

From Populist Media to Media Populism

Fidotta, Neves & Serpe

Introduction

In June 2018, *The Guardian* launched an investigative series on ‘The New Populism’. A collaboration between in-house journalists, pundits, a pan-European and global academic research network, and the British data analytics company YouGov, the series was presented by its architect, former Washington correspondent and current head of investigation, Paul Lewis, as ‘an exploratory project helping us (and you, our readers) better understand populism, even if that meant there were no definitive conclusions’ (2018). Countering popular associations of expertise with elitism and the establishment, the series featured authoritative contributions by academics and policy-makers, such as in-depth analyses and op-eds, and it invited readers to consider how populism has become ‘the concept that defines our age’ (Mudde, 2018; P.C. Baker, 2019). Alongside traditional formats, ‘The New Populism’ also offered more playfully pedagogical engagements, such as quizzes testing readers’ knowledge on the topic (‘How Populist Were These Politicians on the Stump?’) and measuring both their personal tendencies (‘How Populist Are You?’) and their populist-hunting skills (‘How to Spot a Populist?’). In spite of the series’ remarkable scope, its informative contributions also throw into relief four conceptual problems widely associated with the ‘populist zeitgeist’ (Mudde, 2004).

First, ‘The New Populism’ draws our attention to a *geopolitical* fallacy that conflates the diverse geographic and political currents commonly used to frame populism(s). While the series includes dispatches from locations as varied as Rio de Janeiro, Istanbul, New Hampshire, Venice, Johannesburg, Delhi, Zurich, Glasgow, and Hartlepool, its fascination stems from the perceived intrusion of populist leaders and parties into North America and Western Europe. Indeed, two specific events are widely understood to bring the new populism to ‘worldwide’ attention: the election of Donald Trump in the United States and the Leave victory in the Brexit Referendum (Lewis, 2018). In this context, what demands our attention is the fact that the unruly politics of the fringes—from Latin America, Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, etc.—have spread to the center. This explanation, however, is out of sync with historical

understandings of populism rooted in the Global South, where populist support for the people, workers, and sovereignty directly responds to Euro-American hegemony and is itself a form of statecraft (e.g. ‘Peronism wants an Argentina socially “fair”, economically “free” and politically “sovereign”’). It also fails to engage the intensification of inequality under neoliberal globalization (Germani 1978; Bello, 2002; Harvey, 2003). By localizing populism as a Southern phenomenon, this familiar understanding not only reproduces a colonial view of the world system, but it also erases the real causes of social unrest and the populist complaint. In this sense, we speak of a geopolitical fallacy that violently misunderstands the power vectors shaping the inequities between the North and South, even as these spheres become increasingly fractal (Comaroff, 2011).

Second, the Guardian’s series, like much media commentary on populism, engenders a *social* dilemma by blurring the boundaries between inside and outside, us and them, self and society. Like the flattening of scales above, such a conflation understands populism to be viral and disease-like, at once expressing a communicable set of attitudes and ideas that threaten the normal functioning of society, and reducing such a threat to the agency of charismatic leaders’ and their address to a homogenous mass. Of particular importance here is the way that the positing of an abstract relationship between leaders and ‘the people’ obscures more complex political operations, including the actual decline of wages, pensions and social mobility, increasing financialization and economic inequality, tensions between popular democracy and liberalism as well as resurgent nationalisms tethered to blood and soil ethnicities and perceived attacks on whiteness, Europeanness, Hinduness, Hanness, etc. While everyday citizens are potential carriers of the populist virus, people like Marine Le Pen (party leader), Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (president) or Steve Bannon (chief strategist) command the spread of populism at national and international scales. Here lies a troubling paradox. If populism is largely conceived as an embodied form of communication, then how are material and imaginary people—especially the marginal subjects ignored by this top-down view—helping to shape and spread it? In a model in which the passive, undifferentiated, and fictive people are nothing but an end receiver—at once anti-elite and yet so easily duped by elites—the question is hardly pertinent.

Third, an *epistemological* tension consolidates claims about populism's essential indeterminacy, by now a common refrain, while attempting to grapple with an apparently endless list of its manifestations. Lewis himself admits that 'The New Populism' was born out of an exasperation over how the term is overused or misapplied (2018). 'The P-Word. Er, What Is a Populist Again?' is in this respect an illustrative title. And yet, according to The Guardian populists are: the right-wing and nativist movements gaining hold in the North Atlantic; the left-leaning but personalist regimes of the South American Pink Tide or the Democratic Socialists; specific individuals such as Matteo Salvini, Narendra Modi, Evo Morales; or an obscure Slovakian neo-Nazi presidential candidate who made Roma persecution his signature issue; and, without any apparent contradiction, the undefined mob that supports these personalities and parties. No doubt, these diverse examples and imaginaries give the term its relevance and are what has led so many scholars (including ourselves!) and news outlets to stop and reflect on it. The problem with this parade of examples, and the 'I know it when I see it' mentality, however, is that we end up with a vast archive of populist irruptions but a relatively weak sense of their significance in relation to the pressing social and political problems of our time.

Finally, a (*social*) *media* paradox underpins the series' engagement with digital platforms. This includes the common idea that social media fosters division and intensifies populist rhetoric and sentiment (Giuffrida *et al.*, 2018; Mason, 2018; Flew & Iosifidis, 2020). Consider, for instance, a summer 2019 story that links conspiratorial thinking to the practice of consuming news on sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp (Lewis *et al.*, 2019). Part of a larger discourse about fake news and social media bubbles, such claims not only gloss over the political assumptions of mainstream news sites, but also overlook how these same sites rely on social media-like circulation, participation and affects. From quizzes and comments to the virality of reposts and retweets, both Twitter and *The Guardian* are involved in the *production* of populism; neither is simply neutral. In this way, interactive story-quizzes, like 'How Populist Are You?', replicate the antagonisms of populist discourse by asking readers to locate themselves and others on an ideological spectrum. If the coexistence of serious analysis and entertaining clickbait is today's media standard, then perhaps the forms of engagement and habituation that these practices activate can help to shift

attention beyond presidential tweets or conspiracy-infested forums and, like the above problems, to ask new questions of *media populism*.

These tensions capture something more than the blind spots of the default liberal position—a way of seeing, thinking, and feeling populism that can fully account for neither its intricacies nor its enticements. Instead, they indicate the radical thrust of populism to illuminate the agonistic nature of politics concealed by neoliberal hegemony (Mouffe, 2018) and, in doing so, they allow us to reconsider media's relationship with the political.

On Populism and Populist Media

From the pioneering volume edited by Ionescu and Gellner (1969) to today's proliferation of both academic and mainstream interventions urged by the rise to power of populist movements in Europe and the United States (Müller, 2016; Galston, 2017; Brown, 2017; Grossberg, 2018; Norris, 2019), theorizing populism has meant navigating a landscape of contradictory formations, ideological prejudices, and call-to-arms apprehensions. In spite of the internal richness of the debate, the hegemonic role played by political science has limited the focus on political parties and movements, rather than embracing the multifaceted manifestations of populism across the most diverse social worlds. This approach, on the one hand, has the advantage of making populism visible, even measurable, through its analysis of speeches, polls, rallies, and electoral victories. On the other hand, however, it has created conceptual and epistemological barriers that continue to impede new perspectives—including, as is the focus of this special issue, understandings of the relationship between media and populism that emerge outside of political scientific frameworks. In the light of these and similar debates, we run the risk of losing sight of populism's distinct theoretical legacies, perhaps replicating the tendency to shrug it off on the basis of its conceptual messiness or, worse, its presumed obviousness. To address this concern, we begin by providing an overview of four influential perspectives on populism from political science, and adjacent fields, before turning to the question of media and the media-oriented engagements that inform this issue. These perspectives understand populism to

be: 1) a thin-centered ideology, 2) a mobilization strategy, 3) a political style, and 4) ‘the’ logic of the political.

The first view includes scholars who define populism as a discursive frame or a thin-centered—that is, inconsistent, empty—ideology that divides society into two groups competing for hegemony, ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite’. Politics, conceived as the expression of the general will, is the terrain that populists promise to bring back to their legitimate holders, ‘the pure people’ in the name of whom they claim to speak (Mudde, 2004; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013; 2017). Proponents of this so-called ‘ideational view’ underscore its capacity to set boundaries between populist and non-populist phenomena, construct logical taxonomies, and enable cross-national and cross-regional comparisons, criticizing other approaches for not being able to deliver answers as exhaustive (Mudde, 2017). On the other hand, the same view has been contested for its normative basis as well as the ways it oversimplifies or dichotomizes populist and non-populist forms, thereby leaving little room for the analysis of ideas, discourses, and practices that do not strictly relate to either category (Aslanidis, 2016; Hawkins, 2019).

More operational from its foundations, the conceptualization of populism as a mobilizing strategy was initially devised to explain how charismatic political leaders come to power with the support of large numbers of mostly disorganized followers (Weyland, 2001; 2017). More recently, this strategic approach has fallen out of favor because of its inability to theorize ‘the people’ in ways that are not conditioned by the ambitions and actions of leaders and, therefore, to understand of politics as something more complex than the mere ‘search for and use of power [...] based on the mass mobilization of supporters’ (Barr, 2019: 44). While not central to current scholarly debates, aspects of this approach have been recuperated by scholars interested in how the connection between charismatic leaders and multifarious forms of grassroots organizing has the capacity to transform groups into an active and collective political subject (Roberts, 2003; Jansen, 2015). Its real impact, however, is outside of academia, where the focus on what populist leaders say and do has attained broad legitimacy in the mainstream media, giving it everyday relevance to understandings of contemporary politics.

Benjamin Moffitt's recent rethinking of populism as political style—that is, as 'the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performance' (2016: 7) that are used to create political relations—bridges the gap between ideational and strategic approaches. From the former, it borrows a focus on the people-elite divide, and on the appeal to the people as the arbiter of common sense. From the latter, the political style approach derives its understanding of the leader's mobilization techniques, specifically through the use of a rhetoric of emergency and crisis. Unlike the previous two approaches, however, Moffitt gives particular attention to *performance* and to what he terms a *media logic*. Drawing perhaps too loosely on a media studies vocabulary (e.g., performativity, actors, audiences, stages, scripts, and *mise-en-scene*) that is not consistently supported by a sustained engagement with media theory and practices, he argues that populism as a political style relies on three tenets, namely: an appeal to 'the people', the leaders' 'bad manners', and a politics of crisis. These tenets correspond to a particular field of media dynamics, including: dramatization, polarization, and prioritization of conflict; personalization, stereotypization, and emotionalization; focus on scandals, simplification and intensification. Greeted as one of the most original theorizations of populism to appear in recent years, Moffitt's focus on style as an embodied practice and form of communication opens up new ways of thinking populism beyond the relationship between leaders and masses. From our perspective, the significance of his contribution rests on its understanding of media as '*the stage* on which populism plays out upon' (5), and not simply an amplifying factor.

Finally, motivated by the desire to grasp the potentials of populism for democracy, rather than dismiss it as a threat or a disturbance to its correct functioning, Ernesto Laclau's theory remains, in our view, the most complex examination of the topic (1977; 2005a; 2005b). Laclau starts from the assumption that populism must be understood not only in relation to its concrete historical manifestations, but also through its ability to structure the political sphere itself. He argues that it is through populism that 'the people' emerge as a political category—as popular identities aggregated around socio-political demands, which, once coalesced in the form of an 'equivalent chain', set up an internal frontier through which 'the people' separate themselves from their opposite, 'the elite'. What makes populism 'the logic of the political', according to Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, is that all political identities are created

through antagonism and, by the same token, any political struggle proceeds by precisely developing this antagonist potential (Laclau & Mouffe 1985; Mouffe, 2013). The centrality of antagonism is not new to this debate. Already in the mid-50s, Edward Shils (1956) had defined populism as the ideology of popular resentment against the ruling classes, and, as we have seen, the ideational approach has not departed much from that. Laclau, however, shifts the focus from particular demands and strategy, the nitty-gritty aspects of political life, to understand populism as the paradigmatic logic of the political—that is, the ways in which society is instituted (Arditi, 2005).

Responding to the call to open up thinking populism beyond established paradigms, this special issue brings problems of media and mediation to bear on populist phenomena and debates. Interrogating media *vis-a-vis* populism raises important questions that we think are not sufficiently accounted for in the many disciplinary discussions already underway. In particular, our approach to media populism contests the still pervasive and common sense view that media are neutral channels for unmediated communication (Bos & Brants, 2014; Alvares & Dahlgren 2016; Chakravartty & Roy, 2017). Here we find both the durability of hypodermic communication models and the tendency to see media as a static background, and not as a crucial agent or support that is constitutive of public assembly and public speech (Butler, 2015). On the other hand, our approach also seeks to reframe understandings informed by the political communication literature that links populist discourse to the so-called ‘mediatization of politics’, i.e., ‘the process through which the importance of the media and the spillover effects on political processes, institutions, organizations and actors have increased’ (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014: 6; Mazzoleni, 2008; Moffitt & Tormey, 2014). Thus, while we agree that media are increasingly influential and are integrated into all social spheres, we also want to problematize the idea that a putatively singular ‘media logic’ subsumes political relationships and the ways that societies are organized, informed, and ruled—especially the narrow view that links such claims to ‘the dominance in societal processes of the news values and the storytelling techniques the media make use of’ (Strömbäck, 2008: 229). Recent scholarship focusing on ‘populism among the media themselves and independent of any relationship to populist movements’ is in this regard illuminating but necessarily limited (Krämer, 2014: 42;

Gerbaudo, 2016; Baldwin-Philippi, 2019; Krämer & Holtz-Bacha, 2020). What we term *media populism*, then, rethinks the established dichotomies that understand media as either enabling of participation and public sentiment or fostering social anxieties and increasing atomization—a splintered epistemology that diminishes the significance of populist irruptions and the potentialities of media for popular politics for social change. In what follows, we first introduce a cluster of key ideas about media/mediation before turning to the question of media populism.

Media and Mediation

This special issue builds on a range of recent interventions calling for a ‘shift in emphasis from media as artifactuality to media as process of mediation’ based on the assumption that *populism mediates* (Mitchell and Hansen, 2010: xiv-xv; Kember and Zylinska, 2012; Grusin 2015; Neves and Sarkar, 2017). This is to turn focus away from content, messages, objects, and institutions and towards the constitutive role of media as a ‘general environment for living’ (Mitchell and Hansen, 2010: xii).

The etymology of the term *media* is historically heterogeneous. It includes linguistic, entomological and anatomical registers, such as ‘the middle layer of the wall of a blood vessel’, as well as the more general sense of a *medium* as ‘something which is intermediate between two degrees, amounts, qualities, or classes; a middle state’ (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Only in the 20th century did the concept become tied to its now widespread association with mass media (as the plural of *medium*; an aggregation that includes print, radio, television, cinema, etc.). This mutability is important for contemporary media theorists because it helps us to recuperate and put to work other senses of media—including, as Mitchell and Hansen observe, its more recent singularization (as the collective singular noun *media*). What matters here is not simply an array of technical forms or broadcast-like protocols, where the few communicate with the many, but rather the sense of ‘understanding *from the perspective of media*’ (2010: xi).

Crucial to this reorientation is a resurgence of interest in the work of Marshall McLuhan, including his reintroduction to

Anglophone readers through the filter of thinkers like Friedrich Kittler and the preoccupations of German media theory. While each have been dismissed in some circles for their perceived technological determinism—e.g. McLuhan’s infamous ‘The medium is the message’ or Kittler’s ‘Media determine our situation’ (McLuhan, 1964; Kittler, 1999: xxxix)—they are now more widely credited with recognizing that media do more than name distinct objects or carry ‘symbolic freight’; instead they are ‘crafters of existence’ (Peters 2015: 15). For our purposes, this reconceptualization is also valuable for reworking the prevailing approaches to populist media in political theory: it is in this sense that we oppose media populism to populist media. If the latter remains narrowly focused on what populists say and do *in the media*, as if *the media* was merely a container of information or an ideology to be debunked, media populism instead carves out an expanded field and turns its attention to processes of social, technical, and political mediation. To further situate this call, let us introduce three loosely entangled arguments about media and mediation that inform the essays collected in this issue as well as our collective engagement with media populism. Conceptually, these lines of thought emphasize *ontology*, *vitality*, and *affect*.

What we can term the *ontological* or *elemental* view understands media as ‘our infrastructures of being’ (Peters, 2015: 15). Building on McLuhan, Harold Innis, and others, this approach expands the realm of media beyond human communication to include environments and nature—anything that operates as a repository of ‘readable data and processes that sustain and enable existence’ (4)—and insists that media, in this enlarged sense, are also habitats, logistical forms, and enter into life itself. As John Durham Peters puts it, ‘media, understood broadly, also enter into nature, not only society—and into objects, not only events’. In this way, a wide range of contemporary social and ecological phenomena—from protests to the ozone layer—can be understood to be what they are ‘not only because of how they are covered by reporters, but because of how their being is altered by media, understood as infrastructures of data and control’ (2015: 2). For Peters, this approach both understands media before and beyond the narrow confines of mass media and marks a return to an older sense of mediation now shared by digital technologies. Mediation, in this context, is not simply a middle layer that comes between two pre-existing states or entities (as with

familiar ideas of transmission). Instead, ‘media organize’ (Beyes *et al.*, 2019: 1). It is immediate, relational, and world making. Building on this renewed attention to media ontology, our aim in this issue is more modest and narrowly conceived than Peters’s nature and metaphor (e.g. sea, fire, sky, clouds, etc.): it examines how media are infrastructural to political life—its styles, platforms, and organization.

If the infrastructural view opens up and ontologizes media, what we might term *media vitality* or, from a slightly different vantage, *habitual media*, brings these insights to bear on biotechnical forms of life (Thacker, 2004; Kember and Zylinska, 2012; Chun, 2016). For Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska, this means examining ‘interlocking technical and biological processes of mediation’ and the ways that *life itself* is increasingly ‘articulated as a medium’ that is reproduced, compressed, and patented like other media formats (xiii). Wendy Hui Kyong Chun connects this *interlocking* to everyday activities, redirecting attention to a cluster of slow, embodied, and nonconscious *habits* shored up by our relationships with technological networks. In this view, even obsolescent media ‘remain in users’ bodies’; or more sharply: ‘through habits users become their machines’ (Chun, 2016: x-xi; 1). From another perspective, and closer perhaps to the traditional concerns of cinema/media studies, is what Harun Farocki presciently termed the ‘operative image’ to describe ‘images that do not represent an object, but rather are part of an operation’ (Farocki, 2004: 17). Extending Farocki’s *Eye/Machine* series (2001-2003), Trevor Paglen explores how computational networks have transformed visual culture in the years since. He observes that ‘the overwhelming majority of images are now made by machines for other machines’. And further: ‘we no longer look at images—images look at us’ (Paglen, 2016; Parks and Kaplan, 2017). Such ideas echo broadly across contemporary media studies, linking up with debates about human technicity (Leroi-Gourhan, 1965; Stiegler, 1998; Hui, 2017), nonhuman agencies (Hayles, 2005; Barad, 2007; Bennett, 2010), and the calculative backgrounds that shape smartness initiatives or the Internet of Things (Thrift, 2008; Halpern *et al.*, 2017; Neves, 2020). This includes a wide range of informatic and bioinformatic processes that, like the metaphor of the operational image, signal new distributions and scales of socio-technical life that may be out of sync with established political concepts such as agency,

subjectivity, representation, authority, sovereignty, the people, the public sphere, and populism.

Finally, entangled with ideas about technologized life are a range of debates concerning *emotional* and *affective* mediation. While the literature on affect has exploded in recent years, the basic distinction drawn by Gilles Deleuze in his Vincennes lectures on Spinoza remains instructive. Here Deleuze distinguishes between two modes of thought, namely the representational nature of ideas and the nonrepresentational nature of affect—where ideas have ‘chronological and logical’ primacy over affects (Deleuze, 2007: n.p.). Affect, as Thomas Lamarre concisely puts it, ‘is experience that is not consciously experienced or perceptually recognized’. It also differs from emotion, which describes ‘personalized or individualized feelings’, rather than impersonal or nonconscious intensities (Lamarre, 2015: 103; Massumi, 2011). Complicating this conceptual distinction, Sarah Ahmed offers a useful model for understanding affect and emotion as mutually constitutive, or at least strategically indistinct (2004). She at once refuses the high-low division that, in many works, seems to elevate affect and diminish emotion, and also captures the truck between sensuous feelings and non-sensuous affects. Put differently, what Ahmed terms ‘affective economies’ offers a theory of mediation rooted in the circulation of emotions between bodies and surfaces, tracing how they ‘stick’ and ‘move’, and how this accretion drives ‘affective forms of reorientation’ like fear of particular bodies or the idea that a nation has a ‘soft touch’ (2004: 1-8). In this way, the ‘real powers of affect’ lie in its potentiality: ‘a body’s *capacity* to affect and be affected’ (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010: 2). This capacity, which exceeds human bodies, also resonates with immanent critique and its interest in conceptualizing how such potentialities may open up new political forms (Povinelli, 2011: 8-9).

Recent debates in media theory actually link up with important ideas about mediation in political theory. Take, for example, the idea of *the people* in understandings of popular democracy, or how it is fractured by the current tension between ‘coveting crowds and fearing riots’. Important to this distinction, Dilip Gaonkar observes, is the notion that a political fiction links the doctrine of the divine right of kings to that of popular sovereignty (2014: 3). As the historian Edmund S. Morgan puts it, ‘government requires make believe. Make believe that the king is divine [...] Make believe that the people *have* a voice or

make believe that representatives of the people *are* the people' (1988: 13). But rather than embracing Morgan's assertion that 'fictions are necessary' to democratic governance, Gaonkar resists the fiction thesis for the crucial reason that it displaces 'the notion of *the people as force*' with an ahistorical and fictive subject (2014: 5). Against this established view, he asks instead, 'what happens when fictions fail and what sort of politics ensues in the wake of their collapse' (Gaonkar, 2014: 4)? One answer to this question, perhaps, is the populist surge that proliferates across our current historical conjuncture.

Mediating Populism; Or the People After Laclau

But if populism is *after the fictions*, it remains fixated on the people as its subject. Consider the apparent friction between Gaonkar's 'phenomenology of the multitude', briefly introduced above, and Ernesto Laclau's claim that populism is 'the royal road to understanding something about the ontological constitution of the political as such' (2005: 67). While these claims operate at different scales, the tension they suggest—between, that is, the people in its *corporeal multiplicity* and the people as an *empty signifier*—is productive for making sense of the process of political mediation at issue here. In this section we turn to *On Populist Reason*, including critical responses to the text, to draw on Laclau's formulation of collective identities and to draw out its implications for understanding media populist assemblages.

First, the idea of the 'people as fiction' also needs to be distinguished from Laclau's understanding of the people as an 'absent fullness'. If, as Gaonkar worries, the 'master fiction of democratic politics' posits an abstract people as its subject, with the effect of deferring the career of an embodied and heterogeneous people, Laclau is equally clear that emptiness is *not* merely abstract or fictional. Instead, it names a 'real relation between social agents' (2014: 73). Consider a longer passage where Laclau summarizes this construction:

Let us go back to our original scene: the frustration of a series of social demands makes possible the movement from isolated democratic demands to equivalential popular ones. One first dimension of the break is that, at its root, there is the experience of a *lack*, a gap which has emerged in the harmonious continuity of the social. There is a fullness of the

community which is missing. This is decisive: the construction of the ‘people’ will be the attempt to give a name to that absent fullness (85).

For Laclau this irrepresentability ‘*within* signification’ is crucial to the constitution of the people (2005: 105)¹. But his Lacanian-inflected model is less suited to capturing material people and practices—including their media(tions), as we discuss below. Here Gaonkar’s phenomenology offers an important reworking of Laclau’s signification, while maintaining its focus on the people as a political operative. Gaonkar argues that the ‘category of the people is a collective remainder’ that ‘exceeds all (real, imagined, and hailed) identities’. Moreover, this category is preceded by actual people, the bodies assembling on the street and in the squares, who are its ‘source and survive as the remainder as they pass through these identity forms’ (2014: 13). In other words, he rejects Laclau’s understanding of the people as a unified revolutionary agent. Against this idealized emancipatory subject, Gaonkar, drawing on Spinoza and the (post)autonomia theorists, sees the people as transitory, material, and multiple: *the people come and go*².

Next, and following from this discussion, Laclau returns to two of the definitional problems that plague the literature on populism: the ‘so-called “imprecision” and “vagueness” of populist symbols’ and the ‘centrality of the leader’. These problems are recast, he argues, once we understand that populist union must occur on a ‘radically heterogeneous terrain’. In addition to the challenge he poses to familiar dismissals of populism, what interests us here is Laclau’s nascent theory of media. He summarizes this process as follows:

This heterogeneity does not tend, out of its own differential character, to coalesce around a unity which would result from its mere *internal* development; so any kind of unity is going to proceed from an inscription, the surface of inscription (the popular symbols) being irreducible to the contents which are thereon inscribed. The popular symbols are, no doubt, the expression of the democratic demands that they bring together; but the expressing medium cannot be reduced to what it expresses: it is not a *transparent* medium (98).

Laclau’s theorization of political subjectivity at once relies on a familiar sense of media as an aggregation of popular symbols

inscribed on a surface and, at the same time, insists that this inscription is an ontological and affective force that exceeds the expression of symbols, identities, demands, etc. In this context, two charges associated with populism's perceived indeterminacy—its vague popular symbols and erratic leaders—turn out instead to be crucial to the emergence of the people. What matters here is less the discovery of Laclau as a media theorist, though this is a topic deserving of attention, and more the speculative contention that to address the new populism today Laclau's framework must also be expanded to account for the role of media(tion) in shoring up political forms and relations.

Support for this claim can already be found in the transformation of his conceptual priorities in the years between *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (with Chantal Mouffe, 1985) and his heated debate about populism with Slavoj Žižek (Laclau, 2006; Žižek, 2006). This transition is in part a response to the emergence of an increasingly global democratic imaginary, which leads Laclau to give new significance to the notion of the people as a political subject and to populism as its paradigmatic political logic (Gaonkar, 2012: 199). This includes rethinking the conceptual accents framing his theory of hegemony. Of particular relevance here is a shift in emphasis from discursive to rhetorical practices of articulation; or more sharply: from the 'plane of discursivity' (marked by differential relations between elements) to that of 'rhetoricity (i.e. the mode of braiding the rhetorical form with its function)' (199-200). Extending this conceptual lineage, our aim in this special issue is at once to hold onto the idea that populism is an indispensable political logic and, at the same time, to reframe this social ontology by giving priority to *mediation* (over and above the discursive and rhetorical significations tied to prior political moments).

Let's consider a banal example. At a January 2020 rally, Donald Trump bemoaned that the Academy Award for best picture went to the South Korean feature, *Parasite* (dir. Bong Joon Ho, 2019). Responding to this perceived slight, Trump asked: 'What the hell was that all about?' and 'Can we get [films] like *Gone with the Wind* back, please?' It's hardly surprising that Trump chose a film from Hollywood's Golden Age that romanticizes the Jim Crow era, capturing both the myth of American self-sufficiency and its racist nostalgia for the Confederate South. What is surprising, perhaps, is how swiftly public opinion was

galvanized both for and against the film, and how in the weeks following the murder of George Floyd, sites like HBO Max removed the title from its streaming catalogue, while Amazon reported the film as its top seller. And this, of course, is to say nothing of how the debate, including dozens of new reviews of *Gone with the Wind*, circulated across newspapers, TV, Twitter and Tik Tok in the proximate weeks. Trump's invocation of a popular nationalist, white, and nostalgic American identity offers a deceptively simple articulation of media populism.

In this case, we see not only the leader's action of discursively constructing and summoning the people but also how this creative invocation does not happen out of thin air. Instead, populist leaders both articulate and accumulate shared histories, memories, and experiences, which are always already available as old and new media forms—e.g. national symbols, the press, broadcast networks, digital platforms, etc. Echoing Laclau's interest in the potentiations of popular symbols and leaders, Trump's statement at a rally ('How bad were the academy awards this year!'), which was quickly picked up and redistributed across mass media and social media, signals the importance of remediation to inscribing the people. This is to draw attention to Bolter and Grusin's well known claim, itself a reworking of McLuhan, that '*all* mediation is remediation' because it is dependent on prior acts of representation, technologies, and the like (Bolter & Grusin, 2000: 55).

If political leaders harken to the past in order to bolster some kind of certainty for an otherwise unstable future, it is vital to note that this past—a shared history—is constructed of already made fragments and world-making endeavors. *Gone With the Wind*, for example, is itself an adaptation of Margaret Mitchell's eponymous novel about the antebellum South, as well as other iterations of plantation-era Americana—of which D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* is an urtext (and which itself is an adaptation of Thomas Dixon's white supremacist novel *The Clansman*, and so on). Trump's seemingly off-the-cuff remark thus reveals a chain of mediation that is both marked by its performative logic (i.e. how many people cheering and retweeting have even seen the film?) and the modes of antagonism and equivocation that allow the part to speak as the whole. Trump's political life has been marked by an unapologetic and historically rooted whiteness, as well as a savvy use of media. His 2016 presidential campaign slogan, 'Make America Great Again', is a slightly altered version of

Reagan's 'Let's Make America Great Again', and his catchphrase for the 2020 campaign is 'Keep America Great'. As 'Remediator-in-Chief, not only does Trump draw on a thick history of US right-wing politics to tap into white supremacy and anger, he is already clearly remediating this version of American selfhood into the future.

By being coarse, spectacular, and uninhibited, populism calls attention to itself and its public displays. Indeed populism's proficiency in low cultural forms and its 'tabloid style' (Canovan, 1999: 5) are crucial to its viral appeal and knack for distribution. These are the very attributes that make media/mediation central to the antagonisms between the people and the elite, and the people and the state (Laclau, 1977: 196). Populism thus sheds light on the workings of political representation, laying bare the processes of governance that might be otherwise obscured or rendered invisible. Think of examples like the right-wing's 'swamp' and the 'deep state', or when the left-wing denounces 'multinational corporations', 'the 1%', or the 'IMF'. Populist articulations always bring attention to institutions—real or otherwise—that need to be fixed or eliminated in order to attain purer, smoother, or fairer politics. At the same time, populism's ostentatious style and combative logic do not hinder it from producing close and intense affective relations (Warner, 2002). Quite the opposite, these traits enable its constant challenge to the limits of representation. It strives to generate political representation without representation: movement, leader, and people as one and the same. It is 'a politics of immediation' (Mazzarella, 2019: 51).

Not only high-profile political leaders and corporate social media platforms put to work the double logic of mediation—what Bolter and Grusin describe as the tension between opacity and immediacy. We can also see it played out in more obscure and less official corners of the internet, for instance, on websites like 4Chan and 8Chan. These online message boards are hotbeds for right-wing conspiracy theories (e.g. QAnon), and have both inspired real-life incidents (from Pizzagate to the Christchurch Mosque shooting) and been promoted by political candidates (M. Baker, 2020). Much of the content that circulates in these networks is heavy-handed, makeshift or even crude. But the amateur style and unreliability of message boards, among similar examples, does not undercut their cognitive or affective potentials but rather seems to intensify the capacities to foster group identities and shape political orientations. In this context,

platforms can be understood to be performative infrastructures that, like Laclau's inscription, *do* what they say. This is what theorists like Thomas Lamarre term *platformativity* to describe 'the infra-individual intra-actions between platform and human' that drive our political habits and aspirations (Lamarre, 2017: 301). With populism, then, mediation is given yet another materiality and agency—a vantage point from which to gauge the mutability of communication, the mundane acts of rhetorical warfare that make up our social media, and the tangle steps that have led to our divisive present.

In this way, mediation helps us to understand the role of social texts and repertoires of action—as repetitions, recollections, and refoldings—in giving rise to populism. Here we can return to two understandings of media addressed so far in this introduction—that is, mass media (which informs the research paradigm we have dubbed 'populist media') and logistical media (which informs our understanding of *media populism*). While our approach underlines their differences, and the relevance of these differences for understanding the new populism, here we want to emphasize how these conceptually distinct modalities are themselves remediated, enmeshed, and mutually constitutive. If the former centers on modes of *address* and *circulation* (e.g. textuality, meaning, opinions, and style), then the latter emphasizes *attention* and *organization* (e.g. data and computational processes that track, store and organize human actions and cultural forms) (Agre, 2003; Citton, 2014; Zuboff, 2018). What matters here is not simply to distinguish mass media from social media, analog from digital, among similar dyads, but rather to account for mediation as a process that remakes our understanding and experience of the world. This transformation of political and technical relations, largely unnoticed by Laclau and other theorists writing at the turn of the millennium, both reframes traditional media and models of signification and gives new significance to processes of data and control in shoring up the political. In conjunction with the above suggestion that *populism mediates*—our argument here is this: *media populate*. They share in bringing a people into existence, in charging or unifying a corporeal multiplicity, and in animating new social actions, affects, and infrastructures.

What, then, distinguishes populism from other forms of mediated politics? Beyond discursive content, its imagery and common tropes, we propose to look at populism's styles and aesthetic relations as ontogenetic and mediating capacities.

Echoing David Bering-Porter's contribution, this issue both offers 'a more formalist approach so as to better understand the cultural and semiotic mechanisms by which populism grows and spreads' and examines how these formal and aesthetic mechanisms are transformed by *platformal* operations. The strength of populist symbology and infrastructures resides not only in what it communicates but in how it is communicated. As such, populist media bring into stark relief a tension at the heart of all acts of mediation: the push and pull between transparency and opaqueness—what Grusin calls the double logic that binds immediacy and hypermediacy (2015: 131) and Mazzarella refers to as 'the play of close distance' (2004: 361). But more than the tension between technology's artifactuality and the ways it disappears into everyday life, what comes into view here is the complex relationship between media and political volatility. This is to refuse the image of inescapable surveillance capitalism or states—which imagine totalizing capture and control—and argue instead that contemporary media populism(s) enact a diverse range of responses to neoliberal abandonment and burgeoning inequality. As Gaonkar reiterates in the Afterword, to say that media constitute a 'general environment for living' is to underscore its possibilities and the ways that the ontological, habitual, and affective dimensions outlined in this introduction *are on the side of the people*.

They, The People

In a short but provocative essay, 'They, The People', Gaonkar outlines familiar criticisms of populism—'its ideational thinness, its normative emptiness, and the variability of its social contents'—but also points to the limits of current critique (2017: 63). In particular, Gaonkar is concerned that political theory remains content to repeat what it already knows, allowing the 'populist complaint', and the social and historical inequities that are its source, to recede into the background. In this way, he distinguishes between two overlapping forces shaping the new populism: (i) populist's apocalyptic fear and anger at immigrants, minorities, and many others blamed for declining income and status, such as perceived attacks on whiteness in Britain, France, the US, and elsewhere; and (ii) a sharply anti-elite disposition, complicated by its leaders' origins, that sees the political system as rigged by oligarchs and globalization as a major cause of increasingly visible inequality (62-3).

Much of the current attention afforded populism fails to adequately respond to either account. Gaonkar's intervention can thus be seen as a call for new critical approaches to analyze and actively oppose each of these thrusts at their intersectional origins. This includes, we submit, attending the ways that *racial capitalism* has shaped and continues to shape the practice of democracy and the institutions of the democratic state (Rodney, 1972; Robinson, 1983; Gilroy, 1993; Lowe, 2015). Acknowledging its menace and contradictions, what Gaonkar wants us to keep in view is the simple fact that 'populism is a reliable and indispensable mechanism for curbing and regulating the power of elites' (63). This is not to romanticize populist excess or the enduring violence and fearmongering to which it can give voice, including parties and presidents, but neither is it to disregard the potentialities shored up by its social and political cry: the system is failing; it could be otherwise.

If political theory is to contribute to our understanding of populism, Gaonkar concludes, we cannot continue on the same tack. Instead we:

must give an account of the structural tensions inherent in representative democracy, the inescapable tension between elite and masses—not simply in term of disciplining the volatility of the latter (as proposed by James Madison in *The Federalist Papers*), but in curbing relentless encroachments by the former on what was once common, an encroachment permitted by law, facilitated by governmentality, and encouraged by the markets. In an age when elites have inured themselves to critique, often under the alibi of meritocracy, we are in urgent need of a theory of elite formations and their formidable powers (63).

We are inspired by Gaonkar's call to reinvigorate populist critique by holding onto the social question and by holding elite formations accountable—that is, moving beyond the dichotomy of *the people* and the anomalous *leader*. What is more, this approach echoes our call across this introduction to shift attention beyond the familiar talking heads or social media apps so often associated with the new populism and understandings of its influence. Instead, this special issue adds to an ongoing conversation by throwing into relief the ways that media(tion) organizes, habituates, and affects distinct populist practices and platforms around the world—from the popular volatility accompanying the circulation of an image of the dead Syrian

boy, Alan Kurdi, washed up on a resort town beach, to the complex alliances and aspirations animated by grassroots organizing in favor of a proposed Apple data center in East Galway, Ireland.

If our approach in this framing essay emphasizes the import of media infrastructures and techno-human processes for understanding populism, and political life more broadly—what we frame as a shift from *populist media* to *media populism*—this is not to diminish the critical need for accounts of political subjectivity, aesthetics, discourse, and the like. But it is to observe that such processes have been basically transformed by our computational habitus. The fact that ‘digital media traffic less in content, programs, and opinions than in organization, power, and calculation’ is thus a call to re-invigorate familiar modes such that, in the first case, critique does not simply find what it already knows (e.g. about populism) and, in the second, it develops new capacities for understanding political practices *after* or *beyond* mass media (Peters, 2015: 7). Such a turn builds on a wide range of recent scholarship, including the accounts of mediation, sketched above, as well as studies of race and technology (Benjamin, 2019; Browne, 2015; Noble, 2018), media platforms (Jin, 2013; Srnicek, 2017; Lamarre, 2017), and organizational and logistical media (Vismann, 2008; Cowen, 2014; Lovink & Rossiter, 2018; Beyes *et al.*, 2019). Technological mediation processes involving images and data centers are essential for understanding the new populism and inform this issue’s modest contribution to populist research as well as its call for new works at the intersection of media theory and political theory.

Alongside the other contributors, this special issue brings media perspectives to bear on a wide range of political problems and worlds. These interventions open up genealogical and multi-scalar perspectives on populism. On the one hand, we are acutely aware of the ‘archives of experience’ that ground the populist mobilization of the collective flesh (Mazzarella, 2019: 53). These experiential archives take on critical importance at a time when new ‘algorithmic identities’ and homophilic networks define our relationships and ruptures (Cheney-Lippold, 2011; Apprich *et al.*, 2018). On the other hand, (re)mediation turns our attention to the problem of scale-shifting, a kind of cognitive mapping that amplifies the network itself, all the while fitting different elements into distinct but repetitive modes of contact (Jameson, 1990; Chun, 2015). In

this sense, we can see how something like a presidential rally—a classic object of study for political communication—must be understood to exceed the routine focus on a politician’s rhetoric, the composition of crowds, or even the event itself. Tracking political mediation in this way gives new significance to previously ignored processes of cultural production and has the capacity to reconceptualize the complex dialectic between top-down and bottom-up political interactions.

Notes

1. For Laclau it is important that empty signifiers operate within signification. A longer excerpt reads ‘we mean that there is a place, within the system of signification, which is constitutively irrepresentable; in that sense it remains empty, but this is an emptiness which I can signify, because we are dealing with a void within signification’ (2005: 105). Further, this is also what makes populism’s synecdochal operations counter-hegemonic. Laclau observes that: ‘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 (in our terms: it is merely the positive reverse of a situation experienced as “deficient being”)’ (116).

2. Thanks to Dilip Gaonkar for suggesting this phrasing in our discussion of this issue.

References

Agre, P. (2003) ‘Surveillance and Capture: Two Models of Privacy’ in N. Wardrip-Fruin & N. Monfort (eds) *The New Media Reader*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Ahmed, S. (2004) *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Alvares, C., & Dahlgren, P. (2016) ‘Populism, Extremism and Media: Mapping an Uncertain Terrain’, *European Journal of Communication* 31.1: 46–57.

Apprich, C. *et al.* (2018) *Pattern Discrimination*. Lunenburg: Meson Press.

- Arditi, B. (2005) 'Populism as an Internal Periphery of Democratic Politics', in F. Panizza (ed.) *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*. London-New York: Verso.
- Aslanidis, P. (2016) 'Is Populism an Ideology? A Refutation and a New Perspective', *Political Studies* 64.1: 88–104.
- Baker, P.C. (2019) "'We the people": The Battle to Define Populism', *The Guardian* (January 10), <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/jan/10/we-the-people-the-battle-to-define-populism>.
- Baker, M. (2020) 'G.O.P. Voters Back QAnon Conspiracy Promoter for U.S. Senate', *The New York Times* (May 20), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/20/us/oregon-senate-perkins-qanon.html>.
- Baldwin-Philippi, J. (2019) 'The Technological Performance of Populism', *New Media & Society* 21.2: 376-397.
- Barad, K. (2007) *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Barr, R.R. (2019) 'Populism as a Political Strategy', in C. La Torre (ed.) *Routledge Handbook of Populism*. New York-London: Routledge.
- Bello, W. (2004) *Deglobalization: Ideas for a New World*. London: Zed.
- Benjamin, R. (2019) *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Bennett, J. (2010) *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Beyes, T. *et al.* (2019) *Organize*. Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bolter, J.D. & Grusin, R. (2000) *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

- Bos, L., & Brants, K. (2014) 'Populist Rhetoric in Politics and Media: A Longitudinal Study of the Netherlands', *European Journal of Communication* 29.6: 703–719.
- Brown, W. (2017) 'Apocalyptic Populism', *eurozine*, August 30, <https://www.eurozine.com/apocalyptic-populism/>.
- Browne, S. (2015) *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Butler, J. (2015) *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Canovan, M. (1999) 'Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy', *Political Studies*, 47.1: 2–16.
- Chakravartty, P., & Roy, S. (2017) 'Mediatized Populisms: Inter-Asian Lineages', *International Journal of Communication*, 11: 4073–4092.
- Chattopadhyay, S., & Sarkar, B. (2008) 'Introduction: The Subaltern and the Popular', *Postcolonial Studies*, 8.4: 357-363.
- Cheney-Lippold, J. (2011) 'A New Algorithmic Identity: Soft Biopolitics and the Modulation of Control', *Theory, Culture & Society* 28.6: 164-181.
- Chun, W.H.K. (2015) 'Networks NOW: Belated Too Early', in D. Berry & M. Dieter (eds), *Postdigital Aesthetics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- _____. (2016) *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Citton, Y. (2014) *The Ecology of Attention*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Comaroff, J. (2011) 'Populism and Late Liberalism: A Special Affinity?', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 637: 99-111.
- Cowen, D. (2014) *The Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping Violence in Global Trade*. Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press.

Dean, J. (2009) *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Deleuze, J. (2007) 'On Spinoza', *Lectures by Gilles Deleuze*, <http://deleuzelectures.blogspot.com/2007/02/on-spinoza.html>.

Farocki, H. (2004) 'Phantom Images', *Public 29*: 12-22.

Fitzi, G., et al. (eds) (2018) *Populism and the Crisis of Democracy*. 2 vols. New York-London: Routledge.

Flew, T. & Iosifidis, P. (2020) 'Populism, Globalisation, and Social Media', *International Communication Gazette* 82.1: 7-25.

Galston, W. (2017) *Anti-Pluralism: The Populist Threat to Liberal Democracy*. Yale: Yale University Press.

Gaonkar, D. (2012) 'The Primacy of the Political and the Trope of the "People" in Ernesto Laclau's *On Populist Reason*', *Cultural Studies* 26.2-3: 185-206.

_____. (2014) 'After the Fictions: Notes Towards a Phenomenology of the Multitude', *e-flux* 58, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/58/61187/after-the-fictions-notes-towards-a-phenomenology-of-the-multitude/>.

Gerbaudo, P. (2016) 'Populism 2.0: Social Media Activism, the Generic Internet User and Interactive Direct Democracy', in D. Trotter & C. Fuchs (eds), *Social Media, Politics and the State: Protests, Revolutions, Riots, Crime and Policing in the Age of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube*. New York: Routledge.

Germani, Gino (1978) *Authoritarianism, Fascism, and National Populism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

Gilroy, P. (1993) *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Giuffrida, A. et al., 'The Populist Social Media Playbook: The Battle for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram', *The Guardian* (December 17),

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/17/populist-social-media-playbook-who-is-best-facebook-twitter-instagram-matteo-salvini-narendra-modi>.

Gramsci, A. (1988) 'Concept of "National-Popular"' *Selected Writings, 1916-1935*. New York: Stocken. 363-370.

Gregg, M. & Seigworth, G.J. (2010) 'An Inventory of Shimmers', in M. Gregg & G.J. Seigworth (eds) *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Grossberg, L. (2018) *Under the Cover of Chaos: Trump and the Battle for the American Right*. London: Pluto Press.

Grusin, R. (2015) 'Radical Mediation', *Critical Inquiry* 42: 124-148.

The Guardian (2018) 'The New Populism Series', *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/series/the-new-populism>.

Halpern, O. *et al.* (2017) 'The Smartness Mandate: Notes toward a Critique', *Grey Room* 68: 106-129.

Harvey, D. (2003) *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hawkins, K.A. (2019) 'The Ideational Approach', in C. La Torre (ed.) *Routledge Handbook of Populism*. New York-London: Routledge.

Hayles, N.K. (2005) *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hui, Y. (2017) 'On Cosmotechnics', *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology* 21.2-3: 319-341.

Ionescu, G. & Gellner, E. (eds) (1969) *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics*. New York: Macmillan.

Jager, A. (2018) 'The Myth of "Populism"', *Jacobin*. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/01/populism-douglas-hofstadter-donald-trump-democracy>.

Jameson, F. (1990) 'Cognitive Mapping', in C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (eds) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Jansen, R. (2015) 'Populist Mobilization: A New Theoretical Approach to Populism', in C. De La Torre (ed.) *The Promise and Perils of Populism: Global Perspectives*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.

Jenkins, H. et. al. (2016) *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era: A Conversation on Youth, Learning, Commerce, and Politics*, Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Jin, D.Y. (2013) 'The Construction of Platform Imperialism in the Globalization Era', *triple-C* 1: 145-172.

Kember, S. & Zylinska, J. (2012) *Life After New Media*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Kittler, F. (1999) *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Trans. G. Winthrop-Young & M. Wutz. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Krämer, B. (2014) 'Media Populism: A Conceptual Clarification and Some Theses on Its Effects', *Communication Theory*, 24.1: 42–60.

Krämer, B. & Holtz-Bacha, C. (eds) (2020) *Perspectives on Populism and the Media: Avenues for Research*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Laclau, E. (1977) *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism and Populism*. London: New Left Books.

_____. (2005a) *On Populist Reason*. London-New York: Verso.

_____. (2005b) 'Populism: What's in a Name?', in F. Panizza (ed.), *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*. London-New York: Verso.

_____. (2006) 'Why Constructing a People Is the Main Task of Radical Politics', *Critical Inquiry*, 32: 646-680.

Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C. (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London-New York: Verso.

Lamarre, T. (2015) 'Regional TV: Affective Media Ecologies', *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 2.1-2: 93-126.

_____. (2017) 'Platformivity: Media Studies, Area Studies', *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 4.3: 285-305.

Leroi-Gourhan, A. ([1965] 1993) *Gesture and Speech*. Trans. A. Bostock Berger. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Lewis, P. (2018) 'Exploring the Rise of Populism: "It Pops Up in Unexpected Places"', *The Guardian* (June 22), <https://www.theguardian.com/2019/jun/22/populism-new-exploring-rise-paul-lewis>.

Lewis, P. *et al.*, (2019) 'Revealed: Populists Far More Likely to Believe Conspiracy Theories', *The Guardian* (May 1), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/01/revealed-populists-more-likely-believe-conspiracy-theories-vaccines>.

Lovink, G. & Rossiter, N. (2018) *Organization after Social Media*. London: Minor Compositions.

Lowe, L. (2015) *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Massumi, B. (2011) *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Mazzarella, W. (2004) 'Culture, Globalization, Mediation', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33: 345-367.

_____. (2019) 'The Anthropology of Populism: Beyond the Liberal Settlement', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 48:45-60.

Mazzoleni, G. (2008) 'Populism and the Media', in D. Albertazzi & D. McDonnell (eds) *Twenty First Century Populism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

McLuhan, M. (1964) *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw.

Mitchell, W.J.T. & Hansen M.B.N. (2010) *Critical Terms for Media Studies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Moffitt, B. (2016) *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Moffitt, B. & Tormey, S. (2014) 'Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatisation, and Political Style', *Political Studies* 62.2: 381-397.

Morgan, E.S. (1988) *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America*. New York: Norton.

Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. London-New York: Verso.

_____. (2018) *For a Left Populism*. London-New York: Verso.

Mudde, C. (2004) 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition* 39.4: 541-563.

_____. (2017) 'Populism: An Ideational Approach', in C. Rovira Kaltwasser *et al.* (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

_____. (2018) 'How Populism Became the Concept that Defines Our Age', *The Guardian* (November 22), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/22/populism-concept-defines-our-age>.

Mudde, C. & Rovita Kaltwasser, C. (2013) 'Populism', in M. Freeden *et al.* (eds) *Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

_____. (2017) *Populism: A Short Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Müller, J.-W. (2017). *What Is Populism?*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Neves, J. (2020) 'Social Media and the Social Question: Speculations on Risk Media Society', in B. Ghosh & B. Sarkar (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Media and Risk*. New York-London: Routledge.

Neves, J. & Sarkar, B. (eds) (2017) *Asian Video Cultures: In the Penumbra of the Global*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Noble, S.U. (2015) *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York: New York University Press.

Norris, P. (2019) *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Paglen, T. (2016) 'Invisible Images (Your Pictures Are Looking at You)', *The New Inquiry* (December 8), <https://thenewinquiry.com/invisible-images-your-pictures-are-looking-at-you/>.

Parks, L. & Kaplan, C. (eds.) (2017) *Life in the Age of Drone Warfare*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Peters, J.D. (2015) *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Povinelli, E. (2011) *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Roberts, K.M. (2003) 'Populism, Political Conflict, and Grass-Roots Organization in Latin America', *Comparative Politics*, 38.2: 127-148.

Robinson, C. (1983) *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Rodney, W. (1972) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications.

Shils, E. (1956) *The Torment of Secrecy*. New York: The Free Press.

Srnicek, N. (2017) *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Stiegler, B. (1998) *Technics and Time*, vol. 1. Trans. R. Beardsworth & G. Collins. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Strömbäck, J. (2008) 'Four Phases of Mediatization: An Analysis of the Mediatization of Politics' *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 13.3: 228-46

Strömbäck, J. & Esser, F. (2014) 'Mediatization of Politics: Towards a Theoretical Framework', in J. Strömbäck & F. Esser (eds) *Mediatization of Politics: Understanding the Transformation of Western Democracies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Thacker, E. (2004) *Biomedica*. Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press.

Thrift, N. (2008) *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*. New York-London: Routledge.

Virno, P. (2004) *A Grammar of the Multitude: An Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Vismann, C. (2008) *Files: Law and Media Technology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Warner, M. (2002) *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York: Zone Books.

Weyland, K. (2001) 'Clarifying a Contested Concept: "Populism" in the Study of Latin American Politics', *Comparative Politics* 34.1: 1-22.

Weyland, K. (2017) 'Populism: A Political-Strategic Approach', in C. Rovira Kaltwasser *et al.* (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Žižek, S. (2006) 'Against the Populist Temptation', *Critical Inquiry* 32.3: 551-574.

Zuboff, S. (2018) *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. New York: PublicAffairs.