

# **IDENTIFICATIONS**

**Performing Counter Discrimination  
International Conference**

## **ABSTRACTS & BIOS**

Panel 1

Ca' Foscari University of Venice  
Department for Philosophy and Cultural Heritage  
Aula Magna Silvio Trentin  
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## **PANEL 1**

### **Negotiation of Meaning Making.**

#### **Identification, Desire and Symbolic Order**

Chair: Dr. LP. Aneta Stojnić (Psychoanalyst, IPTAR Institute for Psychoanalytic Training and Research, New York)

*Keywords: aggression; jouissance; transgression, sublimation; resignification.*

#### **1. Far-Right: The Identification with Moral Jouissance**

*Laura Álvarez Garro*

This paper addresses the problem of the contemporary emergence of the extreme right around the globe through two main discussions. First, I discuss the concept of the enemy, taking as a reference the work of Carl Schmitt, with the contributions of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. This analysis aims to resolve theoretical and practical problems about how the identification process unfolds and provokes scenarios of annihilation and destruction. It discusses the movement from a distinction between "us" and "them" as a necessary condition for the constitution of the political community, to the identification of an enemy to be annihilated. Second, I propose that this passage has been exacerbated by mutations in the symbolic order that have triggered processes of necropolitical identification through the moralization of politics. Starting from Koselleck's hypothesis about the moralization of politics as a condition of possibility of the Enlightenment, a condition that has been obscured or hidden but remains, I discuss how this moralization has become commonplace; and how and when it is exacerbated. I link this moralization to the Lacanian concept of jouissance, how the label of evil enables the persecution of the other, and its relation to the rise of fascist, populist, or totalitarian political formations. Finally, I will argue that the absence of discussion of moral jouissance creates enormous difficulties for a realistic approach to political conflict, since denying this phenomenon not only obstructs the analysis of what kind of situations, events or circumstances feed this constitutive aggressiveness through moral stances and turn it into hatred and revenge but also makes it impossible to devise proposals for containing the conflict that are viable in practice.

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*and the History of Concepts Group. Has a degree in Psychology from the University of Costa Rica; a master's in social sciences from the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, Mexico City; PhD in Humanities with emphasis in Moral and Political Philosophy from the Autonomous Metropolitan University, Iztapalapa. Has also taken short courses at the Humboldt University of Berlin, The College of Mexico, and the Birkbeck Institute at the University of London. Currently teaches in the Philosophy and Psychology graduate programs at the School of Philosophy. Researcher at the Institute of Philosophical Research (INIF), all at the University of Costa Rica.*

## **2. Identification, Aesthetic Transgression and Sublimation**

*Thomás Zicman de Barros*

This paper examines emancipatory forms of identification by articulating the idea of populism as aesthetic transgression and psychoanalysis. Divided into two sections, the study first examines populism as aesthetic transgression, a notion previously developed by Théo Aiolfi and myself. This perspective transcends leader-centred performative currents by drawing on Jacques Rancière's idea of aesthetics as 'partage du sensible'. Here, populism is seen as aesthetically transgressive because, through the discursive articulation of 'the people', it generates processes of identification that bring elements excluded from the symbolic order – the 'part of no-part' – into the political realm. The second section uses psychoanalysis to assess the emancipatory potential of this aesthetic transgression resulting from the inclusion of marginalised sectors. Psychoanalysis shows that transgression and the reactionary affirmation of order can coexist. However, the psychoanalytic concept of sublimation, one of the most complex ideas in the work of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, opens a way of understanding emancipatory forms of transgression. The attempt to use the concept of sublimation to inform radical democratic politics was first proposed by Yannis Stavrakakis and subsequently developed in Ernesto Laclau's reflections on populism. This paper builds on these contributions by demonstrating that sublimation is intrinsically linked to aesthetics, particularly aesthetic practices that highlight the incompleteness of their own symbols – what Oliver Marchart calls 'conflicting aesthetics', akin to queer practices. This transgressive aesthetics not only implies an ethical stance in line with radical democracy but also promotes alternative forms of enjoyment compatible with this ethical stance. The article concludes that emancipatory and sublimatory forms of identification involve the construction of an unsaturated symbolic order,

in which 'the people' serves as a symbol that continuously questions its identity to incorporate subalternised groups.

*Thomás Zicman de Barros is a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for Ethics, Politics and Society (CEPS) at the University of Minho and Research Associate at the Centre for Political Research (CEVIPOF), Sciences Po Paris. He currently develops his research activity on the articulation of subaltern, queer, and populist studies from a historical perspective, focusing on Latin America. He has taught democratic theory in various universities and has published on populism, political identities, and the interdisciplinary dialogue between political theory and psychoanalysis in journals such as Representation, Constellations, the Journal of Political Ideologies, Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society, and Nouvelles Perspectives en Sciences Sociales. With Miguel Lago, he co-authored, in Portuguese, Do que falamos quando falamos de populismo [What We Talk About When We Talk About Populism] (Companhia das Letras, 2022), a book that discusses historical and contemporary populism through an analysis of the incorporation of marginalised subjects in politics.*

### **3. Empathetic Signifiers**

*Helena Botto*

During my practice-as-research PhD I've been exploring forms of enacting infamous right-wing populist speeches (e.g. D. Trump, J. Bolsonaro, M. Le Pen, et al) and reflecting how on their theatricality is able to provoke different experiences in an audience. Moreover, how potentially 'negative' outcomes are mobilised and re-signified into 'positive' experiences and positive re-significations. Departing from my acting and performance experiences throughout this process, I've been drawing on Lacan's notions of 'master signifier' and Laclau's notions of 'empty signifier', and 'floating signifier' to think on fluctuations of meaning. I claim that voters' and audiences' experiences are re-signified and deployed by populist politicians in order to build their populist persona that will then appealing to an audience of potential voters. I've been terming this phenomenon 'empathetic signification'. Instead of looking at how a performance may provoke experiences, I'm looking at how do the audience's experiences, and the 'ambience in the room' might influence the performance that is being produced by the populists. Does the populist construct the people or do the people construct a populist? Does the performer provoke experiences in an audience or does the audience provoke experiences in the performer, making her to act (re-act) empathetically?

*Helena Botto is a performer and a performance-maker, based in London, whose work has been presented nationally and internationally. She is currently in the writing-up phase of her practice-as-research PhD on the theatricality of populism, at the School of Arts at the University of Roehampton, in London. She holds a studentship from Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (PT). She is a researcher in POPBACK, a Norface funded, interdisciplinary and inter-university research project studying the effects of exclusionary populism (2020-2024). She has been a part-time Lecturer in performance practice at the School of Theatre at the Manchester Metropolitan University (Jan-Jun 2024), teaching in both undergraduate and master's degree levels.*

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## **Chair**

***Aneta Stojnić, Ph.D.** is a psychoanalyst in private practice in New York City and a director of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy Program at the Institute for Psychoanalytic Training and Research in New York. Alongside psychoanalysis, Aneta's areas of research include artistic and theoretical practices at the intersections of art, culture and politics. She published three books and three co-edited volumes, as well as dozens of peer-reviewed articles on contemporary art, media, and culture. She is a co-host of Voices From Room podcast, and one of the editors at a magazine Room-A Sketchbook for Analytic Action. Aneta has authored numerous artistic and curatorial projects and has taught performance, art and media theory at universities and art academies in Vienna, Belgrade, and Ghent. She regularly presents her work and research at conferences and festivals worldwide.*

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