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THE POPULIST MANIFESTO



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Contents

Introduction	1
<i>Emmy Eklundh and Andy Knott</i>	
1 Populism: The Politics of a Definition	9
<i>Andy Knott</i>	
2 Populism and Myth	25
<i>María Esperanza Casullo</i>	
3 Populism and the Politics of Control	39
<i>Paolo Gerbaudo</i>	
4 Ten Theses on Populism – and Democracy	55
<i>Emilia Palonen</i>	
5 Why Populists Aren't Mad	71
<i>Emmy Eklundh</i>	
6 Populism, Democracy and the Transnational People: In Defence of Democratic Populism	83
<i>Mark Devenney</i>	
7 Left Populism as a Political Project	95
<i>Marina Prentoulis</i>	
8 A Manifesto and Populism?	107
<i>Andy Knott</i>	
Index	123

Chapter 2

Populism and Myth

María Esperanza Casullo

My name shall be your fighting flag.

Getúlio Vargas

Populism is a puzzling phenomenon. It advances in fits and starts; it erupts and then it fades away; it can have democratic effects but also authoritarian ones. I posit that the best way to understand it is to view it not as a *thing* but rather to see it as a *way to do things*. Populism should be viewed as a way to do politics or, more specifically, as a way to win elections and to wield power. This approach underpins most contemporary definitions of populism. The precise definitions differ, with some seeing it as a personal strategy aimed at consolidating power, others as a way of creating a mobilized public, others still as the presentation of one's self to the public by antagonistically flaunting 'low' or vulgar cultural markers, or as a public performance that emphasizes toughness and outlandishness. However, most analysts agree on one definition: populism is a *form* rather than a *content*.

This means in practical terms that populism is a political strategy that can be used to advance either a left-leaning or right-leaning political agenda. This insight has allowed scholars to give a more accurate answer to one important conundrum of today's global politics: how can it be that while populist politicians who act in similar ways are on the rise globally, the specific *contents* of their policies vary? Evo Morales in Bolivia, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in Argentina and Donald Trump in the United States are commonly referred to as populists, yet the first two expanded the scope of the state and, for instance, nationalized all oil and gas production while the third is a free-market fundamentalist embracing de-regulation. Evo Morales and Cristina

Fernández de Kirchner expanded the rights of immigrants,¹ but Donald Trump has made anti-immigration the cornerstone of his administration.

Should the concept of populism just be abandoned? What is *proper* of populism? Why do these populist strategies have political purchase? This chapter aims to shed light on one of the sources of populism's appeal: the way in which populist leaders are able to use a particular type of storytelling genre called 'the populist myth'. This type of narrative genre is seldom used by more mainstream politicians, but it is extremely effective, especially in contexts of social and economic upheaval, when the predominant institutional narratives become discredited.²

The chapter's structure is as follows: first, the notion of populist myth will be explored and its three functions explained: the leader, the hero, and the villain. To do so, three real-world populist presidencies will be compared: Evo Morales of Bolivia, Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of Argentina and Donald Trump from the United States. The main finding of this chapter is that there are significant structural differences between left-leaning and right-leaning populist myths and that they have to do with two things: the direction of the antagonism expressed in it (whether they are 'upward punching' or 'downward punching') and the time orientation of the myth (forward-looking or backward-looking). Lastly, a brief discussion will follow on how these discourses influence the policies of these populist presidents.

THE POLITICAL EFFECTIVENESS OF STORYTELLING

Words and speech matter in all orders of life but even more for politics. Political action arises out of the need to solve collective conflicts; it requires persuasion, rhetoric and eloquence; indeed some would even say that deceit becomes necessary at times. All these things can only be accomplished with words. Politics in a mass society requires the creation of broad shared identities that serve as templates for collective action, and to coordinate a diversity of agents. Thus, political discourses come to underpin social and political life. They circulate as templates of how to talk about the state of the world, the sources of its ills, and the preferred remedies for them. They are socially distributed and shared through many types of mass and social media. Political discourses are performative, in the sense that they can in fact change reality if they are imbued with enough authority and political power.

However, words are even more central for populist movements. The charismatic authority rests purely on the leader's ability to channel and reflect her followers' demands,³ so if this appeal disappears, so will the leader's power. Hence, populists cannot simply give commands: they must give the impression that they speak *for* the people. Therefore, they have to talk to their followers in

a way that inspires and persuades them. Because of this, populist leaders are extremely vocal: they talk *all the time*: on TV, talk radio, Twitter and tabloids. They are compelled to do so, because the connection will be broken if they do not nurture and reconstitute the strength of the representative bond.

As with any narrative, the starting point and the core of the populist storytelling is its hero, the people. This means that the populist discourse is always oriented toward the performative creation of a people. Laclau's most important insight in *On Populist Reason* is that the people is, in itself, a discursive construct. A people does not exist *as such* before it is discursively *named*. A people is not a social aggregate, and it is certainly not a 'class' in any 'objective' sense – be it defined in Marxist or simply functionalist terms. A people is created, out of a multiplicity of heterogeneous social demands and grievances, through an 'operation of naming'. The populist myth performs the naming of an 'us' that exists in perpetual confrontation with a 'them'. Discourse threads together the demands of excluded or aggrieved social groups and creates a common identity that connects them in the shared loyalty to the leader and the movement: 'we are a people, I am your leader, and they are the *élite*'.

Scholars have also noted that populist discourse typically skews programmatic explanations (which tend to be technocratic, impersonal and non-antagonistic and, therefore, non-populist) and focuses on denouncing grievances in moral terms. According to Laclau, populist in-group solidarity is not created through a common adherence to an ideological programme but through a 'chain of equivalence' that rests on the common opposition to an adversary and the shared loyalty to the leader. Laclau notes that populist leaders favour antagonistic, emotional and personalized genres and rhetorical tropes in their effort to create and enhance the internal frontier between an 'us' and a 'them'. This chapter aims at identifying the particular mechanics through which populist identities are discursively created. It posits that the 'operation of naming' is mainly done through the use of one particular kind of discourse: the narrative genre of the *populist myth*.

THE FUNCTION OF MYTHS IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

Anthropologists define myth as 'a sacred narrative explaining how the world and humankind came to be in their present form'. Margaret Canovan talks about a myth as 'a story that is told to explain the coming to being of something and the uniqueness of its essence'. Myths are narratives: stories, tales. They can be contrasted with syllogistic discourses, which are organised logically and from which the conclusions inexorably follow from the premises. They convey meaning through storytelling: they relate a sequence of events

– with a beginning, a middle and an end. Myths differ from folktales in that they are presented as true or as reflecting something that actually happened in a distant past; they are distinct from legends (which also are said to have been true) because their hero is not individual but collective. Myths tell a communal story that belongs to an ‘us’: they explain how an ‘us’ came to be and what makes it unique.

A political myth is a narrative presentation of the bonds that hold a political community together, a statement about why all of its members should care for each other and why the ordering of that particular political community is far superior to those of others. But myths also talk about differences within that community: they tell who the best inhabitants of the city are as well as who the transgressors are and how they should be punished. In *The Republic*, Socrates tells the myth of metals to his listeners. With it, Socrates explains the commonality of all the members of the city while at the same time naturalizing social hierarchy: all the inhabitants of the city come from the same Earth, therefore they are kin, but because all metals are hierarchically organised into the categories of gold, silver and bronze, the division of labour and reward within the city is justified by and through this hierarchy. Thus, political myths are organized to perform two crucial cognitive tasks: to tell the listener who belongs to the ‘us’ and who does not, and to situate that ‘us’ in a timeline that connects the past, the present and the future.

In our modern, complex societies there are always several founding myths in circulation, and they compete for pre-eminence – liberalism has its own political myth, as does Marxism (see table 2.1). But populist movements depend on myths much more than other political identities because the very nature of the populist mechanism for identity formation – the equivalence chain – relies on creating commonalities between disparate social demands without any reference to a ‘scientific’ or universal ideology. Liberal and Marxist discourses are ideological frames of reference that are thought to be valid for all times and places; however, populist myths lack any pretence of universality. Each one of them tells the story of *one* people and *one* leader against one particular elite, in one time and place.

The populist myth provides an empty template that can be actualized in infinite ways by filling it up with different contents and data depending on the context and the need of the speaker. But, because they are *political* narratives

Table 2.1

	<i>Liberal myth</i>	<i>Marxist myth</i>	<i>Populist myth</i>
Hero	Individual	Proletariat	People/leader
Villain	State	Bourgeoisie	Elite/traitor
Aim	Freedom (individual)	Emancipation (individual)	Redemption (collective)

rather than folktales, they also give practical clues for action. The myth has two formal components, or functions – the dual hero (composed by the leader and the people) and the dual villain (elite and traitor). They co-create each other, because they are related in a temporal sequence of damage, struggle and redemption.

Populist myths belong to the class of political myths, but they are unique in that the commonality between all of those who form the ‘us’ is anchored in the common feature of having been recently wronged by a nefarious elite.⁴ Hence, the temporal organisation of all populist myths follows the same structure: there is a people who in the past was wronged by a nefarious ‘them’; it suffers in the present, but, aided by a redeemer, it will be vindicated in the future.

THE DUAL HERO: LEADER AND PEOPLE

Populist myths differ from legends or folktales in that they have a *dual hero*. The rightful protagonist of the narrative is the people, however, the people cannot liberate itself: it can only do so with the help of a selfless leader who righteously and courageously comes to their rescue. Likewise, the villain of the populist myth is dual as well: the main villain is aided and abetted by a less powerful, but more morally compromised helper that is always labelled as the traitor.

The Leader

Populist myths are unique in that they have only one authorized author. As Laclau has explained, a populist identity is based on the common loyalty endowed to the leader by the followers; this loyalty is what transforms the actual, bodily person of the leader into an ‘empty signifier’, a vessel upon which they can then bestow their trust; the followers’ trust gives weight to the leader’s voice and transforms her into the sole speaker with enough performative authority to tell the populist myth.

The leader must explain to all the people who listen to her. One thing never varies: the leader always presents herself to the audience as a pure outsider who is uncontaminated by politics as usual. Some occupations and personal stories can be easily translated into ‘outsiderness’: military backgrounds (Juan Domingo Perón, José Velasco Alvarado, Kemal Atatürk), ethnic or social activism (Evo Morales, Lula da Silva), business success (Silvio Berlusconi, Donald Trump) and, more recently, women and motherhood (Sarah Palin): these are all very useful foundations for this type of narrative.

But a populist leader cannot talk only about herself – that is what despots do. Populists always construct a narrative in which they feel compelled

to enter politics because of the elite's betrayal of the people. They have been forced into politics out of a selfless moral sense of *outrage* at the elite betrayal of the people. Thus, the leader's moral intentions allow him or her to become not just a representative of some objective 'interest groups' but a true *redeemer*, somebody who is able to articulate into words the *damage* that has been done to the people, who did it, how that adversary can be vanquished and how the damage done can be repaired.

The People

However, the leader tells his or her story in ways that are always interwoven with the people, because the myth is about the co-constitution of people and leader. The leader *becomes* the redeemer only after being moved by the injustices inflicted on the people; by telling the myth, the leader performs the 'operation of naming' that creates a people by telling them who they are and who has damaged them in the past, and by showing them what they can become if they act. In *setting a boundary*, it names with a certain degree of precision who belongs to the people and who remains outside of it. Because neither the 'us' nor the 'them' are constructed in essentialist or objective terms, the leader retains a large degree of autonomy in deciding where the line stands at each moment. The people is commonly said to be made up of the 'good guys', the 'downtrodden', the 'common men', the '*descamisados*', but none of these are fixed entities or classes, and the precise contouring of the 'us' can be altered, according to the circumstances and needs.

The Dual Villain: Elite and Traitor

Explaining who the leader and the people are, however, is not enough to create a populist myth that is able to win the hearts and minds of men and women. There can be no populist 'us' without a 'them', and the identity of this 'them' must be explained in the myth too; they are usually referred to as 'the elite'.

The dual nature of the hero is mirrored by *the dual nature of the villain*. The villain's role in the myth is always performed by a powerful evil figure who is aided and abetted by a lesser but more morally corrupt one. Populist leaders usually rail against a powerful external villain. In the South American case, it has almost always been some combination of the American Empire, the financial global elite or foreign neoliberal technocrats; in the current European and US populism, it is some version of Islamic terror, technocratic Europeanism or versions of 'cultural Marxism'.

The *real* moral condemnation, as it is told by the myth, falls upon the heads of the *internal groups that aid and abet that (external) villain*. They

are groups and individuals that should be part of the people, but they have chosen to betray it and serve a foreign overlord: American-born Muslims, the 'lamestream' media, elite professors and colleges, labour unions, in the United States. The moral denunciation of the traitorous nature of the internal villain legitimizes the measures that the leader must take in order to punish its aggressions against the people and to guarantee their happiness.

PUNCHING UPWARD/PUNCHING DOWNWARD

The elite is not a fixed entity either; it does not refer to an objective, unchangeable entity, much like the people. The leader must strategically decide who is going to be designated as such out of the plurality of groups that populate any given society, and this decision has, in turn, important consequences for actual policy. For Evo Morales, they were the transnational oil companies and 'internal colonialism'; for Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Kirchner, the elite switched from the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and external creditors (from 2003 to 2007) to the agricultural exporters (in 2008) to the mass media and 'vulture funds' (from 2011 to 2015). In the United States, the Republican party has long defined the elite less in economic and more in cultural terms: their preferred adversaries are 'coastal elites', 'Hollywood liberals', 'pointy-headed intellectuals' and 'the lamestream media'.

However, the question remains: how can it be understood that Donald Trump singles out Mexicans and Muslim immigrants as the main threat to the stability of the country? Where is the anti-elite component in that? Mexican immigrants and refugees from war-torn countries like Syria or Somalia can hardly be considered 'elite' according to any kind of criteria, objective or otherwise. However, they enjoy a more prominent position in Trump's adversarial discourse than any financial or economic actor. A closer inspection of the discourse of South American and North Atlantic populism shows that there are two basic sub-templates for the definition of the elite, which I name 'punching upward' and 'punching downward'.

When punching upward, the elite is mainly defined in economic and financial terms: they are the wealthy, the capitalist, the rich and powerful of the country. When punching downward, the elite is described as an alliance between 'high', 'leftist', 'cosmopolitan' or 'intellectual' groups (such as college professors or journalists) with 'low' religious or ethnic 'foreigners' who come from outside to threaten the unity and purity of the people. The external villain–internal traitor duality remains operative: the external villain can be Middle East Islamic groups or, in some far-right US discourse, the United Nations; in Europe, it is more often than not the European Union. The internal traitor is usually intellectuals and 'leftists'.

The distinction between 'upward punching' and 'downward punching' populisms aligns quite neatly with the difference between left-wing and right-wing populism. In right-wing populisms, the anti-elite component of the discourse is usually present, but it is somewhat different than in left-wing populisms. In the former, the real enmity is not directed 'upward' towards the locus of economic, financial and industrial power but 'downward', towards the migrants, women, people of colour, refugees and ethnic and religious minorities. In one case the leader tells the followers that they must 'punch upward'; in the other, they need to 'punch downward'.

Forward- and Backward-Looking Myths

However, like in any narrative discourse, the relation between the dual hero and the dual villain is not static. It unfolds according to a sequence with three moments: the damage, the struggle and the redemption. A good populist myth must provide the listener with a compelling picture of how and when the final 'happy ending' is going to come about. Margaret Canovan notes that there are two basic sub-templates that are in turn connected with two different types of political contents. She speaks about 'backward-looking myths' and 'forward-looking myths'. In the latter, the people is not a pre-existent entity but a political project that can only be completed in the future, while in the former, Hegelian view, the people is an organic entity whose authenticity and wholeness must be preserved. This happy ending is presented as a collective redemption because it is something more than just becoming more rich or powerful: it means going through a moral trial, a moral transformation. It is also collective and reparatory. It is collective in that the people is to be redeemed; it is reparative because it cannot be achieved without recognizing and defeating the traitors. However, redemption can be made to look more or less nostalgic: the leader can tell their followers that redemption will come about by building a new future, or they can emphasize the need to go back to a more harmonious and authentic past.

Left-Wing and Right-Wing Populism in South America, the USA and Western Europe

To recapitulate: this chapter has presented the populist myth centred around the dual hero and the dual villain – its two main functional roles – and its two frames: punching upward versus punching downward, and its temporal orientation – forward-looking versus backward-looking. These are largely formal templates that can be filled with many different contents. However – as will be shown in the last section – there is a certain natural affinity between left-wing populisms with their punching upward and forward-looking myths, and between right-wing populism with their punching downward

and backward-looking myths. This last section will try to exemplify how the myths legitimate actual governing.

Even though their timing is slightly off, the comparison between South American and European populisms is warranted for a number of factors. The wave of South American populism began in 1998 with Hugo Chávez's election in Venezuela, peaked in 2012 when Fernando Lugo of Paraguay was impeached and has receded ever since – only Evo Morales remains in office of the last batch of South American populists;⁵ the rise of US and Western European populism has been steadier and maybe less dramatic: populist parties have routinely won a respectable share of the votes in Europe since the nineties, and it does not seem to have destabilized European party systems in a radical way. However, the success of the Brexit movement, the electoral competitiveness of populist parties in Austria, the Netherlands and France, and – above all – the unexpected election of Donald Trump brought the issue of right-wing populism to the forefront of the popular and scholarly imagination.

South American and European populists have some things in common. They seem to become stronger in the context of social and economic crisis, like the ones that swept South America in the early nineties and the 'great Recession' that started in 2008. Their movements are fronted by charismatic outsiders who promise to shake up the status quo and give power back to the downtrodden, hurt people. More importantly, all of these leaders are adept at crafting and utilizing *populist myths* in their quest for power.⁶ They tell stories that talk about loss, struggle and redemption. South American populists blame neoliberal technocrats, financial global capitalism and imperialism for the people's woes; European populism and Donald Trump rail against foreign immigrants, cultural Marxism and cosmopolitanism (see table 2.2).

Yet here the similarities end. Hugo Chávez, Néstor and Cristina Kirchner, Evo Morales, Fernando Lugo and Rafael Correa chose narratives that were modernising, emphasising the need for wealth redistribution and seeking to expand the reach of the state: all of these would be commonly referred to as 'leftist' policies. The populist myths that support left-leaning populisms have three key features: they are forward-looking or republican, they define the people as a collective, and they define the adversary as the economic and

Table 2.2

	<i>Time Orientation</i>	<i>Adversary Definition</i>
Evo Morales, Néstor and Cristina Kirchner	Forward	Neoliberalism Financial capitalism FinTechnocrats (such as the IMF)
Donald Trump	Backward	Immigrants Muslims The media

financial elites (they ‘punch upward’). This can be shown to be the case for Evo Morales and Néstor and Cristina Kirchner: they utilized modernising, even developmental, rhetoric with an emphasis on the need for bigger state intervention in industry, oil and energy production and technology, and they favoured regional integration. Their adversaries were the ‘traditional’ land-owning elites, banks and other financial entities, and, later on, the media. While they both used nationalist tropes, they did not go after immigrants or religious minorities: on the contrary, they both passed amnesties for foreigners.

Right-wing populisms are much more reliant on backward-looking and exclusive myths. They are xenophobic and nativist, with an economic agenda that seeks to restrict rather than enlarge access to the welfare state. Marine Le Pen’s Front National in France, UKIP in Great Britain and the Tea Party and Donald Trump in the United States have many differences among them, but they all envision the unity of the people as something that existed in a not-too-distant past and that has to be *regained rather than constructed*. This is important because the preoccupation with unity understood as *authenticity* is backward-looking, xenophobic, and leads to less inclusive political movements and even governments. These versions of populism seek not to mobilise but to target primarily urban and rural lower-middle classes who feel threatened by the rapid pace of disruptive social changes brought about by globalization.

When the populist myth is constructed in a forward-looking way, there is a greater potential of becoming more inclusive. The more nostalgic and romantic the populist myth, the greater push there will be for trying to impose policies that will restore the mythical authenticity from the pernicious influence of the outside world. Right-wing populist leaders single out social groups, especially migrants, because their aim is not to generate broad identities and solidarities but to make the restriction of these solidarities politically acceptable (see table 2.3).

Table 2.3

	<i>Dual Hero</i>	<i>Dual Villain</i>	<i>Direction of Antagonism</i>
Evo Morales	Indigenous peoples + a <i>cocalero</i> (coca grower activist)	Capitalist firms + ‘internal colonialism’	Upward
Néstor and Cristina Kirchner	National Popular Movement + a woman, a member of ‘the seventies generation’	‘Vulture funds’ and <i>oligarquía</i>	Upward
Donald Trump	White, working-class, ‘real’ America + tough businessman	Muslim conspiracy and Mexican immigrants + media and cultural elites	Downward

CONCLUSION

I hope to have given a summary of one of the dimensions that explains populism's effectiveness. Time and time again academics, journalists and commentators are blindsided by the evidence that *populism works* electorally, and that unlikely or outlandish candidates such as Evo Morales, Cristina Kirchner and Donald Trump are able to win elections. Political entrepreneurs choose populist strategies simply because, given the right conditions, a populist strategy can be incredibly effective to win power. Some of these changes can be positive and others can be negative, but one must understand the sources of their attractiveness.

This chapter has attempted to show that populist mobilisation is inseparable from the populist myth and that populist leaders are first and foremost storytellers who narrate, over and over, a story about wrongdoing and redemption. To focus on the power of the populist myth allows the analyst to better understand differences between left-leaning and right-leaning populisms, because their respective myths are clearly different and can be summarized as shown in table 2.4.

I hope it is clear by now why there are real-world implications that follow from the kind of populist myths populist leaders employ at a given time. Populist discourse, by its very nature, tends to portray adversaries in a moral and pre-political light. Yet these stories operate as templates for action and generate horizons of comprehensibility within which some policies become more 'natural' than others.

Because the mythic nature of populist discourse makes it easy to define 'the villain' not as legitimate adversaries but as immoral persons, if a powerful leader designates migrants as 'the adversary of the people', it will be much easier to pass restrictive immigration laws. However, if at another time the decision is made to 'punch upward', it will be easier to pass heavier taxation laws.

More needs to be known about why leftist populism has flourished in Latin America and right-wing populism in Europe. It is not the goal of the chapter to give the impression that one type of populism is necessarily 'better' than the other. Left-leaning populisms can potentially become illiberal and authoritarian – Chavismo offers the clearest example of a left-leaning

Table 2.4

	<i>Definition of the people</i>	<i>Time orientation</i>	<i>Definition of the villain</i>
Left-leaning populisms	Political project	Forward-looking (modernizing)	Upward-punching
Right-leaning populisms	Organic whole	Backward-looking	Downward-punching

populism becoming an almost classic case of authoritarianism. And right-leaning populisms are compatible with democracy, as was the case, for instance, with Silvio Berlusconi's movement. However, there is no denying that it is simply very difficult to imagine a successful backward-looking myth taking root in a region in which the past is defined not by a romanticised past of glorious world domination but by genocide, colonialism, slavery and underdevelopment. A movement that wants to have popular support is almost forced to move forward and to promise a new future – if nothing else, as a way of minimising its internal tensions. European right-wing populisms are backward-oriented, and their promise of redemption is premised upon a return to a romanticised past of unity, authenticity and harmony. So often this promise is deemed to be fulfilled by *removing* the inauthentic, offending parts: the Muslims, the foreigners, the immigrants, ethnic minorities, the cosmopolitan elites.

Populist myths tell a story of hurt, loss, betrayal and redemption. All of them tell the same basic story: there was once a people destined to greatness and prosperity, a dual villain (an external master and an internal traitor) betrayed them, then a redeemer came from the outside to mobilize the defeated people; the villain is punished, and finally justice for the people is restored. However populist myths are, of course, not simply literary creations. The goal of the populist myth is to articulate to the victims what precisely the damage was, who did it and what must happen for redemption to be achieved. Populist myths are always about passions; chief among them is the passion that is born out of witnessing a tremendous injustice being perpetrated. This narration has one practical goal: to inject righteous anger into the people and spur them into action against those who have betrayed them. Myths become templates for action because they present the people with a clear indication of who is to blame for their troubles and, therefore, who should be punished for them. They also give certain indications of what the moment of restoration, peace and prosperity will look like after the moral struggle ends.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

This chapter builds upon a handful of key texts. The first among them is Ernesto Laclau's *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005). His overview of the role of antagonism in the formation of populist political identities and of the construction of the 'equivalential chain' (see from page 69 onward) is crucial for understanding the relationship between the leader and the people. He was also one of the first to define populism as a political form instead of a content, which is the approach of the chapter. The definition of populism used

here, which understands it as a dichotomisation of the political space into two antagonistic camps, an 'us' and a 'them', which is performed through an 'act of naming', has been taken from Francisco Panizza's introductory chapter to his edited volume *Populism: The Mirror of Democracy* (London: Verso/Cambridge: Polity, 2005). The concept of the populist myth was taken from Margaret Canovan's *The People* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), as was her distinction between 'Republican and Romantic populisms', which is one of the most useful conceptual tools to distinguish between left-wing and right-wing populism today. Julio Aibar Gaete's description of populism as the *narration of a damage* in *La miopía del proceduralismo y la presentación populista del daño* (México: Flacso, 2013) identifies the key feature of any populist myth. Some anthropological texts on the universal structure of the mythical genre have also been used, especially Alan Dundes's 'Structural Typology in North American Indian Folktales' in the *Journal of Anthropological Research* (1986) 42(3): 237–73. Finally, the methodological tools for doing discourse analysis have been loosely based on Eliseo Verón's performative approach to political discourse (1987) (which in turn is based on John Austin's classical book *How to Do Things with Words*) and the so-called Russian school of literary analysis – for instance, Vladímir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968).

NOTES

1. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner sponsored in 2010 law that greatly amplified the legal rights of immigrants and granted amnesty to approximately 750,000 illegal immigrants from South America. Evo Morales's government did something similar in 2013.

2. It is no coincidence then that the rise of South American populism was ushered in by the economic crisis associated with the end of the neoliberal reforms of the nineties and that outsider politicians from the right and the left were able to profit from the unresolved financial crisis of 2008 and 2009 in Europe and the United States.

3. The populist appeal is by definition charismatic – that is, not sustained by tradition or institutional party norms.

4. Julio Aibar Gaete speaks about the narration of a damage as the central feature of populist discourse (Aibar Gaete 2013: 42).

5. Nicolás Maduro, who was probably never a true charismatic leader to begin with, has transitioned to an authoritarian leader in a much more frank manner.

6. Evo Morales reformed the Bolivian Constitution to create a 'pluri-national' state that recognized the rights of indigenous nations. He also nationalized all oil and natural gas fields in Bolivia and bargained tougher terms for its gas exports, mainly to Brazil. He also multiplied social investments, especially child welfare and

pensions. Néstor and Cristina Kirchner also nationalized the country's largest oil- and gas-producing company, the national airline, the railroads and a water company. The Kirchners passed a tax on soybean exports, which are the main source of external revenues for Argentina. They also increased social expenditures, including nationalizing social security, and they implemented a universal childhood subsidy (AUH) and an almost universal retirement pensions program.