The most successful ideological effects are those which have no need of words, and ask no more than complicitous silence. It follows, incidentally, that any analysis of ideologies, in the narrow sense of "legitimating discourses", which fails to include an analysis of the corresponding institutional mechanisms is liable to be no more than a contribution to the efficacy of those ideologies. (Bourdieu, Outline 188)

In Argentina, the people are what they are but rarely what they seem. Our country is not knowable on the basis of the sources that meet the eye but through the sources--always disguised and underground--that feed those forces. (Eloy Martínez, The Perón Novel 308)

cultural studies resists definition. In this chapter I suggest one reason why this is so: because it shares so many of the features of the political phenomenon of populism, cultural studies can appear to be all things to all people. At its most general and diffuse, cultural studies is the name given to the expansive project that opens up new fields and new types of text or practice for analysis and critique. This is cultural studies as it has transformed literary departments, provoking a series of
shifts from high culture to less prestigious genres: from the rise of the novel to the growth of science fiction; from John Keats to Bob Dylan; from Shakespeare to Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Such shifts are populist in a loose sense, in that they are driven by the desire to validate non-elite cultural forms, and so to underline the worth of the "ordinary." "Culture is ordinary," declared Raymond Williams in 1958, "that is the first fact" ("Culture is Ordinary" 3). Culture is not, then, the exclusive preserve of a minority; it is not Matthew Arnold's "best which has been thought and said" (Culture and Anarchy 6). Cultural studies returns the concept of culture to the people.

Cultural studies is therefore also populist in a stricter sense. Most of its practitioners see their vocation as being in some way political, and see the movement to open or break traditional canons as of more than merely academic interest. The shift to something closer to an anthropological definition of culture is envisaged as a blow (however small) against an elite that has monopolized our conception of culture in the West. Cultural studies becomes an oppositional practice, driven by a democratizing impulse. It shares this impulse with the parallel moves on the part of feminist, African
American, and Latino/a scholars (among others) who study "minority" cultural production as a means to open up the academy, and by extension also other institutions in which culture is consecrated and preserved (museums, publishing houses, and so on), to voices that have hitherto been excluded and unheard. But if identity politics argues for the specific history and experience of particular groups (women, African Americans, Latinos/as), cultural studies has a broader remit, overlapping with and to some extent including identity politics. Above and beyond identity, and above and beyond class, cultural studies declares its solidarity with the people as a social subject.

This, then, is a third way in which cultural studies is a populist project. Beyond its choice of popular texts and practices to study, and its oppositional stance towards elite definitions of culture, cultural studies is also linked to an affirmative politics of solidarity with a diffuse social subject that, for want of a better word, could be called the "people." Expansive in ambition as well as in its choice of object, we can see why Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler, and Lawrence Grossberg, introducing the collection that largely put cultural studies on the map in the United States, should insist that
"cultural studies is both an intellectual and a political tradition" (5; my emphasis). Moreover, we can also see why they should locate it firmly as a project of the left, quoting with approval James Carey's judgement that it leads "to a revolutionary line of political action or, at the least, a major project of social reconstruction" (5). For such critics, cultural studies inherits Marxism's position as social conscience of the academy, and inspiration for struggles beyond it. Yet cultural studies is not itself Marxist, first because its practitioners reject Marxism's exclusive focus on the working class, and second because they have on the whole given up on revolution in favor of "social reconstruction." The turn from Marxism is more pronounced now that cultural studies has become (itself) popular, and as it has become institutionalized especially in the United States, but even in the first flush of British cultural studies in the 1960s and 70s, populism was almost always a vital component of its project. Cultural studies is post-Marxist both because it draws on Marxist categories (such as ideology or commodification) and theorists (Gramsci, Althusser), and because it effectively replaces Marxism as the pre-eminent radical theoretical and critical perspective in the academy. Populism replaces
Marxism, as though one were the natural continuation of the other.

Jim McGuigan goes as far as to suggest that "a non-populist cultural studies is very nearly a contradiction in terms: it is an academic game which might do better calling itself something else" (Cultural Populism 13; emphasis in original). He argues that "the field of study is unintelligible without recognition of its populist impulses" (32). Yet few have engaged with this populism, or considered its consequences, theoretical or political. Too often, populism has served as a loose descriptor rather than as a prompt for more sustained reflection. In this chapter, I pursue the question of cultural studies' populism, and attempt to pin down the key features of both populism and cultural studies. This is more than merely a move to understand or make intelligible an academic movement that happens to be currently in vogue.  

Arguably "cultural studies" is not now the phrase of the moment as it was a few years ago. Still, a very rough and ready search suggests that up to 50-70 of the jobs advertised in the ADE and ADPL job lists for Languages and Literatures in 2003 mention "cultural studies" in one way or another.
become the vehicle for intellectuals looking to reinvent a certain image of the left, oppositional and engaged, its populist inclinations afford it little critical purchase against a new right, one of whose defining characteristics is very often a rejuvenated populism. As I write, film star Arnold Schwarzenegger has just won election as governor of California in almost classically populist style, prompting comparisons from many commentators with the career of Ronald Reagan. Cultural studies emerged in the shadow of Thatcherism and Reaganism: is it but a reflex of such populism, or can it provide a suitable critique of its own conditions of production?

It is true that cultural studies has proven one of the best hopes for a critical theory in the academy. Its current fairly firm establishment in the academy is no mean feat, and serves as a flag of convenience under which to rally many worthwhile endeavors. Yet, unguarded and unreflexive, cultural studies has something like a compulsion to repeat the populist tendency to substitute culture for the state in its analyses. As such, then, the future of this particular left project has to be in question. The inclination of cultural studies (in line with the inclinations of the Anglo-American political
left's latest incarnations) is to provide little more than a counterpoint to the populism of the right, which continues to provide the main tune. I argue that cultural studies' analytic logic of hegemony may offer an ever increasing number of critical targets and ammunition in the field of culture, but fails to note the systemic relations between culture and the state, between ideologies and their "corresponding institutional mechanisms" in Bourdieu's phrase (188), let alone the extent to which the cultural may itself operate as a screen, a fetishized substitute, in the political logic of populist command. Even as cultural studies gains ground, in so far as it shares rather than criticizes this fetishism it may in fact be oblivious to--perhaps even help to hide--a marked expansion of political and state command.

The cultural studies tradition has been elaborated around a populist anxiety that is at times repressed, at times more or less expressed, but hardly theorized. Cultural studies' development and expansion has coincided with--and is both a symptom of and reaction to--an era of populism in Britain and the US. But it has little to say to that populism. I turn to Argentine theorist Ernesto Laclau to examine the anxiety that surrounds populism.
Laclau articulates well the problem and challenge for cultural studies, which is its need to produce a theory and critique (indeed, perhaps to start with, a definition) of populism in general—rather than micro-sociological analysis of subaltern resistances or piecemeal reaction to specific discourses of oppression. For only thus might it differentiate and distinguish its project clearly from that of the populist right.

Yet cultural studies has only very intermittently faced this problem or even approached this challenge, and any theory of populism has consistently been blocked by cultural studies' own populist impulses. For while it may be true that not all populist projects are equal—and the description of cultural studies as populist is not necessarily a slur or accusation—it should equally not be assumed that the overlap or continuity between right populism and cultural studies is insignificant. Are perhaps both the political populism of the right and the academic populism of the left performing the same function: maintaining a fiction of hegemony that perpetuates the dream of a harmonious social compact?

My aim is to establish a dialogue between the Latin American history of populism, specifically the experience of Peronism in
Argentina, and cultural studies. I regard Laclau's theory of populism (for which Peronism is the prime object of analysis) as a model and theoretical influence for the contemporary project of cultural studies as a whole. The detour through Peronism maps out what I call a secret history of cultural studies (see my "Peronism and the Secret History of Cultural Studies," on which this chapter draws). Latin America and its populist experience, I suggest, indicates something like the concealed truth of cultural studies, and its theoretical and political limits.

This secret history of cultural studies—involving the global periphery but touching at the very heart of cultural studies as a practice centered in Britain and the United States—enables its major preoccupations to be reframed and rehistoricized. Not only has populism itself reached its most successful and fully realized instantiation in this Latin American periphery, but also the theory of populism that cultural studies seems to require has been most fully articulated through a consideration of Latin American populism. My genealogy for cultural studies therefore assigns particular importance to Laclau's theoretical formulations and emphasizes the extent to which his (and Chantal Mouffe's) hegemony theory is indebted to the experience, consideration and theorization of Peronist populism. This history of cultural studies thus necessarily passes through the figures of Juan and Evita Perón and the political movement they inaugurated.

It is unsurprising to turn to Latin America in an attempt to understand populism. The Anglo-American experience is tardy compared to that region's own "populist epoch" (Castañeda 44), which can perhaps be dated from 1930 and the accession of Gertulio Vargas in
Brazil through to the (neo)populist revivals of the 1970s and possibly even the present day. (I explore the possible differences between populism and neopopulism, or between neoliberalism and neopopulism here, in chapter two. See, however, the helpful article by Aldo Panfichi and Cynthia Sanborn for an account of the continuance of populism as neopopulism in Peru.) These regimes are the "creole pioneers" of populism. Benedict Anderson uses this phrase of Latin America's priority in the spread of nationalism; that Latin America should also pioneer populism is hardly coincidental given the importance of national ideologies for most populist projects. Of course, Britain and the US saw populist movements before the 1970s, but it is only with Thatcherism and Reaganism that populism came to power in the way that it did several decades earlier in Latin America.

Alaine Touraine also suggests that populism is a particularly Latin American phenomenon:

> Populism has always been the great Latin American temptation, representing a desire for change within continuity, without the violent rupture that both socialist and capitalist processes of industrialization experienced. (qtd. Castañeda 43)

Touraine's reference to the centrality of modernization—to the search for alternative forms of modernization—attempts to explain why Latin America might have taken to populism early, but might also explain its later vogue following the crises of British and US modernization to which (as Stuart Hall observes [qtd. Stratton and Ang 370]) cultural studies is a response. Populism is usually associated with a major re-allocation of national or international economic resources within the same mode of production. Such re-allocation may involve a transfer of resources from the agricultural or extractive sectors to industry, between industrial sectors or from the industrial to the
service sector, but in any case such displacements imply the rupture of existing ideological consensus and the necessity for new articulations of hegemony across very broad and diverse components of the social totality. Arguably, then, populism is associated within the industrial phase of capitalism with underdevelopment (or rather, the associated belated push for development), and within the post-industrial phase of capitalism with the transition from dependence on an industrial base. This might explain the apparent shift of populism from the periphery to the metropolis over the past twenty years.

Populism is badly-enough understood by those who study it as a historical phenomenon. Distinguishing between its various incarnations is far from easy. Populism is always a temptation, always a pleasing gesture. If those who presently engage in cultural studies therefore wish to dissociate themselves from it, they may well have to think seriously, as McGuigan suggests, of abandoning the project of cultural studies as it is presently constituted.

the populism of cultural studies

British cultural studies came closest to identifying and analyzing its populist context, and its own perhaps disturbingly similar desires, in Stuart Hall's work on Thatcherism as authoritarian populism. More recently,
there has been some criticism of cultural studies that invokes the term (examples include not only McGuigan's Cultural Populism but also Fredric Jameson's more evenhanded "On 'Cultural Studies'"). Yet in the end the political and theoretical stakes remain unclear in such work and a theory of populism, which might also be a real theory of cultural studies (rather than the endless historical and genealogical redescriptions that otherwise abound), is still lacking.

Hall comes closest if not to a theory of populism, then at least to a differentiation between a populism of the left and a populism of the right in his narrative of the New Left, which he calls "populist in the 'Narodnik' sense of 'going to the people' and in terms of what they/we might become, rather than in the Thatcherite sense of massaging popular consent by cynical appeals to what the people are said by their betters to want" ("The 'First' New Left" 36). Yet Hall's own work elsewhere shows that Thatcherism is something more than "massaging popular consent"; he here falls back on a logic of "false consciousness" that cultural studies in general repudiates. On the other hand, the question of what "going to the
people" could entail remains (and will remain) a continuing anxiety for cultural studies.

My focus here is on Anglo-American cultural studies, mostly because what is now gradually being called Latin American cultural studies (on whose emergence cf. García Canclini's "Contrasting Perspectives") generally appears to arise late, even as Raymond Williams and others from the cultural studies tradition were read in Argentina at times before they had much influence in the United States (an observation I owe to Beatriz Sarlo). One might also, however, want to rename the tradition of Latin American critical thought (say, from José Enrique Rodó's 1900 _Ariel_ or Domingo Sarmiento's late nineteenth-century _Facundo_, or even earlier) "cultural studies." There are certainly overlaps between that tradition and cultural studies as it is practiced today--above all, in that both situate high culture within a much more diverse panorama of cultural production, and as such reflect more broadly on cultural politics. There is a certain strategic logic to such renaming, in that it questions the priority accorded to the Anglo-American academy. But this strategy is also in the end self-defeating: the attempt to validate Latin American thought by asserting its place under the umbrella of cultural studies is still ultimately a validation of cultural studies as the term that can overcode all other reflection on culture. Better, then, to understand Latin American cultural studies as the result of an encounter between a pre-existing cultural studies tradition and a Latin American context that poses new challenges to that tradition. As such, Latin American cultural studies only really emerges in the 1980s or even 1990s. There has
been plenty of debate and resistance to the emergence of cultural studies within Latin Americanism—a debate analyzed by Alberto Moreiras in his introduction to *The Exhaustion of Difference*. Even many of those who routinely are asked to speak for Latin American cultural studies—Nelly Richard or Beatriz Sarlo, for instance—still tend to shun the label.

But did Latin American populism not inspire a cultural studies tradition equivalent to that nurtured by populism in the UK and the US? Perhaps here one might want to rethink the *testimonio* in the context of cultural studies (a cultural studies that has since championed this genre, emblematically represented by Rigoberta Menchú's *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, in the US "canon wars"). Arguably Peronism can claim to have produced the first Latin American *testimonio* in Rodolfo Walsh's *Operación Masacre* (an account of Aramburu's repression of a 1956 Peronist uprising, written from the point of view of the civilians accidentally caught up in these events), and the links between the *testimonio* genre and cultural studies are significant. For the *testimonio* is an instance of intellectual production, encouragement and ventriloquy of the popular voice in much the same manner as cultural studies' partisan popular ethnography as exemplified by Dick Hebdige's *Subculture* or Paul Willis's *Learning to Labor*. Further, *testimonio* claims to refute aesthetic valorization much as cultural studies' own preference is for analysis of the political and cultural construction of subjectivity within the strictures of official and market-mediated institutions. It should be no surprise, then, that cultural studies first has a significant effect on Latin American studies in the course of the
debates that testimonio provoked. (For more such thoughts on testimonio and cultural studies, see my "Thinking Solidarity.")

More generally, I favor two possible approaches to Latin American cultural studies. We could either opt for a radical nominalism, for which those who choose to call what they are doing Latin American cultural studies be acknowledged as such, and those who would prefer to use some other label be respected for that decision. Or we could declare that Latin American cultural studies does not exist, and has still to be constructed; its promise and its negation are both found in the tension between Latin Americanism and cultural studies, and so long as that tension continues then Latin American cultural studies will inevitably be both invoked and denied, promised and still to come.

If cultural studies somehow continually tends towards populism, this is not only because of its engagement with the populism of the right (indeed, such engagement scarcely characterizes its US variants at all), nor even because of its general focus on what might be called popular culture. Rather, cultural studies is populist in so far as its project can be defined as a attempt to construct a popular cross-class alliance against the dominant power bloc. One can see this even in a founding text of the cultural studies tradition such as Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society*. Williams here argues for the "development of a
common culture" premised on "the idea of solidarity" (332). His emphasis on the "common" is distinct both from the Marxist emphasis on class (even as he states that working class culture may be taken as a model, being "primarily social [. . .] rather than individual" [327]) and the notion of culture and social organization imposed from above, the "poison of hierarchy" (331) against which this book, and the cultural studies it helps to found, take an uncompromising stand. Later, with the institutional founding of cultural studies at the Birmingham Center, Stuart Hall would understand cultural studies' task as aligning it with an anticipated or desired "emerging historical movement" and for cultural studies' intellectuals to be "transmitting [their] ideas, that knowledge, through the intellectual function, to those who do not belong, professionally, in the intellectual class" ("Cultural Studies" 267-278). The task of cultural studies, then, is to identify and encourage popular resistance and mobilization from below.

Cultural studies coincides therefore with Laclau's definition of populism, which states that: "populism consists in the presentation of popular-democratic interpellations as a synthetic-antagonistic complex with
respect to the dominant ideology" (Politics and Ideology 172-3; emphasis in original). Populism represents society as structured by an antagonism between dominance, on the one hand, and a more diverse set of interests and subjectivities that it names popular, on the other. Its self-appointed task is to bring together the disparate ideological elements that constitute the people, and to bring out the antagonism that they represent to the dominant ideology. It is this that, for Laclau, would be the core of a concept of hegemony. Thus cultural studies likewise gathers dissident popular activities, readings, decodings and so forth, to stress and present their commonality and their antagonistic potential as the makings of a counter-hegemonic historical movement.

Moreover, Laclau argues that "the emergence of populism is historically linked to a crisis of the dominant ideological discourse which is in turn part of a more general social crisis" (173), and it should be clear that such were also the conditions for the full-fledged emergence of cultural studies. Cultural studies arose and gained its full store of theoretical and institutional resources in a context defined not only by the defeats of the left, and the discrediting of Marxism (features that
had also been present in its first, post-1956, incarnation), but also by the generalized climate of crisis--oil crisis, currency crisis, debt crisis, unemployment crisis--from the early 70s to the early 80s. The ideological discourses then current could provide neither explanation nor answer to these crises. The conjuncture also immediately opened up to the global--Hall is quoted by Jon Stratton and Ien Ang as saying that the conditions of possibility for cultural studies lay in the post-war "manifest break-up of traditional culture" and "the cultural impact of the long-delayed entry of the United Kingdom into the modern world" (370). Yet Stratton and Ang argue that this crisis of national identity--to which Thatcherism also responds, as Hall has made clear--that foments cultural studies is equally repressed by cultural studies as it demarcates itself so firmly according to national identity: first British, then a host of other (American, Australian, French and so on) cultural studies, defined by national provenance. Like populism, cultural studies takes national shape as a reaction to global crisis.

As Hall's work on Thatcherism particularly makes clear, cultural studies as it emerged and developed in the
1970s and 1980s centered around a specific anxiety regarding populism. Cultural studies in the 1950s and 1960s had looked to the populist appeal of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) for the New Left of the 1950s and 60s with approbation, as "a popular movement with a clear radical thrust and an implicit 'anti-capitalist' content, formed through self-activity in civil society around a concrete issue, but lacking a clear class composition and appealing to people across the clear-cut lines of traditional class identity or organizational loyalties" (Hall, "The 'First' New Left" 32). In so far as cultural theorists consciously considered political populism before the 1970s, therefore, it was as a movement in synch with their own goals and their own understandings of the political. The former communist E P Thompson would remain a leading light of CND right through to its resurgence in the 1980s as one of the few movements with any claim to counter-hegemonic success against Thatcherism.2

In the late 1970s, however, any residual celebration of left-populism found itself trumped by a resurgent

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2 The CND has regularly held the record of the largest demonstrations organized in London, from the Aldermaston march of 1960 to the rally against the war in Iraq in February 2003. During the 1980s CND was able to mobilize thousands at a period when the Labour party was in the electoral and political wilderness.
populism of the right. However, Hall found within Thatcherism (as Laclau found in Peronism) the opportunity to crystallize and define the problem of cultural studies' (for Laclau more generally the left's) populism. Hall realized that traditional methods and theories could not account for Thatcherite populist success, and that the right was providing the "emerging historic movement" of the moment, and thus stealing a march on cultural studies and the left. Cultural studies, which had always attempted to address the failure of left projects for radical change, was now faced with a successful hegemonic shift engineered by the right and, after 1979, from a position of state power. As Hall re-stated the problem in the mid 1980s, Thatcherism had "set out to and has effectively become a populist political force, enlisting popular consent among significant sections of the dominated classes [. . .] through a combination of the imposition of social discipline from above [. . .] and of populist mobilization from below" ("The Toad in the Garden" 40). Thatcherism thus presented not only a political but also a theoretical challenge, demonstrating for Hall the need to turn to hegemony as the key notion in any understanding of power (53). Indeed, "Thatcherism gives you a better
understanding of what the struggle for hegemony is about than almost anything one has seen in the politics on the left" (61). If there is a note of surprise here, it is also the note of anxiety at the base of cultural studies, even if this anxiety has since been repressed in much cultural studies work. The right was proving far more successful on what this new left considered its own natural terrain.

No wonder then that Hall suggested that "make no mistake, a tiny bit of all of us is also somewhere inside the Thatcherite project" (The Hard Road to Renewal 165). Thatcherism interpellated cultural studies twice over: first in so far as it appealed generally to a sense of antagonism against the status quo; and second in that it offered a paradigm of a successful hegemonic project. No wonder also that Laclau's work on Peronist populism (which most drew Hall's attention) and his later work with Mouffe (which fed into the translation of cultural studies to the United States) seemed so useful, defining as it did the stakes and goals of a left populism and refining the theoretical analysis of hegemony. In the process, however, Hall's continuing anxiety about the state could be forgotten (eventually, it might seem, even by Hall himself)
and thus also his argument that "the moment of the passage of power into the State and its condensation there into a definite system of rule is a critical historical moment, representing a distinct phase" ("The Toad in the Garden" 53).

Hall seldom attempts to define populism, but there has, of course, been much work on defining populism in Latin America, even as populism always seems to escape definition. Populism attempts to provide a solution to crises in national identity while leaving that identity inchoate and somehow beyond representation. Sagrario Torres Ballesteros argues that "[w]hat is important [. . .] is the confrontation between the 'people' and the 'anti-people,' the struggle between 'poor and rich,' 'exploiters and exploited' [etc. . . .]. All populist rhetoric revolves around the 'people/anti-people' antagonism" (173). Under Peronism, the anti-people was defined for the most part in terms of imperialism and its oligarchical agents within Argentina, named "enemies of the people" as in the section with this title in Perón's Pensamiento Político de Perón (121-123). However, this Manichean distinction is expressed more broadly and more succinctly in the phrase that serves as epigraph for this same book: "For a Peronist there should be nothing better than another Peronist" (5). This phraseology offered a still greater degree of rhetorical flexibility (if also instability) to the Peronist logic of political demonology in so far as the people were thus only secondarily identified as the "poor" or "exploited" (or "descamisados"), their primary identification being as Peronists. Peronism is here defined purely by
its negation of and antagonism towards an as yet undefined and perhaps indefinable other.

Yet Peronism also conveyed an apparent refusal of conventional dualisms that might appear to construct a binary system through simple negation. Various traditional (or even non-traditional) referents, such as the poor, the people, or the descamisados, were articulated into a system of equivalences with Peronism, a term otherwise outside of such a referential (as opposed to phatic) discourse. Presenting itself as outside of such binary frameworks, because its own articulations, however consistent, were contingent rather than necessary, Peronism could position itself as a third term or horizon to all such either/or logic. This then was the Peronist "Third Position" (Perón 123-125) also expressed in slogans constructed precisely through the simple addition of Peronism as negation of a given binary, such as "Neither nazis nor fascists--Peronists" or "Neither Yankees nor Marxists--Peronists" (qtd. Ciria 311). In sum, this is the process that Laclau has termed "the social production of 'empty signifiers'" (Emancipation(s) 36), whereby a signifier, here "Peronism," defined in its relation to a chain of equivalences among a whole set of disparate signifiers in a specific regime of signification, appears to transcend and thus establish itself outside of that signifying system.

Thus part of populism's definition becomes its ability to resist definition and, practically, Perón was thus able to shift position constantly, defining and re-defining anti-Peronism (also therefore the "anti-people") according to situation and circumstance, while leaving the actual substance of Peronism itself relatively underdetermined and yet retaining the same apparent referent both in his own charisma (his
own name) and in the notion of an ideal, unbroken movement of Peronism towards an un-named historical destiny. This presentation of equivocation as constancy was most successful in the early seventies (say, in 1972), just prior to his return to Argentina, as Perón played off the Peronist Youth (and associated guerrilla movements) against the union old guard and vice versa, before finally demonizing the youth movement itself at a mass rally they had organized for 1 May 1974, thus expelling from the movement those who--it seemed--had only been contingently incorporated (cf. di Tella 66).

Such redefinition and expulsion provided the limit to what was otherwise the corollary of Peronism's populist indefiniteness, this being the availability of Peronism as the legitimation and support for multiple political inflections from the far right (Perón's fascist elements) through reformism to the revolutionary left (John Cooke or some of the armed groups). The fact that anyone could be part of the coalition meant also that no-one was essential to it. This ambiguity was heightened as the figure of Evita was also available as a second pole for would-be Peronist negative identification, for example in the montoneros' construction of Evita as incarnation of the Peronist left: "if Evita were alive, she would be a montonera." Through all this Peronism flirted with what Alberto Moreiras calls "the death of politics" in that he defines "politics [as] the negotiation of difference" ("Pastiche Identity, and Allegory of Allegory" 207), both in its annulling difference, and in its constitution of non-negotiable differences. John Frow's critique of Laclau's valorization of populism is based on a similar premise, that its organizing "'structure of feeling' [... is] the building of a space of equivalences held together by the absolute otherness of the opponent;
the repression of difference; the politics of the Imaginary" (79). But Peronism would never reach this form of death, as history would always frustrate the Imaginary (perhaps better, virtual) realization of absolute hegemony. Only in exile could Perón maintain his position as empty signifier.

During Perón's exile there was a certain complicity between those making opportunistic use of Perón and those whom Perón manipulated to maintain himself as leader, if absent. The irony of Perón's death was that, far from bringing political or ideological closure, it ensured the further fragmentation of these tendencies without the possibility of their unification or further authoritative re-definition. Given the triple identification of party, people and state in this antagonistic indefinition, all three aspects—in civil society, culture and state—were thus bound to disintegrate. Tomás Eloy Martínez's The Perón Novel, which concerns the day of Perón's return after almost 20 years abroad, can be read in this context as a study of Peronism as both an open field of identification and affiliation and as the moment of closure. The massacre at Ezeiza airport that ensued as Perón re-entered Argentine history marked the state violence that ends interpretation and establishes the anti-people. Perón's return to Argentina meant the return of history to Peronism, the fragmentation of hegemony in the need to (re-)establish a state.

Put in terms of hegemony, the problem facing cultural studies is this: as a project of the left in an epoch in which the right is dominant, cultural studies defines its calling as the attempt to construct counter-hegemony. But
how, apart from its articulation from a position of disempowerment, is counter-hegemony to be distinguished from hegemony? Surely at some point counter-hegemony becomes hegemony, as it succeeds in articulating and synthesizing a greater number of disparate ideological elements. Populism in power (such as Thatcherism after 1979) would seem, at first glance, merely to be more successful in this aim than populist projects that remain without power. The problem that arises, however, is that of how to map hegemony onto the state: projects to construct hegemony would seem, *prima facie*, not to be as inimical to the state as their rhetoric of antagonism might otherwise imply. Indeed, in that populism claims to be transformative, it seeks out power with which to effect such transformations. As a modernizing force, populism claims to renovate institutions that it claims are gripped by traditionalism, but it also requires an institutional base from which to launch that renovation. (Perhaps here we have also some indication of the tensions affecting cultural studies in the course of its institutionalization in the academy.)

When modernization projects fail—or when their ideological legitimation is unavailable—the Latin American experience has been
that authoritarian regimes step in to complete (or to further) this program of developmentalist re-adjustment. Though authoritarianism is marked by a certain contempt for ideological legitimation (for which it substitutes coercion), this is not to say that it gives up on discursive legitimation altogether; merely that it prioritizes efficiency over hegemony. Authoritarianism's self-legitimation may still take its cue from the populist project of national popular redemption. Thus perhaps authoritarianism is the pursuit of hegemony by other means once populism has defined hegemony as the model for the political—or perhaps rather, once populism has defined hegemony as politics by other means. That military rule should seek justification by an appeal to populist understandings of hegemony gives an ironic twist to the martial understanding of politics implicit in the Gramscian concept of hegemony. Authoritarianism literalizes what, in cultural studies at least, is generally taken to be the figurative conceit of defining the pursuit of hegemony as a war of position.

Thus the Argentine military president Juan Carlos Onganía in 1966 refers above all to the military re-imposition of national unity, arguing that "the cohesion of our institutions [. . .] ought to be our permanent concern because that cohesion is the maximum guarantor of the spirit that gave rise to the republic" (in Loveman and Davis 195). Equally, "in his farewell address to the Argentine people in 1973, General Alejandro Lanusse felt obliged to thank his fellow citizens for their patience with a government that had not been elected" (Schoultz 20).
hegemony as politics

If the characteristic articulatory structure of populism is a cross-class alliance from below, and a shift in patterns of modernization its typical historical context, populism's major analytic trope is the substitution of hegemony for all other understandings of the political. In so far as hegemony consists in the articulation of disparate subject positions around a common program, this populist reliance upon hegemony is hardly surprising, of course, and follows from its basic structural refusal of essentialism. Moreover, and for the same reasons, hegemony is also the major trope of cultural studies. Indeed, it is almost a commonplace that hegemony is the key concept of cultural studies, at least in its post-Althusserian phase, and it was the contestatory connotations of hegemony, the notion that hegemony is always incomplete and thus open to negotiation, that appealed to cultural studies over Althusser's apparently bleak structuralism.3 Dick Hebdige--

3 Commenting on a draft of this chapter, Lawrence Grossberg suggested to me that articulation, rather than hegemony, is the key concept of cultural studies. However, as Jennifer Daryl Slack's useful genealogy of the concept of articulation demonstrates, it is the understanding of hegemony that gives articulation (political and practical) purpose and framework, given that "hegemony [is] a process of articulating practices in discourse" (120). Articulation, in cultural studies, is what goes to make up hegemony. Moreover, Slack's conclusion expresses
whose Subculture is, as Jameson points out, perhaps the single most influential book written from within the cultural studies tradition ("On 'Cultural Studies'" 51 n. 3)--simply states that the "theory of hegemony [...] provides the most adequate account of how dominance is sustained in advanced capitalist societies" (15).

Moreover, if we understand hegemony as a process rather than an accomplishment--as an effort to win consent rather than the assumption of consensus--it is unsurprising that this process becomes visible precisely in the context of peripheral failure to achieve infrastructural and political re-organization. In Antonio Gramsci's work it is Italy and thus the European semi-periphery that registers the necessity for hegemony in a context of relative political and economic underdevelopment. Likewise it is unsurprising that the major modern theorization of hegemony--Laclau and Mouffe's--should arise precisely from a consideration of Latin American populism, and specifically from its most accomplished (if, finally, failed) instantiation, Argentine Peronism. Mapping the

a concern that there is a (technocratic) tendency in cultural studies to see articulation "more as a theoretical, methodological and epistemological [problem] than as a political and strategic one" (125); in other words, a tendency to disassociate articulation from the hegemonic analysis that gives cultural studies its politics and its strategies.
secret history of cultural studies via this detour through Laclau, Latin America, and Peronism does more than add merely a more nuanced and less parochially Anglophone element to the founding fictions of cultural studies; it also restores to cultural studies its full political investment in social theory and questions of strategy and organization.

Both Latin Americanists and those in cultural studies or theory seem to forget Laclau's Latin American and Argentine origins. Yet Laclau himself states that "the years of political struggle in the Argentina of the 1960s" remain his primary context and point of reference:

I didn't have to wait to read post-structuralist texts to understand what a "hinge," "hymen," "floating signifier" or the "metaphysics of presence" were: I'd already learnt this through my practical experience as a political activist in Buenos Aires. So when today I read Of Grammatology, S/Z or the Écrits of Lacan, the examples which always spring to mind are not from philosophical and literary texts; they are from a discussion in an Argentinian trade union, a clash of opposing slogans at a demonstration, or a debate during a party congress. (New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time 200)

In the same interview he recalls that he was first a member of the Partido Socialista Argentino, then later the nationalist Partido Socialista de la Izquierda Nacional which was in alliance with Peronism, considering it the bearer of the "bourgeois banners" that had started the anti-imperialist revolution (197-200).

On the other hand, perhaps cultural studies, whose unexamined nationalism(s) Stratton and Ang set out to reveal, may indeed register Laclau's disruption of its tidy Anglophone-centered self-understanding
in the fact that, as Slack notes, "[i]n spite of the importance of
Laclau's formulations, he has been excluded--as has Mouffe--from most
of the popular histories of cultural studies" (120). Indeed, despite
the fact that his first book, Politics and Ideology, certainly had
greater influence on British cultural studies than his (and Mouffe's)
later Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, in that it aided the
formulation of crucial parts of cultural studies' theories of hegemony
and articulation (whereas the later work facilitated their export to
both other countries such as the US and other disciplines such as
political science), its clear Latin Americanist focus may contribute
to the fact that it is seldom referenced.

Laclau's major statement on hegemony is undoubtedly
his and Mouffe's Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, in which
they construct a genealogy of the concept taking in
Luxemburg, Lenin, and Sorel (among others) before passing
through and (they would claim) superseding Gramsci himself.
However, I wish to re-historicize their own theorizing.
They state that "'hegemony' will not be the majestic
unfolding of an identity but the response to a crisis," and
that their genealogy is also (as they claim, following
Michel Foucault) the "archaeology of a silence" (7), but
their intellectual history, mapping socialist traditions to
European high theory, passes over in silence the Peronist
crisis that underlies Laclau's previous book, Politics and
Ideology in Marxist Theory. Politics and Ideology outlines the first steps towards the theory of hegemony, but not so much within an intellectual (and European) tradition of political philosophy, but more in the historical analysis of (as the subtitle denotes) capitalism, fascism and (Latin American) populism.

It is Laclau's analysis of populism that enables him to clear the ground for the later Hegemony and Socialist Strategy in that he presents populism as providing the clearest proof of the error that is traditional Marxism's class essentialism. Just as the Gramscian notion of hegemony emerges less from an abstract theoretical development and improvement of an intellectual tradition (though it may come to have such a significance) and more from the historical circumstance of Italian underdevelopment and the failed political leadership of the Northern elite, so Laclau sees populism as a practical stumbling block to the development of the theory of ideology and only consequently constructs this as a problem immanent to the theory itself. For the problem of populism is that it seems to have no necessary class basis: left movements such as Maoism and right movements such as nazism (not to mention problematic formations such as Peronism
that contain both left and right elements) all seem to exhibit populist features. This, then, constitutes "the impossibility of linking the strictly populist element to the class nature of a determinate movement" (Politics and Ideology 158), and thus the impossibility of any simple evaluation of populist movements according to their class orientation.4

Yet the class reductionism that has typified Marxism precisely attempts to link ideological (or superstructural) elements to particular classes or class fractions—to say that nationalism is necessarily a bourgeois ideology, for example—and to attribute apparent deviations from this model to instances of false consciousness, of the masses being "duped." Further, even where the Leninist notion of hegemony as class alliance to construct a Popular Front allows the strategic interest for the working class in adopting some bourgeois ideological tenets, this is still taken to be a strategic deviation, against the grain of the basic class rootedness of ideological and political expressions. Populism confounds this conception of class

4 Likewise Hall in his discussion of the New Left's populism describes it as a break from then current and increasingly impossible arguments over questions such as "whether or not the Soviet bomb was a 'Workers' Bomb' and therefore more worth keeping than the capitalist one" ("The 'First' New Left" 32).
reductionism, as populist movements are not clear instances of either false consciousness or strategic alliance and are not so especially in their most typical exemplars. Thus, according to Laclau:

'It is easy to see, then, why a conception which makes class reduction the ultimate source of intelligibility of any phenomenon has met with particular difficulties in the analysis of populism, and has oscillated between reducing it to the expression of class interests--or of the immaturity of a class--and continuing to use the term in an undefined and purely allusive way. (Politics and Ideology 159)

Laclau's solution to this problem is to suggest that there is no necessary relation between class position and ideological elements (such as nationalism), but that the relations of production determine the form in which these ideological elements appear. This form is the articulatory principle of all ideological elements in a determinate historical conjuncture: thus "classes exist at the ideological and political level in a process of articulation and not of reduction" (161). The process of articulation is also the process of hegemony: through articulating various ideological strands, which may appeal to distinct social groups and interests, a class succeeds in neutralizing contradictions between ideological elements and constructing itself as the principle of unification of all these diverse elements. Laclau argues that for the
dominant class, this hegemonic process is usually that of transformism, the neutralization of dissident elements through their accommodation in a hegemonic articulatory bloc. Social democracy, for example, relies upon the concept and practice of the welfare state to articulate and neutralize subaltern demands for inclusion. The relation, then, between any hegemonic process and its constituent ideological elements is radically contingent; it is only through a formal, functional analysis that the class character of ideological struggle can be determined.

For the purposes of the genealogy of Laclau's thought (and of cultural studies' understanding of hegemony) we should note that in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy he and Mouffe repudiate even the idea that class struggle determines the form of hegemonic articulations. In this later book, any social group—such as feminists, ecological activists or other new social movements—may come to determine the nodal point of a hegemonic bloc. This is the point at which Laclau moves decisively from a Marxist to a post-Marxist framework, as class is deprived of any epistemological or ontological priority whatsoever.\(^5\) The totality of all such struggles then becomes the

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\(^5\) This is also of course the trajectory of cultural studies, at just about the time of the publication of Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, as it was being translated to the US. One would hesitate to make any absolute inferences about causality here, however this influential text of Laclau and Mouffe's certainly facilitated both of the other two processes.
democratic struggle--the struggle for radical democracy--which is the ever-expanding horizon of politics for Laclau and Mouffe. As the hegemonic project expands to articulate the demands of more social groups--and as the progress of social differentiation produces and abstracts more such groups and demands--they argue that it necessarily tends to become more democratic. As modernization brings about a more differentiated society, less available for simple ideological suture (than, for example, feudal society), they see this process of hegemonic articulation becoming increasingly important: "the hegemonic form of politics only becomes dominant at the beginning of modern times" (Hegemony and Socialist Strategy 138), and thenceforth experiences a "constant expansion" (139), tending to approximate the social totality.

Although such democratic struggles are ultimately subordinate to the class struggle in Politics and Ideology, the structure of political engagement is the same: politics is the combined movement of articulation and antagonism. Antagonism is the necessary second moment of a democratic struggle, and the second articulating principle (in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, the sole articulating principle) of the political field. Antagonism is the confrontation between a hegemonic bloc and its constitutive outside: it is the differentiation subsequent to the establishment of a system of equivalences that is the process of hegemonic articulation. Without antagonism there is no oppositional force--and indeed, social democracy or other parliamentary systems that serve the interests of the dominant class may well try to avoid antagonism in favor of a transformism that will neutralize otherwise antagonistic demands. Antagonism, however, is for Laclau the motor that drives the political progress of
democratization: in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy this conclusion is presented as a consequence of the philosophical claim that "antagonism constitutes the limit of every objectivity" (125); in Politics and Ideology it is populism that provides the model for antagonism in that populism polarizes the social field in a pure relation of antagonism.

Populism polarizes the social field (rather than neutralizing its conflicts through transformism) by pointing up the second possible principle of articulation within any social totality--that specific to the social formation between the people and the power bloc. Thus for Laclau "Populism starts at the point where popular-democratic elements are presented as an antagonistic option against the ideology of the dominant bloc" (Politics and Ideology 173). For Laclau in Politics and Ideology, in so far as the people-power bloc contradiction is ancillary (if ultimately subordinate) to the contradiction that is the class struggle, these two possible articulatory principles make up the "double articulation of political discourse" (167), and both need to be specified to describe or theorize adequately any determinate political formation. Further, as the social formation, the relation between the people and the power bloc, is subordinate (in the last instance) to the mode of production, and thus to the class
struggle, any analysis of populism needs further to be qualified by an understanding of its principle of class hegemony. Thus there can be a populism of the left and of the right because the people-power bloc antagonism can be articulated by either the dominant or the dominated class. There is therefore both "a populism of the dominant classes and a populism of the dominated classes" (173). Differentiations between the varied expressions of populism—from fascism to Maoism—can therefore be ascertained according to analysis of their ultimate class articulation. Laclau thus seems to provide a theory that could distinguish between populisms.

But Laclau goes further, arguing for the necessity of populism. In that the two articulations (popular-democratic and class) are never fully separable, Laclau argues that a successful hegemonic struggle on the part of the dominated class must also take into account this other mode of articulation, which cannot therefore be understood as an impurity or a deviation from socialism. Far from it:

The struggle of the working class for its hegemony is an effort to achieve the maximum possible fusion between popular-democratic ideology and socialist ideology. In this sense a "socialist populism" is not the most backward form of working class ideology but the most advanced—the moment when the working class has succeeded in condensing the ensemble of democratic
ideology in a determinate social formation within its own ideology. [. . .]

In socialism, therefore, coincide the highest form of "populism" and the resolution of the ultimate and most radical of class conflicts.

(Politics and Ideology 174, 196)

Thus Laclau validates the populist character of Latin American liberation movements—while providing, with his appeal to class as the ultimate articulating principle, a means of differentiating and judging between various forms of populism, refusing therefore uncritical celebration.

It is in this sense that Laclau seems to produce the theory of populism that cultural studies demands: a theory that is able simultaneously to validate and to criticize the populist impulse on the basis of theoretical analysis exterior to the domain of popular culture itself. My argument, however, will be that this is at the cost of losing sight of the state.

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6 In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Laclau and Mouffe move to a different validation and criterion of criticism of populism, but the project itself remains essentially the same: that of understanding populism, conceived as a hegemonic articulation of popular-democratic elements, as the principle of politics itself in these new (non class-reductionist) times. In the later book, the criterion by which to judge populist articulations is their potential for expansion of the logic of the social, or "the struggle for a maximum autonomization of spheres on the basis of the generalization of the equivalential-egalitarian logic" (167). Purportedly this populist struggle for "radical and plural democracy" thus "finds within itself the principle of its own validity" (167; emphasis in original), but I argue that this later attempt to redefine the basis of democratic struggle still leaves crucially unexamined the forces against which the struggle is waged.
Even at its most basic—in its expansion of the electoral franchise, for example—Peronism has to be seen as a movement to expand the logic of the social, and thus advance radical democracy according to its definition offered by Laclau and Mouffe. Specifically and importantly, women gained the right to vote under Perón in 1949. Indeed, and especially through Evita's welfare policies, Peronism took in the sphere of daily life as a legitimate arena for political demands in a way that confounded the conception of public (masculine) citizenship advanced through liberalism. In this as in other examples—one thinks also perhaps of the category of youth advanced in the 60s and 70s—Peronism was far from opposed to the logic of the new social movements, but rather the site of their nurture and encouragement, even as it worked to construct and incorporate the power of the traditional working class. If Peronism did effect a unification of the social through the binarization of the people-power bloc distinction, this was not at all through effacing difference but rather in constructing and articulating, in a relation of equivalence, a whole series of new social actors in precisely this radical democratic tendency towards colonization of the social. Like Laclau and Mouffe's vision of a radical democracy, Peronism did see the social as open, while the constitutive antagonisms of populism remained.

Though Laclau and Mouffe argue that "popular struggles only occur in the case of relations of extreme exteriority between the dominant groups and the rest of the community" (133)—and thus presumably are therefore more likely at the
capitalist periphery rather than at its more internally differentiated core—the logic of hegemonic articulation continues to be populist in that it consists of the development of ever new antagonisms. The significance of the new social movements thus consists in the fact that "numerous new struggles have expressed resistance against the new forms of subordination, and this from within the very heart of the new society" (Hegemony and Socialist Strategy 161). Though Laclau elsewhere observes that these movements and classical populism differ in that "[p]opular mobilizations are no longer based upon a model of total society [. . .] but on a plurality of concrete demands leading to a proliferation of political spaces" ("New Social Movements" 41), this is not necessarily at all a move from the logic of populism. First, because populism is equally flexible and ambiguous, articulating different groups (descamisados, youth, unions) in different ways at different times. Second, because not only is the principle of antagonism maintained, but so is the principle of the constitution of popular subjects--defined by antagonisms "within the very heart of the new society." For Laclau, without this populist element, there is no hegemonic process; or as he puts it in an article devoted precisely
to defining hegemony as the sole (modern) form of politics, "without the constitution of popular subjects there is no war of position" ("Tesis" 24).

It is this constitution of popular subjects that is the core of cultural studies' populism. Moreover, I suggest that any social analysis that relies upon the concept of hegemony thus inevitably partakes of a populist politics. With Laclau and with a detour through the Latin American context in which he sets the notion to work, we can see the implications of its analytical use. It is in the practical analysis of Peronism that Laclau hopes to use the concept of hegemony--understood as the populist articulation of elements antagonistic to the dominant power bloc--as a tool that will differentiate between right and left populism, right and left hegemonic projects. Yet it is also in Laclau's analysis of populism that the limitations--indeed evasions--of the concept of hegemony become evident. Essentially, the limitation of the concept is its evasion and equivocation concerning the role of the state--and again it is the analysis of Peronism that shows up this feature. For while the popular elements of populism are apparent, it is unclear what he considers to be the opposing pole of the antagonism.
Perhaps there has been too much attention paid to the status of the subject of Peronism—the popular subject position especially, if not exclusively, identified with the Argentine working class—just as perhaps there has been too much attention paid to "subjectivity" in cultural studies. Daniel James, at the end of tracing this subject's extensive history in his fine *Resistance and Integration*, can be perhaps read as also signaling the exhaustion of this mode of investigation—enabling us to lay this concern to rest. His emphasis throughout is on the mutability of Peronist identification, especially during Perón's long exile. James is concerned to argue precisely against the notion of some persistence in ideological affiliation—what he terms the "pervasive form of explanation [. . .] which has emphasised the continued adherence of workers to populist ideology" (262). By contrast, James points rather to the ways in which "workers could at times recast traditional tenets of Peronist ideology to express their changing needs and experience" (263) such that "Peronism had become by the late 1950s a sort of protean, malleable commonplace of working-class identification" (264). James himself thus turns from the ideological analysis of Peronism towards a more immanent concern with what he suggests might be "the ontological status of the working class" (259) using Raymond Williams's concept of "structures of feeling" (97) and Pierre Bourdieu's concern with the effects of articulation of "private experience" (30) upon an embodied habitus.

James's subsequent book continues this preoccupation with Peronism as embodied in the Argentine working class, examining first the physical monuments and architecture of the town of Berisso, a "profoundly Peronist place" (*Doña María's Story* 16) just outside of
Buenos Aires, and then the testimony of one particular Peronist activist as a performance in which "final coherence is elusive" (211). James examines the way in which his informant, Doña María, elaborates her identity as activist around a trauma, an affective kernel of "ultimately indigestible feelings" that can never fully be narrativized, that "must simply remain in tense coexistence within the story" that she tells. He expands therefore on the structure of feeling mobilized by Peronism but in tension with the ideological discipline that populism's hegemonic project attempted to impose. This he terms the "melodramatic fix" (280) that Peronism tried to apply to harness the affective energies that its series of oppositional dualisms appropriated (254-255). Likewise, then, Javier Auyero also turns to the theory of performance and to Bourdieu to understand the instantiation and embodiment of Peronism among its activists. "Performing Evita," for instance, is for Auyero "taken for granted, unreflective, and outside the realm of discursive consciousness" (Poor People's Politics 145). Peronism is an affective disposition, a practice of surrender to an "imaginary 'bond of love'" (147) only subsequently overcoded by ideological interpellation.

Perhaps, however, as well as turning from the ideological to the ontological and the affective it might also be useful to move from the focus on either the working class or Perón (Evita or Juan) and towards the way in which the other pole of Peronist mobilization was structured and organized in relation both to the Peronist subject and to Perón himself, which might then be viewed as effects of this organization rather than their principle. In other words, rather than analyze the Peronist subject (whether than be the "ordinary" Peronist or Evita or Juan Perón), I argue for more analysis of the Peronist...
"scene." In the first place this would be an examination of Peronism's use of image, technology and dramaturgy to demarcate its proper spheres of social, symbolic and physical space. An example of such social (primarily urban) scenography and dramaturgy was in the use of the Plaza de Mayo, in front of the Casa Rosada from whose balconies Evita and Juan could address and present themselves (flanked by huge banners bearing portraits of their faces) to the masses below. Peronism thus staged the social collectivity, the people in its positivity, as presumed subjects and objects of a mutual and reflecting gaze between leader and mass. Such a scene was inaugurated in the originary myth of October 17, 1945's demonstration against Perón's enforced resignation. Mariano Plotkin analyzes at length the uses that were made both of this event (thereafter celebrated and recreated annually) and of the annual Mayday parades (which predated, but were appropriated by, Peronism), while also paying attention to the struggles over the interpretation of these "political rituals," especially in so far as socialist groups attempted to reclaim the Mayday march for a non-populist agenda. However he shows that "towards the end of the Peronist regime [. . .] the first of May and the 17th of October were no longer popular festivals, but rather highly ritualized celebrations organized entirely by the state" (129). It is this relation in tension between people and state that I highlight in my final chapter, in which I argue that this scene indicates the presence of another social subject, the multitude.

Given the regime's cinematic and theatrical imaginary, it is no surprise that Evita was a former radio and cinema actress. Indeed, it was her image above all--iconographically either behind a microphone or on the balcony of the Casa Rosada with, as at least one Peronist
caption put it, "her arms [. . .] always raised, encouragingly, in a
gesture of love" (qtd. Poneman, caption to plate 2)--which, as Julie
Taylor suggests, "functioned as intermediary between Perón and his
people, between governmental machinery and governed masses" (67).

Above all, John Kraniauskas's work is an important advance here, both
in its analysis of Peronism and in its theorization of the relations
between culture and the state in the setting of modernization.

Kraniauskas analyzes the Peronist "scene," and particularly Evita's
role within it to mobilize and organize popular affect, in terms of
both psychoanalytic and commodity fetishism. Kraniauskas argues that

Evita "invades the political space of the state" ("Political Puig"
126) and becomes a "hybrid figure, emerging at the interface of the
cultural and the political, where the logics of education and
entertainment fold into the logic of the State, making the latter a
peculiar kind of stage and of Eva Perón herself, a peculiar kind of
fetish" (123). Perhaps, however, it is a case of the logic of the
state folding into (or behind) the logics of (hegemonic) education and
(mass cultural) entertainment. Finally, the state seems to disappear
as, Kraniauskas notes, "(a conservative military) anxiety produces a
substitution (in the form of a phallic monument, the embalmed Eva
Perón) through disavowal (the containment of working-class and female
'barbarism')" (131). I would only add the other side of the process,
to emphasize that this is a double disavowal, as (popular, working
class) anxiety produces a substitution (Evita and the affective
relations she mobilizes) through disavowal (of the conservative,
military--in a word, state--element). This latter operation is also
cultural studies'.
the populist sleight of hand

I have been referring to the opposing pole of the basic antagonism in the social formation as the power bloc—the term Laclau most commonly uses. However, Laclau himself slips between at least three different possible terms when he discusses the nature of this antagonism. Indeed, in a mere two pages he describes this opposition in all three ways: first as "the 'people'/power bloc confrontation" (Politics and Ideology 172); second as "a synthetic-antagonistic complex with regard to the dominant ideology" (172-3); and third as "antagonism towards the State" (173). Moreover, for good measure, he also uses the mixed expression in referring to "an antagonistic option against the ideology of the dominant bloc" (173). In other words, for Laclau's theory of populism it would seem to make little difference whether the dominant pole of the popular antagonism is a bloc, an ideology, the state or some combination of the three elements. A little later—on a page which also specifies the dominant pole as "the power bloc as a whole" (196)—he makes and naturalizes the

7 Juan Carlos Portantiero and Emilio de Ipola underline the problematic nature of this term alone, in so far as it "leaves standing (that is, opens without resolving) the [. . .] problem of the relation between populism and socialism" (210).
articulation between these different elements in a single phrase. Indeed, this is a crucial passage in Laclau's argument:

to the extent that popular resistance exerts itself against a power external and opposed to "the people," that is to say, against the very form of the State, the resolution of "the people"/power bloc contradiction can only consist in the suppression of the State as an antagonistic force with respect to the people. Therefore, the only social sector which can aspire to the full development of "the people"/power bloc contradiction, that is to say, to the highest and most radical form of populism, is that whose class interests lead it to the suppression of the State as an antagonistic force. In socialism, therefore, coincide the highest form of "populism" and the resolution of the ultimate and most radical of class conflicts. (196)⁸

I wish to emphasize the slippage of definition that converts "a power external and opposed to 'the people,'" into "the very form of the State" through the phrase "that is to say." Indeed, here we see a conjunction of the opposing ends of the populist spectrum discursively

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⁸ One might also here question how Laclau now insists that the class interests of the working class "lead it to the suppression of the State" when all his argument until this point has been to mark the distinction (in terms of relative autonomy) between the class struggle and the struggle within a given social formation. Laclau has been at pains to insist that classes--as defined and produced at the economic level--are not simply represented at the cultural or political levels; this he regards as the error of class reductionism. Yet he seems here prepared to assume that the state is indeed represented in some simple way in the economic level and that to misunderstand this is to misunderstand the objective "class interests" in play--a notion that precisely seems to bring with it the whole problematic of false consciousness with respect to objective interest, a problematic the move away from class reductionism was supposed to have refused.
produced (again, "that is to say") as a normative constant. After all, even on Laclau's terms, it would seem precisely the difference between populist articulations of a vague external power (foreign agents of imperialism; the Jews; the freemasons) as the dominant pole of the social contradiction on the one hand, and articulations that place themselves against the very form of the state (note the strength of this; this is not even merely "the bourgeois state" or some such other definition) on the other, that marks the difference between right and left populism. Yet he here assimilates this possible set of distinctions into a single essence of populism: Laclau argues that populism is essentially "against the very form of the State" in so far as it is an antagonism "against a power external and opposed to 'the people.'" But it is precisely this identification which remains to be demonstrated.  

Laclau thus justifies the possibility of a socialist populism through a double equivocation that at each turn

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9 Laclau himself, commenting upon a draft of this chapter, defined "the very form of the State" as a deliberately "de-sociologized" notion, expressing the "very principle of domination." But this seems to me to re-iterate rather than to do away with the essential problem, which could be rephrased in Philip Abrams' terms as a confusion between the "idea of the state" (75) and the "state structure" (76), in other words the various and relatively unIntegrated institutions that compose the state. Or, as Frow puts it, "what is at stake here [for Laclau] is not directly the power bloc but rather a particular discursive representation of the power bloc" (78).
confuses the hitherto separable double articulation essential, in Laclau's argument, not only to populism but also to the social totality as a whole. First he identifies socialism with antagonism towards the (very form of the) state, then he identifies populism with socialism by similarly allowing populism an inevitable anti-statist essence. However, the most troubling aspect of this argument is that it is unreflexively populist, again according to the very definition he has given of the populist project. For populism--again according to Laclau--mobilizes popular and anti-authoritarian ideological elements in the name of an antagonism against the form of the state, but simultaneously demobilizes this social energy by presenting an abstract figure external to the popular as the object of this antagonism, substituting a cultural or ideological antagonism internal to civil society for a strictly political antagonism. Laclau repeats this move in his substitution of the "form of the State" for state structures.\(^\text{10}\)

\(^{10}\) Equally, populism mobilizes class elements--ideological elements traditionally if contingently associated with class self-consciousness--and demobilizes them by translating them into an antagonism distinct from the terrain of modes of production. Again, Laclau repeats this move by presenting class antagonisms as equal to popular ones--as Frow suggests, this "drastic simplification of the political space is a poor substitute for a properly multi-dimensional class analysis" (80).
Laclau himself has to return to state structures in his own analysis of Peronism: finally he notes that the distinguishing feature of Peronism by contrast with other populisms lay in its "allowing the persistence of various 'elites' which based their support of the regime upon antagonistic articulating projects, and in confirming State power as a mediating force between them" (Politics and Ideology 197). Thus, and despite his continued stress on the ideological elsewhere--the final lines of his book, from which Hegemony and Socialist Strategy indeed takes its impetus, concern the question of a "valid starting point for a scientific study of political ideologies" (198)--Laclau is forced to return to the institutional in order to explain Peronism. More significantly still, he ends up emphasizing the resistance to ideological analysis that Peronism exerts: "The renowned ideological poverty and lack of official doctrine of Peronism is to be explained precisely by this mediating character of the State and Perón himself" (198).

Otherwise, the importance and expansion of the state within Peronism is almost so obvious as hardly to require mention, were it not for Laclau's contention of an essential populist anti-statism. Di Tella, for example, points out that in Perón's first administration "[t]he State increased its role substantially" (18) in financial affairs, while Juan José Sebreli (in his admittedly very antagonistic account) underlines the extent to which the Peronist state maintained legislative and judicial power in constant subordination (64-67).

However, I merely footnote this point because Hegemony and Socialist Strategy would seem to sidestep the issue of class sufficiently to escape this aspect of the critique.
More emphatically still, Portantiero and de Ipola make of this statism a principle of Peronism in that they discuss the regime's "fetishization of the State (and thus subordination to the general principle of domination)" (209)—though again, see Kraniauskas for Evita's role in mediating this fetishism, especially his extended discussion of fetishism in "Rodolfo Walsh y Eva Perón". Elsewhere, de Ipola's critique of Laclau is basically open to the latter's discursive analysis, but points out above all that Laclau has neglected to account for the conditions of reception of any attempted discursive articulation, especially in so far as the state not only mediates discursive claims, but is also in a position to consolidate ground won in the field of hegemonic struggle: "After his electoral triumph, Perón had not only implanted his hegemony in the field of the popular: after that point, he controlled also the material means to maintain and consolidate that hegemony" (949). Indeed, de Ipola's conclusion is to underline the importance of the "relation existing between the relations of power, crystallized in apparatuses, hierarchies and practices that legitimate or disqualify social actors, that allow them to speak or reduce them to silence, and the relation between the discourses themselves" (960). The fact that, as Torres Ballesteros points out, "it is surprising the scant importance [Laclau] attributes to leadership" (169) in populism, especially given the identification of the Argentine state directly with Perón, also indicates his failure to pay attention to the principles of hierarchy and force that regulate the process of hegemony.
Thus though many have criticized Laclau and Mouffe for their apparent abandonment of class and thus equally their move from the priority of the economic—such criticisms being usually leveled by Marxists against this unabashed post-Marxism—this seems to be the wrong point of critique, not least because the basic problem in Laclau's position appears equally in his earlier work on populism, which does indeed argue for the priority of class and the fundamental importance of the economic level. The problem is not with his de-emphasizing the economic, but rather with the substitution of culture for state, of ideological representations for institutions.

If hegemony is the concept that links Gramsci, Laclau and cultural studies, perhaps it is the concept of the state that separates these theoretical moments. For if Gramsci's turn from political to civil society (from advocating a frontal war of maneuver to theorizing a hegemonic war of position) comes from a strategic calculation, in Laclau such a turn is the result almost, as I hope to have shown, of a rhetorical sleight of hand—a sleight of hand that is characteristic of populism, and nowadays equally characteristic of cultural studies, at least in those instances of cultural studies in which the
concept of the state is not merely discarded from the outset, as beyond a horizon of intelligibility already set by cultural studies' pre-existing populism.

Finally, then, populism—as exemplified by Peronism and as theorized by Laclau—entails and is defined by a systematic set of substitutions. For example, it substitutes morality for politics\(^{11}\), individuals for social forces, the body of Evita for the power of the state. As Kraniauskas points out, quoting Freud on fetishism, in all these cases "Something else has taken its place, has been appointed its substitute, as it were, and now inherits the interest which was formerly directed to its predecessor" ("Rodolfo Walsh y Eva Perón" 113). While it is true that in all these disavowals some remainder is left of what has gone, any analysis has to move beyond the mere examination of such symptoms.

Most importantly, populism presents hegemony as the replacement for politics on other levels—such as the structural and organizational—and as such presents the expansion of the state as the increasing openness of culture or civil society. In an article tracing various

\(^{11}\) As Peter Wiles points out, it "is more moralistic than programmatic [. . .] it valorizes less logic and effectivity than the correct attitude and spiritual character" (qtd. Torres Ballesteros 171).
Marxist theories of the state, Laclau himself equivocates precisely on this point. On the one hand he notes this increasing permeation of the social by the state: "the form of the state defines the basic articulations of a society and not solely the limited field of a political superstructure" ("Teorías marxistas del estado" 54); however, and immediately following this recognition, he disavows it by claiming that "political struggle has passed now to extend to the totality of civil society" (54). This, however, is precisely the repetition of the populist substitution. So long, therefore, as political analysis remains confined to the theory of hegemony--as is contemporary cultural studies--then it will remain confined to a logic of populism that is unable either to differentiate itself from the dominant political mode of right-wing populism or to recognize the transformations and substitutions that political mode demands and entails. Moreover, it will be anxiously haunted by the remainder that hegemony contains of what has been lost. Rather, then, than examining the articulations within the field of civil society--a field that may indeed, one might suggest with Michael Hardt ("The Withering of Civil Society"), be withering away in a movement that again, perhaps, begins in
the periphery rather than the metropolis--one might do better to examine the organizational features of culture and state, to re-emphasize their difference rather than their similarity. Or rather, we might again see the state as what has to be explained, a state dependent upon but distinct from an affective performativity that we might want to term culture.