to La Nación newspaper, six months after taking power, in May 2016)⁸.

‘The most difficult thing for us is to go through the moment when you leave populism and leave aside the fantasy of an enormous lie, telling people that they would be able to live this way forever because we had the resources to do that.’ (Gabriela Michetti, Vice President of Macri’s government to *Ámbito Financiero* newspaper, May 2016)⁹.

‘The populist party has to be paid.’ (Laura Alonso head of Macri’s Anti-Corruption Agency during ‘Let’s Change’ government in May 2018)¹⁰.

‘Now, you [addressing Cristina Fernández de Kirchner], without anything, are just a poor old sick lady, fighting against oblivion, desperately trying to scratch a place in history, which will hopefully judge you as the piece of shit you were’. (The person who ended his late tv show with these words in October 16th 2016 was Jorge Lanata, a leading tv and radio journalist and showman detractor of the two periods of the Peronista Cristina Fernández de Kirchner’s government (2007-2015), and an enthusiast advocate of ‘Let’s Change’, Macri’s government¹¹.

‘Populism drove the country into “laziness” and led the people to believe that striving was something bad, (...) There is an unbearable tax pressure because of an excessive public expenditure. We have to check if we are being productive enough, if everybody is doing their best in their jobs... and that clearly isn’t happening because populism led us toward laziness, making you believe that things fall from heaven and that striving was something bad’, affirmed President Macri on May 18, 2017¹².

‘Now, Peronism is the political party of those who do not work’, asserted Macri as leader of the political opposition, on October 19, 2020¹³.

‘What is coming, it is the worst crap ever in the world. She must be killed!’ [referring to Cristina Fernández de Kirchner elected as Vice-President], said a voice to the tv camera on a Summer afternoon in December 7th 2019 at the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires city, the geographic heart of Argentina’s most important political rallies. Supporters of ‘Let’s Change’ organised a farewell party for President Macri, days before he had to leave the government after being defeated by the populist (Peronist) presidential formula Alberto Fernández-Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in October 2019¹⁴.

‘People only understand when they are beaten up. There is no other way. And as a big portion of this country is Peronist, the peroncho [Peronist in a contemptuous way] only understands with bullets, sticks, kicks in the ass. That is the only way, because they are black. Then... I don’t know, I don’t know. The only thing I hope is that this pandemic makes the ethnic cleaning faster, which we all deserve. If it were up to me, I would leave it [the Covid-19] in La Matanza [a very large and traditional Peronist voting district] with 5 or 6 million black people, less Peronists, less social programmes... Maybe, in that way this country can get started’). These words were pronounced by Julio Carballo, a Capilla del Monte town councilor, in the Province of Córdoba, elected as a representative of ‘Let’s Change’, who had to resign after his opinion turned into a public scandal¹⁵.

It could be said that these pieces are just marginal extracts of the speech and that they do not have much political relevance or representativeness considering the broader discursive that constitutes the political alliance ‘Let’s Change’. However, from the evidential paradigm we can take them as clues to inquire what is the affect that commands the articulation of anti-populism. According to Ginzburg (2008), the evidential paradigm has been the method of knowledge since the ancient hunting times. It is the practice of recollection and interpretation of clues and traces that, once interconnected, enables the construction of meaning on the basis of an absent object (prey). It is precisely the identification of these marginal pieces –clues– what allows the exercise of sensibility, intelligence and imagination. Ginzburg illustrated this practice with the eastern fable Zadig, which tells the story of three brothers who reconstruct the figure of the camel –an animal they had never seen– through the recollections of clues. Ginzburg also identifies the practice of the evidential paradigm in the Freudian psychoanalysis, in Arthur Conan Doyle’s detective novels with his famous

character Sherlock Holmes and in the art criticism of Giovanni Morelli. The evidential paradigm assumes that the truth of knowledge is always fragmentary and dull, and that it takes marginal and indirect paths, unlike the positivist paradigm which defends the idea of a full and transparent access to the knowledge of truth because it assumes that things are what they are and each object coincides with itself. In any case, the evidential paradigm implies a conjectural knowledge, let us put it in Lacanian psychoanalysis: truth (of knowledge) never fully belongs to a signifier, that is to say, truth can only be half-said (Lacan: 1972, 478).

According to the evidential paradigm, we consider all these discursive pieces as clues that allow us to begin constructing the thread of the anti-populist affect. The first thing we found looking up in the dictionary was that these expressions matched the following definitions of hate. The Third College Edition of Webster's *New World Dictionary of American English* says: [hate] 'implies a feeling of great dislike or aversion, and, with persons as the object, connotes the bearing of malice' (Simon and Schuster, Inc. 1991). The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines hate as: 'A feeling of intense dislike or aversion towards a person or thing; hatred, loathing, animosity. Opposed to love' (Oxford University Press, 2000).

Unlike love –that has a general positive social connotation and it is an affection that usually does not need an excuse– haters need to justify their hate, no matter how delirious that justification may be. Haters have to hate for a reason, because it's only when they can circulate their hatred within a signifying chain that it may become a political cause. Hate by itself does not have legitimate room within the institutionalized spaces for political exchange in democracy, a regime that expects the rule of argumentative reasons. This was the limit that the town counsellor Carballo found when he had to resign to his public position after unbridling his hatred against the traditional Argentinean populist formation, Peronism. But, when justified, we may find it, in well accepted pieces such as the one of former President Macri, flowing in the stream of a political speech. However, these pieces are part of the same anti-populist discourse that shows how hatred has a structuring function in this type of political formations. Anti-populism is structured around the hatred towards the people and its leaders.

In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud (1921) stated that hatred can be the knotting point of a group. That is the reason why Laclau, a thorough reader of Freud, asserted that there is also the possibility that hatred becomes the affect that commands the social bonds in the formation of groups. In *On Populist Reason*, he quotes from Freud: 'hatred against a particular person or institution might operate in just the same unifying way, and might call up the same kind of emotional ties as positive attachment' (2005: 60). What anti-populists have in common is their despise for those elements –the people and its leaders– that function as the unifying 'us'. Carballo brutally expressed his hatred for the people, who is 'black', needs to be 'beaten', 'bulleted', 'beaten up with sticks' or 'kicked in the ass'. In any case, they deserve a punishment because they are responsible for the evil of the country: because of them, it never 'gets started'. Carballo also identifies the people with Peronism, that is, the Argentinean populist (political) expression of the people, that has traditionally antagonised with the elites, and that in its latest version (the Kirchnerista one) has also resisted the neoliberal domestication. Macri, as Carballo, blamed Peronism for being the country's evil – but in a gentle way, sounding audible for a democratic regime. For Macri populism is guilty for driving people into laziness, it 'drove the country into

laziness'; people do not work enough, 'if we were productive enough', and it also misled the people to believe that 'things fall from heaven'. And all these statements are associated with 'an excessive public expenditure' and 'an unbearable tax pressure'. In any case, Peronism is 'the political party of those who do not work'.

Jacques Lacan followed the same path, but went a bit farther than Freud. Lacan said: 'Something equivalent may no doubt be grasped in the communion established between two persons in their hatred of a common object: except that the meeting is possible only over a single object, defined by those traits in the individual each of the two resists' (1966: 35). For Lacan hatred has a 'unifying effect', because there can be a communion or meeting regarding a shared hated object. But he adds something crucial: that hatred targets the traits that define the hated object. In other words, what is hated are the traits that define the other's being. This is the dimension that allows us to say that the anti-populist task is to suppress the people and its leaders along with any populist articulation within the social space. Argentina has a long anti-populist tradition in which –as mentioned– we can analyse its long history of coups d'état. They have all had exactly the same aim: to get rid of the people and its leaders. The novelty of the latest anti-populist formations is that they do not need the military perpetrating a genocide any more, as in Argentina's last hard civil and military coup in 1976, because its task can now be completed in different ways, that is by legitimate elected governments or 'soft coups'. This was the case of Macri's government which not only repressed social protests, but also put pressure to disarticulate social and political organisations, as well as persecuted social and political leaders (particularly all those linked with the Kirchnerista version of Peronism) by supporting suspicious judicial procedures. Widening the scope of examples to a general Latin American overview we can include as a current anti-populist case the government of President Lenin Moreno in Ecuador, persecuting any social and political organization or leader close to former populist President Rafael Correa. We can further tag as anti-populist the 'soft coup' against the indigenous populist President Evo Morales in Bolivia during the presidential elections in 2019, and the 'institutional coup' perpetrated against Brazilian populist President Dilma Rousseff in 2016. This 'soft coup' later was accompanied by the imprisonment of the populist leader and former President of Brazil Lula Da Silva through a corrupt judicial procedure and the murder of Marielle Franco, a feminist and lesbian social leader, city councilor in Rio de Janeiro, all of these amplified by the election of an overtly racist, homophobic and misogynistic anti-populist leader Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency of Brazil¹⁶.

Lacan even went a step further, because this hatred, the one of suppressing the people and its leaders, goes beyond a 'mirrored' rivalry that holds the fantasy that if the antagonised other is definitively subjugated, what will come is the fullness of my own being. (By the way, fantasy was clearly explained by Carballo when he said 'with 5 or 6 million black people less, there'll be less Peronists, less social programmes... Maybe, in that way this country can get started'). The old elite's fantasy is that by eliminating Peronism they could heal whatever they consider to be the broken history of Argentina). Lacan says that nesting there is an even more radical hatred that it is not eased by the submission of the other and it is linked to jouissance/enjoyment.

In thinking hatred Lacan also predicts the rise of racism (as a paradigmatic segregating violence) in terms of an 'economy of enjoyment'¹⁷. For Lacan 'racism is segregation that marks as different subjects and groups that have elaborated, constructed and organised a mode of jouissance

incommensurable with the *jouissance* of another group' (Azeen Khan, 2018: 159). Following the path opened by Lacan, Jacques-Alain Miller added that the kind of hatred that we know through racism, and any kind of segregation, is not mere aggressiveness directed to fellow beings, but a hatred that is directed towards 'what grounds the Other's alterity (...) their *jouissance* (...) it is hatred of the particular way, of the Other's own way, of experiencing *jouissance*' (2010: 53). From a Lacanian psychoanalytical perspective, we are –as subjects inhabiting language, that is, speaking beings – affected by castration (lack). Therefore there is a structural impossibility to have a full access to enjoyment, and that lack of enjoyment is experienced as being stolen by the Other. Hatred to the Other's enjoyment hides two dimensions: on the one hand, the perception that the Other has stolen my own enjoyment and, on the other, that the Other has access to full enjoyment (at my own expense). In this sense, the most intimate of one's own subject is outside (somebody has stolen it from me). Lacan used a neologism to designate this paradoxical position: *extimité* (*extimacy*).

This Other partially incarnated in those others, the leaders, the political activists, any member of the people have stolen that which bars me from accessing full enjoyment. From the anti-populist position, populists are like this, they grab all the amount of enjoyment for themselves, taking or accessing what is not meant for them, getting into places where they do not belong, becoming visible, demanding rights, participation, and even attempting to rule. They leave non-populists with nothing. This is the unbearable excess of populism, the unbearable populist enjoyment. Never better expressed than by Macri's appointed president of the Bank of the Nation: [the populist government of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner] 'they made an average employee believe that their average salary was enough to buy mobile phones, plasma-screen TVs, cars, motorbikes, and to travel abroad. That was an illusion. That was not normal'; and also Macri's Vice-President: 'The most difficult thing for us is to get through the moment when you leave populism and leave the fantasy of an enormous lie, telling people that they would be able to live this way forever because we had the resources for that.' All in all, 'the populist fiesta has to be paid', as Laura Alonso the head of Macri's Anti-Corruption Agency said. Populists have to be domesticated and their leaders punished, even humiliated. Because an additional wicked mark is that populist leaders, from the anti-populist position, are an imposture; they 'make the people believe', they tell lies, they create fantasies. In any case, they are accountable for the populist excess.

Jacques-Alain Miller, deepening Lacan's formula, allows us to grasp what this need to humiliate is about when he affirms that what is at the root of racism (or any segregating hatred) is 'hatred to one's own *jouissance*. There is no other – if the Other is in my interior in a position of *extimacy*, it is also hatred of myself' (Miller: 2010, 55). The point of radical alterity within myself is what I hate. The other in a position of 'extimacy' is what becomes uncanny for the subject, an inassimilable excess. Then the other has to be denigrated. This is why it is very common to find anti-populist discourses full of insults or scornful expressions towards populists, especially their leaders, rather than demands. The journalist and showman Lanata calling Cristina Fernández de Kirchner 'piece of shit' on tv, or a voice demanding 'to kill her' are good examples, insults and severe punishment including death if the populist leader keeps on winning the elections. However, the Argentinean case has shown that there is no insulting chain capable of satisfying the anti-populist denigrating hatred, it is incessant. The anti-populist rallies during the governments of Cristina

Fernández de Kirchner showed an astonishing variety of humiliating insults against the former president¹⁸.

Last but not least, let us return to Freud to conclude. In his text *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (1915) Freud states that loving admits three opposites: 'loving - hating', 'loving- being loved' and, 'loving and hating taken together are the opposite of the condition of unconcern or indifference' (1915: 128). And he adds that 'loving / hating- indifference has a logic priority over the pair loving - hating. That is to say, for Freud indifference is the precursor of hate. Indifference as a previous logic moment to hating, is the moment in which the ego is invested by all the drives and finds satisfaction in itself. 'This situation is that of loving oneself, which we regard as the characteristic feature of narcissism' (1915: 128), when the satisfaction of the drive does not require any external object, therefore towards the outside there is only indifference. Loving / hating - indifference is a primigenious opposition, loving oneself facing the outside world. But if that indifference is perturbed, what comes next is hatred. That is the reason why for Freud before started hating, we should have been unconcerned. Indifference towards tort is at the root of the formation of the people. At least that is what we can interpret from Laclau's (2005) suggestion, that solidarity among different unfulfilled demands (source of the people) comes from the 'experience of a lack', that is, some kind of tort that remains unattended. Once a populist formation is articulated, it inevitably perturbs indifference inasmuch as it upsets the social order (it questions the way in which places, roles and hierarchies are distributed), and provokes the unbearable excess that we mentioned a few lines above. After all, before immersing themselves in their hatred to the people and its leaders, anti-populists should better be aware of the consequences of their indifference towards pain.

Final Words

Returning to the questions that guided this essay we can say that affect is not an epiphenomenon of the anti-populist formations. But it has a structuring function. Taking as clues a few speech pieces from the current anti-populist formation in Argentina -'Let's Change'- we have analysed with psychoanalytical tools how hatred is the affect involved in the structuring function and that its main task is to eliminate the people and its leader, and consequently, any kind of populism in the social space. Probably the most disturbing aspect of anti-populism was finding out that the disavowal of the people and its leaders can emerge either in dictatorial or (post-dictatorial) democratic contexts. The question is: to what extent does anti-populism stand democratic institutionality? This question needs to be explored deeply in further inquiries. However, we can still mention a few features.

Anti-populism encompasses an authoritarian threat. We have mentioned that the task of 'getting rid' of the people does not necessarily take the form of a genocide (as it did in the last Argentinean dictatorship). It can also take diverse forms of hindering or direct repression of the political practices that may bring about the emergence of the people. This is the reason why we also affirm that anti-populism is basically an anti-political practice. If we accept that politics is a collective practice (as it always involves antagonising by creating a chain of equivalence of diverse unmatched demands), attempts to prevent solidarity among unfulfilled demands in the social space or to disarticulate any kind of figure of the people is an anti-political gesture. Even more, it is the

disavowal of politics as such as it rejects the way in which the dispossessed antagonise to get a place in the communitarian space that ignores them.

The paradox of the anti-populist authoritarian threat is that anti-populists usually introduce themselves as the defenders of republican institutionality or democracy. This has been, for instance, the nodal speech justifying the different coups d'état in Argentina and the current anti-populist formation in Argentina. But hatred blocks the possibility of any critical argumentation within the public space. It also cancels the possibility of any political negotiation. There is nothing that the populist leaders may say or do, neither a gesture, nor a political proposal or a measure, not even one political decision favourable to a sector identified with anti-populist positions, that is not being rejected in advance by anti-populist haters. In this way many times anti-populist hatred in the name of democracy puts into question one of the fundamental practices of a democratic way of life: the debate that makes opposing political positions drift.

What follows is that the undermining of democratic debates is the judicialisation of politics. Anti-populists –when they are the political opposition– can hardly accept the decisions taken by the populist parliamentary majority. The judicialisation of politics functions as a means to block the exercise of popular sovereignty. A common practice is to take to court those laws passed by the populist parliamentary majorities in order to block their enforcement (usually what is questioned is their constitutionality), or to directly contest the institutional procedures (claiming that there has been fraud in the case of elections or plebiscite, etc.). The risk of this anti-populist practice is that it pushes the Judicial Power to overtake its own institutional place by standing over the other two political branches (the executive power and the legislative power). In this way, anti-populists put into question the famous republican formula of ‘check and balance’ and the very functioning of democratic institutions.

Last but not least, anti-populists take for granted that populists (in particular populist leaders) are corrupt. This is almost a *matra* of faith. It is a deeply rooted conception of corruption. (We have mentioned how the perception of the stealing of enjoyment works). From the anti-populist perspective populism is constitutively corrupt. This is because populist leaders either steal or they just tell lies. Populist leaders corrupt the people (the evidence is that they ‘make the people believe’ in things that they should not) because they enable access to places that are not ‘proper’ for them. For an anti-populist, populist politics is not a matter of extension of rights or social justice, but the fact that the people gain access to places not pertained to them. The consequence is that once in power, anti-populists pay very little attention to the guarantees of due judicial process. They ‘know’ in advance that they have to put in jail any of the heads of a populist movement. That is the reason why we find as a common anti-populist practice the fact that they treat the political (populist) opponents in judicial and not in political terms. This way of judicialization of politics is a common practice in anti-populist governments, not only in the experience of ‘Let’s Change’ in Argentina, but also in the whole of Latin America: it consists in putting pressure and manipulating the Judicial branch in order to incarcerate populist leaders mainly to prevent them from participating in free elections. The judicial procedures against leaders such as Lula Da Silva, Evo Morales, Rafael Correa and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner are paradigmatic examples. In this way, anti-populism also harms the basic democratic principle that any citizen has the right to elect and be elected, needless to say, the harm to basic individual guarantees.

NOTES

1. *Cambiamos*, in a marketing-oriented strategy, changed its name to *Juntos por el Cambio* (*Together we'll make a change*) for the presidential elections in 2015. However, as for the purpose of our text this does not make any difference, so in order not to confuse the reader, we will remain to use the name 'Let's Change' throughout the article.
2. For instance, in a recently published report Giorgos Katsambekis and Yannis Stravakakis provided a "minimal" understanding of populism based on an emerging consensus that sees it as a kind of politics that champions 'the people' and their sovereignty, while antagonising unresponsive political 'elites' or a multifaceted 'establishment.": Giorgos Katsambekis and Yannis Stravakakis, "Populism and the Pandemic: A Collaborative Report," *Populismus*, (2020): 4.
3. At this point, it is important to keep in mind that the dichotomical division of the social space always leaves remainders. That is to say, the division of the social space into two places of enunciation never completely overlaps the social space as such, but there are always heterogeneous elements that escape this logic. This could not be otherwise, unless we were to accept that the antagonism between populism and anti-populism can reach the fullness of the social field.
4. The period that opened with the *coup d'état* in 1955 and ended in 1973 is known as the 'Peronist Resistance'. During those years, different (banned) Peronist organizations (workers unions, students unions, religious groups –mostly catholic priests related to left-wing social movements–, cultural and neighbor's organised groups, guerrillas, etc.) rejected the different civil-military dictatorships and civil governments. The demand of the 'Peronist Resistance' was for completely free elections by putting an end to the proscription of Peronism and the return of Perón from his long exile. In 1973, Perón was able to return from exile and won with 61,85 % of the ballots in 'free' elections. In a context of violent struggles between the left and right-wing Peronist factions, Perón died in 1974 and in 1976 started the last and darkest civil-military dictatorship ever.
5. Since 1983 (which is known as the year of 'the return to democracy'), Argentina has experienced an uninterrupted period of democratic institutionalidad.
6. Jorge Alemán (2016) has affirmed that the end of a dictatorship never matches its chronological calendar, there are always lingering elements. Therefore, the task of a researcher is to investigate those traces that give authoritarianism historical continuity even in the so-called democratic periods.
7. We could say the 'suitable circumstances' for the reactivation of populist (memory) traces were the socio-economic and political crisis left after years of neoliberal policies. The presidencies of Néstor and Cristina Kirchner returned to the populist (Peronist) tradition of inclusion by expanding the local market and the scope of rights, creating institutions to reinforce equality as the fundamental aspect of social justice.
8. "González Fraga: 'Le hicieron creer al empleado medio que podía comprarse plasmas y viajar al exterior'," *La Nación*, May 26th, 2016, <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/1903034-gonzalez-fraga-le-hicieron-creer-al-empleado-medio-que-podia-comprarse-plasmas-y-viajar-al-exterior>, (accessed, 06/20/2020).
9. "Les hicieron creer que podían vivir de esa forma eternamente," *Ámbito Financiero*, May 30th 2016, <http://www.ambito.com/841192-les-hicieron-creer-que-podian-vivir-de-esa-forma-eternamente>, (accessed, 06/20/2020).
10. "Laura Alonso: La fiesta populista se termina pagando," *Clarín*, 3rd May, 2018, https://www.clarin.com/politica/laura-alonso-fiesta-populista-termina-pagando_o_SkhY9bOTf.html, (accessed, 06/20.2020).

11. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvEakh-O-xI>, (accessed, 02/24/2020).
12. “Macri: El populismo llevó a la dejadez y a creer que esforzarse era malo,” *La Nueva*, May 18th, 2017, <https://www.lanueva.com/nota/2017-5-18-8-8-o-macri-el-populismo-llevo-a-la-dejadez-y-a-creer-que-esforzarse-era-malo>, (accessed, 06/16/2020).
13. “El peronismo es ahora el partido de los que no trabajan,” *Página 12*, 10/18/2020, <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/299846-el-peronismo-es-ahora-el-partido-de-los-que-no-trabajan>, (accessed, 10/19/2020).
14. “Aberrante mensaje de una mujer en el acto de despedida por Macri,” *El Destape*, 12/07/2019, <https://www.eldestapeweb.com/nota/una-mujer-pidio-en-tn-matar-a-cristina-kirchner-el-acto-de-despedida-por-macri-201912717450>, (accessed, 6/16/2020).
15. “Renunció a la UCR el dirigente que pidió una ‘limpieza étnica’ contra los ‘negros y peronistas’ en La Matanza,” *Perfil*, <https://www.perfil.com/noticias/politica/renuncio-dirigente-ucr-julio-carballo-que-pidio-liempieza-etnica-contra-negros-peronistas-la-matanza.phtml>, (accessed: 04/10/2020).
16. We are aware that considering Bolsonaro as an anti-populist can be shocking to many who have targeted him as a populist leader, specifically a right wing-populist or a far right-populist leader. However, we have developed the thesis that what is usually classified as right wing-populism or far right-populism should be directly considered as neo- or post-fascism. The summarised argument is that the constitutive structure of any populist expression —if we follow Laclau (2005)—is transversed by an egalitarian logic, as it privileges the logic of equivalence (that allows the formation of the people) over the logic of difference. Having this in mind, we have argued that the difference between what has been mostly called ‘right-wing populism’ and (left-wing) populism is the way in which they treat equality, that is to say, how they deal with the privilege of the logic of equivalence and organise differences. Meanwhile, (left-wing) populism organises differences through articulation —meaning that the formation of the people does not suppress the constitutive heterogeneity of those differences. Right-wing populism attempts to impose equality through a uniform canon that eliminates differences (the fantasy of achieving the people-as-one, meaning that it aims to reach a homogeneous field free of antagonisms). Then, if left-wing populism and the so-called right-wing populism address different political phenomena, why should we call them the same? Particularly, having an available term such as fascism. Furthermore, one of the main fascist characteristics is to confuse the idea of equality of the people with the identitarian closure through the homogenization of differences. (Paula Biglieri. *Populismo: ¿izquierdas y derechas?* *Recerca, Revista de Pensament i Anàlisi, Universitat Jaume I de Castellón*, 25 (2019): 2-20. <https://doi.org/10.6035/Recerca.2020.25.1.2>
17. *Jouissance* is a type of painful arousal poised on the verge of the traumatic –an enjoyment that stretches the subject beyond the bounds of pleasurable. Always composite, never an unalloyed pleasure, *jouissance* always veers off into excess, be it by virtue of the thrills of transgression or simply by means of its indulgence in what is potentially traumatic, linked to pain. Such “negative pleasure” is the result of gratification pursued beyond the pleasure principle’. (Hook, “Racism”, 276).
18. The same can be said regarding the anti-populist rallies against Lula Da Silva and Dilma Rousseff. In the case of the anti-populist ‘soft coup’ in Bolivia against Evo Morales, the populist leaders experienced extreme situations such as the Mayoress of Vinto, Patricia Arce, whose hair demonstrators cut off, painted her entire body in red, spitted on, urinated on, and forced her to walk in bare foot all around town. “Brutal agresión en Bolivia: manifestantes secuestran a una alcaldesa y la humillan públicamente,” *La Nación*, November 7th, 2019, <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/el-mundo/brutal-agresion-bolivia-manifestantes-secuestran-alcaldesa-humillan-nid2304332>, (accessed, 06/20/2020)

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