

The meme as formation of the unconscious.

Humor as ultra right-wing propaganda: The Argentinean case.

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In the following, I propose to examine the unconscious mechanisms of memes in order to shed light on its efficacy as an instrument of political construction. That is, as a tool that allows for pushing the boundaries of what is admissible in public debate while simultaneously serving as a wide-reaching device for collective identification. While a very wide range of digital content can be called a meme owing to its capacity to spread across the internet (Shifman: 2014), such content may consist solely of static images (such as photographs that imitate another one) or animated images (such as GIFs), or of text alone (such as screenshots of social media conversations), but it may equally be a combination of both. Here I shall focus on this latter case and, in particular, on those memes possessing risible content. That is to say, I shall address the meme as a graphic joke with a view to demonstrating its power as a vehicle for political propaganda. In particular, I shall focus on the use of memes in the digital campaign — and particularly at the moment of the election — that led Javier Milei to the presidency of Argentina in 2023.ⁱ

In what follows, I shall analyse the meme in three senses: as a humorous phenomenon, as an image, and as a phenomenon of repetition. Regarding the former, the meme under consideration here is a type of joke and, as such, allows for the questioning of ‘politically correct’ norms through the mockery of a given era’s *status quo*. In this sense, the meme is intrinsically countercultural, even when the values it promotes are conservative. Furthermore, insofar as it is designed to provoke laughter –and laughing is pleasurable– the meme is highly reproducible in its natural environment (the internet in general and social media in particular), as it distributes pleasure among the users it reaches. While these two features derive from the meme’s status as a joke, its power to become a tool for collective identification is also linked to its nature as an image; that is, to the function of the image as a mechanism for narcissistic identification.

This chapter will proceed as follow: (1) it begins with a description of the central features of memetic production during Javier Milei's 2023 electoral campaign, drawing upon empirical studies framed within the sociology of hypermedia. Subsequently, (2) the primary tenets of Freudian theory regarding humour will be presented, with particular emphasis on the role played by the pleasure associated with the joke (*Witz*) as a mechanism for evading censorship. In the third instance (3), the relationship between the leader and imaginary idealisation will be addressed, analysing how memes, as a visual artefact, function as a device for narcissistic identification. Following this, (4) the phenomenon will be examined from the perspective of the ‘desiring-machine,’ treating memetic distribution as a social process of productive flows. Finally, I shall offer some concluding remarks.

<A> Meme production by the Argentine far-right in the 2023 political campaign.

Empirical research on hypermedia demonstrates that the electoral campaign of La Libertad Avanza (‘Liberty Advances,’ hereafter referred as LLA) –the political vehicle that fielded

Javier Milei as its candidate in the 2023 presidential elections— was based on a decentralised strategy primarily focused on social media. In particular, it prioritised the creation of humorous content, with meme production standing out as the primary resource. Interaction data from Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X, and TikTok show that the production of humorous content by accounts identified with LLA outpaced that of its opponents across all three stages of the election (Fraticegli et al.: 15). Let us, then, examine the details of the electoral process.

According to Argentine law, presidential elections are decided in three stages. In the Open, Simultaneous and Mandatory Primaries (PASO, by its acronym in Spanish), political forces determine the candidates to be presented in the general election; however, in practice, they function as a first electoral round. In the 2023 PASO, the far-right group LLA obtained a surprising 29.86% of the vote (having fielded only one candidate), followed by the centre-right coalition Juntos por el Cambio (JxC) with 28.00%, and the centre-left Peronist coalition—the incumbent government at the time— Unión por la Patria (UP), with 27.28% of the ballots. In the general election, the result became more polarised: UP emerged victorious with 36.78%, followed by LLA with 29.99% and JxC with 23.81%. Since winning the election requires the leading party to obtain 40% of the vote with a lead of more than 10 points over the runner-up, it was necessary to hold a third election between the two candidates with the most votes: Sergio Massa (UP) and Javier Milei (LLA). The latter was supported by the candidate from the other right-wing coalition, Patricia Bullrich, who would later join the future government. Finally, LLA won the run-off with 55.65%, compared to 44.35% for UP.

The resounding victory of the far-right party in the PASO was preceded by an intense social media campaign that nearly quadrupled the digital campaign deployed by its Peronist rival. In the two subsequent stages, LLA increased its social media output by 60%; and although the UP campaign sought to imitate this phenomenon, doubling its presence in that

ecosystem by the First Round, it remained consistently below LLA's digital firepower (Fratlicelli et al.: 2025, 8). But beyond the differences in quantity, the two campaigns were qualitatively very different. This was fundamentally due to the fact that Milei was essentially an 'economic influencer,' dedicated to ridiculing opponents on social media and TV sets, proposing simple and forceful solutions –generally based on the perspective of the marginal Austrian School of Economics– for Argentina's chronic problems, above all the persistence of a high inflation rate. While Milei shares memes, cartoons, flyers, images of campaign tours, clips of speeches or interviews, and other users' tweets (rather than his own), as well as press clippings referring to him or his political movement, the UP strategy, by contrast, was limited to showcasing campaign events as if social media were a traditional broadcast medium (Montero et al: 2023).

It should not be surprising, then, that Milei's message was amplified by an intense community of followers who effectively functioned as part of his communication apparatus. This community was predominantly composed of young males, many of them adolescents who had been forced into domestic confinement during the pandemic. The flip side of this lockdown was the accelerated penetration of social media, which became the primary space for socialisation among teenagers (Mauriño et al.: 2022). Much of the discontent with the restrictive measures imposed during the pandemic was channelled through social media, contributing to the formation of a community of young users with no political experience, brought together by their rejection of the traditional political *status quo*. In this context, the diffusion of humorous content played a pivotal role in LLA's campaign, as it simultaneously allowed for the criticism of political adversaries and the construction of a collective political identity.

On the one hand, the meme production was geared towards mocking the symbols of the "woke consensus", represented by the Peronist ruling party. Thus, Peronist voters were

identified as ‘pobres’ (poor) and ‘villeros’ (shanty town dwellers), and were accused of being stupid for adopting a political identity that, in the eyes of libertarians, had systematically led the country to ruin. Feminist collectives were also a primary focus of attack; they were accused of hating men as a form of retaliation for the alleged lack of erotic interest that new female identities –created in light of the critique of gender stereotypes– supposedly aroused in men. Groups that had hitherto been respected by society, such as scientists, university lecturers, and human rights defenders, were also targeted, alongside, in general, anyone receiving state assistance, ranging from social welfare programmes to disability pensions. This heterogeneous group, whose common denominator was the receipt of some form of state support, was identified as a ‘caste’ of beneficiaries who –through high taxes and monetary printing– condemned the rest of society to inflation-driven poverty in order to maintain their privileges. In contrast, libertarianism proposed a programme as simple as it was radical: to shrink the state, lower taxes, dollarise, and close the Central Bank of the Argentine Republic (BCRA) as a means of putting an end to the caste (Fratlicelli: 2024, 18).

On the other hand, memes were utilised in a laudatory comic register to construct the image of a charismatic leader. In this sense, meme production intersected with the fandom phenomenon associated with Milei’s profile as a cosplayer (Fratlicelli, 2024: 22). Indeed, the future president personified an Anarcho-Capitalist ‘superhero’ –Captain Ancap– who made several appearances at cosplay events and in theatrical plays (in one of which he used a stick to destroy a piñata shaped like the BCRA); however, it was his image that was primarily exploited by the community of followers. In addition to being a superhero fighting the ‘caste’, meme production presented him as a lion, an animal associated in the Jewish tradition with the lineage of King David. His adversaries, by contrast, are represented as rats or cockroaches. The lion, in turn, is linked to the world of rock music through the lyrics of the song ‘Panic Show’ by La Renga, a track that opens his political rallies and which Milei

himself has sung live on several occasions. All of this, combined with the supposed economic expertise of the candidate leads to a particular syncretism, blending libertarian messianic elements with an over-human masculinity, seems to find its most recognisable symbol in Milei's dishevelled hair –equal parts leonine and rocker.



Figure 1

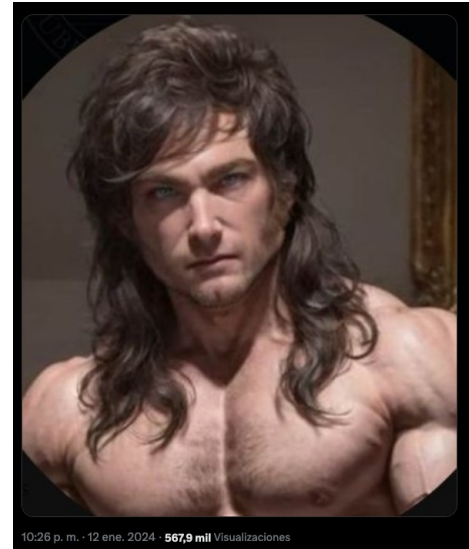


Figure 2

In practice, meme production was highly effective in ridiculing adversaries, highlighting the figure of the leader, and creating an identity-based community through shared humour. That is to say, although most political humour possesses, in fact, an oppositional character, its function as a catalyst for a political subjectivity and as a promoter of citizen support must not be overlooked (Davis et al.: 2018). The effectiveness of the meme as an instrument of political propaganda lies in the fact that humorous posts tend to be shared more frequently than serious ones, involving citizens who do not feel attracted to formal discourse in the

public debate, while nonetheless providing a framework for interpreting events (Fratlicelli et al.: 2024, 3). Given that memes played a pivotal role in LLA's propaganda, several questions arise: why are memes such a potent medium for challenging the boundaries of 'political correctness'? Which unconscious mechanisms account for their viral dissemination? Furthermore, what is the relationship between this process and the formation of a communal identity, and what specific role does the image play in such a construction?

 A community of shared pleasure through laughter

In his seminal work on jokes, Freud approaches them as a 'formation of the unconscious'. This category refers to phenomena whose structure is a 'compromise-formation' between, on the one hand, unconscious impulses or desires and, on the other, the function of censorship that restricts access to the consciousness of those contents, insofar as they are rejected for being morally unacceptable or, in our case, not politically correct (Freud [1905] 1916: 329). Alongside parapraxes, dreams, lapses, or neurotic symptoms, Freud identifies humour as a type of phenomenon that allows us to bypass censorship in an elliptical way; that is, to disguise uncomfortable content through the humorous effect of its formulation, which resorts to the same mechanisms that regulate unconscious life: condensation and displacement. The humorous effect makes it possible to deal with unsettling subjects precisely because of the pleasure with which it is associated: thus, it is possible to laugh at death or illness while avoiding the distressing feelings with which they are usually associated (Freud [1905] 1916: 375).

According to Freudian economics, pleasure expresses the release of psychic tension. In the case of the joke, energy expenditure is associated with the maintenance of a coercion regarding inadmissible ideas or tendencies which are, therefore, kept unconscious by means

of censorship. By allowing inadmissible content access to consciousness, the joke produces pleasure because it enables one to 'save' the psychic expenditure necessary to maintain that censorship (Freud [1905] 1916: 180). Now, in addition to allowing an internal obstacle (an already internalised moral rule) or an external one (a coercive force personified, for example, in an authority figure) to be bypassed, he finds that the very technique of the joke is linked to pleasure.

In this sense, Freud remarks that part of the pleasurable effect of the joke lies in connecting distant universes of meaning through the use of the same word, or a homonym, so that the joke will be all the more humorous the more distant the semantic fields being related are. This 'short-circuit', which calls into question common sense and the 'rational' way of stringing thoughts together, challenges reason and constitutes, therefore, a rebellion against rational knowledge. Freud calls it the 'pleasure of nonsense' and links it to an attempt to overcome the intellectual coercion that characterises the educated adult life (Freud [1905] 1916: 182).

Another source of pleasure linked to the technique of the joke lies in the pleasure derived from the recognition of the familiar. Thus, every new formulation of the joke constitutes a pleasurable repetition of the commonplace, but also a new link that introduces a differential element –I shall return to this point when analysing the 'meme machine.' In both this instance and the previous one, the pleasure would stem from a saving of psychic expenditure, whether from the effort required to deploy argumentatively ordered thought or the effort required to face a novel situation. Hence, the joke is intrinsically dependent on the context of its formulation and survives only as long as the context from which it emerges remains. Let see a concrete example:



Figure 3



Figure 4

The figure 4 is a meme shared by a libertarian account and retweeted by the now-president, Javier Milei. It is a version of an image of the pornographic actress Piper Perri (figure 3), which serves as a template for countless memes. In this particular version, the woman's place is occupied by the governor of Chubut Province, Ignacio Torres, who was at odds with the national government over a dispute concerning owed funds; the group of men has been replaced by journalists from the pro-government news channel La Nación+, who were interviewing the governor live. The user sharing the image comments, using foul language, that the journalists are sexually threatening the governor.

First and foremost, it should be noted that the core of the joke lies in the displacement between an argumentative dispute and a sexual situation marked by a power asymmetry between the group of men –who are presented in an upright and dominant position– and the woman, who is much smaller and smiling, and who appears almost to ignore the sexual nature of the situation in which she finds herself. In this sense, the scene flirts with the idea of a gang rape, where the female character, completely passivised, has no chance of consenting to what

is about to happen, while the men, standing and sturdy, are the ones with the power to decide. It follows as well that the sexual act is interpreted as a form of violent subjugation, where the female partner is reduced to an extreme passivity, verging on impotence. That is to say, from a male chauvinist point of view, no one could desire to be passive.

Now, whoever laughs at the meme would be deriving pleasure from the lifting of the obstacles that seek to prevent extreme asymmetry in sexual encounters. In this sense, the meme contests the very idea of sexual consent, while simultaneously presenting political discussion as a form of subjugation of the adversary. It must not be overlooked, at this point, that Milei himself has characterised the State as a ‘paedophile in the kindergarten, with the children chained up and covered in Vaseline;’ⁱⁱ thus, the asymmetry described can also be directly linked to an invitation to paedophilia. Consequently, the rational argumentative dispute that should govern political life is replaced by the simpler and more direct path of the right of the strongest. The ‘short-circuit’ that replaces the rational sublimation of the drive with immediate discharge is combined here with the pleasure of recognising a viralised image used to describe a current event.

The pleasure derived from the saving of psychic energy is accompanied, according to Freud, by a weakening of critical thought, which stems from the subordination of the immediate satisfaction of impulses to the higher principles of reason and, through them, to the shared values that regulate collective life. That is to say, the pleasure expressed in laughter disposes us against critical judgment, insofar as ‘we are not inclined to consider improper what has given us pleasure, and in this way deprive ourselves of a source of pleasure’ (Freud[1905] 1916: 202). This highlights the power of humour to challenge established values and the difficulty it poses to serious, rational discourse. Faced with the notion that there are certain things one simply cannot laugh about –such as rape or paedophilia– the joke presents itself as an act of rebellion that asserts the individual’s ability to detach themselves from

communal values and claim an individualistic, primitive pleasure. It matters little if the content of the joke proposes a world in which only the strongest prevail; thus, insofar as it causes pleasure, hate speech is celebrated even by its potential victims.

In this sense, the humour of the meme can foster an uncritical community because its very structure presupposes a relationship with a third party. That is to say, the creator of the meme intervenes in public discourse by mocking a second person –in our case, a governor– but the humorous effect is only achieved if the message is celebrated by a third party. If this does not occur, then there is no joke; or, put positively, the joke only takes place when it elicits laughter from its recipient. In other words, the author only gains pleasure retroactively if the laughter of the third party sanctions the message as funny. For this reason, a joke that mocks someone can only occur if there is a recipient of the message distinct from the one who is the object of derision (Freud [1905]1916: 223). The sender, therefore, enters into an association with the recipient, and both, united by the pleasure of the joke, form a community of values against those who are the objects of the mockery. A division is thus established between those who share the pleasure of the humour and act as agents of the mockery, and those who are its passive objects. This separation is subsequently instrumentalised politically in terms of the friend/enemy distinction.

<C> The leader and the imaginary idealization

Nevertheless, the formation of political subjectivity necessitates more than the mere distribution of roles instantiated by the joke. In this regard, it must be acknowledged that a meme is not simply a jest but a visual artefact; as such, it triggers potent unconscious mechanisms. Yet, before conducting an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the leader and the image, we must examine the unconscious process that underpins it. In

particular, Freud proposes that the emotional engagement shared by a group's members with their leader is fundamentally rooted in the realm of identification.

From the perspective of the Freudian Oedipus complex, the heterosexual masculine resolution is achieved through the child's identification with the father. Specifically, the father becomes an exemplar (*Vorbild*) to be imitated, insofar as the aim is to secure a woman like his mother (though no longer the mother herself). In this sense, the father's transformation into an 'ideal of being' is the counterpart to a process in which the subject shapes himself into a desirable object. Furthermore, given that the subject can only love himself –this being the essence of narcissism– on the condition of having a model upon which to construct his own desirable image, the figure of the father thus is introjected into the psychic apparatus and assumes the function of the ego ideal (Freud [1921] 2004: 125).

In genetic terms, the development of the ego ideal constitutes the second stage in the structuring of narcissism, as it depends upon the abandonment of a primary position characterised by omnipotence. That is to say, the necessity of becoming desirable entails the frustration of no longer being the object that fully satisfies the desire of the Other (which is *mutatis mutandi* the mother, in Oedipal terms). In turn, this cleavage between subject and object is accompanied by a further split within the subject themselves, between the ego and the ego ideal. Thus, the ego remains subject to the tension between what it is and what it ought to be, and the ego ideal is established as an agency of censorship and moral self-observation. Hence the emotional ambiguity defining narcissism, wherein the desire to be loved can easily lead to hatred for failing to measure up to the ideal (Freud [1921] 2004: 126). In the same sense, the object internalised as an ideal is simultaneously loved and hated, insofar as, genetically speaking, identification is a compromise formation employed in the face of the impossibility of occupying its place.

The identification which, as we have seen, plays a central role in the formation of subjective narcissism, subsequently serves as the basis for the processes involved in the formation of a group or mass that acts politically as a unit. In this instance, identification takes as its object a figure who is no longer one's own father, but who performs a similar function: that of appearing capable of meeting the environmental demands before which the ego itself feels impotent. This figure –none other than that of the leader– occupies the apex of group identification and serves as the foundation for group cohesion. Within this context, it must be noted that identification with the idealised object is always partial; it occurs on the basis of a trait that is detached from the rest and functions as a synecdoche for the whole. This 'unary trait' (*einzigster Zug*) may vary among the individual members of the group, but it must be present within the figure of the leader. Consequently, the mass is held together because each individual member relates directly to the leader –as they do not necessarily identify with the same aspect of him– and it is this common fact that underpins the horizontal relationships between the members of the collective (Freud [1921] 2004: 128).

At this point, we can ask: what role does the image play in the process of identification? Lacan points out that the experience of incompleteness, stemming from the abandonment of primary narcissism, is veiled by the illusion of completeness that follows the subject's capture by the image. Indeed, the human infant –incapable of walking or standing upright by their own means– smiles at their own image when held erect before a mirror or at the sight of another peer who is capable of standing. This image anticipates the child's motor capacities but, in the present, reflects back an illusion of wholeness. In this sense, the subject becomes alienated to the image returned by the mirror, as it acts as the promise of a lost omnipotence (Lacan: 1966). The image of the leader, then, operates as a guarantor of the followers' narcissism, serving as a safeguard for lost omnipotence. Thus, the greater the perfection

projected by the leader's image, the greater the potency each follower gains from their identification.

While the use of the leader's image as political propaganda constitutes a commonplace of cults of personality, the use of memes as a device for political dissemination did represent a novelty –at least for Argentine politics. We have seen that the meme, insofar as it is a joke, is an excellent propagator of the message, and that those reached by the humour create a community around the common pleasure of laughing together. In this sense, the meme is an excellent vehicle for the message because it urges the user to share it, thereby reactivating the discharges of pleasure between each node of the memetic chain.

However, the humorous character that defines memes forces anyone using it to establish a candidate to employ a disguise, hiding the fact that the memes are part of a political campaign. If the intent becomes obvious, it ceases to be funny. At this point, the leader must accept the farce as a trait of their public persona. Thus, that Milei was a cosplayer before a politician is entirely consistent with his memetic image. In this regard, Lacan points out that while clothing in general serves this purpose, it is particularly evident in the masquerade, where garments function to veil a symbolic loss. To put it in positive terms, masquerade — of which cosplay should be considered an instance — is a matter of identification with the phallic mother (Lacan[1964] 2020: 154).

The concept of the 'phallic mother' refers, in genetic terms, to the overvaluation that the human subject directs towards its caregivers, and particularly towards its mother, who, in most cases, is primarily responsible for its survival. That is to say, the human infant depends entirely upon its caregivers to survive during its long infancy, which means that the satisfaction of its needs is necessarily mediated by the Other. It follows from this that the real object of need comes to be replaced by a symbolic object, one that is accessed, precisely, by means of a demand addressed to the Other. Hence, on the one hand, the presence of the object

of satisfaction comes to depend on the presence or absence of the Other and, on the other hand, the object itself loses its literal relation to need. Consequently, the object can never fulfil human desire or, equally, it is always displaced. In this context, the notion of the symbolic phallus designates the virtual object that articulates the displacement across the series of objects and that, as a matter of principle, plays its role veiled, disguised in ever-new costumes. The illusion of plenitude that emanates from it — its imaginary dimension — is the counterpart of the loss of naturalness that marks the subject's entry into the symbolic order. The 'phallic mother' thus designates the attribution of plenitude and power that the human child assigns to its caregiver par excellence. In this manner, the identification with the fetishised image of the leader—who is himself identified with the phallic mother—sustains the promise of a full, superhuman subjectivity.

The memetic leader stands out as a chosen one, an outsider hero arriving to save the righteous, not only from the 'impoverishing caste,' but also from feminisms and egalitarian discourse in general, which would level the power of exceptionality with human mediocrity. This aesthetic superiority is matched only by the leader's moral nobility and the vastness of his knowledge. These attributes reach his followers via identification; they, in turn, bolster the leader's narcissism by producing new memetic content. Both are parts of the same memetic machinery.



Figure 5



Figure 6

<D> The meme machine

A distinctive feature of Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualisation of desire is that they regard it as an intrinsically productive process which does not depend upon a prior lack or deficiency to unfold. In this regard, the individual subject –and by extension their personal and family history, including the Oedipal drama– does not constitute the primary focus of analysis but is, rather, the effect of an underlying ontological process (1972: 34-5). The notion of the desiring-machine, therefore, shifts the theoretical gaze away from the individual subject of classical psychoanalysis to focus upon the desiring process itself. Having previously attempted to demonstrate the unconscious intrapsychic mechanisms activated by the meme as a humorous image, I shall henceforth treat memetic production and distribution as a social

phenomenon wherein individuals function as components of a machine distributing memetic flows.

From this perspective, each user operates as a node within the memetic flow, propelling the flow through breaks: whether by incorporating a comment, offering a new version of the joke, or simply reinforcing its distribution by liking or retweeting. Each node has strong incentives to do so, insofar as the pleasure of a joke can only be renewed on the condition that it is retold; that is to say, one who laughs at a joke can only recover the pleasure it provoked by retelling it. The third party, as we have seen, is an intrinsic part of the nature of joke; therefore, its reproduction is an inherent part of memetic desire. Expressed in machinic terms, this signifies that each machine operates coupled to another, producing or breaking flows by means of a connective synthesis. Every break –insofar as it introduces a differential into the flow– in turn produces new connections that multiply the meme's capacity for self-propagation.

The connection between memetic machines forms circuits and pathways that are recorded upon a surface of inscription. However, given that in this instance we are considering the meme as a device for political intervention, it could be argued that the role of this surface of inscription is performed here by the digital body of the leader. This concerns, above all, its idealised image rather than his material body, the presence or absence of which continues to impose uncomfortable limits upon its digital construction. Be that as it may, the leader's image operates as a common fact for a multiplicity of memetic flows that are inscribed upon his digital surface.

But the semantic diversity that constitutes the leader's public persona is not contradictory; rather, it is brought together by an inclusive synthesis of an inclusive disjunctive nature. The leader as such is a collection of unitary traits: Be they visual (his hair, the three jackets, the YPF overalls, etc.), oral ('*Viva la libertad carajo*,' 'There is no money,'

etc.), moral ('We are aesthetically and morally superior'), gnoseological ('Specialist in economic growth with and without money,' etc.) or written traces (NOL\$ALP –'We do not hate journalists enough,' by its acronym in Spanish–, TMAP –'Everything is going according to plan'–, etc). In this sense, the digital mass is not an organic subjectivity operating as a unified entity under the command of the leader. Quite the contrary: his body is a multiplicity of dispersed machines that connect on their own terms, yet which together compose the leader's digital surface. Ultimately, taken in himself, the leader is merely another user, a *primus inter pares*. Hence, it is a mere illusion the unity of the subjectivity formed around his phallic image.

Thus, upon the traces left by these machines, a nomadic subjectivity is constructed, following the pathways of desiring-production. It consumes its own product and is defined precisely by the part it plays in the process; one may laugh at a meme and enjoy it in solitude, 'like' it, share it, or create a new version of it. Yet, this subject remains dependent upon local connections and, for this reason, its cohesion is labile and subject to a continuous becoming. Furthermore, the imaginary unity of this collective body is beholden to the inherent aggressivity of imaginary phenomena. Thus, ultimately, identification with the leader is established upon the ambivalent desire to occupy his place.

However, if the leader further presents himself as a perfect and infallible being, it is only a matter of time before disillusionment strips away his imaginary raiment, exposing the farce for what it is. At this juncture, the weaponising of the meme as a propaganda instrument becomes a double-edged sword. As a war machine, the meme is highly effective at deterritorialising 'politically correct' discourse, as evidenced by the 2023 LLA campaign (Deleuze1980: 464). Nevertheless, once in power, the leader and his cohort of followers become the new *status quo*, thereby exposing themselves to the meme's own demystifying onslaught.



Figure 7



Figure 8

<E> Final remarks

I have endeavoured to provide a study of the meme as a mean for political propaganda, focusing on the unconscious mechanisms it activates and which account for its efficacy as a war machine capable of corroding the boundaries of political correctness. Simultaneously, insofar as it transmits pleasure, the meme is easily made viral, penetrating niches that traditional political campaigning cannot reach. Finally, through its circulation, it produces a subjectivation that provides cohesion to a mass of users around the figure of the leader. In this regard, the Argentine case appears to be an illustrative example of its potency as a propagandistic weapon.

However, if the meme is a war machine that is –if its essence is a rebel and deterritorialising power– it appears difficult to continue harnessing its strength once power has been seized. In the case under study, the meme served to challenge political correctness, bypassing the fact that this common sense expresses the sedimentation of communal life; that is to say, political correctness is nothing other than the rules of the *polis*, forged through struggles undertaken over time.ⁱⁱⁱ It was precisely this consensus that became the target of the Argentine far-right, insofar as it was identified as the ultimate cause of the moral weakening that led to economic stagnation. In this sense, the revolutionary potency of the meme was utilised to impose a new conservative and elitist consensus. Nevertheless, it should not surprise the engineers of chaos if their own creature devours them from within. By principle, the memetic machine remains refractory to the State apparatus of capture. In this, there are no exceptions.

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