ME THE PEOPLE

How Populism Transforms Democracy

NADIA URBINATI

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To the memory of my father,
after twenty years

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INTRODUCTION

A New Form of Representative Government

> For a democratic system, the process of "becoming," of transformation, is its natural state.
>
> —Norberto Bobbio, *The Future of Democracy*

Populism is not new. It emerged along with the process of democratization in the nineteenth century, and since then its forms have mirrored the forms of the representative governments it has challenged. What *is* novel today is the intensity and pervasiveness of its manifestations: populist movements have appeared in almost every democracy. They now exist from Caracas to Budapest, from Washington to Rome. Any understanding of contemporary politics that wants to be taken seriously must find a way to deal with populism. Yet our ability to study it is currently limited because until recently, this phenomenon was studied in one of two highly specific ways. Either it was simply conceptualized as a subspecies of fascism or it was studied as a form of government that was thought to be limited to the margins of the West, and particularly to Latin American countries.[1] The latter are considered to be the homeland of populism because they have served as the crucible of the generalizations that we apply to populist political styles, emerging processes, socioeconomic conditions of success or failure, and state-level institutional innovations.[2]

The fresh interest in populism among scholars and citizens is also something new. Until the end of the twentieth century that interest was strongest among those thinkers who saw populism as a problem connected to the process of national construction in former colonized countries, as a new form of mobilization and contestation against liberal democracy, or as a sign of the renaissance of right-wing parties in Europe.[3] Few scholars suggested

that populism might have a positive role to play in contemporary democracy. Those who did saw its virtues as essentially moral. They claimed that it entailed a desire for "moral regeneration" and for the "redemptive" aspirations of democracy; that it encouraged "folk politics" over "institutionalized politics" or privileged the lived experience of local neighborhoods over an abstract, distant state; and that it might serve as a means to realize popular sovereignty, over and above institutions and constitutional rules.[4]

That was the past. Now, in the twenty-first century, scholars and citizens attracted by populism are more numerous, and their interest in it is primarily political. They conceive of populism not simply as a symptom of fatigue with the "establishment" and with established parties but also as a legitimate call for power by the ordinary many, who for years have been subjected to declining incomes and political influence. They see it as an opportunity to rejuvenate democracy and as a weapon that the Left might use to defeat the Right (which has traditionally served as the custodian of populist rhetoric and strategy).[5] More important still, they see that populist movements have moved far beyond their erstwhile homeland, Latin America, and have established themselves in government in places as powerful as European Union member-states and the United States.

Despite the growing number of scholars who are sympathetic to populism, and despite the electoral success of populist candidates, the term "populism" is still used most often as a polemical tool, not an analytic one. It is used as a *nom de battaille,* to brand and stigmatize political movements and leaders, or as a rallying cry for those who aspire to reclaim the liberal-democratic model from the hands of elites, believing that model is the only valid form of democracy we have.[6] Finally, especially since the Brexit referendum in 2016, politicians and opinion makers have adopted the term to refer to *any* opposition movement: to label everyone from xenophobic nationalists to critics of neoliberal policies. This usage turns the adjective "populist" into a term for all those who do not themselves rule but rather criticize rulers. The principles underlying their critique become irrelevant. A predictable side effect of this polemical approach is that it reduces politics to a contest between populism and governability, where "populism" is the name for any opposition movement, and "governability" is democratic politics or simply an issue of institutional management.[7] But when populist movements take power, the polemical approach becomes speechless. It cannot explain the uptake of populism within constitutional democracies, which have become the reference point and the target of populist majorities. And this means that it cannot help devise a successful counterpopulist strategy.

My project in this book is to repair this conceptual weakness. I propose that we should abandon the polemical attitude and treat populism as a project of government. I further propose that we should see it as a transformation of the three pillars of modern democracy—the people, the principle of majority, and representation. I do not follow the widespread view that populists are mainly oppositional and incapable of governing. In its place, I stress the capacity that populist movements possess to construct a particular regime from within constitutional democracy. Populism in power, I hold, is a *new* form of representative government, but a *disfigured* one, situated within the category of "disfigurement" I devised in my previous book.[8]

This Introduction has four parts, which set up the conceptual environment for the theory I develop in the rest of the work. First, I propose an outline of the constitutional and representative democratic context in which populism is now developing, and in relation to which it must be judged. Second, I argue that populism can be understood as a global trend, with a recognizable phenomenological pattern, but that every particular instance of populism retains local-context-specific features. Third, I offer a synthetic and critical overview of the main contemporary interpretations of populism, in relation to which I develop my theory. Finally, I provide a brief road map of the chapters ahead.

How Populism Transforms Representative Democracy

This book seeks to understand the implications of populism's reappearance in relation to constitutional democracy. Constitutional democracy is the political order that promises to protect basic rights (which are essential to the democratic process) by limiting the power of the majority in government, by providing stable and regular opportunities for changing majorities and governments, by guaranteeing social and procedural mechanisms that permit the largest possible part of the population to participate in the game of politics, and by influencing decisions and changing who makes decisions. It does this through the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary. Stabilized after 1945 with the defeat of mass dictatorships, constitutional democracy was meant to neutralize the problems that populism is now trying to capitalize on.[9] These are (1) the resistance of democratic citizens to political intermediation, and to organized and traditional political parties in particular; (2) the majority's mistrust of the institutional checks on the power that the majority legitimately derives from the citizens' vote; and (3) the climate of distress with pluralism, or with the views

and groups that do not fit with the majoritarian meaning of "the people." I argue that representation is the terrain on which the populist battle over these issues takes place. And I see populism as a litmus test of the transformations of representative democracy.[10]

Let me try to summarize the theory I will put forth. I argue that populist democracy is the name of a new form of representative government that is based on two phenomena: a direct relation between the leader and those in society whom the leader defines as the "right" or "good" people; and the superlative authority of the audience. Its immediate targets are the "obstacles" to the development of those phenomena: intermediary opinion-making bodies, such as parties; established media; and institutionalized systems for monitoring and controlling political power. The result of these positive and negative actions delineates the physiognomy of populism as an interpretation of "the people" and "the majority" that is tainted by an undisguised—indeed, an enthusiastic—*politics of partiality*. This partiality can easily disfigure the rule of law (which requires that government officials and citizens are bound by and act consistent with the law), and also the division of powers, which—taken together—include reference to basic rights, democratic process, and criteria of justice or right. That these elements form the core of constitutional democracy does not imply they are naturally identical to democracy as such. Their intertwinement occurred through a complex, often dramatic, and always conflictual historical process, which was (and is) temporal, open to transformation, and finite. It can be revised and reshaped, and populism is one form this revision and reshaping can take.[11] Populists want to replace *party* democracy with *populist* democracy; when they succeed, they stabilize their rule through unrestrained use of the means and procedures that party democracy offers. Specifically, populists promote a permanent mobilization of the public (the audience) in support of the elected leader in government; or they amend the existing constitution in ways that reduce constraints on the decision-making power of the majority. In a phrase, "Populism seeks to occupy the space of the constituent power."[12]

There are unquestionably social, economic, and cultural reasons for the success of populist proposals in our democracies. One could claim that their success is tantamount to an admission that party democracy has failed to deliver the promises made by constitutional democracies after 1945. Among the unfulfilled promises, two in particular militate in favor of populist successes: the growth of social and economic inequality, so that for a large part of the population there is scant or no chance to aspire to a dignified social and political life; and the growth of a rampant and rapacious global oligarchy that makes sovereignty a phantom. These two

factors are intertwined; they are a violation of the promise of equality, and they render constitutional democracy in urgent need of critical self-reflection on "its failure to put an end to oligarchic power."[13] The dualism between the few and the many, and the antiestablishment ideology that fattens populism, comes from these unfulfilled promises. This book presumes this set of socioeconomic conditions but does not intend to study why populism grew, or why it continues to grow. The ambition of this book is more limited in scope: I seek to understand *how populism transforms (indeed, disfigures) representative democracy.*

The term "populism" itself is ambiguous and is difficult to define in a sharp and uncontested way. This is because it is not an ideology or a specific political regime but rather a *representative process,* through which a collective subject is constructed so that it can achieve power. Even though it is "a way of doing politics which can take various forms, depending on the periods and the places," populism is incompatible with nondemocratic forms of politics.[14] This is because it frames itself as an attempt to build a collective subject through people's voluntary consent, and as an attempt to question a social order in the name of people's interests.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary,* populist politics is a type of politics that seeks to represent the interests and wishes of ordinary people "who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups."[15] There are two predefined players in this definition: the ordinary people and the established political elites. The thing that defines and connects these two players is the feeling of the former toward the latter—a feeling that a representative leader intercepts, exalts, and narrates. Populism involves an exclusionary conception of the people, and the establishment is the externality thanks to which, and against which, it conceives itself. The dynamic of populism is one of rhetorical construction. It involves a speaker interpreting the claims of dissatisfied groups and unifying them in a narrative and above all his or her person. In this sense, as Ernesto Laclau has noted, all populist governments take the name of their leader.[16] The outcome is a kind of movement that, if asked to explain what it is that makes it count as the people's voice, it answers by naming the people's enemies.[17]

The interpretation I advance corrects Margaret Canovan's divide between populism in "economically backward" societies (where populism can supposedly stretch to give birth to Caesaristic leaders), and populism in modern Western societies (where it can supposedly exist even without a leader).[18] According to Canovan's framework, Western societies enjoy a kind of exceptionality that makes "populism" almost indistinguishable from electoral cases of so-called silent majorities, who are courted and conquered by

skillful candidates and catchall parties.[19] My interpretation of populism as a transformation of representative democracy is meant to challenge this view. On my theory, all populist leaders behave the same, whether they are Western or not. That said, in societies that are not yet fully democratic, the representative ambitions of populist leaders can subvert the existing institutional order (though they can hardly make the country a stable democracy).[20] This is what happened with Italian fascism in the 1920s, and with the forms of caudillismo and dictatorship that one sees at work in Latin American countries.

Furthermore, I hold that before they come to power, all populist leaders build their popularity by attacking mainstream parties and politicians (from the Right and the Left). Once they have attained power, they reconfirm their identification with "the people" on a daily basis by convincing their audience that they are waging a titanic battle against the entrenched establishment in order to preserve their (and the people's) "transparency," and in order to avoid becoming a new establishment. Developing a direct relation to the people and the audience is essential for this purpose. Thus, Hugo Chávez "spent more than 1,500 hours denouncing capitalism on Alo Presidente, his own TV show";[21] Silvio Berlusconi was for many years a daily presence on both his private television stations and Italian state television; and Donald Trump is on Twitter night and day.

The representative construction of populism is rhetorical, and it is independent of social classes and traditional ideologies. As they say in Europe, it is situated beyond the Left–Right divide. It is an expression of democratic action because the creation of the populist discourse occurs in public, with the voluntary consent of the relevant protagonists *and* with the voluntary consent of the audience.[22] With all of this in mind, the central question of this book is the following: *What kind of democratic results does populism construct?* My answer is that today, representative democracy is both the environment in which populism develops *and* its target, or the thing it claims its ruling power against. Populist movements and leaders compete with other political actors with regard to the representation of the people; and they seek electoral victory in order to prove that "the people" *they* represent are the "right" people and that they deserve to rule for their own good.

This book seeks to demonstrate how populism tries to transform itself into a new form of representative government. In the literature on populism, which I shall examine in the third section of this Introduction, populism is often opposed to representative democracy. It is associated with the claim of popular sovereigns to immediate power. Sometimes it is also connected to direct democracy. This book, by contrast, seeks to show that

populism springs from *within* representative democracy and wants to construct its own representative people and government. Populism in power does not challenge the practice of elections but rather transforms it into the celebration of the majority and its leader, and into a new form of elitist governing strategy, based on a (supposedly) direct representation between the people and the leader. On this framing, elections work as plebiscite or acclamation. They do what they are not supposed to: show what is *ex ante* taken to be the right answer and serve as a confirmation of the right winners.[23] This makes populism a chapter in a broader phenomenon: the formation and substitution of elites. As long as we conceive of populism as solely a movement of protest or a narrative, we cannot see this fact. But when we consider it as it manifests *once it is in power,* these other realities become plainly evident. Alternatively, we might say we can see things better when we stop engaging in debates about what populism *is*—whether it is a "thin" ideology or a mentality or a strategy or a style—and turn instead to analyzing what populism *does:* in particular, when we ask how it changes or reconfigures the procedures and institutions of representative democracy.

The interpretation of populism as a new kind of mixed government that I propose in this book profits from the diarchic theory of representative democracy I developed in my previous work.[24] This theory understands the idea of democracy as a government by means of opinion. *Representative* democracy is diarchic because it is a system in which "will" (by which I mean the right to vote, and the procedures and institutions that regulate the making of authoritative decisions) and "opinion" (by which I mean the extrainstitutional domain of political judgments and opinions in their multifaceted expressions) exert a mutual influence on each other but remain independent.[25] The societies in which we live are democratic not only because they have free elections that are contested by two or multiple parties but because they also promise to allow for effective political rivalry and debate among diverse and competing views. The use of representative institutions—a free and multiple media, as well as the regular election of representatives, political parties, and so on—allows time for political judgments to be formed, and for those to inform voting. It also allows time for decisions to be reviewed, rethought, and—if necessary—changed. While direct democracy collapses the time between will and judgment, and so exalts the moment of decision, representative democracy teases the two apart. In so doing, it opens up the political process to the formation and operation of public opinion and rhetoric. In placing our faith in the capacities of representation in political life, we are exploiting an ideological mechanism that allows us to use time as a resource in guiding our politics. Thus, diarchy promises that elections and the forum

of opinions will make institutions both the site of legitimate power and an object of control and scrutiny. A democratic constitution is supposed to regulate and protect both powers.

In conclusion, the diarchic theory of representative democracy makes two claims. First, it asserts that "will" and "opinion" are the two powers of the sovereign citizens. Second, it asserts that they are different in principle, and should remain distinct in practice, even though they must be (and are) in constant communication with each other. Diarchy is my name for a mediated or indirect kind of self-government, which presumes a *distance* and a *difference* between the sovereign and the government.[26] Elections regulate that difference, while representation (which is both an institution inside the state and a process of participation outside it) regulates that distance. It is precisely this difference and this distance that populist forms of representation question and transform, and that populism in power tries to overcome.[27] Yet its "directness" remains inside representative government.

In these ways, the new mixed regime inaugurated by populism is characterized by *direct representation*. Direct representation is an oxymoron I use (and unpack in Chapter 4) to capture the idea that populist leaders want to speak directly *to* the people and *for* the people, without needing intermediaries (especially parties and independent media). As such, even though populism does not renounce elections, it uses them as a celebration of the majority and its leader, rather than as a competition among leaders and parties that facilitates assessment of the plurality of preferences. More specifically, it weakens the organized parties on which electoral competitions have until now relied and creates its own lightweight and malleable party, which purports to unify claims beyond partisan divisions. The leader uses this "movement" as he or she pleases, and bypasses it if need be. In a conventional representative democracy, political parties and the media are the essential intermediary bodies. They allow the inside and the outside of the state to communicate without merging. A *populist* representative democracy, by contrast, seeks to overcome those "obstacles." It "democratizes" the public (or so it claims) by establishing a perfect and direct communication between the two sides of the diarchy and—ideally—merging them. The goal of opposing the "ordinary people" to the "established few" is to convince the people that it is possible for them to be ruled in a representative manner without the need for a separate political class or "the establishment." Indeed, as I explain in Chapter 1, getting rid of "the establishment" (or whatever else is conceived of as lying between "us," the people outside, and the state, understood as inside apparatuses of elected or appointed decision makers) is the central claim of all populist movements. It was certainly the core theme running through Trump's inaugural address, when he declared that his arrival in Washington represented not

the arrival of "the establishment" but rather the arrival of "the citizens of our country."

Pivotal to this analysis of populism is the direct relationship that the leader establishes and maintains with the people. This is also the dynamic that blurs the democratic diarchy. While in opposition, populism stresses the dualism between the many and the few, and expands its audience by denouncing constitutional democracy. Populists argue that constitutional democracy has failed to fulfill its promise of guaranteeing that all citizens enjoy equal political power. But once populists get into power, they work incessantly to prove that their ruling leader is an *incarnation* of the voice of the people and should stand against and above all other representative claimants and repair the fault of constitutional democracy. Populists assert that, because the people and the leader have effectively merged, and no intermediary elite sets them apart, the role of deliberation and mediation can be drastically reduced, and the will of the people can exercise itself more robustly.

This is what makes populism different from demagoguery. As I explain in Chapter 2, populism in representative democracies is structured by the trope of "unification versus pluralism." This same trope appeared in ancient demagoguery in relation to direct democracy. But the impact of the populist's appeal to the unification of "the people" is different. In ancient direct democracy, demagoguery had an immediate law-making impact because the assembly was the unmediated sovereign, rather than an organ made up of people who were not physically present and were therefore defined and represented by the political competitors. Populism, however, develops within a state order in which the popular sovereign is defined by an abstract principle, leaving rhetoricians free to fight over the interpretations of that principle and to compete for its representation in the state. This is true even though populism initially develops within the nonsovereign sphere of opinion (the world of ideology), and may very well remain there if it never gets a majority to govern. In this sense, I am well aware of the crucial differences that elections bring to democracy. But I contend that referring to the ancients' analyses of demagoguery can help us explain two things: (1) like demagoguery in Aristotle's rendering of the *politeia,* populism intervenes when the legitimacy of the representative order is already in decline; and (2) populism's relation to constitutional democracy is conflictual; this conflict helps us to name and shame the ways in which populism co-opts the principle of majority in order to concentrate its own power and inaugurate a majoritarianist government.[28]

In my previous work, I argued that it is simplistic and inadequate to think in terms of a simple dichotomy between direct and representative democracy—as if participation sided with the former and elected aristocracies sided with the latter.[29] Democratic politics is *always* representative

politics, insofar as it is articulated and occurs in the form of interpretations, partisan affiliations, engagements, and finally decisions by the majority of individual votes. These processes do not merely produce a majority: they produce the majority *and* the opposition, in a ceaseless, conflicting dialectic. Citizens' expression of proposals, their contestation of ideas, and their consent to proposals and ideas (and the candidates who speak for them) are all components of democracy's diarchy of will and opinion.

Taking a diarchic perspective, I can argue against conventional wisdom, according to which populism is best understood as "illiberal democracy."[30] A democracy that infringes basic political rights—especially the rights crucial for forming opinions and judgments, expressing dissents, and changing views—and that systematically precludes the possibility of the formation of new majorities *is not democracy at all.* A minimal (as electoral) definition of democracy thus implies more than merely elections, if it is in fact to describe democracy.[31] As Bobbio writes, electors "must be offered real alternatives and be in a position to choose between these alternatives. For this condition to be realized those called upon to make decisions much be guaranteed the so-called basic rights: freedom of opinion, of expression, of speech, of assembly and association etc."[32]

The diarchy of will and opinion means that democracy is effectively inconceivable without a commitment to political and civil liberties, which requires a constitutional pact to proclaim and promise to protect them, and a division of power and the rule of law to protect and guarantee them. Of course, none of these liberties is unlimited. But it is essential that the interpretation of their scope does not lie in the hands of the majority in power—not even a majority in power whose policies seem to meet the social interests of the many.[33] This is *the* condition for representative democracy to work, and for its process to remain open and indeterminate. As such, thinking and talking in terms of a distinction between "democratic" and "liberal democratic" is misguided, as is thinking and talking in terms of "liberal democracy" and "illiberal democracy."[34] These terms, while popular, are shortsighted and imprecise because they presume something that in fact cannot exist: democracy without rights to free speech and freedom of association, and democracy with a majority that is overwhelming enough to block its own potential evolutions and mutations (that is, other majorities).[35] From the diarchic perspective, liberal democracy is a pleonasm and illiberal democracy is a contradiction in terms, an oxymoron.[36]

Moreover, the concept of "liberally hyphened democracy" plays into the hands of those who claim that populism is democracy at its highest. It

allows proponents of populism to claim that the liberal part of the hyphen limits democracy's endogenous strength—namely, sponsoring the power of the majority. This suits the populist claim rather well. In a speech he gave during the electoral campaign of 1946, Juan Domingo Perón (the father of Argentinian populism) styled himself a *true* democrat, in contrast to his adversaries, whom he accused of being *liberal* democrats: "I am, then, much more democratic than my adversaries, because I seek a real democracy whilst they defend an appearance of democracy, the external form of democracy."[37] The problem, of course, is that the "external form of democracy" is essential to democracy. It is not merely "an appearance," and it is not the prerogative of liberalism alone. If one adopts a nondiarchic conception of democracy and stresses the moment of decision (of the people or their representatives) as the essence of democracy, the mobilization and dissent of citizens appears to signal a *crisis in* democracy, instead of appearing as a *component of* democracy. Narrowing the democratic moment to voting or elections alone turns the extrainstitutional domain into the natural site of populism, and in doing so, as William R. Riker wrote years ago, liberalism and populism become the only games in town.[38] The diarchic theory of democracy allows us to avoid this pitfall.

As we shall see in this book, populism shows itself to be impatient with the democratic diarchy. It also shows itself to be intolerant of civil liberties, insofar as (1) it defers exclusively to the winning majority to solve disagreements within society; (2) it tends to shatter the mediation of institutions by making them directly subject to the will of the ruling majority and its leader; and (3) it constructs a representation of the people that, while inclusive of the large majority, is *ex ante* exclusionary of another part. Inclusion and exclusion are internal to the democratic dialectic among citizens who disagree on many things, and the democratic dialectic is a game of government and contestation. Democracy means that no majority is the last one, and that no dissenting view is confined *ex ante* to a position of peripheral impotence or subordination merely because it is held by the "wrong" people.[39] But for this open dialectic to persist, the elected majority cannot behave *as if* it is the direct representative of some "true" people. (Indeed, at the government level, no decision "can be made without some degree of cooperation with political adversaries"; as such, these adversaries are always a part of the game).[40] Democracy without individual liberty—political *and* legal—cannot exist.[41] It is in this sense that the term "liberal democracy" is a pleonasm.[42] It suggests that "democracy is *before* liberalism," in the sense that it is self-standing or nondependent on liberalism, although it has historically profited from some liberal achievements.[43] This is not only the case because democracy predated liberalism; more importantly, it is the case

because democracy is a practice of liberty in action and in public that is imbued with individual liberty. "The political practice of democracy requires conditions that map onto core liberal and republican values of freedom and equality."[44] This makes it an open game in which a change of government is always possible and is inscribed within majority rule. As Giovanni Sartori writes, "The democratic future of a democracy hinges on the convertibility of majorities into minorities and, conversely, of minorities into majorities."[45] As such, liberal democracy is really just democracy.[46] Beyond this, we get fascism, which is neither "democracy without liberalism," nor democracy, nor political liberalism. Its early theorists and leaders, of course, knew this well.[47]

Populists attempt to construct a form of representation that gets rid of party government, that gets rid of the machinery that generates the political establishment and imposes compromises and transactions, and that ends up fragmenting the homogeneity of the people. If the principle that rules representative democracy is liberty—and therefore the possibility of dissent, pluralism, and compromise—then the principle ruling populism is the unity of the collective, which sustains the leader in his or her decisions. Seeing this, we can understand how populism in power is a form of representative government that is based on a direct relationship between the leader and those who are deemed to be the "right" or the "good" people: those whom the leader claims to unify and bring to power and whom the elections reveal but do not create.

A further implication of populism's impatience with partisan division is its transmutation of the procedural conception of "the people" into a *proprietor.* This point is crucial, and it has been generally neglected in the massive literature on populism. We must overcome this neglect. Whenever populists come to power, they treat procedures and political cultures as a matter of property and possession. "Our" rights (as we hear from the proclamations of the Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán, from the proclamations of the Italian minister of the interior Matteo Salvini, and from US president Trump) are the polestar of populism. They epitomize the populist wrenching of the ideas, the practice, and the legal culture that are associated with civil rights—namely, equal consideration and inclusion. The characterization of populism as a possessive conception of political institutions is at the basis of its factional nature. This adds to its impatience with constitutional rules and the division of powers, and casts light on its paradoxical character: populism in power is doomed either to be unbalanced (as in a permanent campaign) or to become a new regime. It cannot afford to be a democratic government among others because the majority it represents

is not a majority among others: it is the "good" one, which exists before and independently of elections.

The policy implications of populism's possessive nature are also unpredictable. The approach may be cashed out in protectionist ambitions; but it may also be cashed out in libertarian claims, which remain almost unrecognizable as long as we insist on understanding populism as a subset of traditional fascist ideologies, or as a wave of protectionism in the old fascist style. As Rogers Brubaker has written in his perceptive analysis of Dutch populist civilizationism, "Fortuyn's libertarian anti-Islamism gained traction in a context shaped by the distinctively progressive views of 'native' Dutch people on gender and sexual morality, by anxiety in gay circles about anti-gay harassment and violence attributed to Muslim youth, and by the public uproar over the condemnation of homosexuality on a Dutch national news programme by a Rotterdam-based Moroccan imam."[48] Leaders like Marine Le Pen of the French National Front, like Austrian prime minister Sebastian Kurz, and like Salvini of the Italian Lega do not (yet) embrace rhetoric that frontally attacks gender equality (although some of them attempt to revoke the laws regulating abortion and same-sex civil unions or marriages). Nor do they reject the individual liberties that civil rights brought to their people (although they thunder against the "inimical" press). But they *do* use the language of rights in a way that subverts their proper function. They use the language of rights to state and reclaim the absolute power of the many over their "civilization," and thereby over rights, which become a power that only the members of the ruling people possess and are allowed to enjoy. At the very moment they are detached from their equal and impartial (that is, universalist and procedural) meaning, rights become a privilege. They can be inclusive only insofar as they are not conditioned on the cultural or national identity of the persons claiming them. A possessive practice of rights robs rights of their aspirational character and turns them into a means to protect the status that a part of the population has gained. The rebuff of migrants from the Italian shores and the refusal to help them when in need are made in the name of "our rights," which are superior in value to "human rights." The suspension of universalism is a direct consequence of a possessive and thus relative conception of rights. We do not see this face of populism by stressing the illiberal consequences of democracy left untamed by liberalism; we see it when we consistently follow the democratic process, in all its diarchic complexity.

As I shall explain in this book, populism is a phenomenology that involves replacing the whole with one of its parts. This causes the fictions

(the guidelines of acting *as if*) of universality, inclusion, and impartiality to fade away. The success of populism in achieving its stated aims would ultimately entail the replacement of the procedural meaning of the people, and the replacement of the principled generality of the law *(erga omnes),* with a socially substantive meaning and law that only expresses the will and interests of a *part* of the people (*ad personam)*. In Chapter 3 I propose that this process of solidification or ethnicization of the juridico-political *populus* involves an attempt by populist leaders to claim an identification of "the people" with the part *(méros)* they purport to incarnate. Democracy then comes to be identified with radical majoritarianism, or with the *kratos* (the power) of a specific majority, which purports to be—and rules as if it is—the only good majority (or part) that some election has revealed. This identification, of course, requires one to suppose that the opposition does not belong to the same "good" people. And it requires one to identify the "majority principle" (which is one of democracy's fundamentals) with "majority rule." As pure majoritarianism, populism is a disfigurement of the majority principle and democracy (neither its completion nor its norm), whose "illiberal consequences need not necessarily follow upon a crisis of liberalism in a democratic state" but can develop from democracy's practice and conception of liberty.[49]

Ultimately, populism is not an appeal to the sovereignty of the people as a general principle of legitimacy. Rather, it is a radical reaffirmation of the "heartland that represents an idealized conception of the community."[50] This heartland claims to be the true and only legitimate master of the game. It does so either by pointing to its numerical majority or by holding itself up as the mythical popular entity that must translate directly into the will to power. In Chapter 2 I examine this polemical approach, and I propose that—within what I define as a property-like or possessive conception and management of political power—rule by majority ceases to be a procedure for making legitimate decisions in a pluralistic and contested environment, and instead becomes the facticity of power, allowing whatever part of society is seeking *kratos* to make up for its past neglect by elected parties, and allowing it to rule in its own interests and against "the establishment" and the interests of that part that does not belong to the "good" one.

This possessive conception of politics runs the risk of arriving at "solutions" that are dangerously close to being fascist. Thus, while I treat populism as a democratic phenomenon, I also claim that it stretches constitutional democracy to its limits. Beyond these limits, another regime could arise: one that might well be authoritarian, dictatorial or fascist. From this perspective, populism is not some subversive movement but is rather a process that appropriates the norms and tools of representative politics. As

we see today, populists exploit the dysfunctions of constitutional democracy and sometimes attempt to refashion the constitution. Hence the novelty of contemporary populism as it has developed within constitutional democracies. This novelty speaks to the fact that populist forms precisely mirror the political order against which they are reacting.

I argue that populism is structurally marked by a *radical and programmatic partiality* in interpreting the people and the majority. This is the case whether the appeal to "the people" is made in the ideological terms of the Left or of the Right. As such, if populism comes to power, it can have a disfiguring impact on the representative institutions that make up constitutional democracy—the party system, the rule of law, and the division of powers. It can push constitutional democracy so far that it opens the door to authoritarianism or even dictatorship. The paradox, of course, is that if such a regime change actually happens, populism ceases to exist. This means that the destiny of populism is tied to the destiny of democracy: "The *never quite* taking place [is] part of its performance."[51] As such, some scholars have compared populism to a parasite in order to explain this peculiar relationship.[52] Having no foundations of its own, populism develops from within the democratic institutions it transforms (but never wholly replaces). Democracy and populism live and die together; and for this reason, it makes sense to argue that populism is the extreme border of constitutional democracy, after which dictatorial regimes are primed to emerge.

Whatever analogy a particular populist movement uses, its manifestations will be contextual and dependent on the political, social, and religious culture of the country at hand. But populism is more than a historically contingent phenomenon, and more than a movement of contestation. It pertains to the *transformation of representative democracy.* This, I claim, must be the reference point for any theoretical approach to populism. It makes things easier, too, because although "we simply do not have anything like a *theory* of populism," we can profit from its endogenous link with representation and democracy, whose normative foundations and procedures are very familiar to us.[53]

I make a distinction between *populism as a popular movement* and *populism as a ruling power.* This distinction encompasses populism in its rhetorical style; in its propaganda, tropes, and ideology; and finally in its aims and achievements. The distinction maps onto the diarchic character of democracy I outlined earlier. We need a way to understand populism both as a movement of opinion and contestation and as a system of decision making. My earlier book *Democracy Disfigured* analyzed populism in terms of the first authority, and this book analyses it in terms of the second.

With respect to the authority of the opinion, I argued in *Democracy Disfigured* that it is inaccurate to treat populism essentially as identical with popular movements or movements of protest.[54] Taken alone, popular movements may involve populist *rhetoric*, but not yet a project of populist *power*. Recent examples of such rhetoric include the popular horizontal movements of contestation and protest that used the dualistic trope of "we, the people," against "you, the establishment"—like the Girotondi in Italy in 2002, Occupy Wall Street in the United States in 2011, and Indignados in Spain in 2011. Without an organizing narrative, some aspiration to win seats in the parliament or the congress, and a leadership claiming that its people are the "true" expression of the people as a whole, popular movements remain very much what they have always been. They are sacrosanct democratic movements of contestation against some social trend that the mobilized citizens perceive to be betraying basic principles of equality (and that society, they think, has promised to respect and fulfill). This is very different from populist approaches that seek to conquer representative institutions and win a governing majority in order to model society on its own ideology of the people. Examples of these sorts of approaches appear in the majorities that have emerged in Hungary (2012), Poland (2014), the United States (2016), Austria (2017), and Italy (2018). These cases, and older ones in Latin America, show that even if a populist government does not outright change a constitution, it can nonetheless change the tenor of public discourse and politics by deploying daily propaganda that injects enmity in the public sphere, that mocks any opposition and seminal principles like judicial independence. A populist government relies on, but also reinforces and amplifies, a strongly opinionated audience that clamors for the direct translation of its opinions into decisions. This audience becomes intolerant of dissent and disparaging of pluralism; and, in addition, it claims full legitimacy in the name of transparency, a "virtue" that is supposed to expunge the "hypocrisy" of pragmatic politics. Thus, the populist leader's move to offend adversaries and minorities in public speeches becomes a mark of sincerity against the duplicity of the politically correct. This was also the style of fascism, which translated that candidness directly into punitive and repressing laws. This is precisely what makes populism in power different from fascism in power, although populism may sponsor ideas and propagate views that are just as insufferable as those of fascism. Nonetheless, to understand the character of a populist democracy, we should not concern ourselves only with what the leader says and the audience echoes. We must also analyze the ways in which populism in power *mutates* existing democratic institutions and procedures.

Contexts, Comparisons, and the Shadow of Fascism

Populism is a global phenomenon.[55] But it is almost a truism that any "definition" of populism will be precarious. The phenomenon resists generalizations. As such, those scholars of politics who wish to study it must become comparativists, because the language and content of populism are imbued with the political culture of the society in which the specific instance has arisen. In some countries, populist representation takes on religious traits; in others, it takes on more secular and nationalist ones. In some, it uses the language of republican patriotism, while in others it adopts the vocabularies of nationalism, indigeneity, and nativism and the myth of "first occupants." In some, it stresses the center-periphery cleavage, while in others it stresses the divide between city and countryside. In the past, some populist experiences were rooted in the attempts that were made by collectivist agrarian traditions to resist modernization, westernization, and industrialism. Others embodied a "self-made man" kind of popular culture, which valued small-scale entrepreneurship. Still others reclaimed state intervention in order to govern modernization, or to protect and succor the well-being of the middle class. The variety of past and present populisms is extraordinary, and what may be right in Latin America is not necessarily right in Europe or the United States. Equally, what holds true in North and Western Europe may not do so in the eastern or southern areas of the old continent. Isaiah Berlin's comments about Romanticism could equally have been made about populism: "whenever anyone embarks on a generalization" of the phenomenon (even an "innocuous" one), "somebody will always be found who will produce countervailing evidence."[56] This should suffice to guard us against *hybris definitoria*.

But populism's importance does not spring from our (in)ability to render it in one clear and distinct definition. Its importance comes from the fact that it is a "movement" that, even though it escapes generalizations, is very tangible and is capable of transforming the lives and the thoughts of the people and society that embrace it. As the scholars at a 1967 conference at the London School of Economics showed with their pioneering interdisciplinary analyses of global populism, populism is a component of the political world we live in, and it signals a transformation of the democratic political system.[57] Perhaps Berlin's other comments about Romanticism do not apply: that it is "a gigantic and radical transformation, after which nothing was ever the same."[58] But we *can* say with some confidence that populism is part of the "gigantic" and global phenomenon called democratization. And we can also say that its ideological core has been nourished by the two main entities, *ethnos* and *demos*—the nation and the

people—that have fleshed out popular sovereignty in the age of democratization since its beginning in the eighteenth century. Populism is "always one possible response to the crisis of modern democratic politics" because is premised upon "claims about" the interpretation of popular sovereignty.[59] The things populism *does* to a democratic society, and the traces it leaves on that society, are primed to change both the style and the content of public discourse, even when populism does not change the constitution. This transformative potential is the horizon for my political theory of populism.

Since populism cannot be rendered as a precise concept, scholars are rightly skeptical about whether it can be treated as a distinctive phenomenon at all, rather than as some ideological creation or even simply "another majority." In many countries, populism goes together with citizens' critical attitudes toward elections—which are rooted in a belief that elections simply reproduce the rule of the "establishment"—and this makes scholars talk of populism as a "crisis of democracy."[60] I don't use the language of crisis and don't flirt with apocalyptic visions. There is nothing "undemocratic" about electing a xenophobic leader; nor is there anything "undemocratic" about the rise of antiestablishment parties.[61] Democracy is not in crisis because, or when, it gives us a majority we do not like or that is despicable.

Why, then, should we bother with populism? My answer is this: the simple fact that the term "populism" now appears so persistently, both in everyday politics and in academic publications, is reason enough to justify our scholarly attention. We study populism because populism is transforming our democracies.

To study populism, we must be attentive to context without being locked within it. When populism was just beginning to be studied, scholars identified it with a reaction against the processes of modernization (in predemocratic and postcolonial societies) and with the difficult transformation of representative government (in democratic societies).[62] The term emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, first in Russia *(narodničestvo)* and then in the United States (the People's Party). In the first case, it was a label for an intellectual vision; in the second case, by contrast, it was a label for a political movement that idealized an agrarian society of communitarian villages and individual producers, thereby standing against industrialization and corporate capitalism. There were other differences, too: in Russia, the populist voice was first of all the voice of urban intellectuals, who imagined an ideal community of uncontaminated peasants. In the United States, on the other hand, it was the voice of those citizens who contested the ruling elites in the name of their own

constitution.[63] The US case, therefore, not the Russian one, represents the first instance of populism as a democratic political movement, proposing itself as the true representative of the people within a party system and a government.[64]

It is important to remember, though, that in the United States—and also in Canada, when the Canadian populist movement got under way—populism did not bring about regime changes but developed along with a wave of political democratization and the impact of the construction of a market economy on a traditional society. This wave of democratization spoke of ways to include much larger sections of the population, at a time when the polis was really still an elected oligarchy.[65] In the context of democratization, indeed, populism can become a strategy for rebalancing the distribution of political power among established and emerging social groups.[66]

Several other important historical cases of populist regimes emerged in Latin American countries. Here, populism was capable of becoming a ruling power after World War II. It was met with mixed feelings at different historical phases, depending on whether it was evaluated at the beginning of its career or at its apex, whether it was evaluated as a regime in consolidation or a regime facing a succession in power, and whether it was evaluated as an opposition party mobilizing against an existing government or as a government itself.[67] As in Russia and the United States, in Latin America populism emerged in the age of socioeconomic modernization; but much like fascism in Europe's Catholic countries, it led toward modernity by using state power to protect and empower popular and middle classes, to dwarf political dissent, and to tame the liberal ideology, all while implementing welfare policies and protecting traditional ethical values. Finally, in Western Europe, populism made its appearance with predemocratic regimes in the early twentieth century. Here, it coincided with colonial expansionism, with the militarization of society that occurred during World War I, and with the growth of ethnic nationalism—which, in response to an economic depression, unraveled existing ideological divisions under the myth of an encompassing Nation.[68] In predemocratic Europe, populism's response to the crisis of liberal representative government ultimately manifested in the promotion of fascist regimes.

Populism only became the name of a form of government after the collapse of fascism, primarily in Latin America. Since that time, as a political form located between constitutional government and dictatorship, it has displayed family resemblances to political systems that sit at opposing ends of the spectrum. Today, populism grows both in societies that are still

democratizing and in societies that are fully democratic. And it takes its most mature and vexing profile in constitutional representative democracies. If we seek to draw a general trend out of these many different contexts, we can say that populism challenges representative government from within before moving beyond denunciation and seeking to substantially reshape democracy as a new political regime. Unlike fascism, though, it does not suspend free and competitive elections, nor does it deny them a legitimate role. In fact, electoral legitimacy is a key defining dimension of populist regimes.[69]

Interestingly enough, though, we see frequent accusations that populists in power are "fascist." This is particularly common today, given that Salvini shows sympathy with the neo-Nazi movements infesting the streets of Italian cities and beating and terrorizing African immigrants; and given that Trump's aides have explicitly admitted to finding inspiration in the books and ideas of Julius Evola, an obscure and esoteric fascist philosopher who argued that official fascist ideology was too dependent on the principle of popular sovereignty and the egalitarian myth of enlightenment to figure as genuinely fascist. Other European populist leaders have also made alarming declarations about the ways in which the Christian roots of their nations have been "contaminated" by Islamic ideas, or about the way immigration contaminates the ethnic core of the people. These claims are striking and alarming. But I continue to resist the idea that the new form of representative government initiated by populism is fascist. As I shall explain in Chapter 3, where I discuss the similarities and differences between populist antipartyism and fascist antipartyism: it is true that fascism is both an ideology and a regime, much like populism is; and it is true that fascism emerged as a "movement" and militated against organized parties, much as populism did.[70] But the two should remain conceptually separate, because a fascist party would never give up on its plan of conquering power to construct a fascist society—a society that would be deeply inimical to basic rights, political freedom, and, in effect, constitutional democracy. It was for precisely this reason that Evola criticized readings of fascism as a version of absolute popular sovereignty in which fascism was derivative of the French revolution (and thus basically popular and "populistic"). In contrast, he conceived of fascism as a view of politics and society that was radically hierarchical and holistic, one that was wholly opposite to liberalism and democracy because of its radical denial of a universalist view of human beings,[71] and one that was not parasitical on democracy but was instead a radically antidemocratic project.

Fascism in power is not content to achieve a few constitutional amendments and to exercise its majority *as if* it were the people. Fascism is a re-

gime in its own right that wants to shape society and civil life according to its principles. Fascism is the state and the people merging.[72] It is not merely parasitical on representative government, because it does not accept the idea that legitimacy springs freely from popular sovereignty and free and competitive elections. Fascism is tyranny, and its government is a dictatorship. Fascism in power is antidemocratic all the way through, not only in words but also de jure. It is not content with dwarfing the opposition through daily propaganda: it uses state power and violent repression to *silence* the opposition. Fascism wants consensus but will not risk dissent, so it abolishes electoral competition and represses freedom of speech and association, which are the pillars of democratic politics. Where populism is ambiguous, fascism is not; and like democracy, fascism relies on a small nucleus of unambiguous ideas that make it immediately recognizable. Raymond Aron was already gesturing at this interpretation at the end of the 1950s when he tried to make sense of "regimes without parties," which "require a kind of depoliticization of the governed" and yet did not reach the pervasiveness and intensity of fascist regimes.[73]

I invoked the metaphor of parasitism to characterize situations in which populism grows from within representative democracy. In order to represent the ambiguous nature of populism, and its relationship with both fascism and democracy, I propose that we should also employ the Wittgensteinian metaphor of "family resemblance."[74] This metaphor captures the borderline identity of populism. "Rather than dealing exclusively with the most evident traits found in all photographs" of the members of a family, "Wittgenstein took into account the presence of blurred edges, related to uncommon or even exceptional traits. This shift led him to reformulate 'family resemblances' in terms of a complex crisscross of similarities between the members of a given class."[75] The evolution of the composite method of portrait making "helped to articulate a new notion of the individual: flexible, blurred, open-ended": the result of a work of comparative analysis that reveals the blurred edges that make contours appear out of focus.[76] The notion of a family resemblance, which materializes through the blurred edges that populism shares with both democracy and fascism, is a useful metaphor for us to position the phenomenon of populism in relation to modern popular regimes. To give just one example: in 1951, Argentina's Perón talked proudly about his regime as an alternative to both communism *and* capitalism. A few years later, he was stressing links with Francisco Franco's dictatorship in Spain and had started to represent his third position as a new, supranational resistance to "*demoliberalismo*."[77] Perón's populism was similar, but never identical, to fascism, because he did not eliminate elections, nor deny them a legitimate role. In

fact, electoral legitimacy was a key defining dimension of Perón's populist sovereignty, although he used elections in a way that resembled a plebiscite on his party list, not a reckoning of individual preferences taken after open competition between a plurality of parties.[78] In sum, fascism *destroys* democracy after having used its means to strengthen itself. Populism *disfigures* democracy by transforming it without destroying it.[79]

As the metaphor of a family resemblance implies, fascism and populism share important, recognizable traits. "Fascism has proposed itself as anti-party, opened the door to candidates, allowed an unorganized multitude to cover with a patina of vague and cloudy political ideals the savage *(selvaggio)* overflow of passions, hatreds, and desires."[80] If we set aside the reference to violence *(selvaggio),* this description of Italian fascism that Antonio Gramsci gave us in 1921 can be used to describe populist phenomena today. Contemporary populism is also marked by a "negativist" approach, which I discuss in Chapter 1. Populism sets itself up against the establishment not merely to oppose existing rulers but also to give organized passions the chance to rule for their own good. I explore how this happens in Chapter 2. Populist governments can—and often do—devise policies that are rhetorically violent, that attack their adversaries, and that exclude foreigners and immigrants. Populists in power can—and often do—target and reject noncitizens: we see this taking place in almost all countries in which they rule. But from the moment the government starts to use (unconstitutional) violence against its *own* citizens, from the moment it starts to repress political dissent and prevent freedom of association and speech, its so-called populist government has become a fascist regime.

Even acknowledging this important distinction, the descent into fascism is always just over the horizon. The history of democracy in the last century has been characterized by many persistent attempts to separate itself from, and actualize itself as an alternative to, fascism.[81] This divorce became permanent at the moment that democratic governments embraced the idea that no holistic representation of the people corresponds, in effect, to democracy, and that one party alone can never represent the various claims of the citizens. In this sense, the division of "the people" into partisan groups was democracy's most powerful break with fascism. The implication of that division was that "the people" is both a criterion of legitimacy and the mark of an inclusive generality that does not coincide with any particular social group or elected majority. Postfascist democracy undoubtedly values free political action, pluralist party competitors, and alternation in government. It renounces the mixing of power with possession (by the many or the majority, for instance) and keeps its procedures independent of the political actors who use them. Fascism, on the other hand,

is a regime in which appeals to the people by the leader cannot be contested or confronted with opposite appeals. This is true even if the government rests its legitimacy on some kind of orchestrated consent. (Not even the most violent dictatorship can survive if its power relies exclusively on repression.) The real legacy of the divorce between democracy and fascism is the dialectic between the majority and opposition, rather than the celebration of the collective unity of the masses.

Fascism testifies, in reverse, to the trickiest problem of democracy: not the problem of *how to decide* in a collective, but the problem of *what to do* with dissent, and with dissenters. As I explain in Chapters 1 and 2, the democratic process does not exclude the provision of a place for leadership, but the leadership it breeds is fragmented. For this reason, elections are the site of a radical difference between democracy and populism. The unification of all the people under one leader is a true violation of democracy's spirit, even if the method used to reach that unification (elections) is democratic. This suggests, finally, that representation alone is not a sufficient condition for democracy. (Indeed, it can be used by autocratic leaders, as history quite clearly shows.) As I explain in Chapter 3, in order to understand the populist transformation of democracy, we must consider *how* representation is practiced.

We must also unpack the same ambiguity with respect to the principle of majority; I do this in Chapter 3. It is well known that the Gran Consiglio, the fascist government, was a collegial organ that adopted majority rule to make decisions.[82] But democracy's principle of majority is not only meant to regulate decision making in a collective composed of more than three people. More importantly, it is designed to ensure that decision making happens in the open, and to ensure that dissenters always remain part of the process, not silenced and subjected, not concealed from the eye of the public. Populist leaders and parties are certainly interested in achieving an absolute majority, but as long as they keep the possibility of elections alive, and as long as they refrain from suspending or curtailing liberty of opinion and association, their attempts to achieve such a majority remain merely an unfulfilled ambition. This is why populism lies halfway between democracy and fascism.

To summarize, if we consider the two corrupt forms of power that qualify fascism—demagogy and tyranny—we see that populism involves the former, but not the latter. Populism remains a democratic form as long as its latent fascism remains unfulfilled, a shadow. Fascism, too, used to claim a legitimacy derived from enthusiastic mass support. But it would be completely wrong to classify fascism as a form of democracy, because fascism consists not solely in the demagogic mesmerizing of the masses but

most radically in the rejection of a kind of consent that presumes that individual citizens can express themselves autonomously, associate and petition freely, and dissent if they should like. Democracy presumes a majority that is only ever *one possible* majority, permanently operating alongside an opposition that legitimately aspires to, and knows it may well be able to, displace the currently existing majority.

Instead of using fascism as my reference point, therefore, the guidelines I follow to decipher the dynamic of populism in power are inspired by Bernard Manin's account of the historical stages of representative government. Manin outlines three stages in the evolution of representative government:[83]

1. Government of notables: involves restricted suffrage, a slim bill of rights, constitutionalism, parliamentary party and politics, and centrality of the executive.
2. Party democracy: involves universal suffrage, parties outside and inside the parliament as organizations of opinion and participation, a media and communication system connected to partisan affiliations, constitutionalism, and centrality of the parliament or congress.
3. Audience democracy: involves the citizenry as an indistinct and disorganized public, horizontal and floating opinions as an authorized tribunal of judgment, the decline of parties and partisan loyalties, media with an status autonomous from partisan affiliations, citizens who are not involved in the making of political agendas and party life, the personalization of political competition, centrality of the executive, and decline of the role of the parliament.

Manin's stage 3 contains the conditions in which populism can grow and achieve power. As I explain in Chapter 4, the massive usage of the internet—which is an affordable and revolutionary means of interaction and information sharing by ordinary citizens—has supercharged the horizontal transformation of the audience and made the public into the only existing political actor outside institutions born from civil society. This public is radically opposed to the party form of organization or any "legacy organization" that relies upon a structure of decision making that is not direct.[84] I call this phenomenon of disintermediation a "revolt against intermediary bodies," and I argue that it facilitates the direct representation held by the leader, who interprets and embodies the multiple claims springing from his or her people.[85] Although it claims to be an advance toward direct participation, audience democracy is the form of representative government in which populism can, and often does, find oxygen. A populist democracy is

an antiparty democracy but is not necessarily rearranged so as to be a more direct and participatory democracy.[86]

Of course, the diarchic processes of democracy—like representative government—are not static or frozen in time but rather go through distinct stages. Populism also goes through distinct stages, and its different manifestations through history seem to mirror the transformations of representative government. With Manin, we can say that representative government has been through several metamorphoses since its inception in the eighteenth century, and populist contestations and mobilizations occurred mostly during the times of transition from one stage of representative government to another. I do not intend to propose a grand "philosophy of history of representative government" (and populism). Nor do I intend to develop a historical overview of the several forms populism took within the transitional moments that occurred in the history of representative government. My concern and interest are with twenty-first-century populism.

I propose that we should situate the contemporary success of populism within the transition from "party democracy" to "audience democracy" (or "democracy of the public"). The shattering of partisan loyalties and memberships has been to the benefit of a politics of personalization, or candidates who court the public directly through personal ties. As I explain in Chapters 3 and 4, representation as embodiment (of the people and the leader) resists relying on intermediary collective actors, such as parties. Hence, a contemporary populist democracy looks like a democracy that pivots on leaders far more than structured parties; and it looks like a democracy in which parties are both more elusive and more capable of expanding their attraction because they depend less on partisan claims than on an emotional identification with a leader and his or her messages. As I shall explain in Chapter 3, populist parties are holistic movements with loose organization. As such, they are capable of drawing many different claims together under one representative leader. An undifferentiated public—the audience—is the humus in which a populist form of democracy takes root. New or changed partisan forms are already emerging in party democracy, as political scientists have documented. These new forms utilize poles of attraction that can enlarge consensus, thanks to a popular leader who is no longer fully entrenched within the party's structure and who is uninhibited by the party's institutions and willing to uses the party machine in order to court an audience (and an electorate) that is not only broader than the party's membership (as in electoral democracy) but also somehow *unpartisan,* in the sense that it is capable of catalyzing many different interests and ideas under the people's leader.

In the last pages of his book, Manin suggests that the kind of representative democracy that would develop when the public sphere is no longer made of political parties and their partisan newspapers would be more in tune with the metaphor of the theater (the staged performance) than with the metaphor of the parliament (the talking assembly). In this new public sphere, proposed laws would no longer be the outcome of the art of coalition, compromise, haggling, and opposition among representatives of the majority and the minority. Manin confesses he does not know what to call this "new form of representation," which he describes as being centered on representative personalities, instead of being centered on collective parties representing partisan lines. He sees that it involves representatives who are "no longer spokesmen" for ideas or classes or political programs but rather "actors seeking out and exposing cleavages" beyond and outside parties and partisan lines.[87] I propose we name this new form of representative government *populism*.

Interpretations

How does my interpretation of populism as a new form of representative government relate to existing scholarship on the phenomenon? The quantity and quality of scholarship recently produced on populism is intimidating for anyone who decides to embark on writing a book on the topic.[88] Things are made still more complex by the context-specific character of populist movements and governments, and by the variety of past and present populisms, which is extraordinary, and which goes beyond any individual's capacity to subsume them into a general theory. With the exception of two pivotal global research projects dating back to the late 1960s and the late 1990s, and some later monographs, populism has generally been studied in relation to its specific contexts.[89] Contextual variations among countries and within countries, along with the polemical uses of the term in everyday politics, have hindered academic attempts to come up with conceptual definitions. Nonetheless, some basic agreement has now emerged about the ideological and rhetorical character of populism, about its relation to democracy, and about its strategy for achieving power.[90] I presuppose, and profit from, this rich body of scholarship in this book, but my explorations will be essentially theoretical. I will refer to concrete populist movements and regimes only for the purpose of illustration.

Contemporary scholarship on populism can be divided into two broad domains. The first is the domain of political history and comparative social

studies; the second is the domain of political theory and conceptual history. Work in the first domain attends to the circumstances or social and economic conditions of populism. It is concerned with the historical environment and specific developments of populism, and it is skeptical of the reliability of theorizing from empirical cases.[91] Work in the second domain, by contrast, is mainly interested in populism itself: in its political nature and characteristics. It accepts with the first domain that sociohistorical experience is essential for understanding different varieties of populism, just as it is for understanding different varieties of democracy. But unlike studies of democracy, work in this first domain struggles to come to an agreement about what exactly the category of populism consists of because, as I have noted, populism is an ambiguous concept that does not correspond to a specific political regime. This means that the subtypes of populism that are produced by historical analysis risk locking scholars into the specific context they are studying, and risk making each subtype into a case of its own. The end result is many *populisms,* but no *populism.* Everything that sociohistorical analysis gains in its depth of study of specific experiences, it loses in generalization, and in normative criteria for judging those experiences. This means that we need a theoretical framework into which we can incorporate these context-specific analyses. Otherwise, we are stuck with contextual analyses that merely end with "half-hearted nods" to the idea of an exportable concept of populism.[92]

One early attempt to combine contextual analysis and conceptual generalization appears in the taxonomy of the variations of types and subtypes of populism in relation to cultural, religious, social, economic, and political conditions, produced by writers including Ghiţa Ionescu and Ernest Gellner, and also by Canovan, who was a true pioneer in the study of populism.[93] Canovan used a broad range of sociological analyses inspired by Gino Germani and Torcuato di Tella, two Argentinian scholars (the former an exile from fascist Italy), who aimed to devise a descriptive category of populism.[94] Political sociologists Germani and di Tella argued that societies that lack a nationalist core, and that consist of heterogeneous ethnic groups, give rise to a need to "construct the people." From their perspective, it is this task that makes populism into a functional project of nation-state construction and makes it the site of the "paradox of politics": the challenge of constituting the subject of democracy—the people—*through democratic means,* or, more simply, the challenge of "determining who constitutes the people."[95] Canovan took these two factors—the relation to political regimes and the conception of the people—to be the basic reference points that scholars would need if they wanted to interpret the conditions and circumstances of

specific populisms. She brought sociohistorical scholarship on populism into an exquisitely theoretical and normative domain and related it to issues of political legitimacy.

The theories of populism that currently dominate the literature fall into two main categories: *minimalist* theories and *maximalist* theories. Minimalist theories aim to sharpen the tools of interpretation that will enable us to recognize the phenomenon when we see it. They aim to extract some minimal conditions from several cases of populism for analytical purposes. Maximalist theories, by contrast, want to develop a theory of populism as representative construction that has more than a merely analytical function. Such theories claim to offer citizens a template they can follow to put together a collective subject that is capable of conquering the majority and ruling. This maximalist project, particularly in times of institutional crisis and declining legitimacy among traditional parties, can play a political role and help to reshuffle an existing democratic order.

I classify as minimalist all those interpretations of populism that analyze its ideological tropes (Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser), its style of politics in relation to rhetorical apparatus and national culture (Michael Kazin and Benjamin Moffitt), and the strategies devised by its leaders to achieve power (Kurt Weyland and Alan Knight). The goal of these endeavors is to avoid normative judgments for the sake of an unprejudiced understanding, and to be as inclusive as possible of all experiences of populism. Mudde has contributed the most to defining the ideological frame of this nonnormative minimalism. He argues that a Manichean "moral" worldview is what gives rise to the two oppositional camps of populism: the people, associated with an indivisible and moral entity; and the elites, conceived of as an entity that is unavoidably corrupt. Populism looks like "a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups . . . and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people."[96] Populist movements are capable of straddling the Left–Right divide and are populist because they make a moral appraisal of politics that elevates *la volonté générale* and demotes liberal respect for civil rights in general, and the rights of minorities in particular. Beyond the presence of this ideology opposing the "honest" many to the "corrupt" few, however, populism has few defining aspects. Indeed, for Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, populist parties do not even require specific leadership: "An elective affinity between populism and strong leaders seems to exist. However, the former can exist without the latter."[97] Moreover, neither representation nor majority radicalization figures in their minimalist rendering of populism. The first step of the approach I adopt in this book consists in a critical reflection on this

minimalist rendering. There are three sets of critical observations that I make about this minimalist approach: two pertaining to its inability to distinguish populism from other political forms, and one pertaining to its normative implications.

To begin with, the ideological contraposition between the "honest" many and the "corrupt" few is not unique to populist parties and rhetoric. Certainly, it comes from an influential tradition that dated back to the Roman Republic of antiquity, the structure of which was based on a dualism between "the few" and "the many," the "patricians" and the "plebeians." This tradition was fueled by popular and proverbial mistrust in the ruling elites, with the people playing the role of a permanent check on them. The same ideological contraposition then became a central theme in republicanism, and we hear an echo of it in the writings of Machiavelli and other humanists.[98] But the minimalist reading of populism does not help us understand why populism is not simply a subspecies of republican politics, even though it is structured according to the same kind of binary logic.

Second, the dualism of "we are good"/"they are bad" is the motor of all forms of partisan aggregation, albeit with differing intensities and styles. But we cannot register all partisan aggregation as a subspecies of populist action unless we want to argue that all politics is populism. As I shall explain in Chapter 1, mistrust and criticism of those in power are essential components of democracy. In democratic contexts, majority rule and regular changes in leadership entail that parties in the opposition can (and actually do) depict the currently governing parties as corrupt, out-of-touch, and nonrepresentative elites. Stressing populism as a "political style," as Kazin and Moffitt do, does not solve the problem. Even if this approach allows us to cross "a variety of political and cultural contexts," it does not allow us to detect what is peculiar to populism vis-à-vis democracy.[99] The key limitation of the ideological and stylistic approaches lies in the fact that they are not sufficiently attentive to the institutional and procedural aspects that qualify democracy and within which populism emerges and operates. These approaches diagnose the emergence of the polarization between the many and the few; but they do not explain what makes the antiestablishmentarian focus of populism any different from what we find in the republican paradigm, or in traditional oppositional politics, or even in democratic partisanship.

The third objection I propose points to the untold (normative) assumptions that sustain this purportedly nonnormative approach. These assumptions pertain to the interpretation of democracy itself. The ideologically minimalist frame wants to avoid being normative—that is, defining populism as necessarily good or ill—so that it can be receptive to all empirical

instances of populism.[100] In order "to come to a non-normative position on the relationship between populism and democracy," and to "argue that populism can be both a corrective and a threat to democracy," Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser base their descriptivism on the assumption that there is a distinction between democracy and *liberal* democracy. This allows them to conclude that populism entertains an ambiguous relation with liberal democracy, but not with democracy in general. "In our opinion, democracy (*sans* adjectives) refers to *the combination of popular sovereignty and majority rule;* nothing more, nothing less. Hence, democracy can be direct or indirect, liberal or illiberal."[101] I propose that this definition is not, in fact, bias-free, because it suggests that—if not amended by liberalism—democracy is open to all the risks we attribute to populism. This assumption is made for the sake of a purely descriptive approach, but it necessarily has a normative effect because the "liberal" conception it attaches to the body of democracy has the task of making sure that democracy protects and fosters the good of liberty (individual liberty and basic rights), where this is understood as a function that liberalism can perform but democracy cannot. The decision to ascribe the value of liberty to liberalism, rather than democracy, fails to explain the democratic process itself. Moreover, the minimalist theory of populism presumes a view of democracy that includes a split between freedom and power. It claims that democracy is not a theory of freedom but only a theory of power: the power of the majority exercised in the name of popular sovereignty, whose control and containment come from outside—that is, from liberalism (which is a theory of liberty). On this account, democracy is an unconstrained system of people's power, much like populism, and the real difference and tension are thus between populism and liberalism.

The last variant of the minimalist approach reads populism primarily as a strategic movement: populism is but a chapter in the ongoing strategy to substitute elites, and political content becomes much less relevant. So understood, populism is capable of varying from neoliberal to protectionist, and so attracting leftist as well as rightist ideologies, at least in theory. However, in his seminal article "Neoliberal Populism in Latin American and Eastern Europe," Weyland demonstrates that what holds in theory may not hold in practice. Indeed, populist policies vary according to circumstances, so that populist leaders (e.g., Alberto Fujimori and Carlos Menem in Latin American, or Lech Walesa in Europe) occasionally use their popular support to enact painful, neoliberal reforms. The problem is that populism may be unsuitable for consolidating neoliberalism because, as Knight observes, populist leaders who are engaged in efforts to maintain their ruling power rarely delegate to the institutions that would allow neoliberalism to endure.[102]

On this basis, Weyland argues that populism is "best defined as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers."[103] Despite its grassroots discourse, for Weyland populism boils down to the manipulation of the masses by the elites. Moreover, even though it is held up as a blow against the corruption of the existing majority, it may well end up accelerating, rather than curing, corruption once in power because it needs to distribute favors and use the state's resources to protect its coalition or majority over time.[104] According to this reading, populism in power turns out to be a machinery of corruption and nepotistic favors that deploys propaganda showing how difficult it is for it to deliver on its promises because of the ongoing conspiracy (both international and domestic) of an all-powerful, global kleptocracy. The most important aspect of this strategy-based reading consists in its observation that personalist politics mirrors populist parties, which are therefore primed to function more as movements than as traditionally organized parties. It is this feature that makes them more amenable to manipulation by the will of the leader, who is "a personal vehicle with a low level of institutionalization."[105] This characterization takes a significant step in the direction I shall take in this book. It stresses the role of strategic organization—organization that above all serves to satisfy a new elite's desire for power and, in so doing, transforms the institutions and the procedures of democracy into property-like instruments in the hand of the winner or the majority. The classic works of Gaetano Mosca, Robert Michels, Vilfredo Pareto, and C. Wright Mills offer us additional insights into the way populism works, into what it aims for, and into its results once it achieves power—in short, insights into its effects on representative constitutional democracy.

The strategic rendering may be persuasive and capacious, but it does not link populism directly to a transformation of democracy itself. Populism's self-professed criterion for success is its ability to deliver what it proposes; but the strategic argument does not say much about how its possible success will affect democratic institutions and procedures.[106] Moreover, since electoral success is part and parcel of democracy, and since all parties aspire to a majority that is large and long lasting, the strategic rendering fails to make clear why populism is so different from, and so dangerous for, democracy more broadly. As I have suggested already and will reiterate throughout the book, in order to understand populism, we must recognize that democratic proceduralism is not merely a set of rules that defines the means and channels for achieving any kind of power. Nor is it merely a formalistic guide to victory (any kind of victory). Once we recognize this fact, we are able to see

the possessive approach that populism takes to power and the state, and to evaluate whether populism is compatible with the normative foundations of democratic procedures and institutions—the foundations that make these procedures and institutions function legitimately through time, and equally for all citizens.

Turning to the maximalist theory of populism, we see that it is driven by the move that explicitly connects populism to democracy. The maximalist theory, as I mentioned, offers not only a conception of populism in theory but also a practical template for populist movements and governments to follow. It proposes a discursive, constructivist conception of the people. The maximalist theory overlaps with the ideological conception insofar as it stresses the rhetorical moment; but unlike the ideological conception, it does not take populism to be based on a Manichean moral dualism between the people and the elite. Ernesto Laclau, who is the founder of the maximalist theory, makes populism the very name of politics and of democracy. For him, it is a process by which a community of citizens constructs itself freely and publicly as a collective subject ("the people") that resists another (nonpopular) collective and opposes some existing hegemony so that it can itself take power.[107] Laclau sees populism as *democracy* at its best, because it represents a situation in which the people constructs its will through direct mobilization and consent.[108] He sees it also as *politics* at its best, because—as he shows, building on Georges Sorel's voluntarism—it is constructed of myths that can mesmerize the audience and so unite many citizens and groups (and their claims) with nothing more than the art of persuasion. Voluntarism is the audacity of mobilization and a recurrent factor in moments of political transformation, and it can be both anarchical and oppositional, and power oriented.[109] Following Laclau, theorists of radical democracy base their sympathy for populism on the force of the popular will; they see populism as an answer to a formal conception of democracy, with its universalistic interpretation of rights and liberty, and as a rejuvenation of democracy from within that is capable of creating a new political bloc and a new leading force of democratic government.[110] Political voluntarism (of a leader and his or her movement) is directed toward achieving victory; and government is the measure of its reward, once political action is not subjected to a formal conception of democracy. In a way, Vladimir Lenin's *narodničestvo* is the underlying model of Laclau's interpretation of modern populism as political voluntarism. It serves as evidence that "the people" is an entirely artificial entity. (Lenin forged the first definition of populism, which would become paradigmatic; traces of his ideological interpretation are detectable, for instance, in Berlin's studies on Romanticism, nationalism, and populism.)[111] "The people," Laclau writes, is an "empty

signifier" that has no grounding in any social structure and that is based exclusively on the leader's ability (and the ability of his or her intellectuals) to exploit the dissatisfaction of many different groups and to mobilize the will of the masses, who believe that they lack adequate representation because their claims are going unheard by the existing political parties. Populism, then, is not simply an act of contesting the methods that the few are using to rule at some particular moment in time. Rather, it is a *voluntarist quest* for sovereign power by those whom the elites treat as "underdogs," who want to make the decisions that shape the social and political order by themselves. These underdogs want to exclude the elites, and they ultimately want to win the majority so they can use the state to repress, exploit, or contain their adversaries and enact their own redistributive plans. Populism expresses two things at the same time: the denunciation of exclusion, on the one hand, and the construction of a strategy of inclusion *by means of* exclusion (of the establishment). It thus poses a serious challenge to constitutional democracy, given the promises of redistribution that the latter inevitably makes when it declares itself to be a government based on the equal power of the citizens.[112] The domain of generality as a criterion of legitimacy disappears in the constructivist reading of the people. Politics becomes essentially power seeking and power shaping: a phenomenon for which legitimacy consists simply in winning the political conflict and enjoying the consent of the audience. Laclau claims that populism demonstrates the formative power of ideology and the contingent nature of politics.[113] On his reading, populism becomes the equivalent of a radical version of democracy: one that pushes back against the liberal-democratic model, which it sees as enhancing mainstream parties and weakening electoral participation.[114]

This radically realistic and opportunistic conception of politics, combined with the trust in the power of collective mobilization and political voluntarism, allows us to see that populism is artificial and contingent by nature. It also allows us to see the way in which the nebulous concept of "the people" is ultimately constructed, and to see how it is highly dependent on the leader and his or her knowledge of the sociohistorical context. This last factor cannot be overlooked: the leader's knowledge (or lack of knowledge) and strategic skill (or lack of it) are the only limits on his or her ability to "invent" the representative "people." The leader plays a demiurgic role. In stressing this radically open potential of populism, Laclau depicts it as the authentic democratic field in which a collective subject can find its representative unity through the interplay of culture and myth, sociological analysis and rhetoric.

But the problem with the linguistic (or narrative) turn in the theory of hegemony is that the structure of populism does not, by itself, incline toward

the kind of emancipatory politics that a leftist like Laclau would like to promote. Because it is so malleable and groundless, populism is just as well suited to be a vehicle for rightist parties as for leftist ones. Because it is so detached from socioeconomic referents, it "can in principle be appropriated by any agency for any political construct."[115] In the absence of any specific ideological assumptions about the social conditions, and in the absence of any normative conception of democracy, populism boils down to a tactic by which some leader can bring together a disparate set of groups in order to achieve a sort of power whose value is both contingent and relativist. Victory is the proof of its truthfulness. If we characterize democracy as essentially a consent-based strategy for gaining power, then Laclau's characterization of populism (as a contest between coalitions that are knit together by a powerful leader and that compete for hegemonic control) ends up encompassing democratic politics in general. And yet anything can happen in the zero-sum game that is hegemonic politics. Assuming strategy without any social, procedural, or institutional limitations—because all that counts is victory—leads us to a situation in which all outcomes are equally possible and therefore equally acceptable. If we assume that democracy and politics both consist essentially of constructing the people through a narrative and the winning a majority of votes, we lose access to the critical tools that would lead us to judge a leader most effectively. In effect, what a successful leader does once in power is correct and legitimate insofar as and until the public is on his or her side.

As we shall see in this book, an agonistic view of politics—one that assumes politics is simply an issue of conflicting relation between adversaries—does not tell us much about what conflict delivers, nor about what happens once conflict is over and a populist majority rules. Laclau and Mouffe have provided the following definition of antagonism in one of their early writings on hegemony (which form the template for their later theory of populism):

> But in any case, and whatever the political orientation through which the antagonism crystallizes (this will depend upon the chains of equivalence which construct it), *the form of the antagonism as such* is identical in all cases. That is to say, it always consists in the construction of a social identity—of an overdetermined subject position—on the basis of the equivalence between a set of elements or values which expel or externalize those others to which they are opposed. Once again, we find ourselves confronting the *division* of social space.[116]

This position amounts to a nonnormative realist account of politics and democracy. But it has some daunting questions to answer. What exactly does it mean to "expel" and "externalize" the adversary? Talk of "con-

fronting the *division* of the social space" does not tell us what will happen to those who end up on the outside of the victorious political configuration. From here, further questions arise. How does a populist regime make the legal condition and the social condition relate to one another? Do populist constitutions of democracy remain the same—and, crucially, do they include things like civil liberties and the separation of powers? Will the victory of the populist constellation be all that different from the victory of, say, a centrist constellation in terms of constitutional guarantees? If it will, once the establishment elites are "expelled" from the winning hegemonic collective, where are they supposed to go? If they are simply "sent to the benches" but retain the liberty to reorganize and take the majority back, then how is populism any different from Schumpeterian democracy? If we are going to see populist movements or parties conquer the majority within constitutional democracies, will we also see changes in the rules of the game, designed to make the populist majority last as long as possible? These are relevant questions that a theory of politics and democracy like Laclau and Mouffe's must answer if its claim that populism is politics at its best is to be credible and warranted.

A Map of the Book's Chapters

As I have said, in this book I assume a distinction between populism as a movement of opinion or protest and populism as a movement that aspires to and achieves power. I concentrate on the latter, and I study it by comparing it directly with representative democracy. My thesis, as I have already explained, is that populism in power is actually a new form of mixed government in which one part of the population achieves a preeminent power over the other(s). As such, populism *competes* with (and, if possible, modifies) constitutional democracy in putting forth a specific and distinctive representation of the people and the sovereignty of the people. It does so using what I call direct representation: the development of a direct relationship between the leader and the people.[117] Direct presence, then, does not refer to the people ruling themselves (because populism is still a form of representative government); rather, it refers to an unmediated relationship between the people and the representative leader. The populist "mix" is based on two conditions: the identity of the collective subject, and the specific traits of the representative leader who embodies that subject and makes it visible. These two conditions confute the electoral conception of representation (understood as a dynamic and open combination of pluralism and unification). It turns out, though, that this populist mix is very

unstable, because it weakens the connective and power-checking functions of intermediary actors (such as political parties and institutions) and makes them dependent on the leader's will and exigency.

Taken together, the four chapters of this book trace out how populism in power transforms and, indeed, disfigures, representative democracy. In Chapter 1 I analyze the category of "antiestablishment" as the "spirit" of populist rhetoric and goal, and I map out the transformation from a position that is antiestablishmentarian to one that is anti*politics*. I show how this remains the central content of populism whether it is oriented in a left- or right-wing direction. And, borrowing Pierre Rosanvallon's opportune terminology, I show how populism takes advantage of the mechanisms of "negative politics" or "counterdemocracy" that constitutional democracy guarantees.[118] I propose that populist rhetoric and movement develops essentially in the negative. Its content includes several "antis," held together by the category of "antiestablishmentarianism," which populism renders and uses in quite a different way from democracy (even though democracy also contains an antiestablishment drive). Populism accumulates these negatives not simply to question an existing government or a corrupt elite and achieve a majority but to attain the more radical outcome: that of expelling the "wrong" part completely and installing the "good" part in its place. From this perspective, populism is really a chapter in the broader issue of a political elite's formation and substitution.

In Chapter 2 I analyze how populism in power is primed to transform the two fundamentals of democracy: the people and the majority. The meaning of the people for populism is quite different from the general, indeterminate meaning of the people that belongs to constitutional democracy. The democratic meaning of the people includes all citizens, and it is not identified with any part of society in particular. The meaning of the majority for populism is also different from its meaning for democracy. Populism does not use the majority as a method to detect the victorious part of a competition for government and the size of the opposition. Instead, it uses it as a force that claims to be the expression of the right people—and that is legitimized to dwarf and humiliate the opposition. This means that changes in power become difficult—a situation that is, indeed, a central goal of populism in power. I argue that populism identifies the people with "a part" of society, making the majority the ruling force of that part against the other part(s). This is certainly a radical disfigurement of representative democracy, because it violates the synecdoche of *pars pro toto,* pitting one part (which is assumed to be the best one) against the other(s). The logic of populism, indeed, is the glorification of one part, or *merelatria* (from the Greek words *méros,* or "part," and *latreía,* or "cult"), with no pretense of universality or

generality. It occupies the institutions in order to further the interests of a part, which does not act "for" and in the name of the whole but in its place; the part erases the whole and makes politics a question of partiality. Populism is an essentially *factional* government, the government by a part of society that rules for its own good, needs, and interests. As such, populism in power becomes a radical contestation of party government and mandate representation: in a word, a contestation of representative democracy as party democracy. It ascribes a radically relativist stance to politics, one that justifies (via majority consent) the *reductio ad unum* of populism with politics and ultimately with democracy in general. This identification can materialize in the celebration of the total creative power of rhetoric (of the "good" people), which is conceived of as the essential means for the construction of a collective subject under the banner of one representative leader, who claims to be the mouth of "the will of the people."

In Chapter 3 I turn to examine this disfigurement of the procedural conception of "the people" into a possessive conception of that people. I analyze the ways in which a populist system comes to be constructed through the leader, the elections, and the party—categories that become so transformed that "representation" plays a role in populism that is very different from the one it plays in constitutional democracy. In populism, representation unifies the collective under the figure of the leader. Unlike the mandate representation that appears in electoral democracy, it does not look out for advocacy (of interests or ideas or preferences), and it is not concerned with accountability. By representing the people in the body of the leader, populism aims to unify multiple groups, and multiple claims, in order to achieve a strong, large consensus, in both the state and society. It does not merely want to give voice to diverse groups and their claims; rather, it wants to use as its issues whatever the voice of the leader embodies. Populism is a form of antipartyism. It turns representation into a strategy for creating a centralized authority, which claims to speak in the name of a holistic people while being inclusive of some and dismissive (and at times repressive) of those who are at the margins (either because they do not consent or because they belong to a culture, class, or ethnic group that does not conform to the one being represented in the populist government and its majority).

Chapter 4 brings the main arguments of the book to their conclusion. It defines and illustrates the *direct representation* that populism fosters in its attempts to go beyond partisan oppositions and to reaffirm a unitary representation of the people. This chapter explores two contemporary cases of populist movements, both of which purport to be, and were born as, antiparty movements, and both of which framed themselves as existing outside the traditional Left–Right distinction: the Italian Five Star Movement (M5S)

and the Spanish Podemos. These are very different political groups with almost opposing projects and narratives and very different political trajectories. Yet what interests me here is to examine their foundational moments: moments when both of them projected themselves as existing beyond the Left–Right divide and envisioned something they considered to be postparty democracy. These cases serve to test populism's ambitions to confirm and solve Michels's disillusionment with party democracy. Populist movements practice adversarial politics so they can form a government that promises to administer the people's true interests, beyond partisan divisions. Populism in power looks like a postpartisan government, one that claims to serve the interests of the ordinary many and promises never to produce an establishment of professional politicians. Its ambiguity lies precisely in this ambition. Populist movements manifest in intense partisanship while they are rallying against existing parties, but their inner ambition is to incorporate the largest possible number of individuals in order to become the only party of the people and so dwarf all partisan affiliations and party oppositions. Chapter 4 explores the fact that, even weakening organization in this way, the people still do not receive any guarantee that they will be able to check their leader.

I am skeptical about the palingenetic promises of populism as much as I am skeptical about the apocalyptic prophecies about the destiny of democracy. In the Epilogue, I clarify the political motivations behind my research and skepticism, which are connected to a recent wave of sympathetic interest in populism: one in which populism is seen not simply as a sign of troubles that belabor contemporary democracies but as an opportunity to make democracy better, or to regenerate it. I explore it as a potential "advanced trench" in fights by citizens to reappropriate their power, to influence the distribution of income, and to redress inequality. In short, I examine it as an attempt to redesign representative democracy in order to rid it of its more or less inexorable slide into elected oligarchy. I take these populist aspirations seriously and examine the aims they have to give priority to the majority in order to demote the power of parties and economic minorities. But I conclude that if we conceive of the battle between the many and the few in this way, we risk ending at precisely the point that Aristotle warned his contemporaries about: with the creation of a factional government that is no more than an arbitrary expression of the will to power of the ruling force (whether that force is controlled by the many or the few). Paradoxically, the populist ambition to transcend Left–Right divisions is an indication of this process of factionalism, not a reversal of it. Analyzing populism in power, I conclude that populism is by no means a neutral strategy. As such, it cannot be a tool whose use may be curbed as one pleases, toward reformism and conservatism, Left and

Right. It is not simply "a style of politics," either, because in order to be successful, populism has to transmute the basic democratic principles and rules. And in so doing, it leads politics and the state toward outcomes that citizens can hardly control. The path that populism takes is inevitably a path toward the exaltation and entrenchment of a leader and his or her majority, and this for the simple reason that its success is contingent on the leader's authority over the people and its parts. This may set populism on a collision course with constitutional democracy, even while its main tenets remain embedded in the democratic universe of meanings and language.

1

FROM ANTIESTABLISHMENT TO ANTIPOLITICS

> They are in positions to make decisions having major consequences. Whether they do or do not make such decisions is less important than the fact that they do occupy such pivotal positions.
>
> —C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*

The central claim of all populist movements is to get rid of "the establishment," or whatever is posited as lying between "us" (the people outside) and the state (inside apparatuses of decision makers, elected or appointed).[1] This was the core theme running through Donald Trump's inaugural address:

> For too long, a small group in our nation's Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost. Washington flourished—but the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered—but the jobs left, and the factories closed. The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country. Their victories have not been your victories; their triumphs have not been your triumphs; and while they celebrated in our nation's capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land.[2]

As we shall see in this chapter, this antiestablishment rhetoric does not refer to socioeconomic elites and is neither class based nor money based. Ross Perot, Silvio Berlusconi, and indeed Trump were (and are) part of the economic superelite. But this seemed to be acceptable to their electors, who were ultimately looking for a person who was successful but who still shared the same values as theirs: someone "like" them. Just as ordinary citizens supposedly do, Trump tried to navigate the law for his own benefit, yet he was smart enough to take effective care of his interests and take advantage of tax loopholes. He was proud to confess, during his campaign, that he used all legal means at his disposal to avoid paying taxes or to pay

as little as possible. People who voted for Perot similarly felt uplifted by someone who had "made it" and who displayed competence and skill.[3] To be one of "the people" does not thus mean to be pure in any moral sense. Berlusconi was like many ordinary men of his country, and like them he practiced what in Trump's campaign was called "locker room talk." To be "a man of the people" was also the slogan of Alberto Fujimori, whose 1990 campaign was crafted according to the nonelite slogan, "A President like You."[4] The list goes on and on.[5] Populist voters did not want Berlusconi or Fujimori or Trump to be pure, like saints, because they themselves were not. Subjective immorality is not an issue, nor is class inequality. The issue is *the exercise of power.* "When Perot supporters talked about 'us' against 'them,' they meant the people—all the people—against the politicians."[6]

In this chapter, I will argue that the hostility of populism is directed at the *political* establishment, because it is this establishment that has the power to connect the various social elites and undermine political equality. Populism takes advantage of a discontent, that is endogenous to democracy, with the domineering attitude of the few over the people. Indeed, criticism of political elites (or aristocracy) lay at the source of modern democracy in the late eighteenth century and returned during the several transformations of representative government throughout its history, including the emergence of party democracy, which was born out of an antiestablishment cry against liberal parliamentarianism and its government of notables.[7] The populist polemic against "the establishment" is meant to put political parties on trial. It is meant not to reclaim the primacy of the sovereign people over its parts but rather to establish that only one part of the people is the legitimate sovereign.

How should we evaluate the antiestablishment claim in normative terms? Similar to established parties, populist "movements" compete for seats in parliaments or congress and seek majorities. But they are not viewed as established parties, either by their critics or by their supporters. What makes them different, given that in running for office they risk becoming the establishment in their turn? These are the questions that guide my reading of populism as a project to substitute the whole with one of its parts. In order to dissect the various ambiguities that are connected to the dialectic between the part(s) and the whole (the people), I suggest that we study the crowded populist constellation of *antis* (antielitism, antipartyism, antipartisanship, antiintellectualism) as displays of one central *anti*—anti*establishmentarianism.* This is the paradigm that makes populism a political theology, and one that turns the constitutional power of party democracy into a new order that is truly *party-kratic* (that is, the *power of a part*). The exclusionary logic of the establishment casts light on the conundrum of populism: for

populism, though it is critical of party democracy, creates parties; and though it is critical of representative democracy, it does not promote direct democracy but instead pushes for a new kind of representation, one that is based on a direct relation uniting the people and its leader.[8] As we shall see in subsequent chapters, populists use elections as a celebration of "their people" set up by the victory of that people's champion. And they use the support of the audience (which they orchestrate carefully and endlessly) to "purify" elections of their quantitative and formalistic character. Their goal is to fill the gap between the outside and the inside of the state and, in so doing, to deliver on the promise of getting rid of the establishment forever. To attain this, populists in power construct a new form of popular sovereignty that enhances inclusiveness (of their supporters) at the expense of the open game of contestation of, and competition for, power—in short, at the expense of the two conditions that make for constitutional democracy. Certainly, these tradeoffs "are not inevitable."[9] But their possibility is contained in the logic of antiestablishmentarian populism from the outset.

The Making of Factionalism and the "Spirit" of Populism

We often see populist parties being classified according to the traditional Left–Right divide that we adopt for established parties.[10] This approach is deceptive, though, because it conceals what makes populist parties different from all other parties—namely, that they rely on a conception of antiestablishmentarianism that breeds hostility not simply to the existing ruling parties but to partisan divisions and the party form of political representation in general (especially because the latter promises not the attainment of consensus but rather a mere self-sustaining majority).[11] As Matteo Salvini declared the day he became minister of the interior on June 1, 2018, "We are at a total overturning of all the political perspectives. The issue today is the people against the elites, not the right against the left."[12] Margaret Canovan rendered this phenomenon with surgical precision several years ago:

> The notion that "the people" are one; that divisions among them are not genuine conflicts of interests but are merely self-serving factions; and that the people will be best looked after by a single unpolitical leadership that will put their interest first—these ideas are *anti*political, but they are nevertheless essential elements in a political strategy that has often been used to gain power.[13]

In Canovan's quotation we have the main ingredients of the conundrum of populism: a party that does not merely want to advocate some interests

or claims but rather seeks to mobilize social energies in order to create a large unity against its opponents so that it may rule as if the will of its majority were the will of the sovereign people. This conundrum can be rendered as follows. Although populist leaders behave like the leaders of any other party, populism is hardly reducible to a party; in fact, it resists being classified according to traditional partisan lines precisely because it wants to promote a politics that goes against party divisions.

Scholars who have analyzed Hugo Chávez's government, and other populist governments in Latin America, depict a kind of politics that aims to identify the "popular power" directly with the government in all its instances—but without parties. The antiparty stance of populism reaffirms the sovereignty of the ordinary people. It declares them to be the creators of a "protagonistic participation," which makes the citizens the speakers and representatives of their problems and even the administrators of their own social services. The *social* (understood as the sum total of the various instances of "belonging to civil society") becomes much more important than the *political*. The social manages itself directly, through municipal, regional, and national institutions, as we read in Chávez's government and propaganda documents. It has no need for other intermediary organizations, such as parties, which are viewed as complicit in the reproduction of an establishment that has failed to solve society's problems.[14] Canvassing against a corrupt and impermeable political system, Chávez entered politics by creating his own social movement, in the form of grassroots "Bolivarian committees" and diverse civic groups, which developed proposals for various constitutional reforms. But once he was in power, he gradually institutionalized those movements into a party organization within the state, thereby making his "antiparty" into a model for how a holistic party could be ingrained within institutions and the guarantor of a new establishment.[15] This indicates that populist movements are both expressions of adversarial politics and the makers of a mobilized society that should avoid politicization altogether (dedicated, as it supposedly is, to the administration of the people's needs). "The politician's populism," or populism in power, is thus a conscious project of a postpartisan government that wants to serve the interests of the ordinary many without ever producing a new establishment.[16]

The trajectory of populisms speaks to this ambiguity. Populism arises as oppositional and intense partisanship when it is first rallying against ruling parties, but its inner ambition is to incorporate the largest number of individuals into itself so that it can become the only party of the people and sweep away the plethora of partisan affiliations that preexisted its rise. In her analysis of the forms of antipartyism, such as the "party of virtue" and

the "holistic party," Nancy Rosenblum demonstrates that, no matter their animosity toward parties, old and new nonpartyists are ultimately partisans. They are partisans of one—and only one—form of party: the one that is capable of defeating the party system altogether and saving the only "good" party around.[17] As we shall see in Chapter 3, one-party-ism is married to antipartyism, insofar as both of them share in the powerful myth with which democracy was born. This is the same myth that the representative system tried to reproduce, in fiction, at the symbolic and indirect level: the myth of the perfect unity of the collective sovereign endowed with a single will. Neither the adoption of the principle of majority nor the partisan pluralism that the electoral system exalts has had the power to erase this myth of unanimity. It is therefore fitting that we use it to evaluate populist antiestablishmentarianism.[18]

Taking this approach allows me to amend Peter Mair's insightful idea that the success of populism's antiestablishmentarianism in contemporary societies is an indication of the postparty trend as partyless democracy. It is "a means of linking an increasingly undifferentiated and depoliticized electorate with a largely neutral and non-partisan system of governance." Mair states, "Populist democracy primarily tends towards partyless democracy."[19] Antiestablishmentarianism, Mair argues, discloses a project that is radical—constructing a citizenry that is "undifferentiated," "depoliticized," and "neutral"—and that fits a public sphere of opinion that looks like an indistinct audience rather than citizens divided according to party lines.

> The crucial fact is that, in audience democracy, the channels of public communication . . . are for the most part politically neutral, that is, non-partisan. . . . It would appear, then, that today the perception of public issues and subjects (as distinct, to repeat, from judgements made about them) is more homogeneous and less dependent on partisan preferences than was the case under party democracy.[20]

In Chapter 3 I will discuss the question that Mair poses, of whether populism indeed inaugurates a partyless democracy, or whether it rather consists in a celebration of the power of one part (and hence legitimates factionalism). In this chapter I prepare the terrain for that factionalist argument by dissecting the phobia that populism has for that part of society it targets as "the establishment."

Some decades ago, Raymond Polin and Norberto Bobbio introduced the term *"merecracy"*—the *kratos* of *méros,* or the "power of the part"—in order to explain (Bobbio) and criticize (Polin) the structural condition of representative democracy as party democracy.[21] The myth of an organic unity of popular sovereignty that refuses to be fragmented by parties is the

myth that lies at the core of the populist attack against the establishment, and it forms the center of the project to construct a different kind of party. To paraphrase Pierre Rosanvallon, whereas the organization of political life in a representative democracy "rests on a fiction" that is felt as necessary—"the assimilation of the majority with unanimity"—in a populist democracy, that same fiction solidifies and becomes socially real. It becomes identified with a specific part of society, some claims and groups, or a bloc of movements.[22] Populism represents a redirection of the notion of the people toward that ancestral myth of assimilation, but with a twist. It is a phenomenology of substitution of the whole with one of its parts, in which the "fiction" of universality fades away. Its success would entail replacing the juridical meaning of "the people," and also replacing the principled generality of the law. I explain both these things in more detail in the next chapter.

Examining this conundrum of "the parts" and "the whole" that populism incarnates leads me to argue, in what follows, that populism epitomizes not so much the claim of "a part" representing "the whole" *(pars pro toto)* (which would be the synecdoche of political representation in general) but instead, and much more radically, the claim to embody one part only—the "authentic" part, which, for this very reason, deserves to rule for its own good against the excluded, inauthentic part.[23] Clearly, the key to factionalism is the category of *antiestablishmentarianism,* which, in Montesquieu's language, forms "the spirit" of populism, in every respect.

A *volonté générale* Turned Upside Down

There is a reasonable question that we might ask as we analyze the issue of antiestablishmentarianism: Is populism's phobia against all kinds of elites, or only some kinds? First, we can note that populism sponsors the idea that politics is unavoidably factional. This is because—it claims—politics is a contest for supremacy between two groups—namely, the ordinary many and the elites. Analysts of populist movements are unanimous in acknowledging that the populists' attack against the "enemies of the people" occurs on the basis of the assumption that the two groups revealed by elections are homogenous and mutually exclusive. There is the group of the "morally just," on the one hand, and "those of the establishment" on the other.[24] This irreducible dualism is the engine of antiparty sentiment for two reasons. First, it declares that only one part is the "right" part; and second, it excludes, a priori, any possibility that politics could be a home for universalist ideals or ambitions. The most democratic of all populist movements

was the People's Party. People Party's activists, who were connected to labor movements, sought out an alliance with blacks who shared their economic interests. But the language of the discontent of white "plain people . . . never dealt comfortably with African-Americans." The People's Party claimed that it wanted to purify "the republic" of corruption and big money, yet it could not make peace with new immigrants because it could not "afford such ignorant animals within its borders" as European and Asian immigrants.[25] Importantly, this case is no exception in the history of populism. The fact that populism is different from all other structured ideologies, in that it does not aim to shape the people according to some specific vision of the good, does not entail that it lacks some "perfectionist" plan. Nor does it entail that populism is content to leave the category of "the people" untouched, simply bringing it as it is, and as such, to the center stage of politics.

Contrary to Mudde's claim that populists "do not want to change the people themselves, but rather their status within the political system," the populist goal of preserving the good people (the "republic of ours," or "our nation") from contaminations by external folk or by domestic elites is a perfectionist project.[26] As such, it has some educational aspirations: it certainly wants to change the public mentality and the civic culture, and to make the majority impermeable to (what it deems to be) "foreign" or elite culture (hence the ubiquitous assault on "bookish people," the college educated, and all those who are not like "us"). Even though it remains a "party in the negative," or a "nonparty," while in opposition, the populist movement pursues two concretely positive goals. First, it aims to overturn the political class; second, it aims to use the state to actualize the project of consolidating its collective (be this the people or the nation). Canovan suggests this interpretation when she argues that bringing politics to the people and people to politics—which is the design of populist leaders—is a project that aims not so much to purify the people (which is already "pure") as to *rid politics itself* of the politicians who exercise power.[27]

Populist politics is thus exclusionary, like all parties' politics is, but in quite a radical way. Historically, party politics was able to achieve legitimacy when it proved that it was not identifiable with factional politics. But populist anti-establishmentarianism reshapes democracy along factional lines.[28] Students of politics have demonstrated that political parties are meant to solve the uneven balance of electoral politics, by unifying portions of the electorate according to class, interests, or ideological faith. They are meant to unify citizens, and make them participate, gather information, exercise judgment over public issues, and support or resist proposals and political agendas.[29] Party politics generate pluralism. When populism iden-

tifies parties with "the establishment," therefore, it accuses them of partiality. As Steven Levitsky and James Loxton observe, "Fujimori, Chávez, and Correa all claimed that their countries were not democracies but 'party-archies' (i.e. a system of 'rule by the parties' rather than by 'the people'), and all of them campaigned on a pledge to destroy the old elite in the name of 'true' or 'authentic' democracy."[30]

But the use of antiestablishmentarianism for political purposes demonstrates that the opposite of party democracy is *not* the reinstatement of the undivided whole. Experiences of populism in power show that the assault on party politics has generally translated into a hammering of the institutional system, where that system is understood as a structure of rules and administrative procedures that is supposed to function independently of the majority and provide stable continuity to the legal and bureaucratic order.[31] Historically, party democracy stabilized when parties became capable of ensuring that the state looked like a set of boundaries that partisan politics was not permitted to trespass. The system of rights, the rule of law, and the impartial operations of bureaucracy were the conditions that partisans agreed not to exploit—so much so that, in party democracy, the violation of these general rules (which are not only juridical but also ethical) is identified with political corruption and is named *particracy*.[32] Populism emerges as oppositional force in reaction against that political corruption, and an advocate of the "rule of the game," which the establishment manipulates. As we can detect in the case of Chávez, mentioned earlier, the antiestablishmentarian paradigm reclaims the hegemonic priority of the political as in Carl Schmitt's friend–enemy trope.[33]

If it succeeded, populist antiestablishmentarianism would entail a move from "party politics" to "faction politics," not a move to "partyless democracy," as according to Mair. This is because its reading of the people is itself merely the shadow of a part. It is not truly general, and it is not fully inclusive. Populism's strategy for achieving this goal involves ascribing a factional nature to existing parties by accusing them of subordinating the will of the people to party elites. Meanwhile, it fully embraces the logic of "the part" when it predefines antagonistic groups according to the position they occupy in relation to the state—situating the people "outside" (as "pure") and the few "inside" (as "impure").[34] As Andreas Schedler writes, populists "draw up a triangular symbolic space around three actors and their relationships: the people, the political class and themselves." The first of these actors represents "the innocent victim," the second represents "the malicious rogue," and the third represents "the redeeming hero."[35]

In this way, we can explain the paradox that arises out of populism's phobia of parties. This phobia, as I have said, gives rise to a project that aims

to substitute the sovereign (the whole) with one of its parts. This part may be the most numerous or the least directly involved in power, but it remains a *part* in all respects. Party-phobia then becomes idolatry of the "right" party and entails the rejection of any parties that do not fit with populist antiestablishmentarianism. This seems to be the phenomenology of populism: from a movement of opposition (where one party agitates against other parties, as occurs in electoral democracies) to a position of ruling power (where one party unravels the *kratos* of the winning part). In this sense, I have argued, antiestablishmentarianism does not consist simply in giving some particular part legitimacy by claiming it stands for the whole. It is not *pars pro toto* logic; it is instead *pars pro parte*. Maximilien Robespierre's words pronounced two days before his execution give us the sense of this substitution: "You, the people—our principles—are that faction! A faction to which I am devoted, and against which all the scoundrelism of the day is banded!"[36]

To recall one of Robert Michels's most notable examples, the factional logic of populism resembles the warlike model adopted by early socialist parties in late nineteenth-century Europe. Those socialists proclaimed that "their party [was] specifically a class party," but, betraying that bold proclamation, Michels observed with regret, they added that "in ultimate analysis the interests of their party coincid[ed] with those of the entire people." This was an "addendum" that Michels branded as an unfortunate concession to representative logic.[37] Populist parties, on the other hand, would not disappoint Michels because they are ready to make that bold proclamation of factionalism, without appending the addendum of universality or generality. When populist parties oppose the establishment, they declare that their part alone is entitled to rule: they make no pretense of universality, as traditional ideological parties do. The *relativism* of populist politics is predicated on a view of the establishment as an unredeemable condition, and one that justifies a permanent countermobilization of the people. As Laclau explains, a populist claim can include various features of people, and it can change the configuration of its political message according to context and opportunity (both factors are variable and specific).[38] On the question of universality, Laclau agrees with Michels. Universality, he asserts, cannot be a *political* reason, because all political struggles for power require some "retreat." They require an identification "with some particularistic" contents.[39] Populism makes no concession to the whole people as an ideal universality of citizenry. As such, any move to associate this movement with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *volonté générale* is completely incorrect.[40] The root of populism is the nonelite people, or the masses minus the elites: it is the *antiestablishment*.[41]

At the Root of the Moral Ideology of Populism

The analysis I pursue here both profits from and amends and completes two important lines of interpretation that define contemporary scholarship on populism in social and political sciences. As explained in the Introduction, these two conceptions are the minimal (which we may call thin) and the maximal (which we may call thick) conceptions, respectively. The thin conception, for its part, centers on populism as an *ideology of morality.* It proposes that populism involves a Manichean worldview, which divides social space into two opposing camps: the *moral* "people" and the corrupt establishment.

Cas Mudde, an early proponent of this "'thin-centered' ideology," and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser write, "This means that populism is in essence a form of *moral* politics, as the distinction between 'the elite' and 'the people' is first and foremost moral (i.e. pure vs. corrupt), not situational (e.g. position of power), socio-cultural (e.g. ethnicity, religion), or socio-economic (e.g. class)."[42] The two authors argue that "the dualism between 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite' deems populist politics an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people."[43] Other interpreters note, further, that its thin-centered nature gives populism ideological elasticity and protean potentials.[44] Capable of straddling the Left–Right ideological divide, populist parties are defined by their insistence on a moral estimation of politics. Their manifestations then vary widely, from the protectionist-cum-neoliberal policies of Fidesz in Hungary, to the radical neoliberal populism of Fujimori's Peru, to the nationalization policies of Chávez.

We can make two critical observations that anticipate what we will explore later. First, given that direct democracy is not a populist goal, the dualism between the people and the elite does not entail instituting the general will with no mediation between the inside and the outside of the state (even if this is what populists claim to be doing). Second, focusing on this thin-centered ideology obscures other crucial components of populism. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser do not, for instance, think that populist parties necessarily require charismatic leadership: "An elective affinity between populism and a strong leader seems to exist. However, the former can exist without the latter."[45] In contrast, the distinction I propose between populism as a movement of protest (which can be horizontal and headless) and populism as a ruling power (which cannot exist without a leader) allows me to show that Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser's arguments hold with respect to populism as a movement, but not with respect to populism in power. As I explained in the Introduction, considering populism as a thin-centered ideology cannot explain what makes populism a ruling power,

nor how it transforms democratic institutions. Certainly, the thin-centered moral orientation is an important step, because it provides a minimal criterion for ordering the empirical analysis of various populist experiences. But it seems too broad and unpolitical to capture the form of representation that qualifies populism in its relation to democracy.

We therefore need to follow the ideological thin argument down to its political roots, which are only apparently "moral." "Anti-party-ism and anti-elitism," Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser write, "are derivative of populism's three value-concepts: the people, the people's purity, and its sovereign will."[46] One could ask, 'What, for populism, are the obstacles to the actualization of these three value concepts?' The immediate answer seems to be party democracy. This is because if and when it deals with "parts" and divided interests, politics fragments the popular will and requires actors to resort to compromise in order to construct the unitary will of decision at the institutional level. For populists, this move opens the door to fatal "impurity," to elites' manipulation, bargaining, and pluralism. As such, it seems clear that populism's first battle cry is directed not against elites *in general* but rather against the *political elite* in particular. Morality per se is not the issue; the issue is a kind of morality (or immorality) that is associated with the exercise (or the nonexercise) of political power. We see this again in the fact that populist leaders, while they do not need to be *populares* themselves to claim their purity, must still come from outside the established political elite. It is this that makes their claims to ordinariness believable. Billionaires are role models in modern society, but their power is not perceived to translate into an ability to impose their will and interests on all through the coercive system of the state. This is why billionaires like Berlusconi, Perot, and Trump fit populist antielite moral argument and rhetoric: they "can be considered more authentic representatives of the people than leaders with a more common socio-economic status."[47] Populist antiestablishmentarianism does not refer to socioeconomic elites and is neither class based nor money based.

In conclusion, the dualism between the "pure" people and the "inauthentic" few is radical because the few are *not* deemed to be a part of the people they rule. The people is the part: it is an entity with a social and substantive meaning that includes only the "ordinary" people, not *all* people, and certainly not the political establishment. Clearly, only one "part"—the ruling few and their acolytes—is expunged from the ordinary and authentic many. This because that part, in the populist mind, negates the other(s). In practical terms, this kind of radical polarization serves to justify calls to force the existing political class out of power. This is a task that populists achieve through a representative process that relies on a strong leader:

someone who is as "pure" of political power as "his" or "her" people. The dualism between "impure" establishment and "pure" people, therefore, is *only apparently moral*—in fact, it takes us straight to antipartisanship, which consists in the antipolitical idea that power corrupts (those who hold it). In Paul Taggart's words, "populism has its roots in a primal anti-political reaction of the ruled against the rulers," with the implied assumption that ruling corrupts.[48]

At the Roots of the Discursive Strategy

The maximal interpretation of populism—which I call here thick—stresses the role of discourse in the construction of the people. This interpretation is inspired by the work of Laclau, which is a cornerstone in the political theory of populism. Laclau's work posits the creative power of the binary ideology that revolves around "the many" versus "the few." In Carlos de la Torre's words, populism is "a rhetoric that constructs politics as the moral and ethical struggle between el pueblo and the oligarchy."[49] Where the thin approach moralizes the ideological structure of populism, the thick approach politicizes it all the way down—so much so that it ends up conflating politics and democratic action with populism.[50] On this view, all politics is populist politics.

Laclau's "populist reason" makes a radical claim for the renewal of partisan politics. It reacts against and wants to overturn the trend in liberal-democratic societies of downplaying political antagonism in order, the discourse of populism claims, to establish a sort of *pactum ad excludendum* among all the leading classes and keep "underdogs" of all sorts (the radically excluded, from the socially poor and destitute to the political radicals) out of political competition. From Laclau's perspective, populism is the movement that can give voice and power to the many who have been and are left out. It is a project designed to facilitate the political awakening of the commoners, and it is directed against the politics of apathy that developed in the face of the establishment occupying all political space. "I propose," Chantal Mouffe writes, to understand "populism as a way to construct the political by establishing a political frontier that divides society into two camps, appealing to the mobilization of the 'underdog' against 'those in power.'"[51] Populists aim to give this frontier-making project the determinative force that originally belonged to democracy itself (where democracy was conceived of as a politics of emancipation against entrenched elites, who dressed in liberal and constitutional clothes in order to perpetuate their exclusionary politics).[52] The thin ideological conception categorizes

parties with a simple binary logic—populist or not. But this discursive approach allows for a more nuanced spectrum of positions. Political parties (both leftist and conservative) can have populist tendencies, or can even be intensely populist, depending on a certain discursive logic. This logic specifies that they must appeal to their base and must find a certain leader capable of embodying that base. Clearly, the goal is to substitute the elites in power for another leading force, as quickly and suddenly as possible.

This thick reading seems to disprove my argument about antiestablishmentarianism. Indeed, how are we to make sense of antipartisanship (as antipartyism), given the strong antagonistic impetus that the discursive conception of populism implies? However, the underlying logic of populism's opposition to the ruling elite is the construction of a holistic people—a construction that cannot itself guarantee and preserve antagonism. Laclau's theoretical efforts to marry populism with an idea of "the people as the excluded part of the *demos*" (an argument in the tradition of Jacques Rancière) are commendable. Clearly, Laclau is sincerely interested in reversing the transformation of representative government into elected oligarchy. This transformation is ingrained within democracy's social imaginary. But during the political struggle to achieve a populist transformation, the identity of "the populist 'us' remains conveniently vague"—as it must if it wants to be as inclusive as possible and win a large majority. Thus, Laclau's discursive populism is fatally open to holism.[53] Moreover, it offers no guarantee that incorporating the largest people will translate into a deepening of political autonomy, or into an enrichment of democracy. It offers no guarantee that it will not instead generate a *more* centralized power, even one that is potentially authoritarian and intolerant of institutional checks and dissenting opinions. It is easy to detect the sources of this structural vagueness (and ambiguity) in populist antiestablishmentarianism.

The Insufferable Few

The thing that makes the political elite so special, and so unbearable, is the inescapable nature of its power. Corporate rule—despotic as it might be—does not have the same fatal power as state rule.[54] This is because corporate domination is not all-inclusive but rather is confined to those who work for, or operate in, a corporate firm. We can escape a corporate CEO's will, and we can find refuge from a super-wealthy individual's domineering behavior. But we cannot escape the state's elected or appointed officers.[55] State power leaves us no choice but to obey: it impinges on all subjects living

under its territorial jurisdiction. Now, the democratic principle of universal inclusion (or the inclusion of "each and all") is intended to legitimize absolute subjection to the state and its law. But the tension here is never fully resolved, even if it is regulated by and monitored through a constitution, periodic renewals of political personnel, and an open and pluralistic public sphere of opinion, which can inspect and criticize state actions.[56] Institutional and procedural strategies are meant to impede the consolidation of the power by "the few" and to keep the tension between the rulers and their fellow citizens alive and robust. But these several checks do not change the *nature* of state power. Nor are they designed to. (Constitutional democracy is predicated on the idea that conflict is a permanent condition of political liberty and participation, not some optional feature or accident.)

The exercise of power has traditionally been associated with pleasure. A long and honorable crowd of critical theorists has depicted political elites as holding power with no other purpose than to exercise it: as holding it for the pleasure of ruling. From Plato to Michel Foucault, philosophers and social theorists have associated the idea of "controlling" and "manipulating" bodies and behaviors—from whatever position in which an officer finds himself or herself in the chain of command—with erotic pleasure. This eroticism feeds on the experience of provoking the subjected and of witnessing their distress.[57] The political elite's perception of their own might is further burnished by a sense of their own reputation and esprit de corps; this is true whether that elite is elected or appointed. Even in governments that are based on the consent of the included—in which "the corporate will proper to the government should be very subordinate"—the relationship between the citizens and their magistrates is stained with an unavoidable perception of arbitrariness. This is because state "agents" never fail to develop a sense of privilege. They become "badly confused with the sovereign" of which they are instead "simply minister[s]."[58] Finally, established politicians, even if they are voted in and out through free elections, earn their living by extracting resources from taxation without ever producing anything that can be materially quantified or fully accounted for. This ambiguity always leaves those who are being represented with a suspicion that the actions of their politicians are somehow arbitrary. In their critique against party-cracy (*partitocrazia* in Italian, and *partidocracia* in Spanish), populists of all stripes stress the condition of privilege that a minority enjoys as a result of its pillaging of the vast majority of the population. (I will return to this issue in Chapter 3.) Indeed, this is the most radical source of the accusation that representative democracy and the entire institutional and judiciary system is a government by "powerful majorities."[59] This accusation generates

skepticism of the capacity of institutions to check excess—the capacity, of course, that is held up as the golden argument in defense of constitutional democracy.

Particularly in times of economic and social duress and increasing inequality, antielite arguments can blur traditional distinctions between the left and right wings of government. Laborists and neoliberals can easily come together under the capacious umbrella of populism. To give a few examples, productive Americans in the late nineteenth century and Reagan-inspired libertarians in the late twentieth century each legitimized antitax politics and supported rebellion against those who did not belong to the people but lived off the people's sweat and tears. These were understood to be "forces comprising most elected officials, public employers," and their allies.[60] In the 1980s, the early public blow of the Lega Nord against the Italian establishment materialized in a very popular (and populist) campaign for "tax disobedience" as a justified reaction against the caste in power.[61] The Mexican presidential campaign of Andrés Manuel López Obrador in 2006 made the opposition between corrupt state elites and the victimized and honest people into its central theme: "What we have to therefore do is unite the people, this is the struggle of the whole people of Mexico to defend its interests, against a band that has perpetuated itself in power and has carried our country to ruin."[62]

Populism targets power within political institutions (from local up to national) because those institutions are the domain in which elites are experienced as inescapable, and in which "ordinary citizens" have no choice but to obey (albeit reluctantly). There are two additional conditions that add to the revulsion against the establishment. First, on the one hand, elites in power are susceptible to a mental disposition shared by the co-opted members of the higher strata of society that makes all of them appear to be characterized by "blunted moral insensibility."[63] On the other hand, they do not seem to be adventurous or imaginative, but rather "mindless" and privileged. (John Stuart Mill invented the epithet "pedantocracy" to denote the class of state mandarins.)[64] The political establishment is made of people who are more prone to mainstream strategies because their main preoccupation is to protect their "status" and sustain their power for as long as possible.[65] Social types develop as the result of common values, and when these social types are co-opted, circles form that are similar in kind. All of them are united by tacit mutual support as "tie-ins." "The power elite . . . also rests upon the similarity of its personnel, and their personal and official relations with one another, upon their social basis of the power elite's unity," define a clique, "not an aristocracy," because they share not heredity or tra-

ditions but instead a common educational routine and belong to closed circles. (For example, they study in the same colleges, as Thomas Piketty observes in his descriptions of the new, global, wealthy oligarchy.)[66] Elites join together: in Italy the populist catchword for them is *la casta* (the caste). This term tends to appear at the same moment that ideological partisanship began to fade: this is the moment that political parties began to seem identical and preoccupied (as they were) with positioning themselves in the mainstream to capture votes. To fill the gap of legitimacy, former mass parties made a classic "establishment" move: "They went to the state to get more resources. They became state-centered organizations, because the core of their activity was anchored in, and performed through, the state."[67]

As the credibility of intermediary associations declines (parties and traditional media), and the checks and balances at an institutional level become dysfunctional (the partisanization of justice, for instance, and the staggering growth in economic inequality), populist denunciations of "the immorality of the few" become more and more alluring.[68] Mair has characterized the transformations of traditional parties as a case of "cartel party democracy." In his diagnosis, populism does not create the crisis of trust in party democracy; rather, populism *reveals and exploits* that crisis and points to the insider mentality that predisposes party personnel to mainstream platforms and policies because they are electorally convenient. Cartel party democracy is in fact an early form of antipartisanship and antipartyism: a "senile disease" of stable democracies that starts from within as a claim made in the interests of the general public.[69] As such, party cartels *generate* populism, which completes their antipartisan move by claiming that parties themselves are the main reason that the general interest is being violated.

Let us turn to consider the dysfunction of the checks and balances at the institutional level. The liberal answer to the populist objection reveals itself to be meager and ineffective because it insists on a formalistic argument that contends that the ideology of a powerful elite is nonsense: that it is merely a remnant of the tyrannophobia that had accompanied the antiaristocratic struggle in the age of constitutional revolutions.[70] The liberal argument suggests that electoral lawmakers and appointed bureaucrats are merely "servants" of the state and claims that they do not "hold" power but rather exercise functions according to the will of the electors.[71] It is true that consent makes electoral democracy, as we shall see later, but this very same consent also makes the people mistrustful of this formalistic argument, because they remember that the division between the rulers and the ruled is simply conventional and functional; it is itself an artifice and certainly is never fully justified. According to Jan-Werner Müller, the "virtually exclusive emphasis

on the rule of law in public discourse," combined with the way in which parties tend to dismiss the partisan habit by making political choices truly meaningless, makes for a particularly bad defense of democracy.[72]

The fact that these power-deflating strategies that modern democracy was able to activate have become so dysfunctional only proves once again that "immorality" is not what makes elites a target of criticism. Elites have always existed, but they only started provoking antiestablishmentarian arguments once political institutions began to derive legitimacy from electoral representation. Representative government itself was born of the claim that the people was the only force of political legitimacy and control.[73] Today, the populist attack harks back to the "purity" of the people, which it opposes both to the representative claim of the elected and to the constitutional claim to check and balance.[74] The classical assumption, which populism restates, is that when elites merge, containing their power becomes difficult. According to populists, the constitutional strategy (division of powers and check and balance) has failed in its task.

But populists do not question the distinction between the ruling class and the people. What they contest is the structure of electoral representation, because it is this structure that prevents the embodiment of the ordinary many under a representative leader, such as a tribune, who can speak for them and only for them, and who can use the strength of their support to achieve power and overturn the few. The populist criticism of the immorality of the establishment is a criticism that points directly to the heart of representative democracy. It suggests that representative democracy not only has been responsible for not keeping power circulating and consolidating the separation between the many and the few (as the democratic critique would have it) but has also structured the people as a plurality of conflicting interests that blocks their *ever* merging into a unity against the opposite unity (the few). Representative democracy enfeebles the people, rather than giving it power.

Innocent of Ruling: The Antipolitics of the Ordinary

At this point, we can grasp the logic of the theory and practice of antiestablishmentarianism. It consists in the drive toward *anti*politics that is implied by the association of power with impurity or immorality. This frame grounds the phenomenology of populist leadership. Its imperative is *never* to replicate the electoral leadership—in fact, electoral leadership is its negative model. The trajectory of the populist leader starts with the attack against the political establishment; but once in power, and once the old par-

ties are relegated to the periphery, he or she has to go on attacking other elites. Once he or she has achieved a majority, the populist leader must move to change the constitution and redefine the functions and limits of existing institutions, if need be. The case of Chávez fits this trajectory almost perfectly. He

> imposed his will, armed by his plebiscitary mandate and seventy per cent approval ratings in public opinion surveys. Upon convening, the new constituent assembly claimed "super-constitutional power," a claim subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court, and moved quickly to dissolve both houses of the national congress as well as state legislative assemblies, effectively eliminating institutional checks on executive power that were located in other elected bodies. By December 1999, a new constitution had been drafted and approved in yet another popular referendum by a crushing majority of 71.4 per cent of voters, and a committee was formed out of the constituent assembly to exercise legislative power in place of the disbanded national congress.[75]

But we should not construe the dualism between corrupt elites and the uncorrupt people to mean that all members of the people are (individually) pure or uncorrupt. The claim that the people is moral is not the claim that its members are *personally* moral; rather, as we shall see in the following section, it is the claim that there is an association between the possession of power and immorality. On this argument, people are uncorrupt not because they are superior or somehow immune to immorality in a godlike way but rather because they do not exercise political power, and so do not run the risk of making decisions that will affect their entire society. "'Ordinary citizens' are deemed 'moral' only because of their structural 'externality to political power.'"[76]

In the spring of 1992, when news emerged about the huge scheme of corruption involving Bettino Craxi (then prime minister and head of the Italian Socialist Party), a whole crowd gathered in front of his hotel in Rome. The people waited for him to appear and threw coins at him, shouting, "Thief, thief!" Of course, many in that crowd were not as honest as their reaction against Craxi seemed to suggest. In fact, many of them had probably benefited from the entrenched system of corruption and the government's toleration of tax evasion by large portions of the population. Presumably, many of the moralizers were as immoral as the socialist leader. But they were *private people*. Politically speaking, they were uncorrupted. This episode is interesting because it confirms, once again, that the underlying logic of populism is not a logic of personal morality but a logic of *political* morality, defined as the potential for corruption that is associated with power holding. The paradox of this logic, then, is that the people can never directly rule.

Many ordinary citizens may be individually corrupt ("those without sin cast the first stone"); but since they are not elected to represent the people, nor rule in their stead, that corruption remains a case of *human* imperfection—something that belongs to everybody. "When Perot supporters talked about 'us' against 'them,' they meant the people—all the people—against the politicians."[77] Perot (like Berlusconi or Trump) was part of the superwealthy economic elite. This was apparently acceptable to the people, who were not actually looking for someone ordinary like them, nor looking for someone poor, like many of them were.

Perot was not the only one who used to oppose the people against the politicians: "This was the same rage that Bill Clinton and other Democrats were trying to channel." Michael Kazin, whom I quote here, makes an interesting observation that confirms the way in which the morality of the many can be betrayed by those among them who gain support on the basis of a promise to moralize power. Perot's populism, Kazin writes, represented "a more profound disillusionment [than Democrats'] because it was grounded among people who had once believed in Reagan's pledges to 'get government off our back' and 'bring America back.' Once betrayed, they would be difficult to attract to a new governing coalition."[78]

Another exemplary case comes from Jörg Haider: as soon as he assumed the leadership of the Freedom Party in Austria in 1986, he struck his first blow against the co-optation of political personnel (those who belong to parties) to positions in government, to nonpolitical authorities, and to social organizations such as unions. "Corporate democracy" had provided some decades of economic stability and had helped suspend social conflicts, but these benefits came at the cost of a politics and a practice of consensus that produced an entrenched establishment, before which the "little man" could do nothing. Haider transformed his traditional right-wing party into a populist protest party; and he made the establishment his exclusive target, in the name of "ordinary" citizens against the elites. "Ideas and opinions of the citizens," he wrote, "cannot be conveyed directly but have been usurped by institutions, interest groups and parties. Between them and the state a power game takes place, leaving little scope for individual freedom and self-determination."[79] Nor is this rhetoric about bringing ordinary people back to politics exclusively a right-wing phenomenon. Tony Blair's speech to the Labour Party Conference following his victory in the British general election of 1997 contained these words: "Ours was not a victory of politicians but of the people. . . . As one women put it to me, 'We've got our government back.'"[80]

We may thus say that it is not "purity" or "morality" that defines populist antielitism; rather, it is the argument that innocence from ruling means

being clean of power. Any argument that represents the elites as immoral is truly a political argument, even if it is crafted in a language that pretends to be purely moral. We should add, though, that the elites expose themselves to this criticism because they are representative claim makers, and so they are expected (by the represented) to give their claim a positive face.

To sum up, the people are (and present themselves as) innocent of power, not of immorality. Elites are guilty of using an opportunity to exercise power and make decisions in the name of all, and for all—they are naturally exposed to corruption. As Canovan observes in analyzing early twentieth-century American populists and progressives, they did not claim to be experts, nor competent, but rather simply honest. Political honesty was the identification they ascribed to ordinary people who did not hold power; in this sense, "the cleverest politician, after all, may be precisely the most dangerous, if he is corrupt." Ordinary people may be naïve or poorly informed, but these qualities are not perceived to be as dangerous as dishonesty. People are less guilty of "vested interests" when taken as "a mass," rather than individually, because they only occasionally practice power as individuals.[81] At this point, we are ready to take a step further in describing the phenomenology of the many versus the few. We can begin to cast light on the core feature of antiestablishment ideology: the assumption that political power is a machinery of corruption. This is, Canovan concludes, the core of antiestablishmentarianism, and what makes populism a "politics of antipolitics."

Power Corrupts

Populist leaders are said to pursue a "politics of antipolitics."[82] But antipolitics is rooted *within* popular government, and it is not identifiable with populism. To paraphrase Niccolò Machiavelli, it presumes that the deep desire of the large portion of the population is not to rule—to which Machiavelli added, importantly, that the people also desire not to be dominated. It is from this desire not to be dominated that they derive their claim to exercise *some* political functions—in particular, participating in approving laws and checking those who govern.[83] To be sure, Machiavelli prescribed a number of avenues for popular participation: from competition for office with the *grandi,* to specific popular institutions of control over the magistrates. As per John P. McCormick, "Machiavelli's theory legitimizes the people's 'natural' disposition of passivity while also justifying an 'unnatural' or learned active political posture."[84] For the topic of this chapter, we shall focus on the "natural" disposition that people have to let

some eager few rule. However, I shall clarify that these two groups are not naturally defined but rather the outcome of a struggle against (and for) power. Power naturally goes together with a sort of division of labor between the many who mostly obey and seek tranquility, and the few who mostly act. Political power cannot exist without a vertical division of this kind. In this sense, the potential for corruption is ingrained in it. In fact, that potential is the engine of the entire system of control and containment of power.

Machiavelli's basic assumption—which was constitutional in its implication—was that the exercise of power goes hand in hand with the development of morally negative qualities. Full redemption from corruption cannot be a goal. Good institutions can contain and channel vices, not eradicate or even cure them. For this reason, those who want to preserve the integrity of their individual souls should stay away from decision-making power; at most, they should exercise controlling power, which is a negative kind of power. On the other hand, since political power cannot be avoided—and because it is the only way to achieve and preserve freedom—leaders and politicians are like sacrificial victims who make it possible for the large majority to take care of their own souls and moral lives. Whatever interpretation we give it, it is certain that the drive to achieve and preserve power (the desire for ruling, which is fortunately only cultivated by a few) is the source of corruption. This makes the many innocent and gives them full legitimacy in criticizing the rulers, in controlling and checking them, and in revolting against them if necessary.

Populist mistrust in the establishment is an extreme manifestation of the mistrust of power that is ingrained in popular government more generally. When a citizen of the Roman Republic wanted to signal his decision to run for a magistracy, he was *candid* about his desire by wearing a white *(candida)* toga. Wearing this toga was a way not simply to make the candidate's intention public but also to make him perpetually visible and so exposed to people's judgment. We can understand the association of power with concealment (and thus wrongdoing) through this lens. We can also use it to understand the belief that only transparency and publicity can give the people the certainty they need: their eyes are the only check that politicians cannot escape. On a populist conception, the audience seems to be a more secure means of controlling the few than institutional checks and balances ever were.[85] This reading also makes sense of the republican idea that the people hold power in the negative, or as a force of control that presumes mistrust of (and opposition against) those who exercise it positively or directly. Inspecting, surveilling, and chastising are all tools that remain in the hands of those who do not hold power. The strength of their check on power

implies that they never rule directly but only (1) through the force of numbers, and through good institutions that are not at the disposal of the rulers (no matter who those rulers are); and (2) through the force of opinion and public inspection, which judges, like a tribunal, and forces the rulers to remain attentive to the possibility that they will lose popular support (a possibility that forces them to stay as benevolent and close to the people as possible).

The push for transparency is at the core of populist propaganda.[86] This propaganda claims that the (negative) power of the inspecting audience can partially solve the problem of having an elite in power (which is unavoidable if people are to play the checking or negative role). The populist assault is quite extreme, though. In effect, it declares that *all* the existing checks—both institutional and extrainstitutional (namely, political parties and the media)—are failing because they are not in the hands of the people or their true leader. The cycle between the checking power and the risk that the people will be fooled by those who are doing the checking seems hard to break. It is not some elite or other that is the problem: it is the "political establishment" itself, which holds in its hands both the institutions and the means to check and monitor them.

We can now make sense of the rhetoric that populist leaders use—all their talk of "going to the people" or of "being close to and even one of them." Those who aspire to conquer the support of the people must claim, first of all, to be *authentic,* like the people who make up their audience. Then they must present themselves as the only true representative of the people (even if they are millionaires). These arguments resonate with the three intertwined qualities that Machiavelli ascribed to political power: (1) the qualities that the few in power are expected to have, (2) the qualities that the people have, and (3) the qualities the ideal leader should have. This basic antiestablishmentarian logic appears in three passages from *The Prince* where these intertwined qualities of power are depicted:[87]

1. "I maintain that all men, when people talk about them, and especially rulers, because they hold positions of authority, are described in terms of qualities that are inextricably linked to censure or to praise."
2. "The objectives of the populace are less immoral than those of the elite, for the latter want to oppress, and the former not to be oppressed."
3. "Now I know that everyone will agree that if a ruler could have all the good qualities I have listed and none of the bad ones, then this would be an excellent state of affairs."

We can derive three arguments from these quotes that will cast some light on the critical populist reading of establishmentarianism.

First, the morality that the people claim to vindicate is easier to have, and to preserve, because ordinary people do not have (nor want) "hard" power. Hard power, on this argument, creates the conditions that expose human beings to things that are politically necessary but immoral and corrupt, at least from the personal moral point of view. This explains why leaders in power always find it difficult to conquer and maintain the support of the few (the entourage) who are like them: because they want the same thing—namely, hard power. The few know the tricks they have to use, and they are conscious of their dirty hands. This is as true now as it was in the Roman Republic, which was Machiavelli's model: political competition occurs only within and among the few, while the people, more often than not, play the role of a judging and checking force (which *buoni ordini* reflect and stabilize). Second, leaders can easily achieve the support of the people (which leaders also need in order to check the power of the few who compose their entourage) not only because the people lack any thirst for power but also because leaders can disguise their vices and make the people believe in their purity (or necessary impurity, as the case may be). This means that legitimacy is more a rhetorical issue than an issue of institutional formality. Third, the populist leader must pretend to be one of the people, and will certainly use the strategy of concealment to appear as one of them—*always,* not only when he or she opposes the establishment.

We may use these qualities of power and power holders (which motivate the many's distrust of power) to explain the basic ideological structure of populist antiestablishmentarianism. As I have said, this structure is radically *anti*politics. It is in this sense that it is moral. The ability to create images and opinions, which will persuade the people of this frame of power, is an essential component of the populist leader's representative practice. Berlusconi was able to preserve power for several years, and enjoy popular support, thanks to his skill at presenting his popular face to the public. After all, this was the face of a person who was a political outsider. The various means of communication he was able to orchestrate helped him a great deal in constructing and preserving an opinion that fit the tastes of the audience. Populist leaders must represent themselves as ordinary citizens; they can never be suspected of being part of the elite. Like all human beings, an outsider may make mistakes. But the populist leader lacks the political vices that establishment leaders are perceived to have. *Anti-intellectualism,* which is another feature of populist antiestablishmentarianism, springs from this claim to unpretentious moral qualities, which the leader purports to share

with ordinary people.[88] Scholars of politics have stressed the role of mobilizations among the people as a *symptom* of political discontent with ordinary party politics. This is true regardless of the outcomes it attains, as we can see when we look at populism.[89] Newt Gingrich said of President Barack Obama and the Democrats, "They are a government of the elite, for the elite, and through the elite."[90] Protest against intellectuals, high culture, and college people and attacks against the cosmopolitan "trash" of "fat cats" in the name of "the common sense of the common people" (those who live by their work and who inhabit the narrow space of a village or a neighborhood) are the components of an ideology that is immediately recognizable as populist.[91]

Populist Antiestablishmentarianism

C. Wright Mills, in his classic book *The Power Elite,* went back to Jacob Burckhardt to give a snapshot of what political elites are and do: "They are all that we are not because they have power that "we" don't have.[92] It is what they *can* do, more than what they *actually* do, that gives the establishment an impure status or makes them seem "immoral." In fact, according to Mills, political elites are marked as immoral because their closeness to power exposes them naturally to corruption. In order to prove how this situation created the potential for corruption in reverse, Mills described the strategy that elites and their entourages employ to defend themselves from the popular criticism of their immorality. They claim they are "impotent" because they are "scattered" and because they lack "any coherence." In order to shield themselves from accusations of immorality, they claim to be divided—which means that their power as a political group becomes the object of criticism, rather than the things they actually do. Elites may have different party affiliations; but all of them operate within the same institutions and share the same desire to preserve their role. Divisions within the establishment are really only *apparent* divisions, and even the institutional checks they refer to are not entirely capable of containing their power. The thin ideology of morality ascribed to populism conceals a thick ideology that goes to the fount of power.

If the antagonism against the few looks moral, it is because populism does not claim the political priority of the will of the people over and against the will of the elites. It does not claim to be enacting direct democracy, nor to be overcoming the division between "inside" and "outside." Rather, populism claims the value priority of the people *over and against* some of its parts. It

wants the large majority alone to be represented, because (it believes) this is the only legitimate part. This claim does not fit the kind of competition for power that mobilizes traditional parties, because it denotes a fight for power that requires a new kind of representation. This new kind of representation must not be fragmented among competitors and claims, but it must remain united enough to counter the clique of the established elite. The representative, Laclau writes, must be an active agent who gives words and credibility to the represented unity: that unity is the author of the homogenizing process that puts an end to the divisions within the electorate.[93] Populist antiestablishmentarianism amounts to a call for substitution of the wrong people ("inauthentic" as the "few" are) with the right people (who are, in fact, the only "authentic" people). And this can only be done if representation changes into an act of faith and emotional identification. It cannot come with questions of accountability, because these would lacerate the body politic with conflicting requests and claims. As we shall see in the next two chapters, this is not a revolutionary call; nor is it a call for constituting sovereignty (or a new form of government). It is not even a call for direct rule by the moral people (or nonrepresentative government). It is a call for a change of the elite in power.

In what sense does the populist division prefigure an ideology of "morality"? How can morality be given the power of a political argument against a vertical political division between the "few" and the "many"? In short, if ordinary people are "pure," is it because they possess an endogenous quality of purity? Or is it rather because they do not hold what could ruin them (as it could ruin anyone)—namely, political power? The answer I propose is that if "morality" or "purity" is so radical, it is because it comes from an exceptionally radical political argument—the assumption, as we saw, that *morality follows from lack of political power.* Since the people are pure because they do not directly exercise political power, the populist criticism of the establishment is radical and irredeemable.

Here we encounter another reason why populism has such an ambiguous relationship to democracy. Democracy does not claim that power corrupts: it claims that *if the citizens exercise and control it,* power can be the condition for personal and political liberty and nonsubjection. The democratic people claim *kratos;* and this claim can be strengthened by keeping the gates to the exercise of power open, forcing power to circulate, and preventing its entrenchment in any one place. These are the normative conditions that make for a democratic community, not a predefined dualism between those who keep themselves uncorrupted and pure and those who are impure and corrupt.

Of course, the representative system facilitates both this dualism between inside and outside, and the populist cry against it. As I have said, elections seem to construct power holders as a homogenous group.[94] The articulation of the representative assembly through parties and partisan affiliations—the pluralization of leaders, as I shall soon show—is intended precisely to break that institutional homogeneity, and to activate the kind of pluralism of opinions and disagreements that actually exist in society. It is no chance phenomenon that populist attacks against political representation become attacks against partisan divisions in the lawmaking institutions that elections generate. As we shall see in the next chapter, the construction of the populist people, and the transformation of elections into a kind of plebiscite (which celebrates the victory of the "true people"), is populism's answer to this problem. As Canovan observes, "A vision of 'the people' as a united body implies impatience with party strife and can encourage support for strong leadership where a charismatic individual is available to personify the interests of the nation."[95]

Some additional observations are needed to complete the illustration of populist antiestablishmentarianism. "The unity of the power elite," and its opposite, the unity of the people in power, is the spirit of populist antiestablishmentarianism. This trope seems to take us back to Marx's dialectics. According to that dialectics, the unification of the two classes that capitalism creates simplifies the struggle and makes it easier for the anticapitalist class to recognize its enemy, and therefore give its struggles a revolutionary twist. But although it is structurally similar, the analogy between class struggle and populist struggle is implausible. This is because, for Marx, the power that springs from the dualism between "the haves" and the "have-nots" derives from the *economic structure* of society, which Marx believes not to be politically or ideologically constructed; moreover the class of the "have-nots" is not a "part" because its interests and needs pertain to the human condition as universal claims of dignity and freedom. Unlike the socialist critique, the populist assault on elites does not grow out of the terrain of class and economic relations, nor does it have universalistic aspirations. But populists do not follow the democrats on this terrain either, because they base their critique on a structural dualism between those who rule and those who are ruled—between the establishment and all the others (unlike the democrats, who base their critique on the norm of *openness*).[96]

If we keep the centrality of politics in mind, we can see that the thin ideology of morality exposes populism to an unavoidable tension that it cannot itself explain. It cannot explain the tension because it is oblivious to the way in which populism thinks of, and ultimately uses, institutions and

procedures. Even though it can make sense of populism as a movement of opposition, the thin ideology cannot explain how populism in power can avoid falling victim to the critique of immorality. It cannot help us understand the fatal temptations that await populist leaders as they struggle to avoid falling into the trap of impurity as elites before them have. There are two key temptations that populist leaders face, the first more benign than the second. On the one hand, leaders may try to remain in permanent campaign mode so as to reaffirm their identification with the people by making the audience believe they are waging a titanic battle against the entrenched establishment in order to preserve their own purity. On the other hand, leaders may want to change the rules, and change the existing constitution, in order to strengthen their decision-making power. These things could serve to weaken institutional checks and humiliate the opposition (assuming it is still recalcitrant and has not yet been tamed). Both these moves rely on efforts to construct a more inclusive sovereign, and to inject mobilization from below. And these efforts are not necessarily democracy friendly—indeed, they can come at the expense of democracy.[97]

Even though the outcomes of these two temptations might be different, they both involve a grave disfigurement of democratic procedures. Valuing democratic procedures implies that we must understand them neither as optional rules to be possessed by the winner nor as "merely" formal stipulations. Take, for instance, elections. Elections are a procedure that makes the players, even while it regulates their game; it makes the groups and citizens who participate in the game of elections conceive and structure both their language and their behavior so as to always respect their adversaries. And this tendency applies both when they compete and after everybody knows and accepts the outcome of the competition. Such behavior is paramount, and it shows us the ways that elections are coessential to democracy, not mere formalities.[98] The same can be said of the conclusion of electoral campaigns—the end of the campaign can of course be procrastinated ad libitum, because the winner can continually reinforce the support among his or her base by permanently mobilizing propaganda and the media. Even though such endless campaigning does not violate the electoral term, it induces the majority to think (and tries to make all people think) that its numerical victory is not strong enough, or not legitimate enough. It entails, quite explicitly, that the actors are playing the democratic game while not really accepting it. Populist antiestablishmentarianism, although framed as a thin moral distinction between the corrupt few and the moral people, is capable of producing a series of consequences, and capable of shaping public behavior and language, which means that its impact on democratic institutions is far from innocuous. What seems to be thin turns out to be very thick indeed.

A Question of Interpretation

One of the consistent manifestations of democracy's egalitarian spirit is criticism of elites. In his book *The Power Elite,* Mills argues that elites' "*structural* immorality" is not simply something denoting specific corrupt men of power but rather a feature that connects rich and powerful people to the powers of the state.[99] The political elite has the power to connect the various social elites: this is what makes the democratic people feel excluded and subjected to the insufferable burden of the few. Criticism of elites has been at the very origin of the various transformations that representative government has undergone throughout its history. As Bernard Manin shows, party democracy was also born out of an antiestablishmentarian cry against liberal parliamentarianism, with its government of notables, and rather than drawing its representative candidates "from the elites of talent and wealth," its personnel "seemed to consist principally of ordinary citizens. . . . This is why a number of late nineteenth-century observers interpreted the new role played by parties as evidence of a crisis of representation."[100] Clearly, the interpretation of "democracy" is key to understanding the place of antiestablishmentarianism in both democracy and populism. The issue is that not all democratic arguments (and theories) are equally equipped to deal with antiestablishmentarianism. This is a serious drawback; and it shows us how populism compels us to reflect critically on the interpretation of democracy we are referring to when we seek to answer its challenge. Let us briefly clarify the main normative antiestablishmentarian arguments that democratic theory offers—one represented by Robert A. Dahl, and the other represented by Hans Kelsen.

Dahl begins chapter 8 of his *Democracy and Its Critics* (1989) with this quote from Aristotle: "In democratic states, 'the people' is sovereign; in oligarchies, on the other hand, the few have the position."[101] From Aristotle's definition, Dahl derives "the assumptions" of the democratic ideal: effective participation, voting equality at the decisive stage, enlightened understanding, and control of the agenda. At the bottom of these "ideal assumptions," he adds an assumption about citizens possessing equal political opportunity to participate and act in the public domain. For him, this is the radical antiestablishmentarian clause contained in the democratic ideal. Recollecting Mills's sociological analysis, we can say that elites, for Dahl, are not the problem per se; rather, the problem is the links that those elites have to those who hold political power, and who thereby consolidate and expand the separation between the "inside" and the "outside" of state institutions. In practice, however, democracy cannot match up to Dahl's assumption of radical leaderlessness in *ideal democracy,* because democracy in

practice cannot avoid having leaders. Because of its divide between the level of "ideal assumptions" and the level of practice, Dahl's approach seems to be ill equipped to face populism, which (as we have seen) is structurally based on a dualist frame.

As Canovan clarified some years ago, the populist project to bring politics to the people, and to bring the people to politics, is intended precisely to overcome the dualism between "ideal" and "real" democracy. In this way, it is supposed to "purify politics" of the politicians who exercise it.[102] The divide between the ideal and reality in democratic theory, as we can see, is like oxygen for populism. Hence, Dahl's dualism—"the ideal assumptions" of democracy and "the reality" of polyarchy—does not offer a sufficiently robust safety net against populism. Populism can insinuate itself in between those two halves and claim that what is portrayed as "ideal theory" is in fact an ideology that is covering "the fact" that power is in the hands of an elite. I maintain that Kelsen's theory offers us a better argument in this respect, because it shows how antiestablishmentarianism is ingrained in the very "practice" of democracy. To make this claim effectively, Kelsen has to question the dualism between "ideal" and "real."

At first, he acknowledges that leadership "has no place in ideal democracy"; but he then goes straight to the question of "how the leader is chosen," which is the issue he thinks we must turn to if we want to discover "the reality [of democracy]'s own significance and regulative principles."[103] Rather than starting with the assumption of a dualism between ideal and reality, Kelsen proposes (in Kantian style) that we seek the principles within the practice and process that democracy provokes. It is this radically immanent conception of political procedures that will better assist us in resisting populist antiestablishmentarianism.

Democratic practice does not promote the practice of refusing to make a place for leadership; rather, it promotes the practice of *fragmenting* leadership. This is the condition that makes vote counting and majority rule coessential to democracy. It is also the condition that makes representation a politics of pluralism and turns the lawmaking assembly into a nonunanimity assembly. According to Kelsen,

> This means that the creation of many leaders becomes the central problem for real democracy, which—in contrast to its ideology [the ideal theory as separated from reality]—is not a leaderless society. It is not the lack, but the abundance of leaders that in reality differentiates democracy from autocracy. Thus, a special method for the selection of leaders from the community of subjects becomes essential to the very nature of real democracy. This method is election.[104]

I do not have the space here to analyze elections as the site of a radical difference between democracy and populism. Suffice it to observe that on Kelsen's reading, the unification of the people and the citizenry under one leader is external to democracy's spirit, *even if* the method to reach that unification (a plebiscite) may be democratic. This means, additionally, that representation alone—or representation that does not pass through the pluralizing method of elections but instead claims to achieve legitimacy directly with the audience—is not a sufficient condition for democracy. In fact, it can also be used by autocratic leaders, as past and present history shows.

There are two things that autocratic leaders cannot use: (1) the *logic* of elections (more than elections per se), which presumes that all political decisions are always revocable and that the winner is simply the candidate who received the most votes, not some "special" figure; and (2) the fact that lawmaking is "many-headed" and the political arena is pluralistic. One might say that *fragmentation of leadership* is the most peculiar characteristic of democracy; this fragmentation is a process of power diffusion, even in the moment it makes the selection of decision makers or a political establishment possible. As Kelsen notes, "The idea of leadership becomes obscured by the fact that the executive must be thought of as subordinate to a parliament with several hundred members; the power to rule shifts from a single leader to a multitude of persons, among whom the function of leadership, that is, of the creation of the ruling will, is divided."[105]

The answers that democracy (in both theory and practice) offers to the threat of elitism are, first, keeping the political space open to the circulation of leadership, and second, fragmenting and diffusing power. These can also serve as answers to the populist strategy of splitting the citizenry into two structurally predefined entities (the establishment inside and the people outside). Democracy is "marked by a constant upward flow that moves from the community of subjects to the leadership positions" in state functions. This upward flow works against any "static power relation[s]"—which would presume an *ex ante* division between the ruling few and the ruled many (and are common to both autocracy and populism). It also works against the split between "real" and "ideal."[106] The open character of antiestablishmentarianism, and the horizontal and vertical communicative currents it establishes between civil and political society, is the better argument to prove that antiestablishmentarianism is indeed democratic, and that it exists within both the theory and the practice of democracy.

The implications of this antidualist model of democracy are remarkable. They also apply to representative government, which is another object of contestation by populists (and some political theorists as well). Indeed, on

the "realist" or "minimalist" conception that is widely accepted nowadays, modern (or representative) democracy appears not as a form of democracy but as a mixed regime instead. In this sense, as the American Federalists argued quite early on (for example, in *Federalist* no. 10), the United States is a republic, not a democracy, because it rests on a compromise between the common people and the elite (rather than a unified polity of equals in power who rotate or select for short tenures among themselves). On this interpretation, representative government—rather than neutralizing the establishment—appears as a compromise *between* the establishment and the ruled. Elections seal and formalize this compromise, but they do not *produce* it. We can observe that these two parts are already defined as structural components of representative politics. This reading is utterly nondemocratic, as it assumes a foundational dualism that will never be solved through political competition. The reason for this is that such "competition" is, in fact, *bargaining* between the few and the many, who seek to contain or promote each other's claims. Competition only seems to occur among the few anyway: the people play the external role of assenting or refusing, precisely as they do in audience democracy.[107]

Populism can find itself wholly at home with this dualist model (which is republican in kind more than democratic). This seems to confirm that representative democracy is at best an oxymoron, and at worst an ideological patina that covers a reality that is both exclusionary (because its elections are a method for expelling the people from power) and elitist (because its representation involves selecting those who are better equipped to rule). What the dualist model misses is an awareness that, in a democracy (be it representative or direct), the distinction between the many and the few rests on a foundational lack of "natural power holders," and also rests on an artificiality that makes the distinction between the few and the many not only conventional but also unstable. (This instability proves its conventionality; it also proves that the dualism derives from a conception of political equality.)[108]

What interests us here is the observation that these dualistic models of democracy and representative government in fact serve the logic of populism, however unwillingly. Indeed, all populists would be ready to concede that Dahl's definition of "the ideal assumptions" of democracy is correct. But they would go on (just as all Schumpeterians do) to turn to Robert Michels or Carl Schmitt. These are the two authors who advanced the most realistic perspective of politics, framing it as a naked struggle for power between polarized and homogenous entities (namely, the elites and the masses). This double track indicates that the debate about the meaning of populism is really a debate about the interpretation of *democracy,* as I

have argued from the outset. Individual citizens are both the actors in and the normative foundation of democracy. Neither the few nor the many play this role, although this distinction is produced by the state organization of political power, and although citizens organize and tend to select leaders when they are acting politically.

To be sure, the democratic process involves a permanent tension. The elite tend to combine and "naturalize" themselves, because they want to appear to be more than merely political. This makes the people "outside" feel as if they are—and sometimes become—a unity of the "naturally" excluded. But it is the all-inclusive nature of democracy, the indeterminacy of its people, and the potential for the emergence of numerous leaders that make the elite in power not merely unbearable but also unstable and temporary. In a democracy, power is not something to be owned; it is a relation and an activity that originates in a public space and that is open to the participation and representation of (and by) free and equal citizens.[109] It follows that the existence of a political elite is a scandal, if and when it coalesces with *social* elites, to make the divide between the many and the few a dense reality, which obstructs that openness and turns democratic "rules" into a void sort of sophistry. To repeat the earlier lesson: a dualist conception of democracy makes populism's dualist argument plausible because it suggests a vision of representative government as a "historical compromise between the common people and the elite."[110] In both cases, the establishment is a naturalized fact because the people do not rule themselves directly. The paradox of a dualistic approach to democracy is that it sponsors an outcome that makes populism the de facto hegemon of antiestablishmentarianism—this because populism is a critique of the representative model, which (it holds) is responsible for instituting "two peoples." With the tale of the two peoples, populism ends up playing the democratic game of elite contestation and embodying political democratic action at its best. In a conception of representative democracy as a compromise between oligarchy and democracy, the populist argument is the *only* democratic game in town.

Antiestablishmentarianism Is Democratic

Populism pertains to the interpretation of democracy, and democracy is a complex form of politics, with both institutional and extrainstitutional elements. Particularly in its representative form—the form within which populism emerges—democracy is a diarchy of decision making and opinion forming in which the practices of monitoring, contesting, and changing decisions play a role that is no less essential than the role played by the procedures

and institutions for making and implementing decisions. Democracy is both the name of an institutional order and a name for the way citizens act politically or participate, in a broad sense, in the public life of their country. Structurally, it is never wholly accomplished because it is a *process* through which free and diverse citizens pursue plans that can be, and often are, different or even contrasting. Democracy, therefore, denotes political autonomy as liberty from subjection and of dissent. Even before autonomy came to be associated with fundamental rights, arguments supporting it were understood to be arguments for reclaiming equality of power, and for guaranteeing equal consideration under law. These claims can be used to justify acts of public resistance and opposition—verbal or even violent—against those who disrupt democracy from within. Ever since it originated in ancient times, democracy has been both a call to and a practice of liberty, because it has been a claim to political equality and a claim to freedom of dissent.

The democratic diarchy of decision and judgment is particularly important in representative democracy because this form of democracy pivots on a structural tension between politics as potentials and promises and politics as institutional actualizing, but it never relies on an entrenched dualism between "the few" who are ruling and "the many" who are ruled. According to the political conception of representation, the activation of a communicative current between civil society and political institutions that derives its legitimacy from free and regular elections is not only unavoidable but essential, even constitutive. The generality of the law (which the artificial identity of the citizen represents) and the standards of impartiality epitomized by the rule of law (*erga omnes* being the criterion of legality) need not be achieved at the expense of the visibility of the citizens' social conditions. What is needed is to avoid giving those conditions a "political" translation into the institutions, which—if it occurred—would break the status of equal citizenship.[111] The multiple sources of information and association that citizens activate through media, social movements, and political parties all make possible the *transformation of the social into the political*. We call this complex process of reflection "electoral representation," which consists in filtering the inputs coming from social groups through political proposals and eventually legislation. Political parties are the agents of this process. We can thus say that the electors' immediate physical presence (right to vote) and the citizens' mediated presence (right to free speech and association) are inextricably intertwined in a society that is itself a living confutation of both the dualism between and the merging of the "inside" and the "outside." Representative democracy is a lawmaking system that lives on a permanent attempt to bridge (without ever merging) the social and the political.

It is interesting to observe that in the charter that historians consider to be the first document of the democracy of the moderns—*The Agreement of the People* (1649)—the Puritans listed both their democratic desiderata (individual suffrage and electoral representation) and the potential risks coming from the new elected class. It was as if they wanted to alert their fellow citizens to the fact that having a government legitimated by their explicit and electoral consent would never guarantee them a secure political autonomy. Mistrust in those holding power was not even allayed by the advent of written constitutions: such constitutions confirm the fact that the contestation of the holders of power and their decisions is endogenous to democracy, not an accident, nor a sign of dysfunction. The noncoincidence between institutions (state) and democracy (between the electors and the citizens) is a safety valve, and it is also the most robust thread in the rope that binds the political history of democratization. It is not unreasonable to think of representative democracy as a political order that is based on a permanent tension between legitimacy and trust, decision and judgment.

Democracy thus includes the habit and thought of antiestablishmentarians, and this reminds us of the fact that it is "government by public discussion, not simply enforcement of the will of the majority."[112] Antiestablishmentarianism is ingrained in democratic procedures, which structure politics as contestation and discussion about decisions. Kelsen situated the worth of the dialectic between majority and opposition exactly here. This dialectic, he explains, proves that democracy is not identifiable with unanimity, because it presumes dissent, and presumes a deliberative decision-making process that includes dissent. Such dissent is never expelled or repressed, even when citizens' preferences converge on different results or reach majority decisions. The central role that Kelsen accords to compromise has its roots here, because the dissenters, when they agree to obey the decisions passed by majority, make the first and most fundamental compromise—the agreement to suspend their resistance, and to accept compliance, without feeling that they are being arbitrarily subjected. Without this compromise, no political community of free and equal members in power would be possible.[113]

For all these reasons, the act of counting votes in order to achieve a majority decision presumes an antiestablishmentarian habit of judgment on the part of the citizens. It also presumes the idea that an opposition is possible and legitimate: it exists and will permanently exist. This reminds the majority that its majority is temporary and never completely established. If victory were permanent, it would erase the majority–minority dialectics, and so erase democracy itself. Antiestablishmentarianism is a constitutive quality of democracy thus, not a sign of crisis or weakness. A minority that

knew, *ex ante,* that it would never have the chance to become a majority would not be a democratic opposition or minority. Rather, it would consist of some few subjected to, or dominated by, the rulers. The opposition needs to conceive of itself—and be conceived of by the majority—as a legitimate, antiestablishmentarian threat in order to be democratic, and to avoid becoming a subjected victim or a subversive force of destabilization always ready to rebel. The opposition needs to maintain the attitude (or habit of the mind) that it acts to dethrone the majority. Otherwise democracy would be inconceivable.

To summarize, antiestablishmentarianism does not belong to populism but is a category that populism takes from democracy. The thing that makes *populist* antiestablishmentarianism distinctive, and makes it different from democratic antiestablishmentarianism, is the way in which it is constructed: according to the binary assumption that breaks politics and its actors into two different groups, defined according to the position they occupy in relation to state power. Democracy derives antiestablishmentarianism from its permanent majority–minority dialectic; populism derives it from the assumption of the existence of predefined polarized groupings and enmity.

Democracy and populism thus prefigure two conceptions of the people and of a government based on people's consent. If the latter were to be actualized, and become a ruling power, it would jeopardize the democratic permanence of antiestablishmentarianism. The reason lies in the populist interpretation of authority as a synonym for "possession" and—as noted earlier—for factional politics. But authority is the *condition of power* itself, and none of those who exercise its functions possesses it: certainly not an elected majority, nor even a leader whom a majority chooses to be representative of the supposed "good" people against the supposed "bad" people. Authority, derived from the people and owned by nobody, is the democratic combination of two contradictory principles that populism wants to sever by assuming, *ex ante,* that they correspond to two antithetical groups: the few (the establishment) and the majority (the people).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have advanced two arguments about populist antiestablishmentarianism: (1) If antielitism means that populism is an ever-growing possibility in democracies, this is because democracy is rooted in an antiestablishment spirit that belongs to democracy and keeps the political game between majority and opposition alive. And yet, (2) antiestablishmentari-

anism is the thing that connects populism to a specific form of representation and proves that it does not exclude all elites but rather wants to institute a different kind of elite. Populism can hardly claim originality as to the antiestablishmentarian argument; in fact, it does not propose solutions that are primed to overturn representative government altogether. But it can claim originality in the way it uses the antiestablishmentarian rhetoric. Let me explain this idea.

I have argued in this chapter that the attack against the political establishment is the "spirit" of populism in power. In this conclusion I would like to offer a glimpse of this argument.

Populism is a revolt against the pluralist structure of party relations in the name not of a "partyless democracy" but of "the part" that deserves superior recognition because is *objectively* the "good" part (since its identity is not the result of ideological constructions or partisan visions). This argument reveals the enormous difference between party democracy and populist democracy. It is the pillar on which populism builds the political program that it will bring to completion if it achieves a majority, as we are already seeing in those countries in which populism rules today. Indeed, the populist people claim to be a simple and objective representation of the people's needs here and now, while parties and party leaders project their programs and solutions in a more or less distant future. Economists and political scientists have stressed "the pervasive connection between the short term protection characteristics of populists' policies and the supply of anti-elite rhetoric."[114] The "irresponsibility" of the populist leader, which I will detect and dissect in the next chapter, is the result of the antiestablishmentarian logic and translates into an irresponsible populist government because of its programmatic lack of concerns for future consequences of its political decisions. Paraphrasing Jürgen Habermas, I would call this phenomenon "populist short-termism."[115] The conflict that the Italian government led on the budget against the European Commission in the fall 2018 is a vivid representation of this approach.

If there is a "utopian" (or dystopian) kernel in populism, this kernel is to be found precisely in the connection between antiparty sentiment and the politics of the "objective" reality of the people here and now. This connection resonates with the myth of politics as a domain of problem solving in which partisan personnel and visions are wrong and will become increasingly useless. It echoes a worldview that incorporates the epistemic ambition of the wisdom of the crowd as instinctively clear and originally sincere. This wisdom can be a guide to decisions at the government level that are wholly concerned with tangible "data" and issues, not with "predigested" interpretations made by some select few.[116] Mistrust of the "intellectuals"

and the "experts" of the establishment is like a tonic for populism. Indeed, anti-ideology-ism and antipartyism have marked it since its early appearance in the United States in the late nineteenth century, and they are certainly what make it still attractive to many, who treat it with benevolence as the sign that there is an ancestral goodness in the people.[117] The technological revolution has given this ancient myth or dystopia the certainty of actualization.

Beppe Grillo started his political career more than ten years ago with an abrasive rhetoric against party democracy in the name of a government by and of the many, in which experts could do a better job than politicians in delivering the general good that people asked and wanted. Checks on the few, Grillo argued, can be more easily attained when politics does not have indirectness and partisanship and can therefore make government fully transparent to the citizens.[118] Once party ideologies and party competition disappeared, experts would be trustworthy.[119] The internet reinforces this myth—indeed, it turns it from a myth into a concrete possibility. It makes postparty democracy possible by making administration and government more permeable to data and more receptive to people's needs; more importantly, it reduces the hold of ideologues and parties on government. In Canovan's words, it brings politics to the people. As we shall see at the end of this book, the internet seems to have the power to make populist antiestablishmentarianism come true: that "the people should be consulted about the broad parameters of policy, while experts should produce mechanisms to bring this policy about."[120]

2

THE TRUE PEOPLE AND ITS MAJORITY

We have populism because there is no people.
—Mario Tronti, "We Have Populism Because There Is No People"

What I would like to do in this chapter is analyze the arguments that populist theorists and leaders devise as they attempt to demonstrate that the legitimate people coincides with only "a part" of the whole. To do so, I will go to ground zero of the populist relationship to democracy, to the place that it takes root: its interpretations of "the people" and "the majority."[1] Populism takes advantage of the structural indeterminacy of the democratic people (which is democracy's most peculiar and attractive quality) in order to conquer it and change its indeterminate character. Populism capitalizes on the fact that "the people"—unlike other unifying concepts, such as "the class" and "the nation"—can be entirely constructed by discourses, leaders, and movements. "The people" retains a "stubborn ambiguity," which makes it the site of a tension that is never resolved between "the people" as the site of many subjects and claims and "the People" as the collective sovereign, which is not identifiable with any of those subjects and claims. The ambiguity persists because "the people" stands for "either the whole polity or one part of the population"—populist leaders want to overcome that ambiguity and make the people consist in one part: "the people-as-excluded-part."[2] To put it another way, "the People" is generally taken to mean "the overarching authority over a territory, inclusive of all members of the polity," and the criterion guiding the judgments of legitimacy (of the government); while "the people" is taken to mean "the great many as the generic ordinary or those who share

in some social or ethnographic condition." The former is undetermined as to the composition and even abstract, never identical to some concrete persons or groups or claims; the latter entails determination of some kind, social or cultural. The populist desire is to resolve the tension between these meanings of the term and to merge the principle of authority with the ethno-social reality. It violates what according to Edmund S. Morgan is the logic of popular sovereignty: that "the people" must approach "the fiction" of "the People" but "never reach it."[3]

In its modern configuration, the category of the people has three key meanings: (1) *persona ficta,* or the collective sovereign that acts as one, and in whose name laws are made and enforced; (2) the sociohistorical body that lives in a specific territory and is sometimes identified with the nation; and (3) the political collective or constituency that claims and achieves political agency through movements of opinions, parties, and representatives. In the first case, the people is the formal authorizer, which is intended to give legitimacy to the legal and institutional order of the state. The people is *everybody,* it entails inclusiveness, and it is a synonym for the impartiality of law; it is a fiction. On this interpretation, "the people" also has the meaning of the popular achievements implied in a constitution, which is a pact that "seeks to protect [those achievements] against erosion during more normal times."[4] In the second case, the people is a sociological category that scholars, politicians, and citizens often treat as an organic entity, endowed with ethical value. This interpretation has been (and is) used by nationalist and sovereignist ideologies in order to justify the people's protection from external and domestic enemies (a move that appears in the current hostility toward immigration and imported goods).[5] In the third case, the people is a collective subject, in the name of which political competition between parties or movements for government occurs. On this interpretation, the interests of the majority are supposed to take priority over and against the interests of the opposition, and over and against the interests of minorities more generally.

Populism operates in the second and—above all—the third case. Its notion of the people corresponds to "the right people": this is the only people it plans to speak for. Moreover, its claim to democratic legitimacy rests on its being the most inclusive expression of the interests of the ordinary collective (as opposed to the interests of the few, or of the establishment). Populists want to substitute the *wrong* people with the *right* one. For this reason, they are not satisfied by the structural indeterminacy or openness of the democratic people, nor by the fictional rendering of the people through the constitution and the law, both of which appear in the first of the three foregoing meanings. Populism may be identified with a process of *extraction*

of the "true people" from the empirical people, and this is inevitably a process of giving substance to institutions and norms by making them the direct expression (or property) of the will of the "true people."[6] The "hopeless search for a subject that incorporates the authentic or genuine 'people'" is what disfigures the democratic project, either because it breeds exclusion and authoritarianism (as in right-wing populism) or because it requires the construction of strong executives, which are endowed with the power of implementing *more dictatura* social policies (as in Latin American left-wing populism).[7]

Populism is both a claim about the unity of the people and a claim to majority power within a particular representative frame. This chapter analyzes the ways in which these two processes occur: it considers the forfeiture of the meaning of the people as *persona ficta* and the forfeiture of the meaning of the principle of majority as procedure. It shows how the people is identified with the will of the "good" part, even as the majority comes to possess the power of the "good" people, who are understood to be the most democratic (because most numerous) part. As a result, the count of the majority is not really a proper accounting at all, and claims to the will of the people are not, properly speaking, claims to the *volonté générale*. My thesis is that populism not only uses but in fact *transfigures* the foundations of democracy.

People/Peopleism

"Ruling As" and "Ruling in the Name Of"

We can say of populism what scholars have said of nationalism: popular sovereignty has made a great contribution to its birth, and to its constant reemergence.[8] Attaching "sovereignty" (which is as singular as the individual will)[9] to a multitude of heterogeneous persons was the revolutionary move that opened the door to the democratization of territorial states. The constitution of the people has a productive sovereign force because it grounds legitimacy in consent; this, in turn, obligates each subject to obey the law. The idea that equality in subjection and consent makes for popular sovereignty is our inheritance from Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.[10] The ideological force of popular sovereignty was strengthened by justifications devised by various philosophers that encouraged participation and persuaded the ordinary many to contest the claim of power by the few (whether for reasons of dignity, of wisdom, or of competence). With the revolutions of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries—which marked the turn from absolute monarchies to popular

governments—the evocative power of the call for popular sovereignty acquired an almost mythical character.

Yet the sovereignty of the people is hardly a simple idea. Nor is it necessarily an idea that is friendly to democracy. The idea of popular sovereignty "offered no obstacle to the restoration of the king" in England in 1660 or in Europe as in 1815—in fact, it was used "to persuade the many to submit to the few."[11] Popular sovereignty has no special or privileged relation to democracy, and even fascist and authoritarian regimes have invoked it (and continue to invoke it) to "justify" their demands for absolute forms of national self-assertion.[12] Historically, the absolutist implication of the sovereign will was neutralized thanks to the fact that popular sovereignty (as a principle of authority and authorization) was distanced from the actual people who were claiming and exercising power. This gap between the normative, on the one hand, and the substantive-political, on the other, was stabilized through representation: it is in this important sense that representation has facilitated, rather than obstructed, the democratic transformation of the states (even though the principle is not democratic in or by itself).[13] The difference between "ruling as" and "ruling in the name of" made all the difference in the world. And it is this that brings us straight to the difference between direct and indirect ruling.[14] In ancient republics, the people held the lawmaking power directly, through the government of their city-state, whose sovereignty was divided among the classes composing the population. As Aristotle wrote in his *Politics,* "The reason for there being several forms of constitutions is that every city has a considerable number of parts."[15] A very distinctive and long-lived political tradition developed out of Aristotle's thinking, according to which those parts cooperated in a mixed form of government. This was the foundation of constitutionalism, and the fount of the modern idea of division of powers. In the ancient, nonrepresentative rendering, the government coincided with the constitution; and a constitution was good (and the government stable and peaceful) if the blending of the various parts succeeded in making the republic seem as if it were being ruled by a large middle. This, it was believed, would give citizens the sense that they were living under the *law,* rather than living under the will of a part of their number.[16] In effect, the division of powers distributed functions among the classes so as to make them cooperate, and so as to prevent them from disrupting the city. The same principle held in medieval and early modern republics as well. In these republics, elections were often used as a method of selection, but they did not succeed in stabilizing the political community, because the citizenry was too divided and socially entrenched.[17] Hence, it was not elections per se that changed the character of sovereignty but rather the presence (or absence) of a particular *form* of in-

clusion in the sovereign body—namely, the inclusion of individual citizens rather than groups or corporations.

The mixed governments of antiquity and early modernity were not the same as the division of powers in postrevolutionary constitutions. The latter, indeed, did not become possible until the representative device began to be employed, operationalizing the separation between sovereignty and government.[18] In ancient and early modern republics, the "mix" in "mixed governments" referred to the classes (the one, or the few or the many): it did not refer to institutions as organized actions performed by fictitious persons (being magistrates detached both from society and from their own personal identities). "The characteristic theory of Greece and Rome was that of mixed government, not the separation of power."[19] In Greek and Roman republics, social stability, or *concordia,* was achieved by making social groups rule directly, and by making the city into a corporate enterprise or even a property of the citizens, who shared authority and privileges in proportion to their social force (that is, their power to threaten stability). Within their socially divided world, the ancients developed their conception of the people, and elections were not capable of pacifying this conception.[20] Even though the terms and suggestive meanings of both democracy and populism bring us back to the ancients, neither the demos of Athens nor the plebs and the *populus* of Rome and early modern republics captures the relationship between populism and democracy. Nor does either capture the character of populism more specifically.[21] Nonetheless, the similarity in language is noteworthy, and it may be useful to recall it at the start of our exposition of the *populist* people, because doing so can help us appreciate the modernity of populism.

The Demos, the *Populus,* and the Modern Gap

Scholars of populism speak of a "confusion" between democracy and populism that is entangled with "the people's internal dialectic of parts and whole."[22] This "confusion" was already at the core of democracy in the time of Athens. "Demos," Josiah Ober has written, "had originally an ideological, not a neutral meaning."[23] Importantly, the ideology of the aristocrats never ceased to challenge "Athenian democratic ideology" and never stopped determining the fate of Athens, even once the aristocrats had dethroned the demos.[24] Even so, however, the demos was not conceived as the many versus the few. As Ober continues, "The term *demos* refers to a collective body. Unlike *monarchia* and *oligarchia, demokratia* does not, therefore, answer the question: 'how many are empowered?' The standard Greek term for 'the many' is *hoi polloi,* yet there is no Greek regime name *pollokratia.*"[25]

The people in Athens were, quite literally, the ordinary citizens: they were numberless, (which is to say, they were not identified with a specific number). Their democratic power did not even refer to "a corporate body" that unified the ordinary many, as it does in modern theories of popular sovereignty. Finally, the demos did not identify with a collective "officeholder," as the modern state does. Even though democracy emerged as a regime type at the moment ordinary Athenians asserted their revolutionary "collective capacity to do things in the public realm, to make things happen," "the people" in Athenian times did not refer to a preexisting constitutional authority that claimed to be the sovereign of the state. The members of the demos were not even "unified in their desire [of power] by an 'all the way down' ideology."[26] What democracy meant to them was *autonomia*—that is, the capacity to make decisions by themselves, rather than being under the dominion of some among them (for instance, the wealthy few, who had enslaved their debtors, and who had impoverished peasants and small land owners after wars or scarce harvests).[27]

In contrast to the demos in Athens, "the people" in Rome was a corporate political unit. This unit shared in sovereignty; it was a collective whose members were socially, culturally, and legally distinct from the members of the opposite collective (namely, the patricians, who were represented by the Senate). The latter's social superiority was itself an arbitrary condition. To unseat this arbitrary power, the plebs (who were poor and vulgar, or non-patrician) established a counterpower: it was known as the Tribunate, or what we would today call the rule of law or due process. The founding principle of the Roman constitution was thus "social priority." The rich and the poor shared in decision-making power, but they possessed distinct powers and institutions. The "strong principle of equality" that Ober ascribes to the Athenian system, which was individually based, did not apply in Rome. Fergus Millar has observed that the ancients who wanted to understand the Roman Republic only had Greek political categories at their disposal. Trying to apply these categories, they came up with confusing analogies between the demos and the *populus,* or the demos and the plebs. The "schematic approach," which suggests that "the people" translates into the demos, obscures "the form and structure of whatever popular participation there was" in Rome.[28] The Roman institutional order divided powers according to social groups, and not all public functions were open to all citizens (which they were in the Athenian demos). Paul Cartledge writes that Roman governance was far from democratic; and more than this, he notes that the force of the Roman *populus* was weaker in relation to the Senate and that ordinary citizens' initiatives faced too many checks and balances to be capable of resisting "the few potentates."[29] Despite this, it was in Rome

that "the people" started acquiring a corporate meaning, so it is more appropriate to refer to the Roman lineage than the Greek demos as we try to understand populism.

Also important is the fact that in Rome, "the people" was *not* "the plebs," even though the terms were sometimes used interchangeably to refer to the populace, or to the ordinary people. The term "plebs" introduced another distinction (social, cultural, and economic), which defined the political position of a group (the plebeians) that resented those who enjoyed their status because of honor or decency (the patricians). The distinction between plebeians and patricians was just as complicated as that between people and nobles. As John P. McCormick has written, "In the early Roman Republic, the plebeian/patrician distinction was formal and hereditary, while the historically later people/noble distinction was largely economic and political; the latter distinction reflected the fact that newly wealthy plebeians had intermarried with patricians, secured regular tenure in the consulship, and gained admittance to the senate."[30]

This entails two things. First, social distinctions were open to those who had entrepreneurial skills, rather than being hereditary. Indeed, many wealthy Romans were not senators (to whom commercial professions were forbidden). In contrast to this, "the interests of the people were neither uniform, nor identical with the interests of the under-privileged."[31] In short, a citizen who was not a member of the senatorial class was not necessarily socially weak or proletarian. Second, political power was traditionally entrenched in class-based divisions, and institutions were conceived to exist exclusively for one particular social group or another. The counterpower was held and managed exclusively by those who could be harassed because of their lack of social power. (In the republican age, only the plebeians elected tribunes, who had to come from their same rank.)

On the other hand, as the satirist Juvenal wrote during the imperial age, in a city where "everything has a price," the plebs were easily conquered by affluent citizens.[32] The decline of the republic could be measured by the commitment with which the powerful courted and conquered the plebs (and the readiness of the plebs to be conquered) by enlarging welfare provisions, offering promises, or making donations of various kinds. Still, in the years the republic was alive, prerogatives and protections (patronage and clienteles) were conceived so as to preserve the stratification and hierarchy within a society that was already highly inegalitarian, and in which the power of the aristocrats was always potentially arbitrary.[33] The proverbial Roman tumultuousness testified to a society in which political institutions signaled the solution to social conflicts between two groups. Although they were homogenous, the two groups remained internally diversified, like two

cities that had never fully integrated. The paradigm of "the many" versus "the few," and of an institutional design that followed and confirmed the social strata, developed into popular sovereignty, and modern representative democracy developed from there.

But the Roman dualism was resilient. It was, indeed, one of the most firmly rooted beliefs that eighteenth-century revolutionary leaders engaged with as they worked to make their new order. The debate in the French Assembly on the adjective to be given to the assembly—"national" or "popular"—is illuminating in this respect: it shows the impossibility of adapting the old Roman dualism to modern legal and political equality. Nicolas Bergasse, who supported Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès's idea of the representative assembly as a means to organize the political system of the nation, proposed dropping the adjective "popular" and adopt that of "national" instead. He argued that "the people" was associated with a part (contra the patricians), rather than with all citizens equally. The republicans, by contrast, were convinced the adjective "popular" *should* be adopted. Citing ancient Rome, and the modern Swiss and American republics, Mirabeau tried to rescue "the people" from its rejection. He argued that its negative meaning came from its having been associated with social stigmas—*vulgus* (Latin), or "mob" (English), or *canaille* (French)—rather than with the idea of a people resisting oppression, which he believed it should signify instead. This latter meaning was in line with the idea of the ancient *héros bataves* in France, who opposed their Roman occupants. Mirabeau also proposed other meanings of the term, which he deemed to be more in tune with the antiprivilege stance the assembly was supposed to represent: "remonstrant" (America), or *pâtres* (Switzerland), or *gueux* (Low Countries). To Mirabeau, who viewed the constitution as mixed, in accordance with Montesquieuian thought, the term "people" meant "la plus grand partie de la nation." He proposed to use the expression *peuple Français,* while recalling the disparaging antiaristocratic meaning it retained in the ordinary language. Since the rights of the people were understood to be opposed to the privileges of the aristocrats, Mirabeau found the term "people" more evocative than the term "nation." Jacques-Guillaume Thouret, on the other hand, argued that "the people" meant either too much or too little. If it meant the entire electorate, he said, then it would become one with the nation; if it were used in a narrow sense, or as *vulgus,* then it presumed the existence of a part made of nonequals (the aristocrats). Thouret had no doubt that the term "people" could no longer be used, because of the two inferences it entailed: (1) "ce que les Romains appelaient *plebs,*" which involved an assumption about the existence of superior orders in the state;

and (2) as *populus,* which suggested the idea of a constituent power comprising the principle of equality in rights, and ultimately transforming the French Assembly into an assembly like that of the English mixed government context (namely, the assembly of the "communes").[34]

In the end, classical republicanism could not be adapted to the idea of legal political equality, nor to the modern conception of popular sovereignty. The French Assembly was to represent no particular part; instead, it would represent the entire nation. This conceptualization, it was understood, would change the meaning of mixed constitutionalism itself: from then on, it would pertain to the functions of the state, not the classes that performed those functions. Bergasse declared that the elected assembly plays an intermediary role between the people and the king, but he was adamant that it is not a body divided internally among orders or classes. Clearly, the transition from "people" to "nation" could be perfected only if the nation were *one.* It would not work if the nation continued to be composed of "commoners" and "nobles." Representative government required the legal equality of individuals. Otherwise, the denomination of the assembly would be, in Jean-Joseph Mounier's words, an "assemblée légitime des représentants de la majeure partie de la nation, agissant en l'absence de la mineure partie."[35]

If we want to understand representative democracy (and populism), the place to look is not the ancient world, nor its mythical peoples, but rather the "new doctrine" of popular sovereignty that was coming into being as a result of the modern revolutions and being practiced through representation. Whereas the *old* sovereignty consisted in the direct exercise of some government power (by the one, the few, the many, or a mix thereof), the *new* sovereignty left behind the social composition and included all persons equally as subjects to the law. When democracy started its march, this sovereignty extended to include them as *citizens* as well. (Witness the idea that "sovereignty belongs to the people," as many modern constitutions declare.)[36] The separation between sovereignty and the exercise of state power, and between constitution and government, can be rendered as a distinction between what *people always have* (unlimited sovereign power) and *what the representatives do* (temporal exercise the state's functions). The crucial feature is the gap between sovereignty and the government, which operates only through representation. This is where populism infiltrates.

In order to solve the problem of endogenous instability, and so achieve "perpetual peace" (both domestically and internationally), Immanuel Kant surmised that a new vision and practice of sovereignty, constitution, and the

government would need to emerge. It was necessary that all shadows of patrimonialism (which entailed political powers or functions as *possessions*) fade away, leaving a state based solely on right—that is, on indirect ruling or representation, which is an exercise of power in terms of an *as if*.[37] In a representative government, all subjects can see themselves represented in the state's institutions and the law. This means that they can be said to *be* the sovereign, without ruling directly or factually, and without the state's functions being owned or held by separate social classes or their members. Historically and normatively, the separation between society and the state went hand in hand with the separation of government and sovereignty, and also with the will of the law and the will of the specific actors performing in government. This invaluable achievement was the contribution of modern revolutions, which marked a turning point in the conception of democracy.[38] They made possible the emergence of the popular sovereignty we refer to when we discuss democracy (and populism). They were also the site of a permanent challenge, because the distance separating the *fictio* and the actuality became the scale used to measure the degree of legitimacy and popular discontent.[39]

For all these reasons, indirectly exercised popular sovereignty is the category we have to keep in mind when judging populism in relation to democracy—*not* direct rule by the people, either via a simple constitution (as direct democracy) or via mixed government (by the plebs and the patricians). Indirectness entails that the relation between the sovereign people and those who exercise state power in its name requires acceptance (or refusal) by subjects in order to exist or be obeyed.[40] There are two levels at which consent is required: consent to the entire legal system (the state and the constitution organizing and defining institutions), and consent to the political actors who govern. These two levels entail a separation between sovereignty and the government; and representation is the device that manages this gap.[41]

The formal legitimacy of the legal and institutional order is an important part of legitimacy. But it is not the whole story. The processes of belief formation, persuasion, and rhetorical strategy through which representatives make themselves and their constituency are also important components of legitimate rule. *The diarchy is no longer between the few and the many,* but between the domain of procedures and norms, on the one hand, and the domain of opinion, on the other. Both these domains form popular sovereignty, but the latter is the place in which the meanings of "the people" become crucial for understanding different forms of representation, and for understanding the populist phenomenon in particular.

The People of Popular Sovereignty

Employing Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities," Bernard Yack has written that the "nation" is "an image of community *over time,*" while "the people" presents "an image of community *over space.*"[42] This seems to be a useful distinction that captures the specificity of the new (indirect) form that popular sovereignty takes within modern states that have adopted elections. The indirect form in which sovereignty operates (thanks to elections) removes the radical nature of democratic politics. This is, first, because representation exposes all laws to popular judgment, but in a deferred way, according to electoral cycles, and the "waiting rule" means that judgment cannot be immediately translated into action. And it is, second, because electoral competition for representative posts makes speech and the public manifestation of ideas paramount because consent is no longer simply a yes/no issue. The power of the will, and the power of opinion, makes modern democracy a diarchic system. The result is that, on the one hand, state power becomes separated from social groups or society and, on the other hand, the injection of rhetoric into politics compensates for this separation. It is perpetually contested, because it is never completely believed and never empirically noncontestable. The diarchic system of representative democracy is the milieu where partisanships (and populism) grow.

In ancient democracy, the force of words in an assembly was immensely important. Orators could turn the assembly in their favor, or against their opponents, and so instantly change the direction of the republic. The people was made and remade endlessly, just like the laws they voted on.[43] As we shall see, the demagogue was the people's leader, who could—at least in theory—destabilize the order every time the assembly met. Thus, despite the importance of words and rhetoric to populism, populist leaders only *appear* similar to demagogues. Their difference resides in the institutional orders and the decision-making processes within which they operate. A demagogue has the chance to influence the assembly of the citizens immediately because direct democracy is the structural domain of demagoguery. The populist leader, by contrast, belongs to a representative kind of politics, in which words are both less dramatic in their immediate impact on decisions and more capable of creating a continuity of narrative. This continuity of narrative connects citizens from one election to another and makes for parties and partisan divisions that last longer than the voting moment. Electoral campaigns introduce a temporal dimension into politics, which can be better rendered as a process or a phenomenon of *longue durée,* rather than as an

extemporaneous event.[44] On the other hand, the power of a candidate over the people and the state is always indirect. It is mediated by the consent of the public outside the institutions, not only the time limit of tenure. This is the milieu where populism finds nourishment.

For populism to emerge, there must be indirect popular sovereignty. The paramount condition is that the people does not immediately follow the destiny of its own decisions (that is, it does not remain identical to itself, so to speak, in the space in which decisions are made). The sovereign state is the structural condition for populism: in effect, it is the locus of the "otherness" (the establishment or the minorities) against which populism claims the priority of its people. It is the artificial people as *fictio iuris,* which makes possible the division between "the people," on the one hand, and the classes, groups, and persons that *compose* the people, on the other. Representation allows the parts of the people to enter into competition while speaking in the name of the people. The division that was made by social classes in ancient republics now becomes a purely ideological construct. It is the artificial creation of all the actors who participate in the making of representation: the speaker, the group identifying with the speaker or the constituency, the audience judging it, and the members of the electorate who are voting. Representation, therefore, plays several roles. It is certainly advocacy ("speaking for"); but is more than this as well. It may well create the people it "speaks for," as Ernesto Laclau has argued: it is a claim-making process. In this sense, it is a celebration of the constructive power of ideology as a discourse that gives reality through interpretations and signifies extant social conditions to groups who re-present themselves before a public that evaluates, judges, and reacts to their claims.[45] The conquest of the (sovereign) people through this competition activates a vision of the people that is an open game of interpretation. At this point, the issue of interpreting the people becomes an object of contestation; and if the rules of the game are respected, there are no limits to the contest. Winning elections sounds like an invitation to believe that the construction of the people has no criteria of judgment apart from its performance. In political competition, there is no external judge, or model of the true, to rely on: all that one can refer to is the consent of the people, as expressed in the audience, and as recorded in voting. The gap between the people as the norm and the people as the outcome of electoral competition plays a moderating role: it is this role that populism questions when it seeks to merge the opinion of one part of the people and the will of the state.

Let's return to the new, or modern, model of the sovereign people. The modern people presents itself as "a bridge over the chasm that separates individuals from each other in their efforts to shape and control the au-

thority of the state."[46] This *bridging role* is feasible only on the condition that the parts to be bridged are legally equals, and not endogenously heterogeneous. This is the condition for applying the electoral method of competition, which requires a basic equality in political power. As Hans Kelsen pointed out in his criticism of corporate representation, the representation of interests or groups *contradicts* democracy: it nullifies majority rule, because it does not allow for *equal consideration* of all interests (and votes) and so violates the main premise of majority rule. In order for majority rule to avoid violating political autonomy, all citizens must be equal before the law and must have an equal right to determine the politics of the commonwealth and to be heard. There need not be equality of opinion (unanimity), nor law-making equality (direct participation).[47] The aforementioned bridging role is feasible on the condition that the positions that the various parts take in the political arena can change; they cannot be frozen in any specific social determination, such as "the few" or the "the many." Majority rule must allow for different aggregations (or working majorities) and not default to some predefined group.

These three conditions—individualism, openness to change, indeterminacy—form the democratic principle of equality that is signified by the sovereign people. Thanks to those conditions, no representative can claim a special prerogative to speak in the name of the people: this entails that majority rule is not a mere formality but rather the registration of a limitation that pertains to any part of the people (including the part that attains a majority of votes). The democratic form of government that mandate representation puts in action resides in a conception of popular sovereignty that is made up of individual voters, and this remains true even if it is articulated by parties in the social and political arena.

The democratic people is like an "eternal present," yet in a kind of Heraclitean sense, as its eternal presence never shows the same configuration. In this normative sense, it is always the same: it has no history, one might say, unlike the nation, which is constructed through and by means of a multigenerational memory and conflicting historical reconstructions. The democratic people has no history because it is the always-present actor that makes the continuity of jurisdictional authority and the legal order possible. It is on this continuity that the nation can persist over time, and it is this continuity that the political people (through movements and parties) continually shapes. At the same time, the emptiness of the concept itself and its fictional nature allow for a permanent, open competition among different representations and prospects of the people. Jason Frank has spoken of "the dilemmas" of authorization that electoral competition creates: "These dilemmas appear and reappear not simply at moments of constitutional crisis

but in the fabric of everyday political speech and action."[48] All of this, together, is the people: "the whole body of a territory's inhabitants imagined as the final or sovereign judge of how the state's authority should be constructed and employed."[49]

Here is the key: the people is "always available in one's struggle with political authority or in one's competition for political power."[50] Nobody can declare that they are the people, once and for all, not even the most numerous part. It is precisely the operation of competition that allows us to recognize populism in action. Populism questions the way in which the party system regulates the competition because it refuses to accept the persistency of those "dilemmas." In the next chapter, we will examine the populist challenge to the party system. For now, let me stress that—while representative democracy holds the competition in such a way that no competitor aims to fully conquer the people—populism enters the competition with the aim of *fully* conquering the people, because it claims its people is the "true" one.

The difference between an ordinary democratic party and a populist party appears in the different ways they run political competitions. Their methods reveal how they interpret the construction of the people and how they interpret the process of achieving electoral authorization that is necessary to rule the state in the name of the people. Populism is not a form of direct democracy, but it introduces a certain directness in running for government, because it seeks to *close the gap* between the sovereign people, on the one hand, and the current political people, on the other (being whoever is currently speaking and acting in the people's name). It opposes "material constitution"—the interests of the winners of the competition—to "formal constitution," whose implications depend on the specific populists in power. In different hands, it may justify the nationalization of natural resources, as with Hugo Chávez's government; or it may justify radical deregulation and oligarchic legislation, as with Donald Trump's.[51] What unifies these different experiences and contexts is the logo of populism. Populism competes for political power in order to merge the representative and the represented. This is the implication of populist antiestablishmentarianism.

Self-Limitation and Openness to Change

In the previous chapter, I listed the ingredients that help us distinguish populism from democracy, and I amended the minimalist interpretation, which does not offer any general criterion to distinguish the two. As Paulina Ochoa Espejo argues, the features of democracy that minimalist interpretations of populism claim are *peculiar to* populism are, in fact, present in democracy

in general—for instance, the appeal to popular sovereignty, and the dialectic between elected representatives and citizens (or those who are inside institutions and those who are outside).[52] We have seen that antiestablishmentarianism is a feature of democracy before it is a feature of populism.

For the minimalist interpretation, populism is a purely democratic movement. It is hostile to liberalism (pluralism, basic rights, and limitations of political power), not democracy.[53] But we know now that this approach is problematic. First, it is neither minimalist nor "anormative." Second, it relies on a questionable conceptualization of democracy that fails to identify the power of the majority with some internal or autonomous norm of "self-limitation." The minimalist reading concludes that, while populism is inimical to liberalism (as the site of limitations of political power), it is not truly distant from democracy—because democracy, like populism, is identical to the power of the majority. On this reading, democracy is powerless in the face of populism, because it is denied any capacity for self-limitation. On this theory, indeed, democracy is equally compatible with liberalism, populism, or even mob rule, because it is a vessel that is empty of any normative content (apart from an affirmation of popular sovereignty and majority power).

In order to remedy these flaws in the minimalist position, I have proposed that we should endorse an interpretation of democracy that has political liberty and pluralism at its core. Democracy is best understood as a public process of collective decision making and of opinion formation and communication: one that facilitates open competition for government, presumes association among citizens, and presumes the possibility of dissent and changes in opinion. In a word, it presumes *liberty* in the public. In order to understand populism in its specificity, we should focus on the way it practices democracy, and we should explore what it wants to achieve by competing for the power of the people (or, as I said, seeking to rule "as" the people). What is it that is so distinctive in populism that we recognize a populist party in the moment it emerges?

A populist party in power considers it legitimate to make decisions against those who do not figure as part of its hegemonic project. This is because it views itself as the only "good" representative of the people. Any respect it grants to pluralism, or the opposition, will be uncertain and contingent. Ochoa Espejo writes that it is the principle of "self-limitation" that distinguishes a democratic party from a populist party. Self-limitation entails that one keeps open the political game of politics, along with the plurality of visions and proposals. We might say that it means that *no majority is the last one,* because the rules of the game are never revoked, and because the people and the audience are encouraged neither to humiliate the opposition nor to

make it incapable in practice (if not in theory) to challenge the majority in power. "From this point of view," a Chávist leader argued during his campaign against an opposition newspaper, "we will take control of the media. We had wanted the means of communication that they should tell the truth. From today on, we are going to give the *means of communication* back to the people. So the means of communication, the television channels should get prepared, because the next in line is *Globavision* [an opposition television channel]."[54]

The principle of self-limitation is a way of interpreting popular sovereignty that avoids a content-based definition. Instead, it is fully sensitive to the political process. It assumes that the procedures and rules of this process will be employed by all the groups that participate in the public game of consent. Democracy's procedures are *substantive,* insofar as they ensure that the party that wins the competition knows that its rendering of the people is only an *attempt* to do so—and one that is always at risk of failing. "The future of a democracy hinges on the convertibility of majorities into minorities and, conversely, of minorities into majorities"[55]—this is the seminal achievement of the indeterminacy of people's democracy. The principle of self-limitation (a corollary of the principle of people's indeterminacy) reveals the problem of populism, because it makes us see that "populists reject any limits on their claims to embody the will of the people—claims that they hold to be always right, always the correct and authoritative interpretation of the common good." By contrast, nonpopulist movements "also appeal to the people, but they frame their appeal in a way that guarantees pluralism and presents any particular cause as fallible, including their own. Self-limitation arises from openness: if the people can (and probably will) change, then any appeal to its will is also fallible, temporary, and incomplete."[56]

Of course, this would entail that populists *could* afford to be (or present themselves as) a minority, which Isaiah Berlin had thought would be impossible: "Populism cannot be a consciously minority movement. Whether falsely or truly, it stands for the majority of men, the majority of men who have somehow been damaged."[57]

In a way, the antiestablishmentarian "spirit" of populism requires that it *always* be the expression of the majority, even when it is in opposition. This means that it does not recognize the principle of majority, but only recognizes the majority it declares itself to represent (even if this majority is not yet expressed or not yet powerful). As we shall see at the end of this chapter, this is the reason why populist leaders recognize only their own majorities, rather than accepting the principle of majority rule. This represents a corruption of the principle, procedures, and quality of democracy. It turns

both voting and majority rule into mere rituals. It robs voting of its direct connection to the individual citizen; and it transforms majority rule into a celebration of those who are in the majority, regardless even of the outcome of the election. Populists claim to *embody* the "right" people's will, and they stake this claim on a form of legitimacy that they believe exists before, and apart from, any voting.

Returning to the question of popular sovereignty, populists do not accept the distinction between institutions and functions. They want to fill the gap between the two levels of popular sovereignty, those being the formal and the practical. In a word, they consider popular sovereignty to mean "the only collective that has the democratic legitimacy to rule" (instead of considering it a criterion for judging the legitimacy of the state's decisions). They merge sovereignty and government, and treat the constitution as if it were just another ordinary law (this is the premise of what I call a possessive conception of power). In this way, they purport to solve "dilemmas of authorization" by putting an end (factually if not normatively) to the open competition for political power—because it is (only) this open competition that makes change and pluralism an inevitability. This makes populism more than a style of politics, because the competition for political power manifests itself when the leader declares and constructs the unity of the people in whose name he or she competes.

Elections as Purely Ritualistic

If we focus on the conception of the people, we see a populist movement in action. We see it in the way a populist leader campaigns: by making claims that are clearly absolutist. Populists disparage their adversaries not so much for the content of what they propose but because of the populist stipulation that those who do not merge with the populists' people are not part of the people—and so must be "wrong." This makes elections merely a ritual as they do not do anything but reflect and collect votes. Elections show, but do not create, the majority—indeed, they *reveal* a majority that is said to already exist (the "good" or "authentic" people), which their leader brings to the surface and makes victorious. The populist majority is not one majority among others. It is the "good" majority, and its legitimacy is not merely numerical but rather *ethical* (moral, social, and cultural). This, it is believed, makes it autonomous from, and superior to, democratic procedures. Populism, one might say, uses elections as plebiscites. In doing this, it disfigures them.

Of course, in a democracy, the majority manages the government and shapes the politics of the country according to its plans (which its electors

supported). As Adam Przeworski reminds us, votes are *hard* power. The majority tends to rule with all the strength and determination that institutions and the constitution allow.[58] But the *populist* majority installs itself in power with a sense that it is more than a temporary winner: it claims to be the *best* winner, and the one that has the mission of bringing the "true" people back. Even if elections are not abolished, and the populist majority is transitory in practice, it is this *as if* approach to the principle of majority rule that makes all the difference. Governing *as if* its government were the "right" one, and *as if* its majority and people were the "true" one, it uses the audience (and eventually also the state) to denigrate those who are in the opposition and declares them to be separate from the "true" people.[59] This creates a climate in which the majority is prone to operate at the expense of the rights and legitimacy of minorities, turning populist government into a form of radical majoritarianism, a form that Nancy Rosenblum lists as one of the three variations of holism (along with "the party of virtues" and "one-party-ism").[60] Moreover, since the majority speaks through the "mouth" and "words" of its acclaimed leader, the risk is that democracy becomes the ruling power of a tiny elite, which uses the mobilizing ideology of the "true" people in order to control the government.

Amending the somewhat Romantic view of populism as a "thin ideology," which opposes the "moral" and "pure" many to the "immoral" and "corrupt" elite, I propose that we should read populism as a strategy to achieve power that uses democratic procedures to serve nondemocratic ends. These nondemocratic ends include the humiliation of minorities and oppositions through a mobilization of the majoritarian audience. In extreme cases, populism in power attempts to constitutionalize "its majority" by dissociating "the people" from any pretense to impartiality and staging the identification of a part (the "good" part) with the ruler representing it *(pars pro parte)* instead. This makes populism different from fascism (which does not need elections or the rewriting of a constitution to prove its legitimacy). It makes it a form of radical majoritarianism that uses the ritual of elections to show its power through vote counting.

To conclude, when a people rules itself, it acts through a multicentered system of interaction that is separate from the institutions. Popular sovereignty is a fiction, in the sense that none of the multiple instances of decision making are capable of comprehending themselves as the embodiment of the sovereign.[61] In a constitutional democracy, as Claude Lefort wrote years ago, the sovereign power is a modus operandi that denies that the sovereign is located anywhere in particular—in this sense, it is a procedure. Modern democracy was "born from the collective shared discovery that power does not belong to anyone, that those who

exercise it do not incarnate it, that they are only the temporary trustees of public authority."[62]

The gap that divides the sovereign people from those who speak in its name reveals that electoral representation is not merely a "second-best" form of direct democracy; rather, it allows for a form of participation that (to repeat Thomas Paine) is primed "to perfect" democracy. The lack of a categorical definition of the people (which arises because of the impossibility of giving it a substance or determination) marks the value and worth of representative democracy. The dispersion of power and the openness of all decisions to question and revision make this form of government, and this form of politics, a permanent process of redescribing social relations and political choices. As such, no institution or person or majority can ever claim to embody or even represent it in its entirety. Not even suffrage, with the institutions that spring from it (such as parliament), can legitimately claim to embody democratic sovereignty. In its representative form, the locus of democracy is not the narrow right to vote or the institutional organization of decision making but rather a broader domain that includes all the various advocacy groups and forms of participation that make up the public arena—from parties and movements to petitions and media. The multiplicity of these groups is a self-containing strategy.

Majority/Majoritarianism

How can we deny that populism is democratic, or a form of democratic politics, given that it does not question (and indeed, radically affirms) the principle of majority, which is the golden rule of democracy? What puts populism and democracy in tension, given that they rest on the same principle, and both claim to be government by the people? These are questions that we must tackle in order to grasp the kind of family resemblance that situates populism between democracy and fascism. The theoretical reconstruction I propose pivots around the scheme of *homogeneity versus pluralism* (of the people) and *indeterminacy versus determination* as the structural tropes that put populism in tension with constitutional democracy. Within this scheme, I explore the transformation that has taken place from the idea that majority rule is a procedure (namely, the method for making collective decisions) to the idea that it is a *force* (namely, that of the most numerous, or ordinary, part of society). I examine the impact this transformation has had on the tenor and style of political activity and opinion formation in society. The analogy of populist democracy to ancient democratic demagoguery will help me clarify this point.

As mentioned earlier, the appeal to the people is different in representative and in direct governments. While populism develops within the nonsovereign sphere of opinion (the world of ideology and propaganda, media, and movements in civil society), and may very well remain limited to that sphere if it does not receive a majority of the vote (or if it eschews electoral competition, as with movements of protest like Occupy Wall Street or the Indignados), demagoguery in ancient times had instant law-making influence, because the citizens had the power to immediately translate *doxa* into authoritative decisions. A pure direct democracy is not diarchic, and the representative construction of the people within direct democracy is (in effect) the work of every speaker or voter who stands in the assembly, makes a proposal, or asks for a vote. Keeping this important difference in view, I turn to Aristotle's analysis of demagoguery. This helps me explain populism's conflictual relationship to democracy, and its transfiguration of majoritarian procedure. I rely on Aristotle because he formulated the most precise characterization of demagoguery: he characterized it as a mutation that was internal to constitutional government and the majority principle *(politeia)*. He also appreciated the deliberative capacity of the assembly of ordinary citizens; he understood the link between procedures and the social context in which they operated; and he associated popular government (and democracy in general) with political liberty. For these reasons, Aristotle's political writing facilitates our understanding of the nature and social dynamic of modern populism.

Majority and Procedural Justice

Aristotle broke with Plato (who identified the demagogue with the tyrant) and made the demagogue part of democracy. But he also introduced a distinction among demagogues, which allowed him to emancipate demagoguery from the disdain in which it was held, and to advance the idea that constitutional democracy could become unconstitutional in virtue of its implementation of majority rule. Aristotle listed examples of both "bad" democracy (demagogical) and "good" democracy (constitutional). Peisistratos, who started as a demagogue and became a tyrant, "had the reputation of being a strong supporter of the common people" and cunningly masked his intention to achieve full and unrestrained power. He was a formidable demagogue who capitalized on the bitterness of the recently enfranchised peasants in order to achieve political power with their support. In short, he "seized power" by "flattering the people" and proceeded to rule as a tyrant.[63] By contrast, Cleisthenes was the popular leader who, "after the fall of the tyranny," gave the Athenians "a constitution more democratic

than that of Solon." He was a member of the aristocratic class but led the Athenians toward democracy by means of rhetoric and persuasion, which mobilized the disenfranchised many and gave them a new constitution.[64]

Demagoguery was thus a form of discourse, and a form of politics, practiced by an elite, with the support of the majority of the people. ("Who leads whom"—the question of whether the orator is led by the people or vice versa—has remained a theme of discussion into modern times.)[65] According to Aristotle, demagoguery was not necessarily a form of the people's power, nor a form of power friendly to the people. Rather, it was a peculiar relationship between certain people's opinions and the work of a skillful leader inspiring them and seeking their support. If we consider Aristotle's tripartite division of the means of persuasion—the character of the speaker, the emotional state of the listener, and the argument *(logos)* itself—we may say that, while the last one denotes the collective work of deliberation in general, the former two pertain to the relationship of the assembly to the speaker. The demagogue exploits (but does not create) the assembly by bringing the majority of the assembly where he or she wants. (This view induced Hobbes to identify demagoguery with government by assembly, and thus with democracy.)[66]

Aristotle's distinction between good and bad demagogues shows that he was, unlike Plato, keen to acknowledge the intellectual capacities of the multitude, and to recognize that an assembly of the many was not necessarily a mob. In fact, for Aristotle, an assembly of the many was no less wise or more corruptible than an assembly of the few—no matter how much more competent the latter might be. The number of people gathered is not, in and of itself, a factor that explains the quality of rhetoric and the impact of the majority rule. The problems for democracy do not come from the (large) collective process of decision making, nor from the method of majority rule—in fact, both these things can be (and were) practiced by all kinds of assembly, popular as well as aristocratic. The problems come, Aristotle surmised, from the kind of people who were included in the demos—and particularly from the commoners, or the multitude, or the poorer citizens. The problems came from the social status of the ordinary citizens who were partaking in the decision-making process. Democracy was unavoidably connected to the social conditions of the people who comprised the sovereign.

As we recall, Aristotle associated virtue with monarchy or aristocracy, wealth with oligarchy, and liberty with mixed government or *politeia*. In the last, a division of labor occurs between the many who gather in the assembly (democracy) and the few who compete for directive positions (oligarchy). Democracy and oligarchy were individually capable of corrupting

a good government, because each channeled the interests of the city in the service of its specific and sectarian interests. The only way to make them play a constructive role in the city was to create an institutional system that forced them to work together and compelled them to limit each other's negative potentials. This was precisely a mixed government. The virtue of such a government was that it moderated the power of the few *and* that of the majority (or the largest number). In effect, Aristotle proposed two interpretations of majority: the first understood it as a *method of decision* within an assembly that comprised a large number, and the second understood it as the force of the most numerous part of society, or the *regime of the majority.* Today, we would call the former the "principle of majority" (or majority decision), and we would call the latter "majority rule."[67] Although most English speakers commonly equate these two phrases, we should avoid using them interchangeably. The "majority rule," properly understood, is "inherent in every process of decision-making and thus is present in all forms of government, including despotism, with the possible exception only of tyranny" as quintessentially individual.[68] Majority rule is not simply a technical device like the rule of making decisions by consulting all participants and counting their votes, which applies almost automatically in small and large public meetings as a laborious process by which means several different opinions are translated into votes and counted one by one rigorously. The regime of the majority ("majority rule") becomes visible whenever it relates to pluralism, as it does not tolerate opposition and tries to conceal it as much as it can, when it does not liquidate it altogether (I have already considered the case of the fascist executive, which was a collective and used the principle of majority, although its decisions were proclaimed to be unanimous in order not to give the people the impression that the government was divided). Thus James Madison and John Stuart Mill conceived the "majority rule" as a threat to political liberty.

We can read Aristotle as suggesting that the assembly (and the rule of majority) was exposed to the influence of each of the two groups—the few and the many—that tended to monopolize it. In all regimes, the method of the majority was employed when decisions were made within a collective; but only in the *politeia* (which belonged to the genre of popular government, albeit a limited one) was majority *as decision method* kept separate from the social force of the majority. The stability of a constitutional regime depended on how well it could manage the risks that arose from merging these two ways of using the majority. Indeed, it is possible to associate the robustness of constitutional democracy with the imperfect merging of these two renderings of majority.

We should recall that, according to Aristotle, the criterion of legitimacy resided in the way the majority acted: specifically, in the way it treated the minority. Either the majority acted for its own interest against the opposition (as in any bad form of government) or it governed for the interest of the entire city. We find the same logic in modern thinking. Here, the concept of the minority can also be understood in two ways: as the result of majority procedure and as the representation of the opposition in parliament. This is how Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, among others, conceived of it: "The benefits of the Representative system are lost, in all cases in which the interests of the choosing body are not the same with those of the community."[69]

James Madison railed against the antirepublicans by depicting them as "more partial to the opulent than to the other classes of society." This is an argument that contemporary populists would not dislike.[70] It entails that the social condition (a certain degree of equality) is never wholly external to the institutional configuration of democracy. And it suggests that, at times, the superiority of the greatest number may be mobilized when the minority acquires a socioeconomic power that appears to be subverting institutional democracy.

Recall that, in Aristotle's reasoning about *politeia,* damage done to the minority was damage done to the city as a whole. Indeed, because Aristotle identified political liberty with the broadest participation of the citizens in the decision-making process, a government in which some were systematically in the minority was a government in which some were less powerful (and thus less free) than others. The merging of majority understood as a method of counting with majority understood as the force of the most numerous social group is thus an issue of political liberty.[71] Aristotle's analysis of demagoguery was a chapter in the analysis of the transformation of a *politeia* into a regime that was less universally free because of the merging of these two concepts of majority. This point is crucial because it helps us understand the place of demagoguery in popular government, and so helps us understand the place of populism in representative democracy.

Vote counting is the core of democracy. Thucydides judged the decision-making procedure used by the assemblies of several Greek cities, especially Sparta, to be quite puerile (in those cities, the majority was determined by the intensity of the shout in the assembly).[72] And in the *Constitution of Athens,* Aristotle opposed this crude method with the more refined Athenian one, in which the process of counting emerged along with the desire to achieve impartiality, for reasons of tranquility and stability. Even when the Athenians still decided issues by shouting, the assessment of volume was

made by asking the judges (nine *proedroi*) to turn their backs to the assembly so that they were not distracted by vision or—more importantly—by the identity of those shouting. Arithmetical counting of *psephoi* (ballots placed in urns, thus secret voting) was not merely a "rough estimate" but rather had to be a certain calculation.[73] The blindness of judgment and the anonymity of the deciders (both of which are guaranteed, in regimes of universal suffrage, by the individualistic character of the right to vote and by secrecy), along with precise estimation, were conditions of impartiality. This was one of the most important factors that militated in favor of counting votes, rather than relying on other forms of expression.[74]

In order for the city to achieve tranquility, and convince dissenters to obey decisions they did not agree with, the method of deliberation had to achieve two outcomes. First, the result needed to be transparent (it "would have had to be repeated in a case of doubt");[75] and second, the process needed to guarantee that the outcome had been achieved through an impartial use of the method of counting. Although an assembly might make unjust decisions, it was paramount that those decisions were made according to a procedure that was impartial. The justice of procedure and the justice of the content of a decision were clearly understood to be separate matters, and procedural justice was crucial. That form of justice, realized through the counting of each and every vote and the ordering of their outcomes according to majority rule, was the necessary condition for the stability of the political order. It was this that ensured the opposition would comply and not rebel. The stability of collective life was served by making political liberty and participation a good for all the citizens involved in government: both for those who were part of the social majority and for those who were part of the minority.

The factor that impeded the merging of this method with the power of the social majority was the requirement that decisions be collectively made and be received *as just decisions* by all, including dissenters. The functioning of the idea of majority truly as a method (rather than its identification with a part of society) was a key element in this process.

A Reified Majority

According to Aristotle's analysis of the majority, as method and a power, demagoguery was a permanent possibility in a democracy (though not an *exit* from democracy entirely: it was still understood to be a regime in its own right). A disfigured demagogical (or populist) democracy was (is) still a democracy, and according to Aristotle, demagoguery was the worst form democracy could take. Demagoguery tuned the minds of the majority into

the plans of a cunning orator and thereby exploited social distress and class divisions, as well as the search for consent in the assembly. Demagoguery could not exist without a leader, because it did not simply entail the spontaneous horizontal mobilization of ordinary citizens; nor did it entail persuasion by argument and debate alone. It could not exist without the public, either, because demagogues needed to draw their audience from that public in order to construct their success in the assembly.[76] We can say the same of populism—when it aspires to state power, it cannot be headless, and it cannot impose its will on the people without the assent and support of that people. In any event, demagogy and populism are potentially contained within the democratic process of opinion and decision formation. They are like a "shadow holism," which in some circumstances "has an even stronger resonance of unity and integrity and approaches a real manifestation of holist antipartyism."[77] Antipartyism is not, however, truly a profession of generality but rather one of absolute partiality: it is the expression of the prerogatives of one part against the other(s), as we shall explore in the next chapter. A part without a counterpart, Giovanni Sartori writes, is a "pseudo-part" but a "whole" that does not contain parts (is not plural): it is a "'partial' whole."[78]

Aristotle's thinking is pivotal for our argument, because it invites us to keep the political process, and the social conditions and composition of citizenry, together in our analysis of democracy. It suggests that we focus on the use that leaders make of their speaking abilities, and of democracy's political liberties, in order to go beyond merely winning a majority and in fact overwhelm the opposition and make it a meaningless entity with no bargaining power. To grasp the meaning of what I call a *majoritarianist regime,* Aristotle turned his analysis to social context and class division: "In democracies the principal cause of revolutions is the insolence of the demagogues; for they cause the owners of property to band together, partly by malicious prosecutions of individuals among them (for common fear brings together even the greatest enemies), and partly by setting on the common people against them as a class."[79] We have here a structural analysis of society, and also of the class relations that facilitate the emergence of demagoguery and the stretching of the political system from a *politeia* to pure *kratos*. Aristotle did not resort to a deterministic logic: as a protopragmatist, he did not presume inevitability, nor any natural determination in the ethical life of individuals and societies. His generalizations from the history of Greece and Athens merely provided an interpretative frame, which he used to understand institutional and political transformations that transcended contextual specificity. This approach is important when we deal with the "underconceptualized term" of populism.

Let us analyze these transformations. For Aristotle, the crisis of social pluralism and the narrowing of the middle class are the two intertwined factors that accompanied the mutation of the *politeia* into pure *kratos*. Polarization between the well-off and the poor, as well as the gradual erosion of the middle class, was (and is) the origin of political polarization.[80] We should recall that Aristotle considers the presence of a robust middle class to be the condition for any constitutional (or moderate) government, and also for "good" democracy. Its disappearance is the condition for constitutional changes, or even revolution. He observes,

> And constitutions also undergo revolution when what are thought of as opposing sections of the state become equal to one another, for instance the rich and the poor people, and there is a middle class or only an extremely small one; for if either of the two sections becomes much superior, the remainder is not willing to risk an encounter with its manifestly stronger opponent.[81]

The disappearance of *social* mediation and moderation reduces *political* moderation and mediation. We should read moderation as a condition of the politics of compromise, because it is moderation that ensures the numerical minority remains part of the democratic game, and ensures that the numerical majority acts in a self-containing way. Until the opposition has the power to threaten the majority—and thus be a part of the bargaining game—a strong majority in the assembly or the parliament does not endanger political stability. However, demagoguery can affect the tenor of public discourse, even if it does not overturn democracy. As we shall see later, this is the case with populism and the populist leader. These tend to emerge in conditions of economic inequality, and they take advantage of social distress to exalt polarization. They also nurture the majority's temptation to use state power against the opposition and minorities in a punitive way. The populist leader seeks to *break* compromise among classes: he or she uses majority not just as a method but as a *force*. (In Laclau's words, the leader uses it to rearrange the "formal" generality of *politeia* with a "true" one.)[82] This transformation of the idea of majority—from rule for decision making into the domination of the decision maker—explains the normative difference between constitutional democracy and populist democracy.

Democracy's process of decision making consists in a numerical majority, but demagoguery reifies a given majority as it promotes policies that translate the interests of the winners immediately into law. It has no patience for mediation and compromise, nor for institutional checks and balances. Polarization facilitates this process. The radical transformation of democracy from within, which demagoguery (and populism) prompts, can be summarized as follows: it is the transformation from the idea of majority rule as

a procedure for making decisions, in a climate of pluralism, to the idea of majority rule as the ruling power of a majority that sees pluralism as an *obstacle* to the making of swift and uncontested decisions.

A Possibility within Democracy

Is demagoguery the tyrannical rule of the majority of the people? Not entirely. It is true that demagogues need the consent of the majority; it is also true that they use speech to bring the assembly over to their side, and to unify it with the opinion of the agora (thus overwhelming dissenting voices). But manipulation by means of speech is part of the art of rhetoric in open democratic competition. There is nothing scandalous in the rhetoric of demagoguery or populism per se; as a matter of fact, all modern political parties tend to adopt the populist strategy of exalting emotions against their adversaries in electoral competition. In a government based on *doxa,* populist style is ubiquitous; it is difficult to distinguish between populist rhetoric and party rhetoric.

If majority decision making works both in pluralistic democracies and in populist democracies, how can we draw a useful distinction? Aristotle tells us that it is not the rhetorical aspect or the style we have to consider but rather the *peculiar use of procedures*. This is where we see that, although both rely on the majority, democracy and demagoguery are different. Rousseau makes a similar argument in his *Social Contract* when he distinguishes between formal legitimacy or the will (which is always essential) and moral or consent-based legitimacy (which is no less essential but cannot, by itself, render a political order illegitimate). Rousseau tells us that when *the will* and *the opinion* merge—either spontaneously or because of the use of procedures—the republic enjoys the strongest possible legitimacy. This is because the will of the assembly is so uncontested (with decisions being made on the basis of a large majority of votes, or even unanimity) that the people feel themselves to be *one* body politic, in both the de jure and de facto senses of that term. But it is *not* unanimity or a large majority per se that matters; nor is it these things that make a democracy demagogical. Rather, it is the *way* that unanimity or majority is achieved. (Not by chance, Rousseau suggested that the assembly should be silent so the minds of the citizens would not be exposed to the manipulation of the rhetoricians—who might otherwise generate unanimity, but not in a purely procedural way.) As I said earlier in proposing the example of the fascist executive, decisions by majority are not peculiar to democracy. In effect, it is not majority per se but rather the dialectic between the majority and the opposition (the relationship between "winners" and "losers") that we must explore if we

want to understand what makes populism part of—but never identical to—democracy.

As mentioned, Rousseau encouraged assemblies to avoid public debates, so there was no chance for orators to sway the assembly away from the general will (or the "reason" that had to guide the political community in all its decisions). But this is no solution in a representative democracy, where public discussion is a necessary condition for the formation of majorities, for the challenging and changing of majorities, and for the election of politicians. Once again, the thing we must ponder is the meaning of "the unity of the people"—be it material (social sameness) or regulative (procedures and the constitution). It is this unity that channels the diversity of opinions and the majority–opposition divide into collective decision making.[83] The unification of the people under a leader, with negligible internal pluralism, is the criterion we must rely on in order to understand the way that demagogues (or populists) use majority. Aristotle offers us some important suggestions about interpreting the phenomenon of unification (or, in Laclau's words, the creation of the hegemonic unity) as a process that interrupts the judgment of individual citizens and makes it part of a collective instead.

The real issue is the attempt to solidify majority rule, and to make it identical with the empirical social majority. Those who seek this result hit democracy at its heart. The populists aim to reverse the process that, beginning with early modernity, was able to achieve the distinction between "the collective as corporate body," on the one hand, and "the collective as the political will, springing from the will of equal individual citizens, translated into law," on the other. As Edoardo Ruffini has written, "The collective cannot create immediately the will of the corporate body as if it were *persona giuridica,* that is to say [it cannot] make the will have the same effects as the private will (like in civil law); it can only represent it [the corporate body]."[84]

A totality is not real, or fruitful, just because its law pretends to be the expression of that totality (even if it is passed by majority). The *fictio iuris* of the totality exists so that the dissenters, in particular, will accept the decision of the majority. The problem arises when this *fictio* is operationalized *as if* it were not a fiction at all but a factual reality instead (when, as I said at the beginning of this chapter, the social people captures the fictional "People"). The filling of this gap is what makes populism quite a different kind of representative politics, as I shall explain in the next chapter. In both direct and representative democracies, different as they are, the assembly meetings (and the decisions they make) must be regarded as "representing" the entire body of citizens. Lawmaking bodies are always a part in relation to the whole: this is the case with representative assemblies and also with

direct ones—for instance, in ancient Athens, where, given "the purely physical constrains of the Pnyx (its name appropriately derived from a verb meaning 'to squeeze'), attendees at an Assembly meeting must have been regarded as representing—and indeed as representative of—the citizen body."[85] This is the meaning of the representative synecdoche of *pars pro toto,* which entails that a part of the citizen body makes decisions that hold for the whole body. The principle of majority allows for this fiction to be operationalized because it rests on the assumption that the parts that comprise the whole are not eliminated or silenced; and moreover that they are not defined *ex ante* as immutable. Only on this condition is the whole not partial, although it speaks through a part or some parts. To make majority decisions a principle that held for all, it was necessary that a *fictio iuris* declared them to hold as if they were the voice of the whole. The Romans achieved this objective.

The Romans were more attentive than the Greeks were to the "formula" of the majority principle (as opposed to the specific decisions achieved through the method of majority). In order to avoid instability, caused by political discord, and to ensure that decisions held even if they were passed by a majority of votes, the Romans devised a juridical formulation of that majority principle, according to which the decision of the majority was interpreted *as if* it had been made by the whole body of citizens. The formula was to be pronounced every time a decision by majority was made, so that the formulation counted more than the specific decision, and so that it gave the people the certainty that the decision was formally correct: "Anything publicly done by the majority is ascribed to everyone" (Refertur ad universos, quod publice fit per majorem partem; Ulpian, D. 50.17.160.1); "What the majority of the senate decides is treated as the decision of the entire body" (Quod maior pars curiae efficit, pro eo habetur ac si omnes egerint; Scevola, D. 50.1.19).[86]

Even now, in our modern age, and with the doctrine of sovereignty in place, *ac si* (as if) is the fiction by which means decisions by majority are construed in representative assemblies as decisions by, and binding on, the entire body. The nullification of the majority as a procedure, and its identification with the political force of a specific majority, debases that formula on which the *fictio* of popular sovereignty is made to rely in modern democratic constitutions. It results in a *reification of the principle of majority,* which becomes the naked power of a part, rather than a method by which free and equal citizens (or representatives) reach an agreement in a condition of plurality and disagreement.[87]

But clearly the basis of the principle of majority is moral but its conditions for success or failure are social. It justifies obedience because it relies

on the assumption that the collective using it is plural and, moreover, that deliberation may happen *because of* its plurality or pluralism of parties. The method of majority assumes and respects the many parts composing the people, which sometimes converge into a majority. Recall that a good constitution, in Aristotle's mind, is an institutional arrangement that relies on a dynamic equilibrium between the two main social classes (rich and poor). Regardless of the form of government, this equilibrium is what makes a government constitutional, and what makes it the home of liberty. For social (and political) equilibrium to exist—and persist—a broad social medium is needed. In the case of democracy, this medium is primed to persist more easily, so long as the very poor are few in number and the very rich feel safe (despite being a numerical minority). Problems arise through the uprooting of the middle and the radicalizing of the social poles. This is what demagoguery explodes and exploits, and it creates the context within which the two forms of majority tend to merge. This, in turn, allows majority rule to be pursued with an intensity that is unknown to a constitutional democracy.[88] As we saw earlier, social context is an important condition to understand and judge populism. But why is the *intensity* of this majority important? What is it needed for?

The Material Conditions and the Question of Impoverishment

On Aristotle's interpretation, these questions are relevant even if demagoguery is not identical to democracy. They are relevant even if the poor, or the workers (whom populism, like demagoguery, claims to empower), are the majority in both cases. Why should the social and numerical majority need to claim that they are a more intense political majority? Why is a simple majority of votes no longer enough? Why does the populist leader need to interpret his or her victory, and that of the good or right part of the people, as more than simply the victory of the numerical majority? These questions are crucial for grasping the distinction between democracy and populism. They suggest that the particular actor of demagoguery (or populism) is *not* the numerical majority alone or in itself. They also suggest that majority is *not* deemed to be a mere procedure that regulates transitions from one majority to another. Since populism is the expression of the "right" people in power, the majority is intended to last, and—at least in theory—never lose ground. As majority is the norm in democratic decision making, demagoguery occupies the "space" of the majority and appropriates this norm. Demagoguery is not simply a force using the rule of majority but rather a force appropriating the norm.

Rosenblum suggests that the "shadow holism" to which the "invocation of a majority—actual or imagined—as if it were the whole people" gives rise translates in turn into the "assumption that the cohesion of the whole has priority over the minority's claim."[89] Within shadow holism, the majority treats minority views as an obstacle, rather than a physiological component of the political game. The minority is seen, and judged, from the perspective of the majority, not from the perspective of the civil rights that all citizens enjoy equally: "The concept of majority assumes the right of existence of a minority."[90] At this point, majority is transfigured, and (where it was a mix of method and power) it becomes merely power—the "right" people "back" in power, as if it had been exiled by previous majorities, which were evidently "only" procedural or formalistic majorities.[91] The description of shadow holism can be adapted to populism. In populist terms, only one majority is the right one, and the idea of majority is not "merely" a rule of the game but rather the *méros* or "the part" that must rule. In populism, the majority is understood to be identical with a part, or the "right" people, only.

Aristotle offered a socioeconomic explanation for this strategy of appropriation that invoked conditions of class polarization and an increase in poverty. When there exists a large number of impoverished people, who need more interventionist policies, the compromises that those people were previously able to strike with the middle class, and with the rich, become more difficult. They need a policy that is more on their side (for instance, increased taxation), and this will upset some among the well-off, who start "banding together" to resist popular claims and to protect their assets. It is not the presence of the multitude of the ordinary people (the nonwealthy) per se that explains the demagogical attack on constitutional democracy. The demagogues may be friends with the oligarchs.

The central explanation for the assault on constitutional democracy is the *breakdown of social equilibrium*. This breakdown opens the door to a politics of power concentration that erodes the impartiality of law. Historically, radical social polarization and the overempowerment of class interests have been the conditions that demagoguery (or populism) exploits in order to build its power within the state. Karl Marx's analysis of Napoleon III's "Caesarism" and Antonio Gramsci's analysis of Benito Mussolini's coup both reiterate Aristotle's scheme. Populism attempts to resolve the "paradox" of the "empty space" of politics by reifying the will of the people, and by condensing state power into some homogenous actor (the "right" people and their leader), in order to "determin[e] who constitutes the people."[92] The formula *pars pro toto* is thus replaced by the facticity of the *pars pro parte*.

Yet the procedure of majority that democracy presumes designates a social order that is neither radically polarized nor made of impoverished citizens. For constitutional democracy to play the open game of politics, society cannot be wholly disconnected from procedures and institutions. The impoverishment of democratic citizens makes it harder for procedures to work well. When social cleavages are strong, it matters a lot that some lose and some win: waiting for the next turn may become harder, or even unbearable. As European history proves, the impoverishment of large portions of the population has often been met with regime changes and has given rise to dictatorial regimes led by populist leaders. These leaders achieved power by denouncing the emptiness of the democratic "rules of the game" and by condemning the inability of those rules to deal with social needs and disempowerment. This is the class factor at the origin of demagoguery, which demagoguery exploits in the name of "the nation" or "the right people."[93] It is related to class, but it does not translate into classist politics. Rather, it feeds a rhetoric of "legal skepticism or 'legal resentment,' a critical, emotional stance towards liberal and legal constitutionalism, and the latter's alleged juridification, depoliticization, and rationalization of society."[94] Scholars have emphasized how this attitude might be related to a Schmittian understanding of the constitution, and to Carl Schmitt's critique of liberal constitutionalism and its conception of the rule of law.[95]

Why call it demagoguery, rather than tyranny? As we saw with Peisistratos, Aristotle listed cases in which demagoguery can *become* tyranny. But demagoguery initially operates *within* a constitutional democracy, in which the assembly of freeborn citizens is the supreme organ and proposals must gain the majority of their votes to become laws. As long as equilibrium among classes persists, the strategy of "words as weapons" does not appear particularly worrisome and remains within constitutional limits. In this sense, demagoguery represents a form of political language that is consonant with assembly politics, and thus democracy. But this "neutral" reading may easily end, and when this happens, a tyrant emerges.[96]

Here lies the paradox we want to consider. It is not the oligarchs, or the few in their totality (as if they were one homogenous class) per se, who break with democratic rule, and so turn demagoguery into tyranny. It is a *part* of them—those who understand that the moment has arrived when they can acquire more power and can use the people's impoverishment and social distress to turn them against the very constitution if they are skillful with their rhetoric, and if they can exploit social duress. The *third party* that Aristotle referred to in order to explain Peisistratos's tyranny—the party between the few and the many—is the key element in understanding both the social conditions of demagogical victory and the role of the individual

leader.[97] Social distress unleashes the immoderate desire for power among the few, who realize that the breakdown of social and political balance represents an opportunity for them to change the extant regime into one that will let them make decisions without consulting the people more broadly.

This is the moment in which they oppose the social condition, against legal and political equality (which they presume to be useless) and *with the support of the majority.* They are "men ambitious of office by acting as popular leaders." They represent a split inside the class of the few: they are able to gain the favor of the people and to pass laws that represent only their own (the few's) interests, but they have the people's support![98] As we saw in the last chapter, being a part of the economic elite is not the thing that counts for populist leaders (even if they are frequently part of the upper or capitalist class). What matters is that they are political outsiders, representative of the "common men and women." Aristotle's scheme seems timeless. As Joseph M. Schwartz writes in his merciless analysis of the erosion of equality in modern democracy, few reformist theorists at the end of the 1970s would have predicted that "the right (particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States) would build a populist majoritarian politics in favor of deregulation, de-unionization, and welfare state cutbacks, particularly of means-tested programs."[99]

Other examples prove the success of populist parties and policies in contemporary European countries: these countries simultaneously adopt a politics of privatization of social services and a nationalistic policy of closed borders against immigrants and refugees. They simultaneously cut taxes for the wealthy and narrow the public sector—and in so doing, they gain the support of the lower classes and the higher classes alike.

Like demagoguery, populist power is a movement that relies on the studious usage of words, images, and the media in order to make the majority converge toward politics that, while framed in the name of the people as a "united body," are not necessarily in their interests.[100] It is also a movement by which leaders claim that decisions need to be made quickly, and assert that deliberation or party contestation in parliament is a waste of time. Francisco Panizza has captured these aspects and transformations well: he describes populism as "the language of politics when there can be no politics as usual: a mode of identification characteristic of times of unsettlement and de-alignment, involving the radical redrawing of social borders along lines other than those that had previously structured society."[101]

This is what populism may do when it succeeds in attaining office and changing the procedures of constitutional democracy.

Populist leaders or parties in power are not content with simply winning a majority: they want unbounded power, and they want to stay in power as

long as possible. They "will seek to establish a new populist constitution—in both the sense of a new sociopolitical settlement and a new set of rules for the political game."[102] Populism in power questions the "formalist" constitution, in the name of the "material" one (which only it can truly interpret), and it advances projects of constitution making and constitutional reform that stress the function of the executive and that limit the controlling power of nonpolitical institutions.[103] This is what we are seeing in several European countries today, with the emergence of strong populist leaders, or nationalistic parties, or institutional populism. Just to offer few examples: the Hungarian Civil Alliance (Fidesz) won a supermajority of the seats in Parliament and has used its power since 2012 to scrap the old constitution, write a new one, and amend it continually, entrenching its own political vision at the expense of opposition parties and an independent judiciary.[104] Recently, the Polish prime minister and leader of the Law and Justice party, Mateusz Morawiecki, justified his government's decision to pass a law that forcibly retired more than one-third of judges on the country's Supreme Court (which is the highest court for criminal and election-related issues) by arguing that his majority did what Polish citizens wanted when they backed his party in the 2015 elections. Marcin Warchol, the deputy justice minister, declared, "There is no other way to impose responsibility on judges except this one. . . . Poles elected their government. This government is doing nothing else except realizing the promises from its electoral campaign."[105]

It is also a tried and true practice in Latin America: as I write these words, I have just learned that Bolivia's highest court has struck down the limits on reelection that had existed in the country's constitution and electoral laws. This paves the way for President Evo Morales (who has been in power since 2006) to run for a fourth term in 2019.[106]

The focus on the populists' appeal to the many versus the few has dominated the literature on populism. But it is the relationship between populist governments and democratic institutions (especially constitution remaking) that demands attention yet has been largely overlooked.[107] By inscribing their policy preferences onto the constitution, populists are able to fuse their party platform with the will of the state. We can give this opportunistic claim a more strategic character and argue that populism aims to create a constitution of its own and eventually build a representative government that reflects the characteristics of its own elected majority. The populist constitution is an entrenched Constitution, filled with policy points traditionally left to ordinary legislative processes. As such, the populist Constitution seeks to eliminate any distinction between constitutional and ordinary politics, so critical to the maintenance of a democratic order.[108]

The Hungarian, Polish, and Bolivian cases are hardly exceptional: they can be used to argue that the collapse of the distinction between populism as a movement and populism as a ruling power corresponds to the collapse of the distinction between ordinary politics and constitutional politics. It corresponds to the transformation of ordinary, "changeable" policy into relatively immutable constitutional provisions.[109] This change is designed to turn the new majority into a permanent one. This means that it undermines the most basic of democratic principles: that of majority rule within a political pluralistic environment, in which any majority is assumed to be temporary and changeable.[110] Because constitutional revisions "rais[e] the question of the source of law or the people as 'popular sovereignty' in its most institutional concrete form,"[111] it is unfortunate that the literature has largely overlooked populist constitution remaking. This, after all, is the locus of the transformation and reification of the democratic principle of majority rule into the domination of a majority.[112] Rightist and Leftist populisms are identical on this regard, and what Carlos de la Torre writes in relation to *Chavismo* can be extended to all forms of majoritarianist regimes:

> Hugo Chávez gained, in increments, near-absolute command of all institutions of the Venezuelan state. His supporters were a super-majority in the legislature, and in 2004 he put the highest judicial authority, the Supreme Tribunal of Justice, in the hands of loyal judges. Hundreds of lower court judges were fired and replaced by unconditional supporters. The National Electoral Council was politicized. Even though the council made sure that the moment of voting was clean and free from fraud, it did not enforce rules during the electoral process but routinely favored Chávez and his candidates. In Ecuador, Rafael Correa also put loyal followers in charge of the electoral process and electoral board, the judicial system, and the offices and institutions that would validate accountability, such as ombudsman and comptroller.[113]

Conclusion

The engine of populism seems to be unanimity: its supporters claim that unanimity is more genuinely democratic—because it is supposedly more inclusive and more unified—and thereby capable of acting in the name of the people. In effect, however, the motor of such "unanimity" is the largest part (no matter how large this may be), which acts against the smaller part(s). Unanimity amounts to punitive majority. I have proposed that we should consider populism to be *merelatric:* the militant attention to the interests of one part. Populist society is not really "partyless" but rather

factional. It is neither interested in counting votes nor aiming for any kind of deliberative unanimity.[114] In effect, populism is a declaration that democracy is no more and no less than the force or the ruling power of the majority. The merging of the principle of majority (procedure) with majority-as-social-force translates into a will (of a majority) that is declared to be *eo ipso* the will of the "good" people. The merging of these two senses of majority is primed to produce far more than "shadow holism": it ultimately produces "shadow *despotism*" within democracy. The tension between this politics of partiality and representative democracy is remarkable. To see it, we should look at populism not as a movement of opposition (which is a sacrosanct expression of civil freedom) but rather as a movement that wants to compete for power, and ultimately rule. In the next chapter, we will explore the implications of the factional conception of the people and majority. Populism in power is a majoritarianist regime that translates the administration of the state into systematic partiality. A democratic Machiavelli would characterize it not as a system that makes the people sovereign "over the law" but rather as one that generates leaders who win people's consent to their plans. Political scientists call this "discriminatory legalism." Óscar Benavides, the president of Peru, has summarized this practice in an effective maxim: "Everything for my friends; for my enemies, the law." This aligns well with Kurt Weyland's suggestion that populism makes democracy *less* democratic, not more radically democratic.[115]

3

THE LEADER BEYOND PARTIES

> To convince them [the people] of a thing is easy; to hold them to that conviction is hard.
>
> —Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*

As we saw in the Introduction, contemporary scholarship on populism can be divided into two groups, according to whether it treats populism as an ideology and a style, or whether it treats it as a strategic movement to remake political authority. The ideological reading is designed to answer the ontological question: What is populism? The strategic reading is designed to answer a different question: What is the populist strategy for conquering power, and what does populism *do* to democratic institutions? The approach I have taken in this book draws from both of these readings, although I am centrally concerned with the latter question. As I argued in Chapter 1, I consider populist democracy to be inconceivable outside the dualism that opposes the many (who do not hold power) and the few (who are not truly part of the people, as they hold political and social power). This is the activating condition for populist antiestablishmentarianism. On this basis, some scholars understand populism to be a call for direct government. I think this conclusion is misleading, because the ideological unification of the social plurality under a leader (and a narrative concocted by that leader and his or her intellectuals) entails a *representative* form of politics, one that is interested in dethroning an existing political class for a new one, not allowing "the people" to rule directly. The populist people remains an agent of consent making, not direct government.

Years ago, Margaret Canovan set out the problem very neatly. She explained that the more democracy takes root, and the more societies become

inclusive, the more citizens need an ideology that is capable of orienting their minds and making an intelligible picture of a reality that is fragmented, chaotic, multifaceted, and intricate (because of the rights they enjoy and the openness of their society).[1] Inclusion and diversification go together in democratic society; at times, these two things generate distress for those who regard fragmentation and openness as signs of weakness. Viewed in such a light, inclusion and diversification seem to represent the dispossession of the sovereign people's power (where that "people" is conceived of as a collective, not as the sum of millions of individual citizens). For this reason, it would seem that democracy itself prepares the terrain for populism when it fragments claims, and when it individualizes ideas and interests (even while retaining the general criterion of the sovereign people). Historically, political representation has been the most effective means of solving the problem of combining universality and particularity, combining as it does the need for unity and the need for pluralism. Political representation, through elections, has shown itself to be able to unify claims without closing the game of claim making. In effect, it does this by managing temporary exclusion (hence the majority–opposition dialectics), but without producing holistic majorities or humiliating oppositions. The fact that political representatives are required to share their ideas *only* with their electors—not with the whole nation as a homogeneous body—means that political representation is itself a refutation of populist democracy. Indeed, in order to acquire the moral and political legitimacy to make laws for all, representation must articulate partisan pluralism *without* superimposing an unreflective unity over an indistinct mass of individuals.[2] Political representation through elections is a process of unity and plurality, not only unity; it is thus a process of partial unification, not holistic majorities. It presupposes, and fosters, pluralism—but its pluralism does not involve a socially given plurality of ascriptive groups and belongings (as occurred in ancient mixed government). Party pluralism is a political construction that is made by legally free and equal citizens (electors and elected) in their conflicting divisions or sympathetic alliances. The move to side for or against is a common mark of partisanship and pluralism. While it inhibits the monopolistic and centralizing tendency of political power, it remains an indication of respect for others. This is because it implies a "comparative political exercise," which presumes the existence of other alternatives.[3] To be a solitary partisan, or an absolute partisan, is simply meaningless. In the end, partisanship wants pluralism; and it stabilizes pluralism. It takes away the absoluteness that any loyalty tends to foster, while acknowledging the pragmatic relativity of all political achievements and certainties.[4] Even as it does so, though, it manages to avoid making citizens

apathetic, cynical, or indifferent.[5] Representative democracy is structurally based on parties and partisanship in these ways; and both of them entail pluralism, which is intrinsic to representation.

Populist democracy is its opposite, and the core of its opposition lies in its proclamation of *representation as embodiment* over *mandate representation.* As Hannah Fenichel Pitkin observes in her landmark study of representation, "If the main goal to be achieved is the welding of the nation into a unified whole . . . then it is tempting to conclude that a single dramatic symbol can achieve this much more effectively than a whole legislature of representatives."[6] The issue is not whether populist leaders accept or refuse representation—because there cannot be populism without someone making the claim of representing the people.[7] The issue is the kind of representation that is activated by the populist claim. In this chapter, I demonstrate that representation as embodiment is the populist model and show that this is the locus of its main difference from representative democracy.

Populism's vision of the people as a unitary collective that absorbs parties and parts corresponds to a conception of politics that seems contradictory. On the one hand, it exalts the power of emotions and symbols, much as parties do. But on the other hand, it does not conform to a partisan conception of politics, because it rejects pragmatic politics (compromise and coalition) and thus rejects the idea of a limitation in one's partisan position. We see the return of this paradox in all populist experiences: its partisanship is strong when in the opposition, but its destiny once in power is very uncertain. The dual track of democratic politics—as "redemptive" and "pragmatic"—can be used to reveal the problem of populist governments' failure to deliver what they promised: to represent people's grievances without replicating the corrupted behavior of the establishment they so strongly criticize. All populist governments are plagued by the following paradox: they make strong proclamations of antagonism and antiestablishmentarianism, yet because they do not institute a dictatorship, they must continue to negotiate with the opposition. In order to reconcile these two positions, populist leaders must perform the "pragmatic" side of the democratic job in disguise (without telling the people) while explicitly telling the people that they are doing the opposite.

The paradox of populism in power is that it cannot do its pragmatic job in the open, as the party system in a representative democracy could. Its public and popular identity is tailored to the redemptive side of democratic work. As we shall see, this creates an impossible scenario—it forces populism to be identified with a leader, whose Caesaristic determination is the only assurance the people have that the most popular part will rule without making concessions. Being pragmatic—but without appearing to be—puts

leaders in a tricky position. They become the only assurance that corruption and bad government are not *their* administration's responsibility but are rather the fatal consequence of being pragmatic: as the Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said to his supporters, "Don't think that each individual's wrong [i.e., corruption] is their personal fault. . . . What is going on [i.e., corruption] is the result of an accumulation of deformities rooted in the political structure of our country."[8] Populist leaders are thus essential. They both propel the rhetoric of redemption and assure the people that power will not make them like the old establishment.

My thesis is thus that we should seek the source of this inescapable contradiction not in the Manichean ideology of populism but in the kind of representation populism practices. Representation as embodiment translates into government behavior that may be (and usually is) no less faulty than the behavior generated by party representation in representative democracy. But embodied representation lacks the ability that makes party representation bearable: the ability to make sure that pluralism and alternation in government can work as checking strategies. As we shall see in this chapter, the idea of representation as embodiment creates an *irresponsible leader,* and a politics that cannot be checked using the two sets of authority that democracy has at its disposal, institutions and opinion. This dynamic explains the centrality of populist rhetoric: it is the ability of the representative leader to command faith. Populism belongs to the craftwork of persuasion, because its leaders do not simply want to convey the testimonies of disempowered masses, or representatives of a cry of discontent and opposition. The construction of the dispossessed people and the exaltation of contestation are not aimless; nor are they an end in themselves.

But representation as embodiment is wholly useless if one is seeking to ensure that the redemptive function is not merely an empty promise. This is because representation as embodiment is a kind of representation that pertains to the chief of the state. It is an institutional function that has an unavoidable authoritarian stance. Populist leaders occupy the presidential role in order to transform their popular incarnation into a lawmaking function. This creates the paradox that they either are immobile (in order to preserve the purity of their role) or must delegate the dirty job of compromises and bargaining to a body of lawmakers (this makes sense of the recent proposal by President Maduro of Venezuela to have new parliamentary elections, yet not presidential ones).

The source of the populist problem is the identification of representation and embodiment. This jeopardizes pluralism by principle, which is only guaranteed by representation as electoral mandate. In the end, the inability of populism to combine "redemptive" and "pragmatic" politics stems from

its use of a model of representation that is incapable of making peace with the pillar of party democracy—namely, partisan pluralism, or the party system as a paradigm. This explains why a populist leader in power must give birth to a new form of democracy in order to survive; and this, in turn, creates the risk that the leader will shatter state institutions and democratic procedures in ways that may be fatal for the entire political and administrative system.

Figure, Voice, and the Monoarchic Power

Redemption, Charisma, and Unification

All populist regimes take the name of their leader. "The construction of a popular subjectivity . . . reaches a point where the homogenizing function is carried out by a pure name: the name of the leader."[9] "An assemblage of heterogeneous elements" succeeds when the face of a leader works "a surface of inscription" that literally constitutes the collective. With the decline of the political role of classes and class politics, the disorganization and heterogeneity of society finds its principle of identification in the "name of the leader." This leader carries (out) the people, and becomes its voice and figuration.[10]

So what kind of representative leaders are the populist leaders? Their monoarchic stance has inspired Canovan and Ernesto Laclau to connect them to Thomas Hobbes's artificial unifier of the dissociated individuals into the state.[11] Their choice speaks to the unsolved ambiguity of populism. The populist leader does *not* create the state, as Hobbes's representative agent does—and Laclau states this quite clearly. Nor can the leader remain content with Hobbes's formalistic and juristic rendering of authorization. The populist leader is emotionally and propagandistically active in his daily effort to reconquer the authorization of the people; and this effort is not, and cannot be, simply institutional. The analogy with Hobbes does not work because Hobbes's representative agent is constructed in such a way that it puts an end to all mobilization and political activity outside the state. It comes *una tantum,* as a primary act of renunciation by the individuals composing the multitude to reclaim their power to decide on their security. Populist constructivism is not Hobbesian constructivism.

Nor is populist constructivism merely or simply a claim-making form of representation. While the populist leaders are certainly the makers of the collective subject because their narrative is capable of unifying various claims and interests, their goal is to bring their investiture within the state and to rule, not simply to mobilize citizens and create conditions of interruption of

the status quo, as in the Althusserian idea of interpellation, which inspired populist constructivism.[12] The leader does not merely perform before the audience; and his or her representation is not supposed to be "merely symbolic" or to serve as a unifier for a bunch of different claims. Although "the symbolic irruption of a marker of exclusion into the public sphere"[13] is a mode of populist identification, it is not the thing that helps us understand the kind of representation that populism activates.

The populist leader plays the role of the "reconstructor of authority," not merely that of counterpower. Not by chance, this leader emerges in times of social distress, which see the decomposition of traditional representation. This does not mean that he *replicates* mandate representation and party democracy, though: he "absorbs" the collective body in his person and acts "as" the people, which is the condition for him to act "for" the people. This further distinguishes this leader from any ordinary party representatives, who would never claim to be "like" and speak "as" their people in order to act "for" them.[14] The representative as plenipotentiary cannot stand the limitation that an electoral mandate would impose on him. She needs a much broader mandate. The kind of representation that better fits this task is the one that collapses the distance between the leader and the people but without returning to direct democracy. Indeed, as I shall explain later, the only aspect of directness that is present here consists in the fact that representation occurs without organized intermediaries between the leader and the people.[15]

In sum, the paradigms of *authorization, symbolic representation,* and *electoral mandates* do not help us understand the representative relation of the populist leaders and their people.

In some ways, the populist leader echoes the charismatic figure whose emergence Max Weber heralded in his work: the figure who functions to revitalize parliamentary politics through his rhetorical ability to involve the masses. It is hard to tell whether the populist leader is truly charismatic. But this is not the point, because charisma is not an objective fact and no one determines the leader's charisma but the people. And the people's reception does not necessarily register the objective qualities of the actor: it registers the *imagined* and *symbolic* ones, created by the very words and narrative of the actor.

The populist leader has also some resemblance to Machiavelli's prince. The Florentine secretary chose to study the most difficult case of founding—that of an "outsider" or "private man" who is capable of creating a principality by his forces or virtues alone. It is risky to draw too many parallels between Machiavelli's heroic leader, who creates a state from scratch, and the populist leader, who climbs the ladders of an existing state. But it is hard

to think of populism without both a *leader* and a *dissatisfied* population. As Machiavelli teaches us, without the enslaved Israelites ready to walk the path of liberation, Moses would not be conceivable. Populist leaders do not arise when the economy grows and the citizens feel themselves to be in communication with democratic institutions. They arise in times of economic distress, in times when citizens witness gross violations of equality amid the general indifference of their representatives, and in times when the most powerful acquire more voice in the state.[16] The populist leader's claim to embody the condition of exclusion is what makes him or her attractive. This also makes populism a "cry" against the crisis of legitimacy in representative democracy.[17] Thus, scholars who are sympathetic to populism see the "redemptive" leader as a symptom and possible resolving of a crisis of legitimacy: "The content of democracy's redemptive promise is power to the people: we, the people, are to take charge of our lives and to decide our own future."[18]

In ancient popular governments, the *capopopolo*—made up of the tribune, the *dux,* and the demagogue—was the forerunner of the charismatic leader in modern mass democracy. Theodor Mommsen's depiction of Julius Caesar as the chief of the "new monarchy," who put an end to the conflicting and corrupt "old republic" and the misery of civil war, inspired both Weber and Carl Schmitt (who are the theorists who contributed the most to the advancement of a plebiscitary and populist rendering of democracy).[19] The *capopopolo* was a leader who transformed people's support into a creative source of energy with which he was able to change the character of the state, both domestically and internationally.[20] This was Weber's model of a charismatic leader: a "genuine statesman," as Mommsen wrote of Caesar, who "served not the people for reward—not even for the reward of their love—but sacrificed the favor of his contemporaries for the blessing of posterity, and above all for the permission to save and renew his nation."[21]

The same can be said of Schmitt's work: his conception of representation as a form of antiliberal authorization that reconstructs the authority of the state against partisan divisions is certainly inspirational for a populist, salvific leader. Such a leader does not seek legitimacy through formal accountability and party advocacy but uses elections as acclamations.[22]

Redemption, charisma, and unification go hand in hand, and they take us to the heart of the populist leader. These qualities have accompanied the populist phenomenon throughout its several stages and countries, even though the means and languages have changed, from the classical mode of Péronist salvific "fatherhood" to the model of an audience leader like Donald Trump. Trump spends part of his time everyday tweeting to Americans and

commenting on the events that pertain to his presidency. This serves to dwarf or even nullify the inspective role of the media, which relies and comments essentially on what he says (much as the people do). The internet is a powerful factor that helps to narrow the distance between the people and power.[23] To past and present populist leaders, however, the formal act of voting serves only to reveal what already exists. Their legitimacy comes from their quotidian popularity among the audience.

Whatever we make of it, charismatic leadership presumes two intertwined factors: a kind of religious *faith* that the masses have in their providential leader and an *irrational identification* of the masses with the leader. These two things make populism a form of political theology (as authority reconstruction) and further distance it from representative democracy. In the first chapter of his *Populist Reason,* Laclau analyzes the structural differences between "publics" and "crowds." He argues that the former is the terrain of the publicist (and the campaigners in traditional electoral politics), while the latter is the terrain of the leader *incarnatus*.[24] The common purpose and organized unification of the crowds requires a single leader: this single leader creates an identity and intends only "to serve the cause," which comes before anything else—including the constitutional limitation of powers, basic rights, and democratic procedures.[25] Disorganized crowds cannot be organized around reasoned deliberation; nor can they be organized around partisan groups, which seek to make the parliamentary arena the site for their compromises. We must therefore ask: Who is the sovereign actor, the crowd or the citizens? In other words, does democracy pertain to the unification of the masses, or does it pertain to the dialectic of majority opposition within a political sphere inhabited by partisan identifications and groups? The specificity of populism pivots entirely around this distinction. In this sense, as I have been arguing throughout this book, an analysis of populism turns out to be an analysis of the interpretations of democracy.

The creation of a populist leader is a strategic enterprise that requires the work of "politico-intellectuals." These intellectuals "help" the *incarnatus* widen the categories for shaping the narrative and help him devise effective symbols. Cristina Kirchner, the president of the Argentine Republic, created a Secretariat of National Thinking in 2014, and Laclau was her organic intellectual. He contributed to the building of Kirchnerism by mythologizing the death of her husband, Néstor, and by constructing a soccer team "for the people" with the soccer star Diego Maradona. In an academic article he wrote in 2005, Laclau had already theorized what he would do for President Kirchner.[26] And in the "Concluding Remarks" of his *Populist Reason,* he synthetized a "series of theoretical" and "political" "decisions" that a populist construction would require, in the form of "suggestions" to the

prince. Laclau's political experience in his own country, along with his theory, makes his intuitions a useful guide to the representative role of the populist leader. But before we examine the phenomenology of representation as embodiment, we must answer two objections that are frequently raised about the claim that leadership is an essential element of populism.

Two Preliminary Objections

The first objection pertains to the nature of the populist movement, which many advocates want to keep separate from the desire for power. This is a crucial point, and one I strongly agree with. But it is important precisely because it allows us to better understand populism in its entirety. Empirical cases corroborate the distinction between populism as a civil society movement, on the one hand, and populism as a movement that wants to rule, on the other. These cases also prove that populism can take the form of a rhetoric of protest without projecting populist power. We have recently witnessed several cases of antirepresentative claims by social movements that wanted to be independent of elected officials and to avoid becoming elected entities. A populist movement does not need to have—nor does it necessarily want—representative leaders to play the role of scrutinizing and denouncing those in power. This was the case with the extraparty and popular movements of protest like Girotondi in Italy in 2002, Occupy Wall Street in the United States in 2011, Indignados in Spain in 2011, and more recently the Yellow Vests in France (a horizontal movement of protest that refuses any representative unification and resists the attempts of Jean-Luc Mélanchon (leftist populism) and Marine Le Pen (rightist populism) to give it a voice.

Uprising is *popular,* but not necessarily *populist*. Lacking an organizing narrative, the aspiration to win institutional power, and a leader claiming that his or her people is the true expression of the true people, a popular movement remains "merely" a sacrosanct democratic movement of protest and contestation. This movement pushes against social trends that citizens judge to have betrayed the basic principles of equality that society promised to respect and fulfill. This means that my answer to this first, important objection runs as follows: Populism should be evaluated and judged in relation to the democratic diarchy itself—as a movement of opinion and a system of decision making. It is inaccurate to treat populism as identical with "popular movements," movements of protest, or "the popular," because it can be much more than all those things.

As I argued in the Introduction, we should not equate all movements that resist decisions with populism—as if democracy were only located *inside* the

state. There is an essential relationship between movements outside and decision making inside. Minimalist and skeptical democrats seek to separate them when they cast doubt on the quality of democratic decisions that are related to citizens' opinions and biases. Any move to insulate institutions from public actions is tantamount to making democracy the name of a political order that is hardly different from an authoritarian regime. We can certainly have populist rhetoric and mobilization without populist power, or before populist power emerges. In such a case, we have a symbolic representation that unifies a collective with no embodiment through and by an apical marker or representative. "We are the 99%" was a representative movement of this kind. Andreas Kalyvas describes Weber's thought quite clearly, and we can use the same description here: that movement of protest, like others of its kind, can be treated as a "charismatic movement" without leaders.[27] "Here, we engage in horizontal democracy. . . . This means we have no leader—we all lead."[28] A claim that unifies different citizens beyond classes but lacks a project of achieving power is not a claim for authority construction. That requires another kind of representative device, as we shall see in more detail later. Whenever populism seeks state power, the leader becomes both unavoidable and dominant, because populism does not want to be identified with traditional forms of representation (such as parties).

We thus come to the second objection. This second objection is raised by sociopolitical scientists like Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, who resist identifying populism with the leader. They resist this move because the various cases they study globally reveal a landscape that is diverse and does not fit a "prototypical populist leader." Certainly, the character, language, clichés, and contents of the messages that leaders choose are contextual and deeply rooted in the average ethical qualities of their country. For instance, "the link between populism and strongmen" brings us back to Juan Domingo Péron and the military figure of the caudillo, which has been a frequent starting point for populist leaders in Latin America but is hardly a general rule. European populism does not produce caudillos. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser also argue that it is problematic to identify the populist leader with a Weberian charismatic leader, because most actual leaders are truly ordinary. To this objection, one could answer that the making of the ordinary person (outsider) into an extraordinary representative requires a sort of emotional, religious, or charismatic moment: it certainly requires a leader whose normality is strikingly attractive and exists beyond the normal lives of the many that identify with him or her. Since charisma is not a quality that can be detached from the people's faith, there is no outside perspective from which we can decide whether a leader is char-

ismatic. "Acceptance of charismatic leadership thus does not only depend on the true believers of charisma; it can be induced simply by the perception that there is no alternative. The charismatic leader has to define the situation in such a way that nonbelievers will be induced to accept his or her claim."[29]

Returning again to the idea that populist leaders have many contextually numerous variations, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser list some generalizations that would make us recognize a populist leader but do not fit a "prototypical populist leader." The records they propose are rich and nuanced. A populist leader can be an outsider in relation to an ethnic majority or a ruling elite, as with Alberto Fujimori in Chile and Evo Morales in Bolivia; an outsider in relation to a political (but not social) elite, as with Silvio Berlusconi and Trump; an outsider-insider, as with Jörg Haider of Austria or Corneliu Vadim Tudor, the founder of the Greater Romania Party, or as with an actor who leaves one party to create his or her own, new party, like Fernando Collor de Mello, president of Brazil, or Geert Wilders, the Dutch conservative who established his own populist party. Sociological categorizations can vary, and scholars are right to caution us against quick generalizing. At the end of their sociological classification, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser venture a definition that sounds like a maxim: "Populism can be thought of as *politics for ordinary people by extraordinary leaders who construct ordinary profiles*."[30]

In previous chapters I dissected "ordinariness" as the opposite of "establishmentarianism," and I argued that populist leaders do not need to be specific in their program. It is important that they use a language of condemnation, declaring the enemies of the people to be corrupted or immoral, and declaring that the populist leader is determined to bring the true people to power. This is what all populist leaders do, although their social characteristics are different. But all populist leaders make a claim of authority—which entails a representative practice—in relation to which the several sociological characters are indifferent.

All populist leaders stage a representative performance, which makes them capable of being seen and accepted by their people as the embodiment of those same people. This is what distinguishes their leadership from mandate representation. Since conquering and building power within the state is the goal, the question to ask would be: How is the leader supposed to become part of the establishment without being an establishmentarian figure? The important question concerning populist leaders is thus not sociological but rather normative and political. The representative device is the process I will focus on here, in order to explain how a populist democracy is constructed and to explore how it looks when we compare it with representative democracy. This is the point of comparison that we must use

if we want to study and judge populism as a phenomenon that develops from within democracy and stretches it to its extreme borders. The questions this section intends to answer are the following: What kind of representation does populism enact to make the leader seem permanently like an outsider, and What kind of representative leader is the populist leader?

Dux cum populo and the Hazard of Becoming Establishmentarian

We can now go back to the inside-outside dualism that the paradigm of antiestablishmentarianism pivots on. *Remaining close to the people outside* is the challenge the populist leader poses to representative politics in party democracy. It is a radical challenge that brings the specificity of populism's representative politics to the fore. The populist leader wants to embody the will and voice of the people in its *partial entirety,* not its universal generality; and he wants to do so without mediating, and without striking compromises with other existing parties. In claiming to be the embodiment of the people, the populist leader has to convince the people that he is not an establishmentarian. Once in power, the populist leader will begin to invoke pristine popular intentions as his testimony to his audience on a constant basis. How close is this strategy to plebiscitary democracy?

Being *under the eyes of the people* is a plebiscitary project that seeks to replace accountability via procedures and institutions with transparency through popular exposure. At the same time, it seeks to give the public sphere a new meaning and configuration: specifically, giving publicity mainly an aesthetic and emotional, and thus theatrical, function. Jeffrey Edward Green has compared his vision of plebiscitary democracy to Joseph Schumpeter's idea of democracy as electoral selection, resting on public expressiveness, in the following terms: "Eventfulness is a value to be enjoyed, not simply by the political actors who perform the event, but even more by spectators who behold them."[31] This is where the representative projects of populism and plebiscitary democracy meet, even as they diverge.

Even though both populism and plebiscitary democracy are suspicious of the people as the name of a fiction that stands for the generality of the law, and even though both rely on political voluntarism, populism gives the people a political presence that is not merely spectatorial. Populist leaders mobilize the people and are one with the people. On some occasions, they find it useful to devise forms of participation that involve the citizens directly in the making of programs that the leader has concocted, such as referenda or plebiscites.[32] At any rate, the presence of the people is not limited to the moment of a plebiscite—"rather than being self-constituted, they are mobilized from above."[33] This is what makes scholars think that

populism entails a form of inclusion and participation that no democratic procedure can faithfully render: not even the plebiscite, which is the most democratic of all procedures (alongside the referendum), even though it is a top-down procedure.[34] "The government has to be on the streets, listening to the population, listening to the people."[35]

The line of demarcation that both separates and connects populist democracy and plebiscitary democracy is thin, but it is clear. The populist leader who wants to avert the risk of becoming part of a new establishment uses two registers. First, he mobilizes the people beside the plebiscitary act of acclamation; and second, he seeks recurrent plebiscitary evidence of his lovability through his massive presence in the media, and through his frequent recourse to formal appeals to the people. In both cases, the role of the leader is pivotal. He always has to perform *inside but also outside* institutions, procedures, and rules to reassure all who might be concerned that he remains the voice of the people. Populism in power is recognizable as a *permanent electoral campaign*.[36]

Embodiment versus Mandate

What kind of representation does the leader activate, such that it cannot be simply identified with mandate representation? The image of the *ventriloquist prophet* is the model that can assist us in answering this question. This same image also brings us closer to the central puzzle of the populist leader becoming an establishmentarian without appearing to be. Péron wanted to be "all things to all men" and even sought to appear godlike, or pope-like, if needed. "I always follow the rule of greeting everybody because, and you must not forget it, I am now something like the Pope."[37] Chávez employed salvific and apocalyptic symbols to prove that the people was the protagonist and the true agent of transformation, rather than him. He asked for *lealtad absoluta* (absolute loyalty), declaring, "I am not myself . . . I am not an individual, I am the people," and claiming, "Only the people can save the people, and I will be your instrument."[38] In one of the speeches Trump delivered on the evening of his presidential victory, he said that it was not he who won and in fact claimed that it was not even he who was talking: the people had won the White House and the people was talking through him that night. Whence this invocation of the populist leader as merely a means?

Like a prophet in relation to God, the leader has no will of his or her own but is rather a vessel of the sovereign will—the mouth from which the vox populi manifests itself. This is the symbolism of representation as *incarnation* or embodiment of the sovereign people, and it is the most radical alternative to mandate representation. It is also the issue we have to focus on if

we want to understand how antiestablishmentarian ideology can allow populism to create an elite, even while it manages to avoid the trap of appearing as corrupt or impure as any other elite. This is the tricky puzzle that populism has to solve if it wants to be more than a movement of contestation against a corrupt establishment. It is also the thing that shows us how populism is not a category of ideological morality but rather a form of representation that helps us explain "the miracle" performed by the populist leader. The embodiment of the people in the leader's person exonerates him or her of the risk of being seen as establishmentarian or as an "insider." Since populism in power is not going to revoke elections and risk "fascistization," confronting this task is vital. It is what truly characterizes a populist democracy.

In an essay on the concepts of representation, Yves Sintomer retrieves a quote from an old book on Napoleon III ("The Emperor is not a man, he is a people"), associates it with Chávez's self-portraits ("I am not myself"; "I am not an individual, I am the people"), and links both of them to one of the most famous cases of "absorptive" and absolute "incarnation"—the case of Louis XIV, who declared, "I *am* the state."[39] The theory and history of representation as embodiment goes back to the late Roman Empire, where the emperor functioned as a divinized chief. It also manifests in the church of the Middle Ages, when the tension between conciliar and absolutist interpretations of this paradigm emerged. The embodiment of the believers in the church, all equals as children of God, took the more democratic character of collegiality in the work of Nicholas of Cusa. Cusa, elaborating from the medieval guilds, merged embodiment representation and mandate representation. He gave priority to the former as the affirmation of the "body" of the church and declared the latter to be its authorized agent, the pope. The pope himself, and his followers, took the opposite position: in order to restore his authority, the pope asserted the leading role that a pope should have against the council (depicted as the part versus the whole) and characterized the whole as the embodiment of Christ and his believers under the pope. The Counter-Reformation, which fostered a comprehensive strategy of authority restoration, contributed to the strengthening of the papal strategy by advancing an additional link, between representation as embodiment (in the pope) and representation as identity construction of the collective (the church).[40] The pope would become in this way the face of the collective identity. That paradigm would later be adopted to defend the representative character of the sovereign: Louis XIV's declaration was preceded by an achievement within theological and juristic doctrine.[41]

Representation as embodiment was a pivotal argument that some early twentieth-century jurists used in order to criticize parliamentarism and to

reconstruct the authority of the state above and against its conflicting parties. Here, we need only mention Schmitt's argument in favor of presidentialism against parliamentarianism. The latter, Schmitt explains, is an assemblage of elected delegates who represent economic interests, political parties, and social classes; the president, on the other hand, "is elected by the entire German people."[42] Elections would be a strategy for unity and subjection (rather than division, as is mandate representation) and would represent a truly visual reproduction of the whole nation at the symbolic and institutional levels, only in the case of the president. "The President, by contrast [to the fragmentation of parliamentary grouping] has the confidence of the entire people not mediated by the medium of a parliament splintered into parties. This confidence, rather, is directly united in his person."[43]

Parliamentary democracies also refer to the president as representing the unity of the nation, but they do not merge symbolic and embodiment representation with mandate representation, which is given exclusively to the parliament. Siding with Schmitt's rendering, populism uses representation as a hegemonic strategy that repels the liberal calls for advocacy, control, monitoring, and dialogue between society and politics, and instead narrows the distance between the elected leader and the electors so that it can incorporate society within the state. In Canovan's words, "A vision of 'the people' as a united body implies impatience with party strife, and can encourage support for strong leadership where a charismatic individual is available to personify the interests of the nation."[44]

Contemporary populism represents a secularization of the political theology of representation as collective identity and embodiment. Federico Finchelstein has documented the "Trinitarian idea of the leader" in some Latin American populism, and especially in the case of Chávez: "I am not Chávez, you are Chávez, we are all Chávez."[45] *Dux cum populo* (as opposed to *senatus populusque*) functions not to represent the people's needs but rather to attain the "miracle" of becoming establishmentarian without appearing to be.

Ventriloquism, Feebleness of the Will, and Irresponsibility

Populist representation's grandiose "miracle" (or trick) is that of making the people the agent that deresponsibilizes the leader: "I am not Chávez, you are Chávez, we are all Chávez." The people is the sovereign, or the first actor; and the leader is its supreme agent and instrument, who believes himself or herself to have carte blanche to pursue the politics that the good people have chosen the leader to actualize. Chávez declared that he could "feel" himself "incarnated in the people"; but Péron had already spoken

the language of political theology before that when he declared, "Se ha encarnado para siempre en el pueblo argentino" ([I have been] forever incarnated in the Argentinian people).[46] The condition of *incarnatus* means that the leader is never truly responsible, for better and for worse. Old disputes over the "true" prophets and the "impostors" come to our help here. They are an exquisite trope in the political theology of representation as an institutional conception of authority.[47] The incorporating leader is a paradigm of the quasi-divine work of bringing the collective subject to life, but without altering it and without being responsible to it, contract-style. The people is everything, and it is always right, but the populist leader is not responsible to it; and the leader's irresponsibility serves as evidence of the primacy of the people, which the leader is embodying but not replacing. Populists welcome the overcoming of mandate representation as a sign of a more inclusive politics, and as a sign that the "outside" and the "inside" have merged. But it turns out to be a scheme that allows the leader to avoid responding to the quest for accountability. In fact, as we shall see at the end of the chapter, accountability is a currency that has no circulation in populism.[48]

Baruch Spinoza, who dug around in biblical texts in search of the sources for a political community based on a pact, ended up studying the figure of the prophet with special care. Relying on a rich body of work on human faculties, which was itself inspired by Renaissance natural philosophy, Spinoza depicted the prophets as individuals who were endowed with "unusually vivid imagination, and not with unusually perfect mind." He deemed them to be "less fitted for abstract reasoning" and so argued that they were not deliberative because they never claimed to act out of their free will and free choice.[49] They were the vessel of a will superior to theirs that filled the void left by the absence of their personal intentional will. The people would not see the prophet as a true one if he merely appealed to virtue and piety: he needed to perform miracles with unfailing naturalness, as if he were behaving naturally or performing natural deeds. It was also necessary that the words of God that the prophet pronounced were not shared with the people through the interpolation of his mind or intention but rather appeared to them "directly." For the church, "false messiahs" and "impostor prophets" "have a minimum of culture and a great deal of charisma, which allows them to seduce the ignorant masses."[50]

The prophet was the direct mouth: "the instrument," as in one of the foregoing quotations from Chávez. He was the mechanical instrument through which the words of God could be pronounced in human language for the audience or believers. This instrumentality without will was the essential condition for the speaker to be recognized as a prophet. The difference

between "false" and "true" prophets (or between "tricks" and "miracles") was made clear in Exodus. This book of the Bible narrates the contest that God staged between Moses and the magicians of the Pharaoh. Both sides performed extraordinary deeds before an audience, which judged them and tested their ability. The difference between the two was the difference between artificiality and naturalness (or between a party's representatives and a populist leader). The true prophet did not need to learn or become proficient through training in the art of magic. He was like an everyday man, outside the caste of magicians, and outside the establishment. In addition, precisely because he did not have a will and an intention of his own, he was destined to be believed through time, and his authority and purity were destined to stay intact. Even if he was not necessarily ordinary, he was certainly not an "insider." To avoid situations in which a prophet became an "impostor," there were several objective requirements that did not depend on the audience reception alone. These were the requirements that the prophet not be an expert in magic, and (as with the populist leader) that he not belong to the political establishment, so he could not be familiar with elite tricks.

The people seem to get their certainty that their leader is not an impostor from this fact—from his being one of the people, being like an ordinary man. The leader does not need to use such explicit language as he enacts his sanctity: this is clear in the cases of Péron, Simón Bolívar, Chávez, and also the most materialist of all, Berlusconi. Nor does the leader need to repeat pagan rituals, as the leader of the Lega Nord, Umberto Bossi, used to do when he decanted the water of the Po River into an ampulla and pretended that it proved the existence of an ethnically homogenous people and region called Padania, which was reclaiming its independence. Offering oneself as the embodiment of the spirit of the nation—as the personification of entrepreneurship and the American dream—is what Trump ventured to do. This is an adaptation of the same technique, using representation as a strategy to claim that one embodies a specific people while simultaneously reducing one's own responsibility. Because the leader is only the mouth of the people and has no will of his own, the things he does must be the things the people have asked him to do. If he does not deliver, the responsibility must lie in the hands of the people's enemies, who never disappear (and never sleep either). Hence, the irresponsible leader relies heavily on conspiracy theory as a sort of "ideology of excuse": "Conspiratorial mindsets are partly expressions of impotence—the painful inability to understand, much less control, the opaque forces that govern the political and economic systems that govern us."[51]

According to Spinoza, the *feebleness of the individual will* and of *individual responsibility* distinguished the true prophet from the impostor. His

weakness entailed that he must be passively receiving the truth. Because he was not inspired by his own personal intention, no mistrust surrounded him and his deeds, and this meant that he would be viewed as "good" and honest by the people and would be able to perform successfully. Spinoza wrote that all prophets were visited by God in their dreams (with the sole exception of Moses, to whom God spoke directly and while he was awake and conscious). Abimelech is one example, and he proved, in Spinoza's view, that the will of God is manifested to the prophet "when his imagination is more active and uncontrolled."[52] The dormant intellect of the prophet and the vividness of his imagination were the things that guaranteed the veracity of his prophecy and the purity of his message. They were the conditions for him to embody the words of God and to be wholly united with him. The relationship of the populist leaders to their people mimics this prophetic phenomenology of truth and power transmission via imagination and the emotions. These become the only means of communication with the people that is legitimate and that preserves the originality of the message through time.[53] *Representing is "midwifing" the truth, or bringing it to the surface, with no adulteration.*

Thus "direct representation" linking the leader to "his" people entails two things. First, it means that the leader performs a direct claim of representing the people, against all mediations. Second, it means that the leader performs his representative role aside from the electoral majority or "formal" counting—and especially above the usual and prosaic procedures that regular candidates use to prove themselves as representatives. It is the receptiveness of the audience and the weakness of the opposition that prove that the leader is on the right track.

This helps us see and understand the relevance of the preemptive strategy implied in this scheme. If the people is good or right, the actor who acts *as* the people (which involves the idea of representation as identity or "acting as," more than "acting for") cannot be bad or wrong. He does not have a will and intention of his own but rather is a pure instrument of the sovereign. This is where we must look if we want to see the difference between populism and fascism.

Populism does not fully suspend temporal limitations on the leader's tenure, as empirical cases show. Nor does it suspend elections. But institutional limitations on the populist leader's tenure can be neutralized through permanent propaganda. If its effect on the people's sentiment is strong, the power of the leader can be almost absolute and free from constraints, like that of a dictator. It can last as long as his identity with the people lasts. The populist leader *does not need* to abolish the constitution or become a dictator to be as free as his people allow him. The people is the absolute sov-

ereign, and the leader is "merely" claiming to be its mouth and to accept its limitations on his actions. In this sense, the populist leader is an ideal model for the aspiring dictator: he can achieve the goal that all tyrants long for but cannot achieve because they are unable to secure the power of the people's opinion, and so must resort to repression.

I would say that the populist leader is indeed bound to the people's will through a kind of imperative mandate, which is essentially the *mandate of opinion*. (On some occasions, a legally "revocable mandate" has been attempted in populist regimes, with the goal of creating "a direct connection between the leader and the people.")[54] The belief that the leader is and does what the people want him to be and do is a matter of fiction and imaginary construction. It is fashioned through the creation of a symbolic unison, and the leader's rhetoric and propaganda nourish this unison through his daily communications with his people. The legitimacy of his rule rests entirely on the strength of this belief; it is supported by interventions in the constitution, but these are never so extreme as to bring democracy to an end and institute dictatorship. Cultivating the audience is thus paramount. As I mentioned in the Introduction, Chávez spent an extraordinary number of hours denouncing capitalism on his own television show; Berlusconi was extremely astute in his use of both his three private national television stations and the three state television stations (which the parliamentary majority controls by law); Trump is obsessively in touch with the American people via tweets, attacking his enemies and commenting on everyday events; Beppe Grillo created his own blog, which became the only party organization of the Five Star Movement; Pablo Iglesias Turrión was already a media star before he became the founder and leader of Podemos; and the leader of La France Insoumise, Jean-Luc Mélanchon, uses the internet like "a tribune of the people of ancient Rome or a Marat in the French revolution."[55] If we want to sketch the populist answer to the diarchic character of democracy, we might say that *populism consists in a government of and by the audience*—one in which the people's opinion, rather than institutions, plays the role of both stimulating and containing the leader. The obvious implication here is that it is the leader's propaganda that stimulates and contains him as he leads the people's opinion. The malleability of the party is coherent with the malleability of state institutions. This is what makes the leader's party a natural competitor with traditional parties, and with the party system: it is a party that is better suited to exploit audience democracy.

The centrality of the audience over the institution (which is part of the deinstitutionalizing vocation of populism) is another important piece of the mosaic. Unlike traditional party leaders, the populist leader enjoys

a true *free delegation*. While traditional party leaders are constrained by their parties, the populist leader is almost absolutely free in his decision-making power. This makes the populist elite very vulnerable to corruption in practice—even more vulnerable than established party elites. In fact, the populist elite is more uncheckable than any ordinary elected representatives; in this sense, it is exposed to clientelism and arbitrariness.[56] But the leader's special, direct relation with the people makes him capable of adapting his image and continually reassessing his unity with his people's opinion. The association between corruption and power holding melts down and makes the populist leader perform the "miracle" that allows him to rule but not appear to be ruling: the miracle that allows him to be corrupt but claim that he is not responsible for corruption. Populist representation allows the leader to avoid falling in the *free mandate trap* (which exposes politicians to the temptations of becoming part of the establishment, separated from the electors). And it allows him to claim his right to pursue the politics he thinks fit, with no compulsion to attend to the people's opinion, except at the moment of elections.[57] Freedom of decision and the will to decide are inscribed within a conception of political representation as a free mandate model. But the fiction of representation as incarnation, and the fiction of the leader as the mouth or delegate of his master (the people), circumvents the structural risk that belongs to mandate representation alone—the risk that the elected will appear to be a separate group or an establishment and so become a natural target of mistrust (and surveillance). These fictions make for "the miracle" of a never separated—and thus perennially spotless—leadership; this, of course, is a fiction as well, but it is so rhetorically well crafted and so persistently reinforced that it looks real.

To sum up: unlike elected party leaders, the populist leader fits in the model of the mere delegate of the people without a free mandate. But this "delegate" role is hardly powerless. Not having a will of their own and being the mouth of the people, the leaders can circumvent the risk of appearing part of the establishment. This strategy is primed to have an impact on the performance of the populist leaders, who can always claim to be on the right track (because the people is their master) and who can always disclaim requests of accountability (as they are truly irresponsible, having no will of their own). The outcome of representation as incorporation is that the irresponsible leaders can decide to secure this extraordinary advantage: they can change the constitution or gravely manumit the bureaucracy (both civilian and military) in order to make institutions directly reflect their irresponsibility.

Mudde has argued that populist leaders tend to use the constitution opportunistically in cases in which they achieve the majority in parliament. He

recognizes this opportunism in the claims they make to speak for "we the people," even as they operate to co-opt the constitution in the name of that same people.[58] As I anticipated in Chapter 2, populist leaders are able to fuse their party platform with the will of the state by harnessing their policy preferences to the constitution. We can thus give this opportunistic claim a more strategic character and propose the following thesis: When it becomes a ruling power, populism aims to create a constitution of its own. Ultimately, it aims to create a kind of democratic system that closely reflects the characteristics of its representation of the people (which is actually a majority).[59]

The Hungarian case is an example of the collapse of the distinction between populism as a movement and populism as a ruling power. This corresponds, as I have said, to the collapse of the distinction between ordinary political and constitutional politics, as well as to the transformation of ordinary "changeable" policy into relatively immutable constitutional provisions. Justifications are not difficult to cook up when one has a leader who is the mouth of the people. Constitutional change is ideally intended to freeze the leader's majority into a permanent one. Unlike fascism, which revokes the tenure limitation of its executive leader and so revokes the process of checks and balances, populism does not seek *iron security.* In this sense, it plays the game of audience democracy. The populist leaders deploy propaganda against enemies who are never fully repressed, as a tonic to secure their appeal and build the people's faith. Irresponsible leaders can also shield their mistakes or failures with conspiratorial rhetoric; such rhetoric requires that enemies be alive and active. Although the establishment has been dethroned, the people representing it are always there—even if, of course, they are not part of the true people.

At the end of Chapter 1 I said that democracy diffuses, rather than concentrates, power. The demiurgic leader is predicated on a kind of political action that centralizes, verticalizes, and accumulates power. But his or her power concentration efforts rely on a diffusive propaganda, which induced popular participation is primed to nourish. (This is the source of the apparent contradiction that has been underlined by scholars of populist regimes: that such regimes combine strong executive power with broad participation in society.) The purpose is not to create a dictatorial regime but to actualize democracy's promises—in effect, to radicalize democracy.[60] I also suggested that the dichotomization of inside-outside (which antiestablishmentarianism renders with precision) facilitates the acceleration of popular discontent, accelerates the breaking of existing alliances, and serves as a strategy that is more congenial to the making of a new democratic order. Symbols and generalizations are the means by which leaders try to unify in

their person the plural and diverse reasons for discontent. Laclau recalled Antonio Gramsci's familiarity with leftist parties (especially the Italian Communist Party) and the care that Gramsci's followers put into the construction of a narrative and the symbols that could unify the working class with other sectors of society. Laclau suggested that these would be excellent guidelines for his populist leader. But the change of perspective between a *party-based* and a *leader-based* project is enormous, as we shall see later.

The populist emulation of past leftist mass parties supports a different project altogether. This alternative project has the leader at its center, rather than Gramsci's collective Prince.[61] Strategic and normative goals split in these two scenarios. In populism, strategy becomes a tactic for consolidating the victory of the coalition of claims that the leader names and embodies, which becomes "the main custodian and definer of its [populism in power] interests." It also, quite predictably, becomes the core of a network of corruption and clientele that is usually justified in the name of *salus rei publicae*.[62] In effect, the traditional Left–Right axis that distinguishes social democracy from liberal democracy turns out to be irrelevant to populism. Paraphrasing Eduard Bernstein, we might say, tactics are everything, the goal is nothing. Moreover, an organized party of the kind that Gramsci had in mind looks like a *hindrance* to populism. It relies on organization; and it is not elastic, not transversal, and not fully inclusive of the different exigencies that make the people opposed to the nonpeople. It is interesting to notice that, while theorists explain the emergence of populism using the decline of partisan divisions, the success of populism depends on the ability of its leader to exploit that "mainstreamism" and to make it into a terrain that is congenial to his or her postpartisan identity. Populist democracy should not be unhappy with party cartels and the decline of organized parties.[63]

The Party of a Part

Populist parties and leaders "generally represent authoritarian understandings of democracy, but ultimately are not against it, are wrongly equated with dictatorial formation."[64] Finchelstein writes that populism after 1945 "morphed from an ideology and a style of protest movement to a power regime": this is what happened with Péron.[65] At that point, its similarities to, and differences from, fascism became visible. Like fascism, populism becomes truly influential when it passes from ideology to power. But unlike fascism, this transition does not consist in regime change or dictatorship, though it may consist in a constitutional change that deflates the lawmaking

power of the parliament and increases the power of the executive. Like fascism, populism is essentially concerned with reconstructing the unity of the masses. Unlike fascism, the leader embodying that concern is never completely above the law. The blurred edge between populism and fascism is made evident not only by the charismatic understanding of the leader but also by the party form. This form is a truly intriguing aspect of populism: it makes it eccentric in comparison with party democracy in a way that is both similar to and yet quite distant from fascism. The authoritarian mode of populism remains in the form of symbolic representation, and this representation uses elections and the media as devices for keeping the popular acceptance always alive. "What matters is always the alignment of wills between ruler and ruled."[66]

Michels's Dilemma and a Permanently Made Holism

In his 1911 study of socialist parties, Robert Michels argued that democrats operating in the parliamentary system had to abandon the ideal of direct democracy and seek organization. But organization only allowed for coordination through division of labor and leadership—without these things, any political program in a modern state would be impossible. Michels made it clear that democrats could not escape this dilemma. Organization "is the weapon of the weak in their struggle with the strong," and democracy cannot do without it. But organization is also the gateway to bureaucracy, power concentration, and verticalization—that is, to oligarchy, and the death of democracy.[67] Populist democracy positions itself at the core of this dilemma. On the one hand, it fits the movement form more than the party form, because the permanent mobilization of the people needs a tool that is elastic and malleable enough to adapt to the various leaders' tactical needs. On the other, it cannot avoid becoming a party, because leaders need a tool that is structured enough for them to dominate but not *so* structured that it limits their power.[68] The parabola of Podemos, the most democratic of all populist movement-not-party forms, illustrates the point.

Initially, Podemos shaped itself according to a "rhizomatic" logic—horizontal and networked. It did this to "balance" organization with antiorganization, to accommodate the exigency of the audience, and to reassure its followers that it was a continuation by other means (elections) of the Indignados' forms and principles—self-management, consensus-based decision making, leaderlessness, and openness. The antiparty structure Podemos endorsed was functional to its intense media practice but permanently exposed it to a leader who ended up producing what old, organized parties had produced: a vertical movement with a strong, singular leader.

The irony is that while the old-style parties at least gave their members the illusion of participating, deciding, and influencing the leaders' choices, the nonparty party or movement party that populism forms offers its members almost no means to hold power accountable.[69] We will return to these shortcomings of direct representation in the next chapter. Here, we must survey another way in which populism differs from fascism and democracy: the party form. My template for this section follows Elmer Eric Schattschneider's insight that "the distinction between democracy and dictatorship can be made best in terms of party politics," which I will adapt to the comparison between populism and democracy.[70]

In Chapter 1 I argued that populism—even though it is antiparty in a radical sense—is ready and willing to form an antiestablishment party against the existing parties (which it accuses of being distant from the people). A populist party looks like an alliance of social movements and wants to create a mass constituency—the "good" people are its undivided constituency. This means that the populist leader, though she may not be a party person herself (and, in fact, is often critical of "party men"), needs a party structure of her own to run her campaign and eventually win.[71] Populists also criticize parties because of their unavoidably *partisan* nature—in the eyes of the populist, this partisanship divides the people into parts, which poses serious problems for the leader's ambition to unify the masses (this unification, of course, being the condition of the people's rescue from the establishment). But things quickly become complicated. On the one hand, the relation of the leader to the party is not simply one of strategy and instrumentality. On the other hand, the leader's persistent appeals to the people do not prevent populists from injecting antagonism into society—for society, after all, is not a regime of one leader and one party. One might say that the failure of populism to fulfill its plan is what saves it (and its country) from becoming a new fascism.

In effect, populism brings out a contradiction that has belonged to representative democracy since its inception in the eighteenth century. This contradiction consists in the distrust and suspicion of parties as examples either of ignorance to be cured or of prejudice to be eradicated. Because of the assumption of a general interest unifying all the demos, "modern politics generates new and powerful sources of anti-partisanship, rooted in the idea that the entire society can escape partisanship—or, put differently, can be enlightened."[72] But populism resolves the problem of partiality in a way that is neither internal to nor consistent with party politics and the party system. Nor is it a replica of the Enlightenment myth of overcoming *doxa*. In fact, populism is the recognition that politics is only *doxa*. Its project is internal to political realism, not political idealism. The issue of partisanship

reveals the problems of pluralism, and the limitations of power that belabor populism.

As Nancy Rosenblum writes, all parties are under "the shadow of holism": in fact, representative government itself was born in the name of ending all factions and making sure that "only one party represents the nation or the people."[73] A populist party is characterized by something that belongs to all parties: the tendency to strengthen its support in opinion with the aim of achieving a large majority, which ideally will be unquestioned and will last as long as possible. (This was the ambition of the Italian Communist Party in the early 1970s, when it proposed the "historical compromise" as a broad alliance among all popular forces, from leftist to democratic Christian, in order to advance a socialist transformation of liberal society by democratic means and with electoral consent.)[74] Last but not least, the party form transforms its loyal people into insiders and thus allows an antiestablishment movement to stabilize power within a new establishment.[75] In the end, it is not the vocation of holism that makes a populist party different from other parties. What makes the populist party unique is *the way* in which it manages that vocation.

As we shall see, populism betrays the pluralist logic of party politics, even though it does not suspend the right to political association once in power, and even though it relies on (and indeed presumes) social pluralism. Whereas fascism is populism becoming dictatorship, populism in representative democracy seems to be capable of consolidating a large consensus, even without calling into question elections, and without inaugurating an anticonstitutional regime.[76] Holism is thus a permanent project, but it is not entrenched in the law. The diarchic nature of democracy makes us recognize the distinctiveness of populism in relation to both fascism and democracy.

Populism's tendency toward holism remains within the terrain of opinion. It manifests as relentless propaganda that keeps the people mobilized around the issues the leader chooses to stress, and keeps them angry at the conspiratorial vocation of antipopulist elites. It places the leader and the leader's party in a daily electoral campaign. Holism is never stabilized within, or through, institutions—and the populist party requires this instability in order to stave off people's apathy and the demobilization that would come from their indifference.[77] This *holism in opinion* can stretch the stability and independence of the state institutions, but it does not change the de facto institutional order to such an extent that it inaugurates dictatorial, "monoparty-ist" regimes. Populism thus does not replicate the "party of virtue," which is total and totalizing, because it evokes the *general will,* not simply *the opinion* of the people. In this case, to be consistent with that will (the sovereign), it is not enough that the party speaks "as" the people—it needs

to make sure it is *the only* voice of the people.[78] This is what populism does not do, which makes it different from fascism (or indeed any totalitarian regime).

Yet a populist party is also different from an organized ideological party in a party democracy. A populist party in power is different from a party majority in a party democracy because it is marked, unlike a party majority, by an active desire for holism and a loose party organization. In a representative democracy, parties do not simply take political pluralism as a de facto condition: they do not regard the existence of two or more parties as merely an empirical fact, or as second best. Instead, they create, and function within, a normative environment that is structurally pluralistic because it presumes (and all its partisan actors presume) that all majorities are time limited, and therefore relative. They are loyal to party politics, and party "borders" are a condition of both pluralism and partisanship. Limitation and pluralism define both the character of the party form of politics and the containment of party's holism in party democracy. This is the reason why it is *structurally partisan,* unlike a populist democracy.[79] This normative specification is important for understanding populism as a movement party that aims to achieve power, not simply to mobilize opposition. It is also important as a means to decode the internal dialectic (which is, in effect, a tension) within populist theory and practice between an organic, nonliberal approach to politics (holism) and an antagonistic and instrumentally liberal approach (competition for a holist result).

Holism, Antagonism, and Hegemony

It is the party system, not the party per se, that defines the nature of party democracy and so militates in favor of political liberty and representative democracy.[80] A party that accepts itself as *one* part, which does not want to get rid of the other parts (although it aims to have a majority) and which shares the same political space with other parties, basing its identity on its competition with them—this is a party that has dropped the ambition of holism. It has abandoned the idea that it is the only good party in town. Such a party is at the outer edge of holism's shadow. This is what gives positive value to partisanship.

As Jonathan White and Lea Ypi show, partisanship lies at the crossroads of two opposite routes. The first route leads it to expand and conquer as much terrain as possible; and the second route leads it to stop expanding somewhere, because (in order to maintain partisanship) it needs to remain partisan or partial and can never become (or even desire to become) identical with the whole, the general will, or the general interest of the people

or the country.[81] The partisan vision interprets politics according to the tenets of the general will: it does not occupy, nor become identical to, that general will.[82] Conscious of its partiality, the political opinion of the citizen in a democracy is a celebration of both commitment to a party (as militant or voter) and self-containment. It is a celebration of intransigence in upholding some basic ideals, and of readiness to accept and discuss with proponents of other ideas. This is not an idyllic picture; but it is a picture that portrays a sacrifice. White and Ypi speak of friendship *(amicitia)* in the classical sense, meaning *idem sentire de republicā*—because no partisan is actually ready to become a partisan of an opposite view, and partisans know that they must endure both their limited condition and the presence of an adversarial view.[83]

This means that partisanship is structurally made for a pluralist habit of mind and a pluralist environment. One would say that this makes the partisan spirit a tonic to politics and an incentive to critical reflection, both of which are indispensable to political judgment and to the making of opinions.[84] Partisanship has a normative function in democratic politics, insofar as siding with some and not others is a condition of making political changes possible, and of enriching our knowledge. Thus, rather than obscuring our epistemic proficiency, partisanship helps it to stay on target, to stay purposeful, and to stay capable of self-correction. Finally, it is an indication of political liberty and pluralism, because partisanship lives out of—and generates—antagonism. This is a condition that is primed to contain the tendency toward monopoly that exists in political power.[85] In the end, partisanship stabilizes democratic societies, because it takes away the absoluteness that any faith or loyalty tends to create; and pluralism of partisan views is the tonic that both contains excessive partisanship and avoids the risk of monopoly, which are two opposite tracks that can make parties "go off course."[86] Partisanship injects a sense of pragmatic relativity into our conquests, credos, and certainties; but it does so without making us apathetic, cynical, or indifferent. As Johan Caspar Bluntschli wrote, in what can be regarded as the first cogent defense of political parties, they "appear in a state wherever political life is free. Parties only fail to appear in a country where indifference to public affairs prevails."[87]

It is interesting to reflect on the fact that the terms "party," "partisanship," and "participation" not only have the same etymological Latin root but, in a way, have the same meaning. The terms "taking sides" and "participating" both refer to a form of action that entails entering the public arena and so occupying a specific and limited space. Politics and conflict, politics and performative virtues, politics and limitation, and politics and the distribution of power all define the domain of justice, and the horizon of the institutional

order, in modern party democracy. In ancient republics, partisan politics was a fact and a source of worry at the same time. It was mostly identified with factional alliances and seen as pestilential, because no institutional order was truly capable of taming and completely neutralizing it—not even a mixed constitution. Politics was a grandiose art for containing and curbing factions, because social groups were directly involved in the management of the institutions. The ancients did not know the difference between faction and party, presumably because they did not employ elections, which would have institutionalized political competition and would have required some written rules of the game, in addition to a constitution that was the result of a pact among parties but was not subjected to social groups.[88]

It is curious to notice, though, that the meanings of partisanship and of participation started diverging when (thanks to elections) society could—at least in theory—endure partisanship as a form of participation with no great danger to its stability. Modern electoral democracies live out of partisan competition, but they seek to represent themselves as consensual rather than conflict-ridden; as epistemic and impartial rather than judgmental and partisan. It took time for parties and partisanship to be accepted within this Enlightenment frame of the political mind. Even today, democracies are traversed by strong sentiments of antipartyism, both when they tend toward populism and when they embrace epistemic ambitions.[89] Although no democratic citizen can avoid partisan reasoning, theorists make the normative assumption that good politics must overcome "biases" (which are also identified with partisan reasoning) and become a form of action that is concerned simply with the technical resolution of problems, which are supposed to require cognitive diversity and informative opinions (which are, in turn, supposed to be available to all citizens). Representative democracy suffers the syndrome of aspiring to be something else. It seeks a status that has been identified (anachronistically) with direct democracy and that Jean-Jacques Rousseau called "the general will"—a voice that would speak to each citizen *ex ante* in the language of clear and simple ideas, with no interests and parts intermixed. As I suggested in Chapter 1, antipartyism is a permanent temptation in party democracy. It is also oxygen for populism, which escalates in proportion as partisan politics declines, and as the myth of an undivided people attracts support from both the Left and the Right.[90] Parties are responsible for this revolt against them because, over time, they indulge two "vices" that become fatal: either they radicalize their partial loyalties or they smooth over their differences in the attempt to capture votes. In the course of time, thus, it seems to be difficult for them to avoid "the Scylla of disintegration (the whole falls apart) and the Charybdis of unanimism (where the parts are engulfed by the whole)."[91] Both "vices"

are extreme forms of a good course of action: seeking convergence with other parties is, at times, a sign of attention to the general interest; and strengthening partisanship serves, at times, to contain the appetite of parties' leaders for alliances and government. "Parties stay safely on course only when they manage to balance partisanship and impartial governing, loyalty to the party and loyalty to the state, party interest and general interest."[92]

In some sense, populism profits from the party system's failure to practice the virtue of balance. It is representative of the wave of antipartyism, as a view that is never fully content with the one-among-other-parties practice, perspective, mentality, and habit that lies behind party democracy. It shares with the one-party party (technically speaking, the totalizing party) the ambition of representing only the "good" part of the people (the many, or the plebs, or the outsiders). And this seems to justify its claim to deserve a longer duration in power than the electoral cycle would otherwise allow it. It is true that populist regimes do not revoke elections, that they accept the risk of being dethroned, and that they prefer to actualize their holism only in the domain of opinion, rather than the domain of institutions. But their habit is to mobilize the audience permanently in order to consolidate their support *as if* they were a one-party party. To repeat, the difference between a populist party and a fully totalizing party lies in their method of attaining the goal they both desire. The former uses favors and corruption to keep, and eventually enlarge, its support among the audience, while the latter, which is no less corrupt, goes straight to repression and uses direct state coercion to curtail political liberty and destroy party pluralism. This is the reason why the question of parties is another place we see the blurred edges between populism and fascism, on the one hand, and between populism and party democracy, on the other.

Laclau has explained that the move to aggregate groups around the figure of the populist leader does not coincide with making, or even seeking, the generality of the people. Something remains that is external to the hegemonic project of party-becoming-the-true-people. As Laclau states, "This aggregation presupposes an essential asymmetry between the community as a whole (the *populus*) and the underdog (the *plebs*). . . . It is in this contamination of the universality of the *populus* by the partiality of the *plebs* that the peculiarity of 'the people' as a historical actor lies."[93]

The socialists and the liberals also try to make their "aggregations of social demands"; but they pretend that their projects correspond to, or refer to, the generality of the people. They pretend to make equality and liberty the paradigms of a universalist and inclusive politics. And they speak in the name of all the citizens, and of the general good. According to Laclau,

however, in politics we can never overcome the domain of ideology. As such, even when parties claim to speak in the name of universalist ideals, they are actually using those ideas to aggregate some claims and drop others. They do covertly what populism does openly. Populism is politics at its best: it consists in acknowledging that all politics is both partial and holistic. Liberals, socialists, and populists make claims to generality from within a partial perspective. But only the populists are fully aware of it, and pursue it consciously, when they distinguish between the establishment and the people outside—only the populists understand and practice "the partiality of the universal" or make the people in a constitutive part that refuses to speak in the name of the whole as makes itself "a part that *is* the whole."[94]

Laclau makes the case that we need to understand politics as a phenomenon that has to do with *parts or partiality, not with the whole or generality* (which always remains a fiction). Populists would not disagree with Schumpeter, who proposed perhaps the strongest argument against the metaphysics of the general will, and against the ideology of democracy, in the name of a plebiscitary and Caesaristic leadership that is crowned by elections. Populists would also be in perfect agreement with Schumpeter's conception of political struggle as antagonism between opposing leaders (and parties as their instruments) for the control of the state. Majoritarianism is shared by both minimalist democrats and populists, because both of them render democracy essentially an issue of majority victory. Proceduralism would be the skeleton, and populism would be the flesh.[95]

But if holism is (simply) a strategy for winning a competition, how can we say that populism belongs to the tradition of the one-party myth and of opposition to the party system? How can it be the progeny of a conception of popular government that is based on the idea of a unanimous corporate body—the people or the general will—which it believes should not be fragmented into organized interests and partisan divisions? How is it possible to ascribe a holistic drive to populism, given that it grows as a radical partisan movement, so much so that some thinkers claim it is genetically internal to Schmitt's friend-enemy paradigm and frame it as essentially antagonistic? These ideas—of populism as radical antagonism, or as an expression of a radical conception of democracy—are the core theme of Chantal Mouffe's defense of populism. They are also the core of a leftist kind of populism, as in the cases of Podemos and of Jean-Luc Mélenchon (the 2017 French presidential candidate).

Mouffe sees the dualism between the establishment and the people as something that revitalizes politics within democratic societies. She proposes that traditional parties, from Left to Right, have tended gradually to court

the center and thus deflated their diversity.[96] Her reading coheres with Peter Mair's, and with that of others who are critical of the cartelization of party politics. Populism would, as a matter of fact, put an end to the long agony of party democracy. The latter started eroding well before the emergence of populism, at the moment when (in Otto Kircheimer's analysis) electoral competition ceased to project alternation as a goal, in favor of the goal of achieving social integration of all parties. This made parties uninterested in programs and made them interested in expanding their electorates and sacrificing their core militants. In effect, the kind of party that Kircheimer defined as a *catchall party* is peculiar to the modern party system, whether it manifests as a fascist party, a mass party, or now a populist party.[97] Cartel parties are parties with slim partisan membership and a variably large electorate, which is volatile and has been taught to think that party politics is prejudicial. The logic of elections seems to contain a party-destroying tendency within itself, because electoral victory induces all competitors to widen their consent, rather than preserve their specificity. Much like a free market, electoral democracy—if left unregulated—would end up promoting the political equivalent of monopoly, "cartelization," which is the end of party politics.[98] Mouffe thinks, reasonably, that democratic procedures can be revitalized only if we use them as they are supposed to be used—namely, as rules that allow political groups to clash and behave strategically, with a view to striking compromises among their irreducible views and ultimately winning the game of votes. The logic of party politics, which cartelized parties no longer want to accept, is "us" versus "them" politics.[99]

Mouffe accepts the Schumpeterian interpretation of democracy as a method for regulating competition. But she does not embrace the idea that procedures are a normative condition of democracy (the premise for political equal liberty); instead, she sees them as tools to keep antagonism alive. One might say that populism, on her reasoning, plays a normative role—it serves as a tonic that revitalizes a routinized practice of majority opposition that has become little more than a consensus-oriented alternation of the same ideas with limited publicized differences. Choosing between two candidates who rally as right-wing and as left-wing has effectively become the same as choosing Coca-Cola instead of Pepsi, Mouffe writes.[100] But on Mouffe's reading, just as on Schumpeter's, antagonism—not democracy—seems to be the good. The argument that conflicts between "us" and "them" are constitutive of politics, "no matter how they are processed, is short-legged and missed the whole sense of political engineering. It does matter how conflict is channeled—indeed, the processing makes all the difference."[101]

Mouffe's interpretation of divergent political ideas as instruments for democratic adversaries to oppose one another, or as a divide between "us" and "them," makes the rules of the game merely functional. But given her assumption that procedures are like empty forms, it is evident that this divide is dependent on extraprocedural principles that help us identify the "us" and the "them." More specifically, "we" and "they" are not *produced* by the rules of the game but only *revealed* by them—although Mouffe, like Laclau, insists that antagonism entails a conception of hegemony as precarious articulation. If there is nothing before the dualism, it means that it is essentially based on the rhetorical skill of leaders and their intellectuals. It is an artifact that relies essentially on voluntarism and receives formal legitimacy from elections. Although both Laclau and Mouffe rely on Gramsci's conception of hegemony, Gramsci would not agree with them that victory decrees the value of a hegemonic project. Their relativism, which amounts to a principleless (although emotional) politics, was actually the main *target* of Gramsci's criticism of fascism. Moreover, as Mario Tronti writes when commenting on Laclau's book on populism, Gramsci did not, after all, substitute the class with the national-popular but rather adapted it to a form of political conflict that became structurally based on consent. Gramsci's national-popular was not populist, and was not beyond the Left–Right division, because it was still class based. (His people "had a meaning in a party, and for the Party, which described itself as being of the working class.")[102] Following Tronti, I suggest that populism grows when the social-democratic or traditional leftist parties decline. Populism is the mark of their decline—a mark of the space left empty by the death of the class-based Left.

According to Gramsci, Benito Mussolini represented the populist version of the degeneration of the collective Prince (the party) into despotic dogmatism. Mussolini's project was not hegemonic but *despotic*.[103] The fascist movement was Mussolini's personal creation—he concocted an ideology that was completely constructed and instrumental to his project of power, and thus *ex arbitrium,* without any philosophy or norms or ideals to warrant it. In effect, it had no goal but power. Mussolini's populist project consisted in linking together people's various claims and forms of dissatisfaction with liberal government. He succeeded in polarizing opinions and in mobilizing a large number of people against the established institutions and norms in the name of a truer representation of the sovereign people—that is to say, his *own* representation as the embodiment of that people. (Gramsci does not fail to observe Mussolini's admiration of Gustave Le Bon.)[104]

On this basis, I conclude that the problematic aspect of a conception of democracy as pure antagonism is the sole role that consent plays in proving the validity of hegemony. This is because that consent could imply (or at

least does not exclude a priori) the imposition of the winning principles on groups that do not agree with them.[105] Let us, for instance, consider the following possibility. There can be (and often are) individuals and groups who do not agree that the dualist option is the only option in politics. These people and groups may be willing to oppose a political party in some cases and support it in others. And they might be motivated by ideology and class interests, not only by strategic behavior. But on Mouffe's view, these individuals and groups could be permanently considered "them" because they do not agree with "us" on every issue and so can never fully coalesce into a populist alternative to the establishment. This implication becomes even more problematic when we consider that, for Mouffe, antagonism does not require antagonistic factions to have any real chance of becoming the ruling "us": it simply requires that they be able to express their disagreement in order to keep antagonism itself alive. In her view, it may seem, minorities must be permanent: it must be permanently possible that they will never become the majority. This goes against the procedural idea of democracy, according to which it is a *crucial* part of democracy that political minorities have a real chance of winning power, such that the party in power changes. Opposition is not simply present for the purpose of facilitating antagonism: it exists with the promise that it may one day become a majority. This is the hard normative condition of democratic proceduralism, what sustains not simply parties and antagonism but the party system or party democracy. Indeed, it is the core of democracy itself—democracy does not consist merely in the presence of antagonism; in effect, it would be more appropriate to speak of "dissent" rather than "antagonism," since partisan divisions are never absolute; nor are they cutting a citizens' body in two perfect parts, such as "the Right" and "the Left." Even if it seems that Mouffe is less attracted to antiliberal (as organic) premises than Laclau, her adaptation of Schmittian antagonism within the game of electoral politics makes democracy seem like wrestling, rather than a process by which oppositions can gain power. Antagonism is *one part* of the democratic movement; but change in government must be the other one. This means that antagonism is a *means*—it is *for* something—not a good or an end in itself.[106]

The party system is the issue that populism contests; and it is the issue that makes populist oppositional politics insufficiently secure for democracy, even if it is not itself antidemocratic.

A Hyperparty in a Monoparty Vision of Politics

The populist vision of politics that claims to unite and represent the largest portion of the population, and aims to achieve a strong and long-lasting

majority, contains both organic-holistic and antagonistic conceptions, even though they appear to be radically different from each other. There are two stages to the populist strategy of seeking consent. First, it destructs and disaggregates existing aggregations (i.e., it breaks previous political alliances) using the oppositional rhetoric of *antis* (and antiestablishmentarianism in particular). Next, it changes the direction of people's opinion through the aggregation of demands for a new people. Laclau has described this stage as follows:

> So we have here the formation of an internal frontier, a dichotomization of the local political spectrum through the emergence of an equivalential chain of unsatisfied demands. The *requests* are turning into *claims*. We will call a demand which, satisfied or not, remain isolated a *democratic demand*. A plurality of demands which, through their equivalential articulation, constitute a broader social subjectivity we will call *popular demands*.[107]

To construct equivalence by unifying various claims, one must design a corporate unity that mimics a mythical popular entity. Whether or not populist leaders have consciously followed Laclau's prescriptions, this seems to be a cogent and realistic populist strategy. As such, we are justified in including the populist ideology within the broad tradition of antipartyism. And we are also justified in resorting to the metaphor of the blurred edge (with fascism), remembering that fascism is the most successful enterprise of putting the hegemonic project of a "one-party party" into power.

Antipartyism was among the most specific characteristics of the fascist movement; this has been true since the moment it made its appearance in the aftermath of World War I. Mussolini attacked the weak and litigious parties of liberal parliamentarianism and accused them of multiplying artificially according to irrelevant issues merely so that they could expand the oligarchic elite within institutions. Mussolini also accused liberalism of having betrayed the democratic claim to advance a popular government. He argued that it fragmented the "unanimity" of the masses in order to select the elites that could better serve the interests of the few.[108] Finally, Mussolini criticized the method of party politics, which consisted of endless discussion, criticism, and sophistry. These were strategies that augmented the others to generate confusion in the nation and break the unity of the masses. Thus, claimed its creator at the dawn of his political career, fascism must be a movement, not a party. But after his first electoral victory, when the movement won seats in Parliament, Mussolini's position changed. To mobilize forces against the party system, fascism needed to go beyond a movement and become an "organization." It needed to become a tool capable of managing elections in order to "put an end to" the "democratic-parliamentary

regime" and conquer the government. As such, the antiparty movement had to become (and did become) a party. It needed to structure its organization and, once in power, shape the state so that it could merge all aspects of the politics of the masses into one organized voice and machine. The one-party party became more and more a party as it ruled the state from the perspective of a party, and from the perspective of fascist ideology and of its leader.[109] The Fascist Party became a faction in the moment it claimed to be the party of the whole, because at that point there was no room for other parties, as the whole had already been taken.

Giuseppe Bottai, the most brilliant of the fascist intellectuals, wrote in 1943 that *antiparty* must be capable of becoming *hyperparty* because in order to resist the temptation of becoming like a traditional party, and so opening the door to multipartyism, the antiparty party must become totalizing so that it can adhere fully to the several claims that emerge from its society. Bottai concluded that pluralism of social claims is necessary, but their political aggregation must be one.[110] A party that wants to be the only political articulation of social pluralism must become one with the state. At the moment this happens, the antiparty becomes a hyperparty indeed—it is no longer a party at all (party, again, presuming a plurality of parts).[111] Hence Hannah Arendt observed that the fascist movement seemed to be more sincere than organized parties, and so seemed right to orchestrate a campaign against the party machinery: "This, however, was so in appearance only, for the true goal of every 'party above parties' was to promote one particular interest until it had devoured all others, and to make one particular group the master of the state machine."[112]

Once fascism became a regime, social pluralism could be understood as needing to find its political synthesis in the party-as-one. The hyperparty was the hegemonic registration of the many demands from society, and it facilitated their transmission to the state.[113] The hyperparty was the "organizing" and unifying agent between the masses and the state. It was the voice of a partyless society (although this society still had many demands in its social domain). In this antipartisan logic, the part (or the party) takes the lead in promoting the "articulation of needs," even while countering the holistic pluralism of social exigencies, in a way that contrasts completely with party pluralism. That seems to be an oxymoron, but it is not, because the idea of politics as embodiment and identity (fascist in particular) is that there ought to be a party that unifies and represents the many claims within society in order to prevent party pluralism from recurring. This is what mass parties do in democracy, but without adopting the hyperparty model—instead, they accept the competition for hegemony, and they do not claim to be the whole, even though when they rule they claim to do so for the

good of the whole; but their very existence results from the fact that they do not quite identify themselves with the public, even when (hopefully) they act for the public.[114] "Acting for" (not substitution with) is precisely the meaning of the word *pro* in the synecdoche *part pro toto,* as I have said throughout this book. This meaning fades away in the antipartyism logic of populism, which is in *this* sense factional.

Hyperpartyism does not belong only to totalizing parties in fascist regimes, and it does not come with the same unpleasant flavor when it operates within party democracies. The thing that makes a mass party a party driven by hyperparty vocation, without resorting to the repression of party pluralism, is its attempt to neutralize pluralism through the creation of an enthusiastic consensus. It seeks, as I have said, to pursue holism within the audience only. This is also what makes a populist party similar to a mass party and different from a fascist party. The last not only represses political pluralism but is untroubled by an apathetic society, while the first two fear apathy and seek enthusiastic support.

In addition, a populist regime cultivates an ambition to rule over a society in which only the leader's party successfully pursues a hegemonic politics, while all other parties are marginalized into near nonexistence, submerged by the rampant propaganda of the leader in government. Yet marginalizing is not the same as suppressing. Chávez aimed to develop another type of political organization that would not resemble political parties: he started a plan for "mobilizing his grassroots support" through social movements, students, community organizations, and the like. But at a certain point, because of exigencies that were internal to the government, the National Assembly launched a "parliamentary action on the streets," and Chávists realized they needed *some* political pluralism, as well as "an alternative form of deliberation, given the lack of opposition in Congress."[115] To be sure, not all populist governments are the same, or follow the tradition of Latin America, where bottom-up and sociopolitical movements are constantly present. The case of Hungary, for example, is different. There, Viktor Orbán suggested more than once that government is for solving problems, not debating over problems: "When a tree falls over a road . . . it is not theories that are needed but rather thirty robust lads who start working to implement what we all know needs to be done."[116]

If we bracket the dictatorial form of fascist power from our comparison for a moment, we can use the antiparty/hyperparty logic that the fascist movement used, in order to explore the behavior of contemporary populist regimes.

Analyses of the numerous experiences of populism in Latin America, both radical and conservative, stress the attack against parties in the name of the

"democracy of the national majority." This "national majority" involves a pervasive system of social organizations, which are made to merge in the leading force of the populist party and its leader.[117] In a document of the Alianza Bolivariana in Venezuela, one reads that "the society" should participate in "direct democracy of the people, instead of the delegated bourgeois democracy, represented by the political class and instrumentalized by different parties. The people will participate from below quite naturally."[118]

The discourse of politics, framed by the Schmittian logic of friend-enemy, "tends to have little use for institutions of representation," as it prioritizes mobilization and social aggregations "as the political instrument par excellence." This is true even when that discourse occurs within an institutional order that is, broadly speaking, democratic. And it means that it is, in effect, not political—because it is articulated not through political competition among parties but through social groups.[119] The social pluralism that Bottai stressed in his theory of the "Fascist party as hyperparty" characterizes a regime that really revolves around a monoparty vision of the public, even if it never becomes completely dictatorial and never occupies the whole by decree.

The dialectic between parts and the whole is at the core of the interpretation of democracy. This is true whether one understands democracy as a political space for a process of majority/opposition (party system) or as a mass politics that relies on the myth of unanimity but is not, a priori, opposed to plurality in the social realm. Is populism a democratic (not fascist) way of dealing with the making of the unity of the masses? And is it an expression of the affirmation of "the whole" against "its parts"?

From Party-Phobia to the Idolatry of a Part

Critics of party democracy have been "mesmerized by the prevailing doctrine," which starts with a "rigid distinction" between "public and private law" and concludes with suspicion of pluralism.[120] To them, the state looks like a "triumphal march toward the supra-individual collective state, uniform and unified." And they have considered party democracy to be a constant object of anxiety. The complaint against interests and particularism mimics the negative connotation ascribed to parties—the argument that they promote factions. Antipartyism is the corollary of this vision of "the superiority of the collective or national interest." As I anticipated in the first chapter, the cry against *merecracy* or *particracy* echoes the myth of the collective people, undivided, just as Bobbio argued.[121] Clearly, Bobbio added, you don't need to have parties permitted by the constitution to have parties:

it is the practice of democracy itself that produces them. When political action is free, parties do not need to ask for "permission."[122] Claude Lefort's analysis follows the same line. He characterizes the "democratic revolution" as the disappearance of a "marker of certainty"—a representative who, through his or her person, embodies the power of a specific group so that the representative can declare it to be the true sovereign. For Lefort, the fact that the locus of power in democracy becomes empty means that power is relational. It also means that it manifests, at every level of life, "between *self* and the *other.*" In short, democracy becomes the exaltation of institutions and procedures against the incarnation of power in a central actor or in some part of the people.

Lefort considered this totalizing resistance to the process of dissolving the center of representation to be the most radically antidemocratic stance. For him, the doctrine and practice of power implied the conquest of institutions and rules, the occupation of the relational world "between *self* and the *other.*"[123] Populism resuscitates some shadows of that archaic desire, which seeks to identify the entire political world of a country in some particular person or group in order to liberate power from special "interests and appetites." The reaction against pluralism of interests involves the "fantasy of the People-as-One, the beginnings for a quest for substantial identities; for a social body which is welded to his head, for an embodying power, for a state free from division."[124]

The paradox of populism is that party-*phobia* (with its totalizing spirit of an undivided, disjoined, and nonfragmented "right" collective) brings us back to party-*latria:* the idolatry of a part. This is the contradiction within populist politics that Laclau documents so masterfully. His is the only consistent attempt to devise a theory of populism that makes this contradiction visible.

We can describe the paradox that haunts populism as follows. A populist movement does not merely consist in giving a part (the "innocent victim") legitimacy or voice. It does not even consist in claiming that this "good" part speaks for the whole, or claiming that this "good" part can better represent the general interests because it is the part that has suffered the most injustice. Populism does *not* make a claim of generality that starts from the negative, as Karl Marx does: "When Marxists claim that the working class is the universal class, they claim that it is more than an interest group (indeed, more than any national interest)."[125] In this sense, populism is not *pars pro toto,* or the part that speaks for the whole. Such a framing would still presume the existence of a *toto* (the whole), or a universal horizon of value (liberty from alienation, for instance), in relation to which populism would be entitled to claim its power. But the militant criticism of the party system,

and a pluralist representation of the people's claims, bring us outside this terrain of generality, which the fiction of *pars pro toto* represents. This is because populism also dispenses with all criteria of generality. These are declared to be mere ideology, and so the idea of power as "subjected to the procedures of periodical redistribution"—to paraphrase Lefort—disappears entirely.[126] It is representation as embodiment and identity—which does not entail substitution of a whole with one of its parts—that prevents us from situating the populist politics within the *pars pro toto* paradigm. The argument I propose is that the populist phobia of multiparts (and consequently, its phobia of parliamentary politics) opens up a much more radical scenario. It makes politics consist in *a part* that declares itself, as such (that is, as a part), to be at the center of state power, and to claim that it is the "good part" entitled to rule, not necessarily for the good of all, and certainly not for those who are understood to be "the establishment."

Laclau observed that universality cannot be a political goal, because all political struggle for power requires an identification with "some particularistic" contents, not with a general universality.[127] "The passage from one hegemonic formation, or popular configuration, to another will always involve a radical break, a *creation ex nihilo* . . . [which is] an 'act of freedom,'" a pure construction.[128]

We have already explored how the theoretical root of populism is not the whole people—it is not Rousseau's general will—because the idea of the people it contemplates is assumed *ex ante* to be identical with the whole minus the few. It is assumed to be the nonelite people only. In overcoming Marx, and in abandoning the universalism that still appears in Marx's proletariat, Laclau argues that the will is always the will of a sectorial group. As such, "the representative has to show that [this will] is compatible with the interest of the community as a whole."[129] Populist politics is a domain of pure voluntarism and rhetoric, similar to that described in the first book of Plato's *Republic*. There, Thrasymachus is adamant that power is always the power of the winning part, and that justice always the justice of the strongest part. For him, the discourse of generality is merely a rhetorical device for winning consent. Extreme voluntarism and extreme relativism converge in a conception of politics that is based essentially on the substitution of one class for another, or one representative actor for another one.[130]

Populism unveils and accepts the structural factionalism of power. It shows how discourse is a rhetorical-ideological mechanism, which conceals the intentions of power by making it appear as if it were the embodiment of the true interest of the people. Ideology is a total condition; it takes away all residue of normativity, as Vilfredo Pareto would have it. The result is the phenomenology of politics as factionalism. Populism, which is part of this

phenomenology, consists in a series of incorporations. A partial group (made up of the antiestablishmentarians) declares itself to embody the whole through its leader, who is its incarnation.[131] The "whole" is itself a rhetorical construct, while the partial group is the materiality that takes the shape of the words and deeds of the leader. Ultimately, the only locus of power is the leader. The "marginal sectors" of society take center stage, thanks to the representative, whose "task would consist less in transmitting a will than in providing a point of identification."[132] In a word, the leader does not restitute "the will" to the marginal groups; the leader offers them his or her "point of identification," through which they will get into power. Laclau assures us that there is a relation of mutual interests between representative and represented. He is convinced that the direction of power is not only from the former to the latter but also vice versa.[133] But there is no institutional or procedural guarantee that this reciprocity will operate once the space of "institutions and procedures" (Lefort's empty space of politics) has been fully occupied by the *incarnatus* and the part he or she proclaims to represent. We have thus reconstructed the phenomenology of factionalism—at the end of which we have not *pars pro toto* but *pars pro parte*. The part (in effect its leader) rules for itself. *Méros* takes *kratos*.

The Party and the Faction

We're now in a position to return to the debate between Raymond Polin and Norberto Bobbio about the meaning of *merecracy* in relation to party democracy and political pluralism. As we saw in Chapter 1, Polin identifies the *kratos* of *méros,* or the "power of the parts," directly with party politics, and criticizes it in the name of an undivided people. Bobbio, by contrast, argues that this *kratos* is the structural condition of representative government, which is based on parties, not simply elections.[134] As I noted, this myth of an organic unity of popular sovereignty, which must not be fragmented by parties, is rooted in popular politics. It is not unique to populism; in fact, it is the very source of the modern constitutional republic. Constitutional democracy contains procedures that allow for the practical realization and organization of the general interest. This has brought political actors and citizens to accept that democracy relies on a fiction: the "assimilation of the majority to the unanimity."[135] It is a fiction in the sense that any majority tries to fulfill its political program through legal venues and compromises, which are supposed to smooth its will to power, and then actualize it with the imprimatur of the generality that institutions provide. (Technically speaking, all political representatives who sit in the parliament represent "the people"—they do not represent just one

specific portion of it, or merely represent their constituencies.)[136] This fiction acquires a normative meaning when the parties accept, for practical purposes, that they are more than one, and when they accept that opposition is legitimate: it is neither a pure strategy for kindling antagonism, nor a second best in the wait for a monoparty polity, nor a rhetorical construct to cover the partial nature of power.[137]

Richard Hofstadter has explored the complex trajectory that has taken place in US politics, from the monoparty mode at the beginning of the American republic to the rise and full acceptance of the "legitimate opposition"—that is, the opposition that sits outside the government and contests its majority in the hopes of taking power for itself. There were two obstacles for parties to overcome before this acceptance could occur. First, they had to acquire legitimacy by proving they were not a threat to the constitutional order. They had to show that they were not actually factions in disguise, trying to seize power and undermine the system, but were genuinely engaging in open contestation. And they had to show that they were not promoting sedition, because they appealed to people's consent on some critical considerations in the common polity. The distinction between parties and factions (which had, from the Greek and Roman republics until the eighteenth century, been considered identical) was an achievement that first appeared in Machiavelli (with his distinction between partisan friends and partisan enemies) and then reappeared in a much more explicit way in David Hume and Edmund Burke. Second, parties had to persuade politicians, magistrates, and the people that there could be a legitimate form of partisan vision that criticized a specific policy and sought to redirect the majority toward different goals. This idea of the party appeared as early as Bolingbroke's discussion on (i.e., against) parties.[138]

Those two obstacles were connected. Once parties were capable of proving that they could be a "responsible" opposition—that is, once they had proved that they were in opposition to a specific majority, rather than the constitutional order per se—they could convince others of the idea that different perspectives are possible, and even legitimate, in the interpretation of the same constitution and the general interest. This, in turn, let them promote the idea that the general interest is not One, and not in quest of one embodiment.[139] These things settled the condition for political representation. Social heterogeneity, and its pluralism of demands, did not require any unitary embodiment in the political arena; rather, it required open contestation and dialectic between the several representative claims.

Within the party system, the general interest was associated with the process itself: the spirit of compromise and the rules of the game allowed the coexistence of opinions and their transmission from society to the state's

institutions. Communicating with the state (without being absorbed by it) is an essential component of the game of politics in democracy's diarchy. This process was held to entail political liberty—that is, the liberty to openly and publicly develop and contest political judgments and ideas about the interpretations of the general spirit of the constitution. Soon, parties were not only accepted but proved themselves effective in a whole range of activities: defining electoral programs, attracting participation, mobilizing followers and members, selecting candidates, educating elected and potential candidates in the administrative and legal culture of the public, furnishing language and administrative competence, sharpening the political culture of citizens, and so on. Rather than being merely some "second-best option" in relation to the first good of unity as unanimity, the party system became a search for the general interest and a political expression of the freedom of ideas in general, and dissenting ideas in particular. To Kelsen, like Schattschneider, modern democracy came to seem inconceivable without parties. In effect, these authors suggested that political parties "created" modern democracy, but not so much popular sovereignty.[140]

Predictably enough, the most resilient argument against parties (especially oppositions) was the argument made by the American founders. As Hofstadter has observed, these founders claimed that the American republic was coincident with the basic good of the republic:

> The Federalists and the Republicans did not think of each other as alternative parties in a two-party system. Each side hoped instead to eliminate party conflict by persuading and absorbing the more acceptable and "innocent" members of the other; each side hoped to attach the stigma of foreign allegiance and disloyalty to the intractable leaders of the other, and to put them out of business as a party.[141]

Reading this, we understand why the founders used the word "faction" when they wanted to accuse each other of partisan affiliation. The acceptance of the "opposition party" overlapped with the *distinction between party and faction* (which was perfected in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the "party system" took shape). The theoretical enterprise accompanying this important endeavor involved work by political and legal theorists to devise the normative conditions that one could use to distinguish a political party from a faction. On the political level, it was paramount that parties and factions were defined according to parameters that were clear and verifiable, and normative or connected to the decision making inside and outside them—publicity versus secrecy, organization by charter versus discretionary methods of decisions, the claim to relay upon principles

that can further the general interests versus the sectarian partiality of the goals (where the latter are divulged).[142]

Contemporary theorists of partisanship go back to Bluntschli's 1869 essay "What Is a Political Party?" in order to make their case that the acceptance of parties coincided with the development of an analytical definition of party, and with the separation between parties and factions.[143] In devising the essential conditions of parties versus factions, Bluntschli was looking for an argument that would be capable of justifying the exclusion of inimical parties in the age of party politics. He proved that this could be done by devaluing groups, by classifying them as "factions." The confessional party (Catholics involved in politics) and the class-based movement (the Socialist Party) were "not political" groups. Bluntschli, echoing Bismarck's politics, thought that they were factions. As such, he believed that they should be excluded from representative institutions.[144] In denying those parties legitimacy, Bluntschli justified their repression, on the basis that they were factions, or on the basis that they threatened the principle of the supremacy of the state (which Bluntschli believed to be the basic condition for an authentic party politics). Hence, the reference to unanimity did not fade away with party government and the rehabilitation of parties; it was transferred from policy to the basic pact, or the constitution, or the state. Legitimate opposition meant first of all *constitutional loyalty,* and proof of that loyalty had to be sought in the ideology and the charter of the parties.[145] Rather than merely providing a justification for party politics as a form of productive partisanship, Bluntschli intended to limit what counted as political (i.e., what counted as a party) and what counted as subversion of the constitutional order (i.e., what counted as a faction).[146]

The distinction between parties and factions in parliamentary government was the first step toward accepting and legitimizing party politics in the age of republican foundation. It was used to sanitize the party environment of those associations that were deemed problematic for the stability of the system. A populist party does more or less the same work of sanitation when it accuses existing parties of fragmenting the masses, or the people, in order to facilitate some partial interests. Its attack on party politics is made as an attack on factional politics. The curious thing is that populist politics is not the affirmation of universalism versus partial politics, as we have seen; rather, it is the celebration of the representation of one part, the peripheral or marginal one, which at times is also the most numerous. Populist politics is *merecratic* in the classical sense—it proclaims the interests of a part once the whole has been declared to be a purely rhetorical construction, and once "institutions and procedures" (the empty space of politics) have been declared to be incapable of being truly empty. In Lefort's words, "The axis of

our argument on democracy has been that it is necessary to transfer the notion of emptiness from the place of power in a democratic regime to the very subject occupying that place."[147]

For Laclau, the extension of this emptiness from institutions to the subject would make sense only "if we were dealing merely with the juridical, formal aspects of democracy."[148] But politics always occurs, and the political subject is always constructed, outside that "formal" aspect. In effect, emptiness is implausible even at the institutional level, as the *politeia*—the constitution—is within the body of the city, within social relations and power relations. Remarkably, to justify the incorporation of this empty space, Laclau clarifies the meaning of the constitution by retrieving its Aristotelian (or Hegelian) meaning. He proposes that the constitution is "a community's whole political way of life": it is an arrangement that regulates relations of power between social forces that are already there. They are, moreover, not merely parties but "social interests and claims." They embody a social pluralism that, as we saw with Bottai, needs to be brought to unity at the state level through a leader.

I started this book with the claim that the "formal" aspect of representative democracy is the substance of democracy. (Assuming that, by "democracy," we mean an open space in which citizens and groups compete to make and change decisions, resisting and opposing in order to propose their own projects in turn.) Now I have clarified that populism pertains to the interpretation of democracy. If, as Laclau seems to suggest, the constitution of democracy is an "arrangement" that regulates the relation of power among opposite sociopolitical demands—the elite and the plebs—then politics is clearly always a politics of factions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have completed the argument about antiestablishmentarians that I began in Chapter 1. I have shown that the truly important achievement of a populist leader—actually, the "miracle"—consists in his nullifying the most nefarious risk he would face once he achieved power. That risk is the risk that he would appear to his people to have simply installed a new establishment. The establishment must belong to the past. The populist leader who seeks power must become an insider without ever appearing to be one. He cannot simply lead a protest movement against the establishment. And he must be able to collapse the difference between movement and power, and between outside and inside. This is the puzzle I have explored in order to examine the tension between populism and represen-

tative democracy, and to outline its differences from fascism. When we examine the role of the leader in populism, we see both its distance from democracy and its closeness to fascism. And we see the difference between populist and dictatorial paths to antiestablishmentarianism. I have demonstrated that understanding representation as embodiment is key to grasping the "miracle" of a leader who escapes the establishment trap by divesting himself of political responsibility. The figure of the leader and the party are the two fundamental components of a populist democracy. And they are the premises that I use, in the next chapter, to argue that populism in power is a form of *direct representation,* in every respect.

4

DIRECT REPRESENTATION

> The pan-movements' hostility to the party system acquired practical significance when, after the first World War, the party system ceased to be a working device.
>
> —Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

In the previous chapter, we saw how incarnation or embodiment is the peculiar form of representation that characterizes populist movements and regimes. We must now turn our attention to the process through which this form is attained. This is the topic of this final chapter. I examine the form of representation that populism movements put in action, with illustrations from two exemplary contemporary cases of anti-party parties: the Five Star Movement (Movimento Cinque Stelle or M5S) and Podemos.[1] Our analysis does not have the ambition of studying these two movements but to illustrate through them the process of hyperleaderism through the digital devide. M5S and Podemos, like other similar movements recently born in Europe and the Americas, emerged through "participatory tools" offered by the web, "mass online decision-making applications that facilitate the participation of members in various discussions, deliberation and e-ballots," and are characterized by flexible definition of memberships that blurs the "party" and unifies citizens through a set of strategies that are recognizable as plebiscitarian and populist, leader-based, and a "reactive" rhetoric.[2] In Manuel Castells's enthusiastic words, these post-parties were like the actualization of the "network society" in which the pyramid of hierarchy is reversed.[3]

These two movements are very different, not only in their programs but also in their methods and achievements. M5S relies on the "everyman" tradition *(qualunquismo),* which has been rooted in Italian democracy since

its inception (1945) and is centrist (but advocates in favor of those who have been "left behind"), antiradical, and antiparty (radically hostile to the existing parties and the system comprising them). Podemos, by contrast, relies on a Leninist kind of voluntarism, which rests on the dualism between the 99 percent and the 1 percent and involves a more radical conception of the people and of politics.[4] The latter is situated decidedly on the left side of the ideological spectrum and does not disdain to become a party in all respects; its antipartyism was in effect a criticism of the reticence and centrism of the traditional socialist party. M5S has never claimed to be a leftist movement: it wants to be a movement of ordinary citizens *(gentismo)* that is aligned with what the indistinct many—*la gente,* or the many—feel and claim. It aims to be much more inclusive and generalist than a traditional ideological party, and it is in favor of social policies based on assistance rather than redistribution; we can situate M5S in the tradition of a moderate mass party such as Christian democracy. Podemos, on the other hand, argues for the overcoming of traditional divides between old right and old left, with an eye to a more progressive politics than traditional leftism. Born in the aftermath of the Indignados, a spontaneous popular movement denouncing impoverishment and elitism, Podemos proposes to be a true alternative to the political establishment: "No es izquierda o derecha, es dictatura or democracia" (It isn't "left" or "right," it's "dictatorship" or "democracy").[5] Both M5S and Podemos claim to be populist, and both have played an important role in legitimizing populism among democrats and within the left. Both movements use new media (Beppe Grillo and Pablo Iglesias Turrión) or traditional media (Iglesias but not Grillo) to activate a sort of "permanent online consultation" with their militants. Both of them are only "netroots organizations," as their intraparty system of decision making and internal communication rely only upon the internet (contra to the hybrid parties, which are traditionally based on "loyalty organizations" and use the internet to communicate with the outside world).[6] Digital militants come to seem like the real leadership, collective and horizontal with the leader as their visual presence and voice, yet without a hierarchical structure of cadres. Truly, these movements are new cases of postideological net democracy. They are new because of the means they use, even if the process they put in motion is the same as that of traditional leaders and parties (which are equally as interested in establishing a permanent line of direct communication with the people). In his book *The Digital Party*, Paolo Gerbaudo lists these new forms of hyperleaderism within traditional categories such as Caesarism and plebiscitarianism. I argue consistently that audience democracy—which the internet facilitates—is permeating parties across the political spectrum and making them more populist in style than they want to appear.

The advantage of new media technologies is incontrovertible, and it seems to give populism a chance of solving the dilemma that Robert Michels raised back in 1911. Organization, Michels argued, is the means of the many in their fight against the few; but organization is always destined to become the rare door through which the few infiltrate the struggle of the many and make it their own struggle. How can the many achieve power without passing through an intermediary moment—that is, the moment that fatally reproduces the establishment? To employ an oxymoron, How can representation be performed directly, given that it is endogenously structured as an indirect, and mediated, form of political presence? To answer these questions, we first need to clarify what a representative process is, why it requires intermediations, and what kind of intermediations it requires. Populism is part of the complex and mutable experience of representative government; it is not part of the category of direct democracy.

Referenda and Plebiscites

Many features of populism seem to conform to the line of thinking pursued by direct democracy, rather than that pursued by representation: the antiestablishmentarian argument, the contestation of traditional parties, and the mobilization of and by ordinary, powerless citizens. Scholars have argued that populism "can be seen as a sort of democratic extremism," because it is a contestation of checks and balances, and of representative procedures, in the name of "plebiscites and other forms of direct democracy."[7] The interpretation of these scholars rests on a conviction that the leader's apical role is contingent, not determinant. In their view, the phenomenon that is more peculiar to populism is the contestation of the liberal component in the liberal-democratic hyphenated set. This, they suppose, is the reason why populism is a challenge to pluralism, but not necessarily to democracy. I raised doubts about this argument in previous chapters. Here I would add that plebiscites and referenda, while certainly "forms" of direct democracy, are not an indication of radical democracy per se; they do not make personalistic politics and verticalization void.

The plebiscite is a democratic form of authorization of a leader or an issue. Referenda are a form of direct intervention that is subsidiary to the representative system, because they occur within a setting of lawmaking by elected politicians.[8] Both forms can easily become tools of manipulation, and they have frequently been used by leaders and politicians who want to attain the consent that will confirm their own policies and goals. Brexit is an exemplary case. Prime Minister David Cameron called the referendum on

Brexit in order to achieve a very parochial goal, and one that was external to the object proposed to popular consultation: he wanted to weaken the opposition within his own party by strengthening his personal popular support. To do so, he pushed a button that he knew was very popular in his country—the button of anti-Europeanism. Then fears about employment, the immigration of a cheap workforce, and never-ending economic crisis fueled the already strong Euro-skeptic sentiments of the British people. In late summer 2016 the leader of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, held a consultative referendum in order to reconfirm the people's support of his anti-immigration politics, and moreover to understand how far he could go in endorsing a closed-border policy with the European Union.

Turning to the plebiscite, the history of this institution is mixed. It has been used both to legitimate constitutional beginnings (for example, during Italy's state formation in 1861) and (more frequently) to crown authoritarian leaders. Beginning with Napoleon Bonaparte in 1800, the plebiscitary appeal to the people has been frequently used by chiefs of state or political leaders who were *already* in power and wanted to deepen their popular support or seek carte blanche against dissidents within their entourage (Napoleon I) or within the democratic parliamentary republic (Napoleon III).[9] A plebiscite is an instrument that leaders may use to seal their charisma in the eyes of the people, and to give it the boost of formal approval.[10] We see this in the words that Bonaparte used to comment on the plebiscite of 1802 (which, we recall, made him consul for life): "The plebiscite has the advantage of legalizing my extension of office and placing it on the highest possible basis."[11] Karl Marx commented on Napoleon III's plebiscite with his characteristic acumen: "In general the plebiscite dealt the final blow to the empire. Because so many voted aye for the empire wreathed in constitutional phrases Boustrapa [sobriquet of Louis Bonaparte consisting of the first syllables of Boulogne, Strasbourg, and Paris] believes he can now quite unceremoniously restore the empire *sans phrase,* that is to say, the December regime."[12]

Approval is the core theme of the plebiscite: it is a sign of investiture and confidence.[13] This explains why the leader is primarily concerned to avoid abstention (as opposed to rebuff). It is high participation in the plebiscite, rather than the majority of the votes by itself, that shows how closely the people adhere to the leader's plans.[14] Unlike populism, which embodies the ideal of mobilization, plebiscitary democracy narrows the role of active citizenship in order to stress people's reactive answers to the leader's promises, deeds, decisions, and appearances. Ultimately, the plebiscite and the referendum are *forms* of direct appeal to the people, but do not institute direct democracy. This is because the latter entails citizens' political autonomy

all the way down: from the raising of questions, to the choosing of issues to be discussed, to voting. If we agree that, in populism, the leader and the people are a twin set—one that appears and works together when a populist movement plans to compete for, achieve, or stay in power—then it is clear that reference to direct democracy does not help us describe the populist phenomenon.

In what follows, I will first highlight the difference between populism and mandate representation. Technically speaking, this is the political form of representation that party democracy adopts and populism transforms. My claim is that this transformation consists in the development of a direct form of *representation,* not a direct form of democracy. This new form of representation stages the construction of a vertical level of authority (as with mandate representation)—but one that succeeds in annulling all distance from the people (unlike mandate representation). I propose that populism is not contesting representative government but is rather contesting the way that government is attained. It is a criticism of organized parties and professional media: it does not seek to restore political autonomy to citizens but seeks to construct a direct relation between the representative and the represented. The target of populist representation is the intermediation model of mandate representation, not elections or indirect ruling more generally. Yet the "need to balance leadership and party machinery" emerges as fundamental, particularly in contemporary democracies, which tend to be dominated by the power of the audience.[15]

Two Representative Processes

I have already established that populism rejects mandate representation because that form of representation injects pluralism and divisions within the people and focuses on "formality" (suffrage) and the identification of participation with "status" (electorship). Moreover, it engenders, and goes together with, vindication (by the citizens by means of media, parties, and representatives), responsibility (of the elected toward the constitution and the law), responsiveness (of the elected to the party and the electors), and accountability (of the representatives to the electors). Although political scientists may have a point when they argue that "responsiveness" is a myth, rather than actual behavior—because electors are far from competent in judging the elected—it remains true that the "rules of the game" create both the players and the environment. They do so at the moment they structure the game, even though they do not guarantee that the players will be efficient, honest, and competent (because how could they?). Yet the "outcome"

is much less relevant than the way it is achieved, and much less relevant than the way the game has been played. In actuality, the way the game is played renders an unsatisfactory outcome legitimate and produces a situation in which citizens confirm their support of the democratic system. The fact that electors are "rationally ignorant," that the elected are not efficient and not fully transparent, and the fact that the preferences of the electors are far from consistent with a hypothetical "will of the people"—none of this refutes the legitimacy of the democratic game.[16] In Bobbio's words, "The rules of the game, the players and their moves form a whole which cannot be broken down into separate units. . . . In this sense the rules of the game [such as elections], the players and the moves are interdependent because they owe their very existence to the rules."[17]

Against this institutional focus, which structures the identity and work of representative bodies, populism denotes "shifting power relationships rather than fixed institutions."[18] Stressing the process of changing the formal and institutional elements, populism proposes a practice of representation that is more attentive to the making of claims than to the exercise of political autonomy in its full sense. This process of claim making is composed of opinion making and decision making. As we have already seen, representation as claim making is the paradigm that better fits the populist phenomenon, and it contrasts with mandate representation, which is based not solely on the claims that unified certain people around the name of a leader but also on the act of the will or electoral designation.[19]

Electoral representation derives legitimacy from the people in its individual components. This is true even if citizens inevitably contest the claims of elected officials to act in the name of the people. It is true, first of all, because there is no identity between those two moments; and, second of all, because if we look beyond the *fictio juris* of popular sovereignty that is contemplated in a constitution, we find that the people is nothing more or less than a *relation of proximity* (never identity) between represented and representatives, which is managed by the negative power citizens have to surveil, monitor, challenge, and dismiss the elected.[20] Mandate representation rests on the constant separation between "outside" and "inside," even as it generates a current of political judgments and opinions that establishes communication between the two poles.[21] The tension between the citizen (who is unavoidably plural in his or her views and partisan in political judgment) and the elector (who is unavoidably identical and has suffrage of an equal weight) is at the core of mandate representation. This representation, as I have said, occurs as a set of dynamics that activate the communications between state institutions and society. Even though political representation *starts with* elections, a rendering

of political representation that is merely electoral does not exhaust the meaning of representative democracy.

On the other hand, populist representation consists in a process that seems, at first glance, to have a *dual* aspect: a process by which a multitude of various (and not necessarily cogent) claims and groups achieve a subjective unity as a collective, which a singular will represents and translates into decisions. Embodying the people means *acting as* the people, as I said, but it means also *acting in place of* the people. At the end of the claim-making process, a strong decision maker emerges: achieving unity and acting as one are two processes that have been combined into one. Representation as embodiment is successful insofar as the people's faith in their leader remains undivided and unreserved. This is the opposite of mandate representation, which generates and profits from mistrust. The engine of populist representation is *trust through faith,* rather than trust through free and open debate (which would entail contestation and dissent) among followers, and between followers and their representative. The continuous flux of judgment and criticism that connects and separates society and institutions is endogenous to representative democracy. It is crucial for the perception of accountability, which would be empty if it were disconnected from the climate of mistrust and denunciation that characterizes such a society.[22] The assumption that elections reinforce is that a leader is not like us anyway, and can be defenestrated; this assumption is the most effective injection of trust in the democratic game. Low faith in the leaders, no matter their claims about being closer to the people than the opposition or their rivals, is a tonic for mandate representation, but not for embodiment representation, which does not have access to any safety valve against the *capopopolo.*

Patterns of mobilization are different in different countries, and it would be wrong to propose a univocal character of populist representation vis-à-vis democracy. But many cases of populism seem to confirm that the ability of a dominant personality "to penetrate state institutions [and] shape and contest public policies" is less successful if popular subjects are "relatively autonomous, self-constituted, and mobilized from below."[23] The tension between the representative and the people is a sign of a healthy polity; such a polity should be measured by the *distance* that exists between the inside and the outside, not the abolition of that distance. Populist leaders do not cultivate the idea of accountability—in fact, they disdain it. For them, who claim to be "one of the many," the faith of their people is a mark of legitimacy, which no formal check or intermediary institutions can break. Their chances of electoral success are proportional to the intensity of their citizens' conviction that political authority is remote from them, and that they are not represented by institutions. Populist leaders' chances of high

approval by the audience once in power are proportional to the intensity of their citizens' conviction that political authority lies with the people, through their leader. (This is true no matter how ambiguous this judgment or "conviction" is, and no matter how hard it is to prove the precise content of the people's authentic will.) The foggy issue of accountability is internal to the perception of the distance between inside and outside. This makes this perspective very important, because if we assume (as we do in mandate representation) that the distance between outside and inside is the paradigm that defines and facilitates the checking power of the citizens (monitoring, contestation, and vigilance), then the need *to define* the will of the people becomes less dramatic. This is because the process of shaping and contesting opinion, on that reading, is already making the will of the people. Under mandate representation, there is no secure way in which one can make the elected figure accountable, apart from waiting until the end of the leader's mandate in order to reconfirm or dislodge him or her. At the same time, the mere fact that electors do not surrender to the quest for empirical demonstration is already a mark of accountability. It is also a mark of how important it is keep the "outside" and the "inside" separated, rather than unified.

But the idea of representation as embodiment is structured in a way that neutralizes the quest for accountability *ex ante*. This is because it materializes with the people's surrender, which itself manifests through their faith in their leader. The victory of populism is not so much the victory of the people; it is the victory of the "authentic" people, whose "right" needs and wills a representative leader declares to know as nobody has before (even if previous leaders ruled with majority consent). In fact, at one point the actual people are transformed into an imaginary entity, incarnated in the leader: the leader extracts the "true" people from the empirical people who inhabit a country, or who are subjected to a country's legal order. As Margaret Canovan writes, it is not the people themselves but the *ideology* of the people that constitutes people's populism.[24] This makes populism in power resemble an order that is something like post-fascism combined with elections, as Enzo Traverso, Roger Griffin, and Federico Finchelstein write.[25] It does not abolish remaining democratic institutions, and it is led by a figure embodying the people who sets forth to relegitimize that people. So the process that seems as if it had this dual aspect at the outset turns out to be one main process. The move to make the people feel that the voice of the representative is *their* voice is, in effect, the same as the move to construct the people through evocative images and symbols. It is the same as the move to refer to exemplary events that make the issue of accountability unnecessary. And it is the same as the move to make the representative's voice the only

voice that can be heard. We may say that formal legitimacy and institutional procedures, or the rules of the game (voting and constitutional checks), are less essential for the legitimacy of this representative work than the presence of this audience support. However, Benjamin Moffitt writes that the populist process is never a "monodirectional operation" because the representation of the people must be "judged" by the people themselves to be effective—and the people are never dispossessed of their judgment.[26] This makes the relation of "judgment" and "will," which constitutes the diarchic nature of democracy, a further theme to be examined.

Democratic diarchy makes two claims. First, it suggests that "will" and "judgment" are "the two powers of the sovereign citizens. Second, it proposes that they are different, and should remain distinct, even though they need to be in constant communication."[27] The public is the core of judgment, along with the parties that organize political opinions and compose the public. It does not claim sovereign power but takes on a constructive role in the making of decisions or the will. Diarchy entails tension, rather than harmony. Its two halves prove that representative democracy has an endogenous disposition to generate dissent and conflict along partisan lines; voting *regulates* this dissent and conflict, but it never *resolves* it. Before and after elections—in fact, just after the counting of votes—we always see a growth in the amount of critical interpretation and contestation. And this does not only occur among the "losers" (in their attempt to assess responsibilities and understand what went wrong); it also occurs among the "winners" (the elected in particular), who are tempted to deviate from their promises and try to propose an interpretation of them that is more convenient to the exercise of their power. Elsewhere, I have conceptualized mandate representation as a politics of temporality.[28] It is a politics of temporality because, in representative politics, votes are never mere quantities, and they never give the last word on a subject. They mirror the complexity of opinions and political influence: neither of these things is an arithmetically computable entity, and both of them are inherently connected to previous and subsequent voting events. When we translate ideas into electoral votes, we tend to forget this temporal complexity: we assume that votes reflect individual preferences, rather than merely rendering opinions about them. If we want to amend the reading of democratic voting that suggests that it selects decision makers, not policies, we need to be clear that—contrary to votes *on* single issues (i.e., direct democracy), a vote *for* a candidate reflects the *longue durée,* or the effectiveness of a constellation of political opinions through time. It mirrors citizens' judgment of a political platform, or a set of demands and ideas that connect past, present, and future perspectives. In this sense, representative democracy is like a "time-

regime."[29] Political parties are inscribed *within* it; they are not artificially added *to* it. They are the repository of that *longue durée,* the thing that makes it enduring and vital. They are the expression of the partisan character of political judgment. This judgment, as we saw in Chapter 2, involves both a claim of loyalty and an assumption that loyalty is limited, because partisanship requires plurality and change, not unison. It reclaims consistency of behavior with some core distinctive values; but the narrative of those values is not a static repetition, nor is it validated solely by the electoral success of the leader. Partisanship changes, and it has a history; and partisans "are always partial," even when their party is in power—this means that "however ardent and devoid of skepticism there is a limit and reticence to partisan claim."[30] Even in power, they can never be one with the whole, because this would dissolve their part, and dissolve what they stand for. This is the condition that makes political parties a secure bastion for pluralism and the rules of the game, because of its combination of "inclusiveness, comprehensiveness, and disposition to compromise."[31]

In the case of mandate representation, the party has an essential role. But in the case of representation as embodiment, it is the media and propaganda that are essential. All elected leaders adopt a "communicator-state" strategy once they are in power. But in addition, populist leaders show impatience with party organization, which compresses their personality and asks that they be consistent with the tenets of the party. This encumbers the communicative strategies the "communicator-state" prepares. As we saw in the previous chapter, populist leaders prefer movements to parties, because they want a personal party that is elastic enough to follow their plans. Predictably, populist leaders love communication and the media much more than party organizations, because the former facilitate two moves: direct confrontation with their enemies (the establishment) and propagation of the ideas and symbols they want the people to absorb.[32] In party democracy, the choice of the citizens in following and choosing a party is left essentially to their single judgment. This judgment can be very much connected to the ideas and values represented by that party, or it can be distant from it: it can even be indifferent to the emotional aspect of partisanship.[33] This means that the representative process is an endless work of identity construction and rethinking. The representative agents and constituencies are several, and there is never a singular unifier who can say, "I am the true people." The public sphere of communication (the "outside") is plural, and sometimes it achieves a cacophonic or even "anarchic" character.[34]

In populist representation, on the other hand, the performing center is clear, unquestioned, and certainly unified or monistic (i.e., it is one). Nobody apart from the leader and those identified by him or her are supposed to do

the representative job. This identification can be believed more or less intensely, and the work of the leader consists in keeping the faith high. To come back to Moffitt's argument, "judgment" is obviously not stolen by the representative leader; but does it have the same amplitude of possibilities and freedom as in party democracy? Only dictatorship breaches the borders of constitutional legality, and populism is not yet dictatorship, as I have said. However, the climate of permanent campaign and propaganda that is needed in order to keep the representative work in progress discourages dissent. Dissent and indifference are met with humiliation. Although *legality* is not mobilized against opposition, *legitimacy* is mobilized intensely, and it becomes a sort of guardian of the "true" people. Opinions and decisions that counter the populist people are constantly chastised, mocked, and rejected as a conspiracy among elites.[35]

In the representative process, the tenor of public debate is no less important than the formal protection of legal guarantees. The show of victorious power in the audience over a plurality of voices is meant to reinforce one judgment while dwarfing all others. To avoid assaulting legality and breaching democracy (to avoid becoming like fascism), the populist leader needs to stay in permanent campaign mode because, of course, the formality of elections has less value than the strength of the audience. Scholars record the number of hours of broadcasting time that Hugo Chávez used while president, and they study the media infrastructures that have been publicly financed in various Latin American governments, or in Italy under Silvio Berlusconi's governments and now under Matteo Salvini's.[36] Presenting the voice of the leader and his or her people "as if" it were the most representative voice, or the voice that commands more respect than all others, is not some innocuous majority judgment. Any move to monopolize the representative voices of the people is an instance of absolutism.[37]

To conclude, the diarchy of will and opinion is the missing paradigm in representation as embodiment. It consists in the idea that the will is external to the representative process, rather than intermixed with it. With populism that will is deposited in the leader, who is like the "mouth" of the people (as Donald Trump said of himself), while the people strengthen their representative identity through the nonsovereign sphere of opinion. This indicates the decisionist vocation of the populist leader. Elections function to show the strength of the popular force that the leader already has. At most, they work as plebiscites, as we saw in Chapter 2. Voting is meant as a vivid demonstration of the people's adhesion to their leader. In mandate representation, adhesion is partial and directed toward collective actors who acknowledge their partiality when they compete for the majority. But in populist representation, adhesion is encompassing and holistic, and certainly not

plural. This remarkable difference brings us to the issue of intermediation, and on this note, we can return to Michels's dilemma.

Observing the fact that populists neutralize the few by linking the many directly to the one, I have situated populism within a monoarchic paradigm of embodiment representation. This is consistent with the classical assumption that it is the few—more than the one—that is inimical to the many. Populist antiestablishmentarianism sustains representation as embodiment and relies on a personalist politics and movement; in so doing, it contests the paradigm of mixing the few and the many in government through the organization of parties (hence its strong contestation of "organization" in the name of a horizontal and direct relation between the leader and the people) and resorts to anther mix, which mirrors the myth of a "democratic monarch" as the natural protector of the many against the few. This argument resonates with John Adams's observations at the outset of the American republic. In his classic attacks against oligarchy, he claimed that "democracy" can be better "protected" against the few by "the strong arm of monarchy." "Aristocracy is the natural enemy of monarchy," he wrote, "and monarchy and democracy are the natural allies against it."[38] In the same vein, we find support for populist leadership in the antiparliamentary writers of the early twentieth century, from Georges Sorel to Vilfredo Pareto. Joseph Schumpeter is a particularly strong example, as he characterized democracy as a method for selecting a Caesarist leader, as occurs in a plebiscite.[39] This is the same as the logic that guides populism, setting it up as a process of collective will construction that achieves representative visibility through a leader, whose name becomes the name of the movement itself.

The Camera Obscura and the Pleonexia of Popularity

I have compared mandate representation with embodiment representation by relying essentially on theoretical generalizations. I did not analyze the factual conditions that accompany the rise and decline of these types of representation; nor did I investigate the factors that are quickly turning that theoretical outline into an idealized picture. Bernard Manin has studied both topics very effectively, and we can rely on the several assumptions of party democracy and mandate representation he collected. I propose to schematize his position in the following eleven assertions:

1. Electors vote for a party, not merely for a person.
2. Society is divided along the line of economic interests and classes, which party ideologies more or less faithfully reflect.

3. Representatives have free mandate by law but enjoy only partial autonomy from their electors (thanks to party discipline, which controls the representatives and so retains practical accountability).
4. Parties are capable of practicing compromises, even though their ideological identity puts limits on their ability to form coalitions or bargain on legislative proposals.
5. Deliberative institutions like Congress and Parliament are more central than executive institutions.
6. The party is never merely "inside" the institution, but always has a strong base in society, among militants and sympathizers.
7. Parties also have connections with organized social interests, such as unions, or the representative of the industrialists and other interests or claims.
8. Parties have their own means of information and propaganda, which tend to correct, dissent from, or contest information that comes from independent media (private and public).
9. Parties have their schools for forming leaders, and for establishing linkages with intellectuals and professionals.
10. Parties have a sort of "memory," which they carefully preserve though archives, cultural institutions, and the promotion of national debates on the day's most pressing issues, and on cultural themes that orient the judgments of citizens and scholars.
11. Militants have a say in the making of these programs, and also a (less powerful) say in the making of the candidates list.[40]

Representative democracy is structurally based both on sentimental attachment (partisan identification)—which includes a predilection for discussion, and a predilection for critical analysis of how parties and their leaders behave—and on a society that is pluralistic and dense with associations and belongings, rather than simply being an aggregation of dissociated citizens and individuals. This *associative pluralism* does not simply rest on material and utilitarian interests. Rather, it relies on political organizations that are capable of inspiring identifications. This means that a parliamentary politics is not solely an affair of the politicians, nor is it simply daily bargaining among institutionalized parties. The party system's capacity to function with people's support relies on a system of beliefs that is functional to the preservation of political pluralism. But it is not, itself, conceived of as pure functionalism. And it is this that distinguishes party democracy from representative government in the predemocratic age. At that time, parties were only really "electoral" because suffrage was limited, and because representation was concerned

with a narrow and fairly homogeneous elite. In representative democracy, the delivery of promises is part of the well-functioning party system, and part of parties that are organized so as to involve citizens, and not simply to mobilize electors. It reinforces itself through its direct connection with militants, fellows, and electors.

Giovanni Sartori depicted the role of parties in democracy quite effectively:

> With universal suffrage, then, the party system acquires a new property. As long as politicized society remains a relative small elite society, the party system can remain in a state of flux. But when the society at large becomes politicized, the traffic rules that plug the society into the state, and vice versa, are established by the way in which a party system becomes structured. At this point, parties become channeling agencies, and the party system becomes the system of political canalization of the society.[41]

And even though parties are machines that need, and create, hierarchy, *parties are not soulless machines.*

We can complete our description of the decline of the party model of democracy by analyzing it through the lens of a dilemma that is endogenous to parliamentary or representative democracy. This form of polity lives on individual autonomy (the secret and individual ballot, which is the true bastion against acclamation).[42] It lives on the rational discussion and assessment of problems in relation to some commonly shared rights. It also lives on toleration, and on the acceptance of a pluralism of ideas and interpretations. And all of this requires dedication and some degree of passionate intensity, which citizens use to express or conjugate the general interest that facilitates pluralism and openness. No party claims to represent only the interests of the part that it relies on directly. And no party confuses toleration of other parties with laxity, indifference, or support for their tenets. Toleration does not exclude intransigence.[43] In sum, representative democracy demands both rational debates *and* the acceptance of views that are either opposed or simply different (particularly at the institutional level). But it also demands more than a merely rational adhesion to, or functionalist calculation of, interests by its citizens. It rests, one might say, on a structural asymmetry between rationalization and passionate adhesion. This asymmetry allows for an equilibrium that is feeble and endemically vulnerable, and it is evidence of the strength of partisan involvement. We can recall what Sartori wrote, several years ago, about the "is-es" and "oughts" of democracy: "A democracy exists insofar as its ideals, its values translates it [democracy] into reality."[44] For several decades, political parties have been the agencies that allowed for the possibility of that translation.

But it would be simplistic to suggest that the political parties and their leaders are the only entities responsible for short-circuiting the system. The rise of populists who act as "sovereignists" (a name that stresses the opposition between national sovereign states and globalized organizations or forms of nation-state integration, such as the European Union) indicates that representative democracy suffers—and populism profits—from the decline of state-centered sovereignty. Populists contrast their support for popular sovereignty (which they call the will of the people) with their rejection of globalizing forces and impersonal corporations, as much as their rejection of immigrants. Allegedly, these forces threaten to destabilize the domestic economy, and populists denounce what is clearly a complex sign of the decline of sovereignty (and the party system). The increasing inability of nation-states to manage their economies, regulate their borders, and execute political capacities only fuels the populist blaze. In Manin's words, "As a consequence of growing economic interdependence . . . the problems which politicians have to confront once in office become less and less predictable . . . so they are not inclined to tie their hands by committing themselves to a detailed platform."[45]

The representative system was tied to the existence of a socioeconomic order that was essentially based on an efficacious sovereign power at the state level. This order provided parties with sufficient latitude to make promises. And it meant that government was not simply a neutral umpire that regulated the traffic being produced by social forces and interests; it was also engaged in governing society according to the projects that citizens most identified with.

This grandiose system for facilitating interactions between society and government relied on a plurality of representative actors. The aim of these actors was to avert plebiscitary forms of politics, but without pushing the people out of politics. They sought to inspire partisanship, but without allowing loyalties to become the fundamentalist interpreters of principles and values (as had happened in factions). And they hoped to prevent the rise of personalized leadership or the politics of celebrity (a role that is paramount in parliamentary democracy). In this sense, parties were not merely supposed to control the masses through the elite, as Michels's famous generalization would suggest. They were also—and perhaps even more importantly—meant to tame solitary leaders, because the ambitions of such leaders could be at least as destabilizing as the whims of leaderless crowds (as Machiavelli understood). This complex architecture was the masterpiece of party democracy. It worked hard to prevent politics from becoming reliant on two pillars (the people and the leader) alone. To paraphrase Max Weber, modern democracy stabilizes when, and on the condition that, it can inte-

grate leadership (and plebiscitary leaders in particular) into the framework of political society—and the organized party is the means to do so. Party democracy pluralized the political sphere and articulated society precisely in order to avert that simple dualism between the one and the many. Organized parties are supposed to contain the power of the former. This checking function is particularly meaningful in a presidential republic, and it can hinder the emergence of populist leaders in parliamentary democracy.[46]

The decline of party democracy mirrors the rise of populism, and both phenomena tend to go together with the success of that simple dualism (the paradigm of the Many and the One). Some scholars compare this process to the dramatic crisis of representative government that antedates mass dictatorships. The exhaustion of party democracy means that the distance between "the popular" and "the constitutional" grows and grows. Eventually, the former is disembodied (because parties become practically absent as organized groups in society while essentially ingrained within institutions), and the latter comes to be seen as a purely formalistic mechanism that resides in the hands of elected or appointed politicians whom public opinion identifies with the establishment, the political caste, or simply "the elite."[47] This terminology antedates the populist phenomenon, which reflects and represents (rather than creates) the image of representative democracy as a ring between insiders and outsiders, or between the establishment and the people. Let us explore an empirical case to prove the point.

In 1992, when the Italian party system collapsed, populist movements and styles of politics had not yet conquered the stage of the public at large. As Mario Tarchi writes, however, public opinion, both professional and general opinion, was already well disposed to a "populistic" transformation of politics:

> the sovereignty of public opinion over the institutions, the faith in the miraculous virtues of the man who devoted himself to the good of the people, plebiscitarianism, the superiority of society and the economy over politics, the right of the individual citizens to impose a mandate on representatives and revoke it whenever they felt betrayed or misunderstood by sending a message to the rulers through the percentage in an opinion survey.[48]

Populism finds fertile soil in countries in which the distrust of parties and partisanship has been very strong.

Notably, the Northern League and Berlusconi both emerged in the 1990s after the evolution of the personalized party was already in place, thanks to Bettino Craxi, the secretary of the Italian Socialist Party. As Mauro Calise writes, in trying to understand the conditions of Berlusconi's success,

> Departure from the previous pattern [organized mass parties] became all the more striking with Bettino Craxi's personal and direct relationship between the new premier and the electorate. . . . Indeed, the rise of personal politics in an attempt to create a more direct relationship between the government and its electorate was also bound to strongly affect the particratic tradition of collegial decision making.[49]

The influence and organization of traditional parties were declining during this period, because of corruption and the end of the polarized ideologies of the Cold War.[50] M5S emerged in 2008, when the leftist party Partito Democratico refounded itself. This refoundation was consciously attained with the goal of never replicating the old organized parties: instead, the refounded party was going to be "liquid" and "light" and avoid establishing local headquarters or local-to-national chains of command.[51] Decline in partisan identifications translated into a decline in citizens' participation (both electoral and associational). It also translated into a broadening of the distance between citizens and institutions.[52] It did not, however, bring about a more reasonable public sphere. Nor did it give rise to greater numbers of independent voters or more objective and nonpartisan sources of information.[53] Instead, it opened the door to new political actors and movements, which built their ascendancy on a public arena that was emptied of partisan attachments. These new actors brandished the language of nonpartisan politics, and they were aided by the growth of media that were mainly commercial, and mainly independent from parties. Populism succeeded by profiting from a citizenry that was an undefined public of electors with weak party affiliation and loyalty.

The transformation of representative democracy goes hand in hand with populism. The process that leads to the decline of party democracy is different in each country, but the *direction* of that process is always impressively similar. As the dense system of intermediary bodies that party democracy had constructed begins to erode, it creates an effect like that of a camera obscura. All previous components are inverted—the age of political activists is over, as is the age of strong electoral participation. Society becomes more fluid, individualistic, and depoliticized, and opinion comes to be controlled by central media organizations, be these private or public. First among these is television; then come a variety of other "new media," such as online social networks. Finally, politics follows the path of celebrity and seeks out an audience as a test of its success. Vision replaces hearing as the organ of the public sphere—and that sphere begins to produce merely "effective images," rather than reasoned deliberation. The camera obscura is the democracy of the audience that Manin depicts in his book. The model

of politics is the theater in which the audience is the final judge. That audience can be induced by the art of rhetoric and visions, and often made gullible, but at the end, it is the only accepted reward of candidates and leaders. Elections register what the audience has already promoted or discarded. In a fully audience-based competition, where parties and partisanships are much less relevant, candidates do not know in advance which part of the citizenry they can rely on. They have to construct their image, style, and message—in short, they have to construct their constituency and do all the jobs that parties had previously done, but without relying on any social precision or any similarity. "Media experts" are the assistants of the candidate; they are expert in linguistic tools, and they are capable of creating the most effective articulations. Of course, they are not supposed to *contain* the ambition of personalist leaders: they are supposed to *unleash* it.[54] Audience democracy is a regime of *pleonexia of popularity.* And this means that electoral victory in such a system is first and foremost the victory of the leader and his or her "media experts." It is a spectacular victory, because it was built almost from scratch, and with no structural support from militants, apparatuses, or established media. It is only secondarily a victory of the logo of the party—on many occasions, in fact, this logo is suppressed, so that the candidate's face becomes the only image that identifies the political group and the electoral list. All of this means that party democracy is primed to produce its opposite: the deflation of partisanship and electoral cartels courting the center. Its poor functioning, or its decline, is primed to create the conditions of a mainstreamism that favors electoral absenteeism and political apathy. This mainstreamism is one of populism's easy targets—but it is also the very terrain that establishes the possibility of populist politics.

Antiestablishmentarianism lies at the core of the animosity that all populist movements have toward the party system. It points directly to completing the disintermediation of the political process, and to simplifying the political game. It does this by leaving only two players—the people and the leader.[55] These two models of representation confront each other on the terrain of opinion: the informal world of ideas and images, judgment and justification, in which consent and legitimacy can be constructed, but also eroded.

This pattern of behavior can be detected in all populist cases. It is borne out by a remarkably rich social, historical, and political literature, which studies cases ranging from Latin America to Europe. In the remaining few pages, however, I would like to discuss two very new populist movements. Only one of them is now in government, but both of them were born quite recently with the goal of achieving a majority and governing, and do so

without and even against the party form. They are M5S and Podemos. They follow the pattern of behavior of traditional populist movements and governments—for example, they reproduce Chávez's proclamations about direct "popular power" and "participatory democracy." As I mentioned earlier, these ideas materialize in their sponsorship of a plethora of social movements that directly manage social services (in the sense that they directly *administer* them, rather than directly *rule* them). These social services were intended to supplant political parties, and to turn elections into a "plebiscite of confirmation."[56] As many scholars have noted, populist leaders across the political spectrum make lavish use of media to achieve their goals. Moffitt has offered a careful overview of the cases and studies that analyze the "mediated construction [of the people] within contemporary populism" and that document the obsession that populist leaders have with making, adjusting, and controlling their image and the image of "their people." (This is an obsession that is shared by all kinds of populists—both the democratic ones and those who become fascists.) In his overview, Moffitt quite rightly stresses the representative and mediated character of populism.[57]

Today, populist democracy emerges within the "propaganda environment" and operates first and foremost on the audience. It aims to deconstruct intermediation (at least in its traditional forms) and to inaugurate the kind of immediacy of emotions and beliefs that the media allows, internet and the audience requires. Contemporary populists aim to regain power over the audience, and they profit not only from the decline of traditional mass parties but also from the technological revolution that has occurred in the domains of information and communication. Just as fascism took advantage of the new media of its own day (particularly radio and the movie industry), populism is taking advantage of television and—even more importantly—the internet. As Moffitt shows with a great deal of rich documentation, new media disseminates the populist performance and compels all politicians and parties to adopt a populist style of politics. Leaders can talk directly to the people, and they are eager to perform their commentary on everyday politics through social media, just like "ordinary" citizens. Antiestablishmentarian ordinariness is handy in this regard. And by this stage, the structure of parties is not simply transformed: it has become obsolete.[58] On this basis, I propose that we should speak of a populist *transformation* of democracy—or, even better, a transformation of the *form* that representative democracy is primed to take in the age of the sovereignty of the audience.

The Decline of Intermediary Bodies, and the Rise of Net Democracy

In *Siamo in guerra* (We are at war), Gianroberto Casaleggio and Beppe Grillo—the two founders of M5S—claim that there is a war going on between the "old world" and the "new world." The old world stands for party democracy, partisan politics, and political representation; the new one stands for free citizens connected horizontally through the net, without intermediary organizations and without any division between "inside" and "outside." "The Net does not want middlemen," as they observe, and it means that political parties and traditional media are doomed to disappear.[59] Indeed, established parties and accredited media are depicted as *obstructions* to democracy, which citizens can get rid of thanks to the net. To return to the ideas introduced at the end of Chapter 1, the extinction of the traditional party structure is a necessary step on the quest to advance a more fluid politics, and to give voice to the collective wisdom, an independent and democratic force that the net allows to emerge and express itself. The thing that makes M5S's claim so radical is not its desire to make the net a means for deepening participation: this desire is quite reasonable. The radical part of M5S's claim is its argument against the establishment, and its quest to remove partisan competition and political deliberation among parties. This is the argument that makes M5S a "nonparty party" (as its charter states), and one that is in agreement with populism's dualism between "folk democracy" and "established democracy" (which is designed, as I have said, to reunite the "inside" and the "outside" of the state).[60] M5S's ambition is to give the "electors" control of institutions and to create "direct parliamentarianism" by keeping the representatives in permanent contact with citizens through the net. M5S's program notes quite clearly that digital democracy is an advanced stage of monitory democracy, which is meant to replace the old style of direct democracy.[61]

For these reasons, opposition against the establishment is essentially opposition against intermediation. It particularly rejects parties and professional journalism, which have become the modern "intermediary bodies" that make representative government possible. I have already explored the various criticisms that have been leveled against the old party model; in what follows I would like to turn briefly to the criticism of official media. Today, this criticism is accompanied by the direct use of the internet—by both the people and their leaders—as a means to produce news and to interpret and comment on facts. This phenomenon seems to collapse the

division of labor and actualize the myth that the entire agora is unified in one time (if not one place).

The revolutionary condition of "digital networks" is one of several factors behind the populist renaissance. It is unpremeditated, and it facilitates the various strategies of postparty movements in ways that are truly novel and not necessarily identifiable with populism. Scholars and citizens still have mixed views of the internet: some of them have met this revolution with apocalyptic pronunciations about the nefarious impacts of Facebook and Twitter, which have created and spread the kinds of falsehoods and disinformation that ambitious leaders are quick to exploit. "The Net is opening up new terrain in our collective consciousness, between the old-fashioned 'news' and what used to be called the grapevine—rumor, gossip, word of mouth."[62] As with the crisis of representative government that preceded the rise of fascism, one might have the impression of déjà vu here too.

Gustave Le Bon is famous for his studies of the rising power of the audience as a force that can induce otherwise rational people to adopt the most obnoxious prejudices if they are immersed in a crowd. Cass R. Sunstein similarly believes that the internet is capable of producing Le Bon–style crowds with group members who "appear to show unswerving support for a cause, or a strong belief in a supposed fact, even though in their private moments almost all of them doubt the cause and the fact."[63] It seems reasonable to situate the phenomenology of direct representation within this old-new attention (which is never neutral) to the power of ideas, myths, and images—as well as the power of propaganda and liminal publicity—in shaping the audience.[64]

The internet proves capable of fusing participation and representation, and it does so in a way that is quick and cheap for individual citizens. Today, populism is an *affordable* politics. And this is one of the reasons for its success. The internet also proves that political movements and national electoral candidate selection can be achieved without "organization," and without "party structures," by the people themselves. The people are directly involved in the making of their representative claims, in their identification with leaders, and in the collection of information and news. The so-called Arab Spring has become a mythical example of how powerful direct representation can be: in that movement, smartphones and Skype were the only (technical) intermediaries. Direct representation does not call the indirect structure of decision making into question; it questions the management of that decision making and the actors who perform it. Representation can also be made in a direct form, and it can be reclaimed by the represented as their own autonomous creature. On this model, the representative becomes a marker that is chosen by the *audience,* not by a party.[65]

We do not yet seem to be fully aware of the implications of direct representation. These implications include greater connection with the world, and with the performance of functions that pertain to the formation of public opinion from within the domestic space; and the fusing of the private and the public in the formation and expression of ideas. They also herald the end of any distinction between private and public styles of discourse, criteria of judgment, or principles of evaluation. Physical meetings require persons and citizens to exit their homes, put on clothes that force them to play a public role, use language that is not immediately expressive of their emotions, and avoid judgments on the members of the gatherings that are too personalized. In a word, such gatherings require them to create a public persona out of their personal identity. The space of politics, even when it is outside institutions, is an externality in comparison with the intimate world of sentiments and family relations, and this is a paramount condition for encounters among strangers. Politics requires a structural distinction between the "inside" and the "outside." This is true even when no intermediaries are involved, as happened in the assemblies of the students' movements in the 1960s and the 1970s, and in the Occupy Wall Street movement in the 2000s.

Before the advent of the internet, interaction (not simply communication) used to entail some sort of physical presence. It also involved a vivid experience of the public sphere, as different from a private one. The internet changes this radically. Virtual movements are a reality of great importance, even if they are fragile over time. They are also framed in a linguistic style and grammatical structure that is more attuned to conquering than convincing some particular audience. Their language is the immediate expression of participants who do not even need to leave their homes in order to participate, and it allows them to communicate in a form that is not so different from their own subjective form of communication. Social networks also provide an instant measure of their participants' popularity, and they teach unreflexive conformism insofar as they teach actors that imitation works better than extravagance as a "rational response to [their] cognitive limits."[66] Catchwords, images, reiterated bits: all of these seem to be more effective than the aesthetic symbols that mass movements used when they sought to achieve connection, unity, and power. Even despite these momentous differences, the process of representative formation through the dissemination of propaganda is not all that different from the way it was when populist movements emerged to contest liberal parliamentarianism and established parties. It is simply more rapid in its impact.

Grillo and Iglesias use (and theorize) the internet and social media as the means by which the people will reestablish a direct connection to their

leaders, and to politics. They try to fuse the two populist poles—the collective and the singular, the many and the one. They do not create anything new, as past populist movements did. But new technology gives populist leaders the chance to actualize a postparty form of democracy. This is a dream that is as old as modern democracy itself: the dream of getting rid of parties. But it is not in the nature of populism to resume or restore or advance direct democracy. Net populism is additional evidence of this fact. For all these reasons, we should not be too quick to read these novel proclamations of antiestablishmentarianism as a "rebirth" of direct democracy—not even when the means of communication and interaction might make such a thing possible. Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell write, "The Internet is now becoming an increasingly important source of information in our society and has begun to take the role played by traditional journalism sources. . . . [It] has become the future nightmare that all politicians dreaded—the source of a daily referendum on their actions."[67]

Recent waves of antiestablishment contestations are very different from previous revolutions or popular uprisings (1848, 1871, and 1968), even though they may be read as a reassertion of the classical democratic ideal of "power to the people." Those "old" events vindicated political autonomy and the participation of citizens in decision making. In the name of that principle, they contested the narrow distribution of electoral power (1848), asked for representation with imperative mandate (1871), and sought to expand democracy in society (1968). But these more recent waves of contestation of representative politics do not vindicate political autonomy in the classical democratic style; nor do they vindicate the expansion of the sovereign, as direct versus indirect power of the citizens once did.[68] To paraphrase Pierre Rosanvallon and John Keane, I would say that these new waves of contestation of constituted and mediated politics testify to a desire to check and monitor institutions and leaders. They represent a desire to hold a *negative* kind of power, which reclaims direct judgment rather than inspection, rather than representing a *positive* power of decision making, which would seek to create a direct wave of judgment between citizens and elected. And they testify to a desire on the part of citizens for *censorial inspection* and *monitory democracy.* The aspiration of these citizens is ocular and judgmental participation: broadly speaking, they aim at surveillance, rather than direct government.[69]

A live-broadcasting or live-streaming representative democracy demands transparency. Citizens want to see what leaders do, they want to immediately send them their reactions, and they want to give them suggestions on how to deal with political adversaries and institutions. Basically, they want to interact with representatives from the comfort of their own homes, as an

audience does with actors on a stage, who then adjust themselves to the audience reactions (if they can). Rather than a democracy of self-governing citizens who want to decide directly, this ostensibly all-new story of a disintermediated kind of representation brings us back to the Roman plebs. The plebs used to interact with their leaders in the forum not in order to replace them in ruling but to feel they could *control* them by imposing the burden of inspection. The plebs made the elites' desire for power costly, and privacy was the cost the elite had to pay. Live streaming or live broadcasting is the contemporary version of that same idea, imposing the burden of inspection on those who exercise power.

For these reasons, the fortunes of populism in contemporary democracy do not only register the decline of traditional party democracy; they also register the decline of the myth of direct self-government; they register the impact of the technological mediation on the process of communication and interaction, which is an extrapolitical factor of paramount importance. Political parties are bypassed as anachronistic, just as the old means of information and communication are bypassed—and with them, the division of labor that presided over opinion formation in representative democracy. The internet reinforces the endogenous spirit of populism and the push to overcome any intermediation that separates the people from politics and from their leader. A representative politics entails a government of temporality and distance—a *deferred* politics. It operates through electoral cycles and the relationship that parties make possible between citizens and the institutions. It does this because it wants to avoid engaging with disconnected individuals, and those who have not benefited from structural guidance in the making of their opinion. Populism, on the other hand, is a politics of *presentism and vicinity,* although these characteristics manifest in a visual and audience form, rather than through the will to decide. Populism blurs the things that interpose between the people and the marker of the people's representation.

Does this new form of populism signal the arrival of a successful horizontalism and the dismantling of hierarchies of leadership, as its proponents and leaders suggest? This book ends with two remarkable cases of new populism: the Italian M5S and the Spanish Podemos. These are the most daring and spectacular cases of populist uprisings that have challenged mainstream parties in recent years. One came from the left, and the other from a more centrist position, but both have tried to create a movement democracy in order to give government back to the people through *direct representation.* Of course, nobody can foresee the future to anticipate what these nonparty parties might do if they succeed in forming government. Nonetheless, we can examine the trend toward verticalization or

hyperleaderism that both movements began to demonstrate as soon as they attempted to pass from movement populism to electorally oriented populism.

Digital Populism

By the 1990s, Beppe Grillo was already well known among the Italian public as a comedian. When he deserted national television, he reinvented his career in theaters and city squares, setting himself up as a radical critic of *tangentopoli* (the national system of political corruption that public prosecutors unearthed in 1992). Speaking in the name of "ordinary citizens" *(la gente),* rather than the more political "the people" (I thus define his "movement" as *gentismo*), Grillo disseminated his denunciation of "the casta" through both rhetoric and satire. By 2005 he had transformed himself from a soapbox speaker into a real political agitator. In no small part, this transformation was due to his work on his personal blog, beppegrillo.it, which was sponsored by Roberto Casaleggio's internet and publishing firm (which is at the forefront of Italian communication management and digital marketing).[70] Grillo integrated two kinds of forum—the physical piazza and the virtual piazza—and he turned the act of participation by sharing opinions into the engine of a new movement of contestation and participation. His final goal was to overcome partitocracy and to create a nonpartisan democracy. Since his early popular shows in theaters, Grillo based his rhetoric on bipartisan issues such as transparency, antiestablishmentarianism, and honesty; he combined this ideology with the "beliefs and pre-existing divides" that were beyond partisan affiliations and loyalties. This became the basic of the M5S "platform people."[71]

The nonparty party M5S was formally founded in 2009 as a net movement and newspaper. It sought to bypass intermediary bodies, including representative government, the party, and the accredited media. The name and logo of the movement were registered at the Chamber of Commerce of Milan, which was intended to stress the idea that M5S was a private association, not a political one. The movement only wanted to be a civil association, not a traditional political party. Its strategy consisted less in increasing participation than in eliminating parties and accredited media altogether. In this, it is transforming Italian democracy from the bottom up and from the outside in. Casaleggio, who was the intellectual and moral inspiration for the movement, identified populism with direct democracy, and declared himself "proud of being a populist along with thousands and thousands of populists. . . . People working in the institutions have the duty

to serve the people, cannot be above the popular will. We are trying thus to introduce new instruments of direct democracy in a country in which there is not democracy."[72]

Casaleggio belonged to the Olivettis' vanguard computer firm and was taken by Adriano Olivetti's visionary conception of a corporate, nonparty, and technocratic democracy.[73] On this basis, he sought to liberate the Italian citizenry from parties and the "fake news" that he thought was being produced by official media. He and Grillo created a movement made up of several different styles of political practices, which (1) pivoted on the direct presence of citizens' opinion (by using both "heavy" [in-person] and "light" [internet-based] gatherings) and (2) relied solely on individual bloggers and opinion movements. Grillo situated M5S within the transnational movement of antipartyism that traces its roots to Simone Weil's 1943 manifesto, *On the Abolition of All Political Parties (Note sur la suppression générale des partis politiques)* (which she wrote at the end of her life).[74]

The combination of internet-based plebiscites and internet communication with meet-ups and news dissemination is perhaps Grillo's most original contribution to democratic politics—even if it wasn't all that successful. But it was not his only contribution.[75] From the outset, his aims were more ambitious: he sought to make his blog a political actor in the fullest sense. He wanted it to combine old and new functions: attracting followers and creating a strong identity, building a widespread expertise that was capable of gathering and disseminating news, arranging meet-up groups that would raise problems and contest the establishment, launching platforms of discussion, and preparing for propaganda and mobilization.[76] M5S claimed that its methods were wholly public and transparent, and it adopted the technique of live broadcasting when local or national deliberation was needed.[77] In a few months, the blog became a political movement. Beppegrillo.it gave birth to an electoral party, but without becoming one itself.[78] Importantly, the M5S platform did not claim total horizontality but rather styled itself as a "democratic meritocracy" and distributed candidacies and functions on the basis of competence, rather than party membership. Perhaps most famously, the selection of the candidates for the 2012 Parma mayoral elections was done by collecting CVs and convening a committee within the movement. The focus on competence over partisanship implies a conception of politics that claims to rest on "objective" knowledge of social problems, rather than resting on the technocratic authority of experts. In effect, therefore, M5S is characterized by the myth of a positivist objectivity. I propose to call this myth "objectocracy." Before it became the engine of M5S, Grillo's blog was a platform that collected and disseminated news. It provided a "true" or "objective" assessment of problems, in contrast to

opinionated media and established journalism. From the outset, the myth of objectivity was a distinctive mark of the movement; as we have seen, it also seems like an implication of antipartyism. The goal of dismantling parliamentary politics was an essential component of this internet-based, post-party populism. (Indeed, Grillo has been persistent in his attacks against free mandate representation.)

As the movement grew, however, and as it became more involved in local administrations and national institutions, it had to make some pragmatic choices. These included a need to build a better organization, define a governing program, and appoint a leadership without reference to unchecked internet voting alone (that method had not required quorum, so only a minority of those subscribed to the blog generally took part in the voting process). But these were choices that the movement—or more specifically Grillo—refused to make. We might read this as evidence of Schattschneider's famous observation in 1941 that modern democracy is "unthinkable" without parties. The question, indeed, is what kind of party is required?

Most of the criticisms that have been leveled against M5S point to the fatal personalization of its leadership. This personalization occurred as the "movement" became a de facto party, but without admitting as much. The party-that-was-not-a-party failed to design an organization that could check and monitor leaders and prevent fake participation in decision making. It failed to tame Grillo's quasi-despotic moves (as he remained, formally, merely a "guarantor" of the movement), and he began to expel elected representatives from the movement, which shows that he considers the suffrage of citizens less important than his movement. (This confirms the factional character of M5S's populism.) The example of M5S confirms Canovan's assertions about the paradox of populism—namely, its inability to reconcile redemptive democracy with pragmatic democracy. M5S cannot solve its problems without changing itself, and it cannot cultivate its ambition to create direct digital democracy without a party organization.[79]

The blog beppegrillo.it was, and partly still is, the pillar of the movement, and was the organ of a radical transformation of political communication and organization. More recently, however, the trajectory from party to internet has found a more technocratic venue with the inauguration of Rousseau, the symbolic name given to the interactive online platform that is intended to allow M5S citizens and institutions to be in constant communication. (Citizens can propose laws, and the platform is programmed to select and filter the proposals in an impartial way, based only on technical criteria—conformity to the Constitution and to the ideas of M5S.) The Rousseau platform aims to change the institutional system—and certainly

the Parliament, which can, at least in theory, rely on direct interaction with the citizens—and thus transform the elected into pure delegates, as in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theory. In reality, this shift toward online structures shows a quite disturbing scenario in which real-world activism is mobilized and orchestrated by the deux ex machina of the system, Davide Casaleggio, the son and successor in power of the cofounder of M5S. Owner, producer, and strategist merge in the figure of this backstage leader (indeed deus ex machina), who guides and inspires the elected and now also the government with no public system of control and monitoring whatsoever, because the Rousseau platform is a private enterprise.

M5S also innovated in the domain of information and opinion formation. As well as pushing for the diminution of parties, Grillo has advocated from the outset for the "liberation" of opinion formation from traditional media and the information industry in the name of "horizontal journalism." Beppegrillo.it has long claimed to be the most reliable source of information for its members, and its bloggers had to be citizens who—like self-made Sherlock Holmeses—would collect data, make inquiries, and disseminate news. Official sources of information were declared unreliable and bypassed, and professional journalists came to be seen as the remnants of an ancient, monopolistic system of opinion making in the service of the establishment. The impact of deprofessionalized journalism is still hard to evaluate, and it goes beyond the experience of Grillo's movement (and this book). But it promises to become one of the most important factors in the process of the transformation of representative democracy and the party system.

The questions Grillo poses are nonetheless relevant. He raises questions about the fact that citizens have unequal access to the marketplace of ideas, and the fact that some citizens or groups have a louder voice than others because of the material wealth they have and can employ to amplify their voices and more easily further their agendas. Technological means of communication—either traditional (printed) or new (digital)—require money, and money brings private interests and economic disparities into politics. Equality has been breached in a substantial way, and this is a challenge to political liberty.[80]

Net Democracy to Solve Michels's Dilemma?

Canovan's paradox returns with the case of the Spanish movement Podemos. Its founder, Pablo Iglesias, is a professor of political science and a media star who was well known to the Spanish public before the advent of his movement. Podemos developed out of the 2011 Indignados movement. It

quickly became an expression of "audience democracy" with the explicit aims of being a nonparty and of activating web-based direct democracy, which was intended to overcome the elitism of organizations and the traditional ideological divisions between Left and Right.[81] It is a diffusive movement, capable of integrating existing protest and social movements. It is also "hybrid" as a nonparty, because it combines participatory practices with vertical elements while promising to avoid "hierarchization."[82] Although some analyses have linked it to anarchist movements and their rejection of representation, Podemos did not propose, nor want, direct democracy. It did not criticize traditional parties from the participatory democracy point of view; it criticized them because it perceived them to be failing to represent "us." Wanting to be represented by someone other than "them" required a search for more sincere and more effective representation. But this new representation would be representation nonetheless. In the words of a top leader of Podemos, Íñigo Errejón, "The gap between representatives and the represented has grown wider, leading to what political scientists call 'disaffection'—which at a more popular level can be understood as 'divorce.'"[83]

Organization and social media were Podemos's two integrated strategies to reachieve representative trust, according to a "networked participatory model."

Since its beginning, the audience has been Podemos's most important terrain. When it was born, its leader, Iglesias (who was already well known from television talk shows, as I have mentioned), declared that "TV studios have become the real parliaments" and launched his own show on a local Madrid television station. Scholars immediately foresaw that, by relying on a media figure, the new antiparty party was invoking "a Spanish trait of party politics known as '*personalismo,*' which is all about a politics of charismatic leadership."[84] Populist leadership was predicated on the nonparty movement that Podemos wanted to be, with weak ideological borders. Since its inception, it has been more of an umbrella movement, with circles or local sites of discussion diffused throughout the country. Iglesias's goal was to create a "liquid party, without clear boundaries between inside and outside." This is a style that traditional parties, like the Partito Democratico in Italy, have also been aggressively pursuing in order to expand their electorate while reducing the burdens of organization on the leader, thus narrowing the role of the militants and the party's ideological specificity.[85]

Podemos aimed to neutralize the distinction between party members and party sympathizers. In this way, it followed the hyperparty model of permeating many social groups without replicating the logic and heavy organization of the mass-party form. This method played two functions at once.

It unified the people at large, beyond their different interests and claims; and it adopted the face of a leader as its unifying symbol. Constructing a collective subject with scarce ideological bonds—or even no ideological bonds—is a task that cannot be achieved except by relying on a leader. The 2015 congress showed the personalistic and centralizing results of this nonparty party. To make the party effective, Podemos had to overcome the radical factionalism that might otherwise have threatened the leadership's overall strategy. One may ask whether "factionalism" should be treated as an expression of pluralism, and as a call for democratic accountability on the part of the leader. Internal critics of the way that Podemos's factions were tamed declared that the leadership had "decided to build a vertical, centralized, personalistic, and not very democratic structure."[86] Podemos tamed and consolidated this faction through the democratic, plebiscitary method of primary elections. This was also the method it used to create a *direct link between the leader and the leader's people*—that is, to establish direct representation.[87] Despite the presence of deliberative and discussion-oriented forms of online decision making, Gerbaudo concludes persuasively that digital parties like Podemos or M5S are in effect "clearly top-down" and inaugurate "digital acclamation."[88]

Podemos's early trajectory toward embodiment representation can be detected in other parties that have adopted the primaries model to elect their leaders.[89] Primaries tend to exalt apical leadership, even though they are usually instituted with the goal of deepening democracy by decentralizing the selection of candidates and leaders. This paradoxical outcome (which seems to offer additional evidence of the validity of Michels's dilemma) has been recently analyzed by Frances McCall Rosenbluth and Ian Shapiro. Through a comparative analysis, Rosenbluth and Shapiro show how primaries have seriously damaged party organization and consequently damaged responsible parties. Indeed, primaries have provoked two changes: they reduce democratization to a mere vote on choices that the voters have not participated in making, and they favor the nomination of radical candidates and extreme minorities, which makes it harder for individuals within the institutions to do their jobs as responsible parties. The paradoxical result is that "more" democratic and "less" organized parties result in a weaker, rather than a stronger, democracy, one that gives less power to the citizens and more unchecked power to a small and obscure political class, which acts outside both the institutions and the party.[90] Primaries modify the way democracy is practiced inside the party, making it electoralist rather than deliberative. One clear outcome of primaries is the decline of participation by ideological militants and the expansion of audience adhesion by ordinary citizens. The idea of the "intelligence of the crowds"—a collective

wisdom that sustains itself without organization—paradoxically generates an unaccountable leadership at the very moment it gets rid of the party rank and file. Finally, it promotes a decline in the number of partisan members and an increase in the number of generic sympathizers.[91] The divide and friction between the two leaders of Podemos, Errejón and Iglesias, pertained precisely to the implications of a plebiscitary interpretation of democracy. This sort of democracy created representation as embodiment and transformed politics into an arena that resembled a coliseum or a wrestling ring. A regional leader close to Errejón spoke even more strongly: "The general secretary can lose a vote in the central committee but then ask the people directly, bypassing the organization. This is the plebiscitary model to which Saddam Hussein and Franco resorted."[92]

At the end, not even Podemos has been able to solve Michels's dilemma. Its trajectory seems to confirm that moves to overcome the intermediation of a party can easily end up establishing a more, not less, hierarchical leadership (even if it is supported by a diffusive and broad audience adhesion). Postparty democracy follows the pattern of the hyperparty model, rather than the no-party model. It relies on an audience that a platform is capable of representing, more than a selective partisan membership.

Both M5S and Podemos share the markers of a democracy that has the audience at its core. This kind of democracy is populist, according to the guidelines analyzed in this book. It involves a form of embodiment representation that pivots on a strong or popular leader and aims to unify the largest possible variety of ideas, groups, and claims as if by magnetic attraction. This postparty system gathers citizens not because of partisan identification but because of needs or claims; this, in turn, seems to make politics overlap with the people or the most numerous or most ordinary of them. The trajectory of audience democracy merges with that of populist democracy, in which the people has the same face as the leader.

Party democracy and populist democracy are expressions of the complex dynamic internal to representative government. They somehow reiterate the "standard story [that] popular democracy is fundamentally at odds with party-based representative democracy."[93] My analysis of M5S and Podemos indicates that these two forms of democracy are, in effect, two possible answers to Michels's dilemma. Party democracy makes the organization (a structure of deliberation and decision) a vehicle for people's participation in the life of the party, which is made up not only of militants showing muscles against other militants but also of militants who exercise some check over their leaders.[94] Populist democracy wants weakly organized parties in order to deepen democracy; in effect, what it attains is direct communication of the masses with the leader. The populist proposes to resolve Michels's

dilemma with a radical jump: by having the leader perform representation directly or bypassing the organization of his or her party.

Conclusion

This chapter has completed my demonstration of how populism pertains to the interpretation of democracy. Its criticism of mandate representation and party democracy is intended to construct a people who can overcome all internal political divisions and partisan affiliations. Even though populist promoters and politicians enter the scene with a strong criticism of the decline of party antagonism, they end up profiting from precisely the cartel parties they chastise. The mainstream habit of those parties is responsible for the suppression of party democracy. Populism does not cause this suppression, but it benefits from it. The leader is the key actor in a form of representation that seeks to unify the plurality claims that exist in postparty democracy, and then to restore the authority of the people. We saw how the antiparty logic of populism is driven by a hyperparty ambition, which is primed to cast a sinister, holist shadow over political antagonism (even as it claims to praise such antagonism in theory). The conundrum of populism is exemplified by the two most recent cases I have examined: Podemos and M5S. Both propose to get rid of traditional partisanship, move beyond Right and Left, and unite the ordinary citizens against the "caste," but both end up crowning a new leadership, which is personalistic in character and is fed the plebiscite of the audience. Ultimately, populism, be it traditional or digital, results in a kind of monarchic emendation of representative democracy; it results in a movement that takes the name of its leader.

EPILOGUE

A Dead End?

> The descendants can learn from past mistakes only if they are "in the same boat" as their forebears.
>
> —Jürgen Habermas, "Constitutional Democracy"

In this book, I have made populism the object of political theory. I argued that it develops within representative democracy and transforms that form, but without overturning it. My interest was not in the several populist conjunctures that democracy has had in its two centuries of modern history. It was, instead, in the populist renaissance we have recently seen within constitutional democracy, itself the political order that followed the war of liberation from mass dictatorship. Populism challenges scholars and citizens to reflect on what went wrong with their governments—on what happened to make people so radically dissatisfied with, or even hostile to, party democracy and pluralist society. Although the insurgence of populism is, first of all, a denunciation of oligarchy and of the economic impoverishment of the middle class, the socioeconomic conditions of populism have not been my focus here. I started from the bare fact of populism's success as a movement and in government; and I sought to understand what it does to constitutional democracy, from which it takes energy, and against which it operates. Studying how populism transforms democracy serves to justify our concern and worries; it is also a premise for every reflection that wants to understand the weaknesses of party democracy and the changes it might need so it can resist the populist challenge.

I employed several categories to typify this new form of mixed government: *factionalism,* which springs from a possessive conception of rights and institutions; *majoritarianism,* which twists the principle of majority to make it serve one majority; *dux cum populo,* which corresponds to representation

as embodiment; and *antipartyism,* which is the driving force of populist holism. In Montesquieu's language, I proposed *direct representation* as the "nature" of populism, and *antiestablishmentarianism* as its "spirit." The quasi-absolute authority of the audience in leading the government makes populism in power like a permanent electoral campaign, which the leader and its majority wage in order to prove they are not—and never will be—a new establishment. Persuading the people is paramount, since faith in the leader is the only guarantee the populist has that his or her power will last. And the internet is the medium that replaces traditional parties in sealing the alliance between the government and the people. Thus I suggested we consider populism a form of representative government that is particularly well suited to "audience democracy." Given that it is not a regime of its own but rather a transformation that takes place *within* democracy, populism in power is endogenously precarious and is subject to two risks of annihilation: reverting to representative government as usual, and becoming a dictatorship.

Using these several categories, I fleshed out the phenomenology of populism and silhouetted four inevitable tendencies and scenarios:

1. Populism characterizes itself as refractory of traditional partisan divisions (multipartyism) and stresses only a basic dualism—that of the ordinary many and the establishment. It translates this dualism into a Schmittian mode, or into an uncompromising antagonism that transcends right and left ideologies and depends solely on the position of the various parts with respect to the exercise of state power. The dualism between the ordinary many and the establishment forges the rhetoric of all populisms, regardless of the specific contexts in which this rhetoric applies. This makes populism a case of unity making (of the part it claims to rule for) and of elite substitution. It is impatient with the rules and procedures utilized by representative democracy, because it is impatient with pluralism.
2. Populism aspires to achieve power through electoral competition. But instead of using elections to assess the various representative claims, it uses them as plebiscites that serve to prove the force of the winner to the public. Elections reveal what already exists: the "good" people waiting to rule. If it is successful, populism tries to constitutionalize "its majority." It does so by dissociating "the people" from any pretense of impartiality and staging the identification of a part (the "good" people) with the legitimate ruler *(pars pro parte)*. Were it to succeed, populist constitutionalism would bridge the gap that distances constitutional law and ordinary law—a gap that is pivotal to constitutional democracy. In short, it would constitutionalize the will of a specific majority.

3. Populism achieves this transformation after rejecting the idea that representation is an electoral translation of claims and partisan views, in favor of the idea that representation is an incarnation of all claims in a leader, who becomes the voice of the "right" people. The direct representation that links the people and the leader selects the audience as the only source of legitimacy. This devalues political intermediaries (organized parties and institutional checks) and enables the leader to reinforce an antiestablishmentarian claim through his or her ruling power. Propaganda is an essential component of populism in power; and such populism consists, more or less, in permanent mobilization and electoral campaigning.
4. Populism reinterprets democracy as radical majoritarianism. This entails resolving the indeterminacy and openness in which the democratic people consists, and solidifying the ruling power of a portion of the population that speaks through the leader. Factionalism is the character of the politics that populism practices: it is an admission that politics is like a war rather than a game, a matter of winners and losers, with no fiction of universalism. Populism represents the celebration of political disenchantment: the end of all utopias and idealizations. It represents the embrace of a hyperrealistic vision of politics as the construction and exercise of power by the strong.

These four scenarios are present when populism is present. As such, populism is more than merely a movement of contestation or mobilization, and it should not be confused with social movements in civil society.[1] Populism is a movement of contestation against the existing political establishment, but one that seeks a majority that would rule with unchecked ambitions and plan to remain in power for as long as possible, though without revoking political liberty or eliminating adversaries. The "benign" aspects of populism in power include its dwarfing of the opposition and minorities by humiliating them and creating an overwhelming propaganda campaign that endlessly reinforces the power of majority opinion. This is true whether the specific movement is led by a right-wing or a leftist leader. Populism has a factionalist character because of its radical constructivism, its celebrated relativism, its exalted voluntarism, and its conflation of legitimacy with factual success or with the positive opinion of the many. From this perspective, its rightist or leftist direction is wholly contingent. Because the domain of generality as a criterion of judgment evaporates, politics comes to consist in the seeking and shaping of power, and winning the political conflict becomes the sole test of legitimacy. This

brings me to my conclusion, in what follows, that hopes of revitalizing the democratic left through populism are seriously misplaced.

How are we to situate populism within the experience of democracy and, in particular, within the experience of twenty-first-century democracy?

To start answering this question, it is worth recalling that democracy has never had an easy life. It was born along with its adversaries, who studied and defined it well before—and in a much more exhaustive way than—its friends. This is as true now as it was in ancient and modern times. Since the resumption of the journey of democracy in the eighteenth century, the rhetoric of the Old Oligarch and of Plato and the abrasive analysis of Edmund Burke and Joseph de Maistre keep reappearing in updated forms.[2] Today, we are facing a fresh outbreak of contestation. Questions on the inefficiency of elected government are growing every day. They are accompanied by the daily occurrence of conflicts at the borders of democratic states, by the humanitarian crisis of immigration, and by the growth of economic and social inequality inside state borders. Party democracies seem spineless and incompetent, for reasons that are not only contingent but structural. Bad politicians seem to reveal the inefficiency of the representative system itself; they seem to reveal an endogenous weakness of democracy. Its egalitarian principles appear, to many people, increasingly incapable of inspiring policies that give people what they deserve (based on what, and how, they contribute to the general interest). Populism is a part of this phenomenon.

Democracy is under stress, and this means that some alternatives that, until recently, seemed completely unthinkable and unbearable now seem less so. These include proposals about requirements for competence in government (technocracy) and proposals about political selection by merit (meritocracy). They also include suggestions on the part of "epistocratic" and realist theorists of democracy alike that incompetent citizens should abstain from voting.[3] Finally, they include proposals to treat social injustice as an issue of legality and law and order, rather than an issue of redistribution—a shift in framing that generates concerning waves of anti-immigration and xenophobia (authoritarianism). Populism proposes itself as a solution that can fill the void of participation and that can restore the unity of the nation before all partial issues (and against minority rights). These complex social and cultural transformations are developing in countries where the renaissance of democratic constitutionalism proceeded under the banner of democratic ideology: places where liberal democracy was promoted as the sole alternative to regimes based on holistic visions of the people, and on totalitarian consensus. It seems that the

ideology of democracy has poorly served democracy itself. In fact, it is a reason for democracy's weakness.

This ideology began to be fashioned in the 1950s as a weapon against the ideology of state socialism or "popular democracy." The end of the Cold War made it redundant and empty: constitutional democracy is the sole credible form of government on the planet. As John Dunn says, "There is no single word in the entire history of human speech to and through which more has happened than the word *democracy,* not even the word *God.*"[4] Constitutional democracy enjoys an undisputed global hegemony. This means that even constitutional reforms that limit existing civil liberties or regress them to a stage we believed was consigned to the past—reforms that contradict the spirit of political openness—are now being made *in the name of democracy.* It is even proposed that they are "more genuine affirmations" of democracy's values. This creates a paradox: it means that there are no other terms in the political vocabulary that are capable of granting legitimacy to political enterprises less easily rendered as "democratic" (at least in terms of the constitutional and representative instantiation of democracy that has come to seem like the only one). As scholars grapple with this paradox, we witness the coinage of oxymoronic terms: authoritarian democracy, technocratic democracy, illiberal democracy, and so on. This puts political orders that are democratic *in name* into tension with democracy in general; and it casts doubt on the value of democracy per se. If we do not develop terms to name these specific transformations, we are contributing to the delegitimization of democracy. The ideology of democracy obfuscates the democratic project, which is one of political liberty through equality, and it leaves us incapable of challenging those who are really adversaries of democracy from within.[5] In this cultural and political context, a new form of elected government is primed to emerge. And it, too, is changing democracy from within.

I have tried, in this book, to offer a theoretical analysis of a key disfigurement of contemporary democracy: the phenomenon of populism in power. I have stayed deliberately silent on the economic "causes" of populism's success in democratic societies, because this domain is outside my expertise. Instead, I have concentrated on the political aspects of populist transformations—in particular, by examining the impact of populist rhetoric, movement, and majorities on public discourse and representative government. I have also drawn analogies with past institutional mutations or defeats of constitutional government. However, although it is true that populism's successes after World War I opened the door to dictatorial mass regimes in Europe and Latin America, I have treated the contemporary resurrection of populism as a distinctive phenomenon. It is not a replica of

past events but rather an offshoot of the kind of democracy, both constitutional and pluralist, that has governed political and social reconstruction since the end of World War II. To paraphrase Giambattista Vico, if things passed seem to return, it is certainly because "human customs . . . practices and habits" do not change "all at once," so that, although new institutions are constructed to answer new exigencies, they retain "an impression of some former practice habit." The sedimentation of previous social and political forms makes the new ones difficult to detect, and at times gives the impression of a renaissance of some past experience, like déjà vu.[6]

I have also remained deliberately aloof from discourses about the "crisis of democracy" (which are very popular today) and resisted the move to make populist transformations part of a catastrophic picture of the presumed agony, or even death, of democracy. Discourses of crisis can be a source of ambiguity rather than clarification. From at least the eighteenth century onward, there has been a persistent refrain of discourses about democratic crisis in both academic and nonacademic writings.[7] As David Runciman has observed, "democracy" and "crisis" can hardly be separated; this means that the stories of success and crisis are unavoidably intertwined.[8] Democracy's modern journey started along with claims that it was in crisis, although it was only the turmoil of the 1920s and the 1930s that set the tone for the most dramatic political crisis and its accompanying discourses. At that time, crisis was fatal to constitutional government and political liberty. This is not the case today, even though there are discourses booming on the "'subterranean' erosion[s] of democracy" that are supposedly revealed by protest movements and declining electoral participation.[9] Protest movements are the salt of democracy, not its poison. This makes discourses of crisis somehow unwarranted. It is also close to impossible to tell how much socioeconomic inequality is needed to provoke populist uprisings.[10] Catastrophic scenarios of decline toward authoritarian or illiberal solutions also seem to imply, explicitly or otherwise, that democracy only has a single mode of actualization—namely, the one devised by Western countries after 1945. The success of the party model in burying totalitarianism, and in favoring economic growth and redistribution, runs the risk of freezing the impressive corpus of ideas and actualizations produced in the Glorious Thirty. If we hypostatize democracy, we reduce our ability to understand its forms and achievements, as well as its historicity. It becomes merely an ideology.

Apocalyptic narratives are inspired by a picture of the world threatened by populism—but this picture is often self-congratulatory, and often not very persuasive. First, when we denounce the curtailing of civil rights by

populist majorities, we seem to imply that our countries enjoyed those rights from the moment they adopted democratic constitutions and bills of rights. We seem to believe that the worst of majoritarianism was somehow "over there," in "less advanced" democracies. But in Western democracies, civil rights were proclaimed well before their citizens and societies started enjoying them. For several decades, our democracies on both sides of the Atlantic were far from open to (for instance) the right to divorce, abortion, equal opportunity of political and public careers, gay marriage, and equal respect for minorities. I was in my teens when the right to divorce became a law in my country, Italy, and when a referendum blocked the attempt to cancel it. I was already an adult when the law was passed that allowed women to choose responsible motherhood. I have still to see a full implementation of some rights contained in the Italian Constitution (i.e., Article 51) on the equal opportunity for women's participation in public and political life.

Our democracies are historical constructions, not static models born from the brain of Minerva. They have made important promises to expand rights, but they were not born with them—and this should be reason enough for us to suspect that our democracies are always liable to narrow and curtail them. In the twenty-first century, populist majorities are aggressive toward those rights. And they have the propaganda machines and popular support to push the general public toward a cultural mentality reminiscent of the one that preceded the civil rights movement. In a way, populist democracy designates a counterrevolutionary move, the prospect of a more closed rather than a more open polis. I argued that this regression does not need to be interpreted as fascism, even if it took a fascist shape in the past. What it proves, however, is that rights are never a secure achievement, because even if majorities promise solemnly not to encroach on them, they retain a robust power to orient the public and to make laws and statutes that expand or restrict the scope of civil rights, make their enjoyment more or less difficult, and subject them to budget expansions or budget cuts. Populism is part of a regression in the culture and practice of political openness.

Finally, the narrative of crisis and apocalypse seems to disregard the fact that movements of opinion and political contestations—and therefore also populist movements—are *part of* the dialectics of democracy, not a pathology or the sign of a disease. Thus, defining Brexit as a case of democracy in "crisis" seems to suggest that democracy does not include free movements of contestation, or referenda, but only institutions and governmentality. But popular uprising, or even rage, as well as collective demonstrations against the powerful and their policies, is also what democracy is about. Jürgen Habermas has theorized this as a legal and political order with a lively, at

times conflicting, and even "anarchical" public sphere.[11] The Yellow Vests' demonstrations, which emerged as a self-organized multitude in France in December 2018 and gave birth to weekly happenings in Paris that have occurred since then, are not solely an expression of street violence but are first of all a radical contestation of the way representative democracy works; they are "a multitude that is rising up" against an elite which, although it declares itself to be representative and is authorized by elections, seems to be wholly disconnected from the life and problems of the citizens and incapable of acting as their advocate and being felt as representative. The contestation activated by the Yellow Vests movement denounces "the new misery wrought by neoliberal reforms" and refuses "representation and intermediation from the Right and the Left."[12] The distance between the institutions and the extrainstitution is so high that no circulation of knowledge and ideas connects them. The crisis of representative institutions is measured by this lack of communication. But blaming populist movements for these "problems" is like barking up the wrong tree; moreover, it seems to imply that apathy and political indifference serve democracy better. This technocratic vision, which identifies good democracy with outputs that satisfy the clients of government, was actually well represented already in the age known as the Glorious Thirty, as we can read in the 1975 Trilateral Commission's document on the crisis of democracy.[13]

In sum, rather than talking about crisis or depicting apocalyptic scenarios, I have proposed in this book that we should pay attention to the way democracy is liable to change, and so explore how populism transforms democratic procedures, institutions, and practices. In particular, I argued that populism, while a sign of justified distress by disempowered citizens, can hardly be a solution because its speakers and leaders want to use majority not merely or simply as a method for solving disagreement. Rather, it seeks to install itself as the "good" majority, which elections legitimize and that proves intolerant of other parts of the population. The ways in which a populist majority is capable of disfiguring the public discourse, the style of politics, and the relationship between the leader and institutions are all reasonable issues of concern. Of the two authorities that compose the democratic diarchy, the domain of opinion is the most disruptive, because of the impact it has on public interactions among citizens. Populism is a bad school of political participation as its polemical stance creates a climate that is inimical to deliberation and marked by linguistic bullishness. It damages political antagonism because it damages "friendship" among citizens and creates niches of like-minded individuals, a fact that jeopardizes the basic condition of respect among opposite "sides" and "parts" of the society and jeopardizes the process of revising ideas (even within a party or political

group).[14] Injecting enmity in the ordinary life of the public is what exalts factionalism. And factionalism is, as I showed, the nature of populism, even though the latter claims to speak for and in the name of the people. The reality is that it speaks for and in the name of the "good" people *after* having decided to expel the parts it deems should not and do not belong to the people. Using government for its (majority) part, populism sanctions a breakdown in friendship among citizens—this is what political scientists call radicalization, and it consists in an excruciating dualism between "we the good" and "you the bad." In this book, I connected populism with a reversal of party democracy, because it is an attempt to affirm the legitimacy of one part only.

I suggest that, even as we pay attention to the difficulties in enlarging the sphere of rights and freedom, and the even greater difficulties in using the public space in a civilized and peaceful manner, we should not rush to identify populist phenomena with fascism. The fact that we have democratic countries ruled by populist majorities does not entail that democracy is in agony, or that the situation prevailing today is the same as the situation in 1920s and 1930s Europe. Certainly, many contemporary populist leaders employ a language and a style of politics that remind us of fascism, which—it is true—achieved popular support by vindicating the priority of national sovereignty against foreign potentates ("big business" and the conspiracy of the antinational lobbies organizing human trafficking) and against international organizations (the European Union is a target today as the League of Nations was in Benito Mussolini's age). Yet identifying today's right-wing populism or nationalist majorities with fascism is not only wrong (because propaganda and audience democracy are not yet dictatorship); it does not help us to decipher the phenomenon we are experiencing, and it does not help us to devise effective strategies to confront and dethrone it. Democratic practices and procedures are not frail; they are capacious enough to allow and make room for phenomena that many of us do not simply disagree with but actively dislike.

But the ecumenical disposition of the ideology of democracy to include all institutional changes, provided they receive the people's consent, does not help the sharpening of our critical understanding of the responsibility of existing democracies and political leaders in paving the way for a populist critique. Thinking in these terms enervates democratic thought, and deprives it of its capacity to innovate, by criticizing and countering interpretations and policies that jeopardize its principles in the name of goals (such as governability and national uniformity) that, in fact, can justify blatantly antidemocratic institutional designs. How can we value political equality when our democracies promote technocracy, or when constitutional re-

forms are made that legitimize authoritarian leaders? The fact that we lack names for these transformations is part of the problem. It contributes to delegitimizing the democratic polity. Ultimately, moves to freeze the model of representative democracy into an eternalized scheme, create a sort of conceptual and practical cage, and this is true whether that move serves the interests of genuine democrats (who think that this is the only model that can make participation secure and capable of delivering effective decisions) or instead serves the interests of skeptics in democracy (who think that it is simply a fake popular regime that gives citizens the illusion that they rule, even while it legitimizes the power of an elite).

Since its inception more than twenty-five centuries ago, democracy has shown itself capable of extraordinary institutional innovations, based entirely on trial and error, and so permanently open to the risk of failure.[15] Democracy was never a closed game, free from unwanted outcomes, even though its procedures were conceived so as to allow for good decisions. Its basic principles are capable of pragmatic adjustments within historical contexts, on the condition that people recognize themselves to be "in the same boat," as Habermas perspicaciously wrote.[16] They generate unique polities that are historically specific—though they are always projected toward transcending their contingencies. As we have seen in this book, the "is" and the "ought" are the two intertwined levels that make democratic practices so special and keep them permanently open to self-critical analysis. Pierre Rosanvallon writes elegantly of the creative link between democracy, history, and principles:

> The conditions of living together and of self-government are not defined a-priori, fixed by tradition or imposed by an authority. To the contrary, the democratic project generates an open political field because of the tensions and uncertainties that underlie it. . . . Understood in these terms, one cannot apprehend the political without bringing out the full relief and density of these contradictions and the ambiguities which underlie it. Therefore, it must be clearly stated that it is insufficient to suggest that democracy *has* a history. Rather, one must take the more radical step and understand that democracy *is* a history. It is indissociable from a process of exploration and experimentation, an understanding and elaboration of its very essence.[17]

This exploratory habit means that democracy is not solely "an *active laboratory* of our present"; nor is it a means of "permanent dialogue between the past and the present."[18] It also stretches democracy toward the future and toward the unknown, sometimes hazardously so. A historiographic approach to politics does not sustain any comfortable beliefs in social and moral progress.[19] Nor can knowledge of the past give us any certainty about the present, or the future. History does not repeat itself; nor does it teach us

how to live.[20] Democracy, one might say, is a claim that each generation makes to pursue its own choices—even the bad ones. This unavoidably contingent aspect, which constitutions have tried to govern, voids both ideological eternalization and catastrophism. It makes them into literary genres that do nothing to make our democratic institutions more legible. They leave us unable to understand the hiatus between historical determination and actual experimentation. Populism epitomizes that hiatus. It is the product of a specific context, and it represents the emergence of a political will that explores new avenues in its attempt to react against practices that do not deliver what was supposed or was promised. The fact that populism gives us bad majorities and alarming decisions is not a reason to believe that we can save democracy by freezing it into the model that belonged to the old good days.[21] At any rate, exiting from populism can hardly mean going back to where we were before. That "before" was devalued at the very same moment it enabled populist successes. This is the perspective I have adopted as I have tried to understand populist democracy as a new form of representative politics and government.

This book is not only an investigative text; it has political import. It seeks to enter a dialogue on populist democracy with democratic scholars, and also with citizens who have recently embraced and theorized populism as more than a movement of denunciation (signaling problems of social injustice and disempowerment that belabor contemporary democracies). These thinkers and citizens have embraced populism as a better form of democracy. They see it as an advance trench in fights by citizens to reclaim their powers of influence over the distribution of income and the push against inequality. In brief, they believe it is an attempt to redesign representative government by overcoming a debilitated party democracy and its lurch toward elected oligarchies. I took these populist criticisms and beliefs seriously, and I examined populist proposals for giving priority to the majority in order to demote the power of economic and political minorities.

Contemporary populist arguments show that populism does not create the problems it magnifies and intends to solve.[22] These problems reveal the failure of representative institutions to deliver what they promised. They promised, of course, that representation would make democracy more efficient, that it would give voice to citizens' claims, and that it would put the elected under the permanent monitoring power of the electors, thanks to organized parties and a pluralistic sphere of opinion formation. Populists seek to recover the power of the majority. They propose to do so by deflating constitutional assumptions about the rule of law and civil protec-

tions (specifically, those that hold that the certainty of the rule of law and civil rights protections relies on the construction of nonelected bodies, which use impartial judgment to stop the political will or majority decisions). They argue that constitutional strategies of power containment, which were crucial in restoring authority to democracy after the collapse of mass dictatorships and their system of political arbitrariness, have crystallized their power over the last few decades. Now they have entrenched an establishment that claims ruling prerogatives as a caste of mandarins. This set of old and new privileged classes, populists claim, is the iceberg against which the criterion of impartiality (on which nonpolitical authority claimed legitimacy in containing political decisions) has finally sunk. Within a "senile" democracy—whose representative institutions have eroded their capacity of guaranteeing accountability, participation, and openness—populism reclaims the role of a rescuing force. According to its democratic supporters, it is a cry of discontent by the many against the oligarchic transformation of representative democracy. It is also an accusation that constitutional democracy is unable to amend itself sufficiently to be effective in delivering its promise of containing power. Populists claim that a bolder majority—that is, "the power of the people"—can be the solution and that it should rebalance state powers so as to give supremacy to the moment of decisions; in fine, that it should rewrite the constitutions. This, they say, is the solution to the problems caused by our senescent post–World War II model of democracy.

Contemporary populists often point to the decline of economic equality and the parallel inability of traditional social-democratic and leftist parties to sustain social reforms. This is one of their most appealing objections to the current state of things. Populism began to grow in earnest after the Cold War, with its accompanying erosion of ideological parties (which would be capable of unifying popular claims for social reformist politics). It grew not only through movements of opposition but also through parties that democratically sought power—and sometimes achieved it. A populist democracy, as the argument goes, can both interrupt the failure of traditional leftist parties and block the resurgence of right-wing ideologies and movements. It can inspire "federating the democratic demands into a collective will to construct a 'we,' a 'people' confronting a common adversary: the oligarchy," and thus "recover democracy to deepen and extend it."[23] It is supposed to do both these things by giving power back to popular sovereignty and expelling the establishment.

Democratic supporters of populism state their case by denouncing the two main projects of global emancipation that were launched after 1945. The first was the project of leftist parties, with their social-democratic or liberal plans to create a more egalitarian society and political democracy. The

second was the project that gave rise to forms of international governance (from global institutions to regulate the open market, to quasi-federative experiments such as the European Union) as agents of democratic reconstruction after the war. These tried to combine political freedom and peace, as in the Enlightenment tradition.

As to the first allegation, democratic theorists of populism point their fingers at established leftist parties and argue that they have colluded with the neoliberal policies of privatization and deregulation that have eroded welfare state programs. It is almost a commonplace to observe that today's leftists have, indeed, become centrists. They have dismissed their traditional class criticism. As Thomas Piketty writes, they have "become associated since 1970s–80s with higher education voters, giving rise to a multiple-elite party system: high-education elites vote for the left, while high-income/high-wealth elites for the right, i.e., intellectual elite (Brahmin left) vs. business elite (merchant right)."[24]

Paradoxically, the energy that social democrats and liberals injected into the age of democratic reconstruction evaporated along with their emancipatory projects (often related to poverty and illiteracy). Thanks to the leftist parties, some of the "plebs" managed to climb the social ladder and become middle class. But today the same parties that fostered emancipation after the war only represent a privileged portion of the working and lower-middle classes. As we saw in our analysis of Aristotle and his exploration of the social causes of demagoguery, the well-being of the many is a hope that propels democracy and creates a middle class. But this middle class tends to protect its own status and close the gates to the lowest classes, knowing that if it were to include them, it would lower its own status. The democratic left has stopped thinking and acting in term of *new* strategies of inclusion and simply become a gatekeeper of the part that is already included.

The interruption of the emancipatory function of the leftist parties is illustrated by their centrist strategy. As observers have noticed, this is one of the factors of citizens' disaffection with politics and electoral participation.[25] Not only did the radical Left cease to exist, the Left in general became more interested in protecting the privileged beneficiaries of their social policies, rather than expanding or innovating welfare programs in order to adjust them to the needs of the less affluent.[26] The cartelization of parties, which some believe is a factor in the growth of populism, has gone hand in hand with the erosion of social ideals in the leftist parties, and the erosion of the ideological opposition between Left and Right. The "silent majorities" that characterize postideological democracy, as well as the mainstream tactics that all electoral parties endorsed, were produced by party democracy itself. The collapse of the "center" and centrism are fertile terrain for pop-

ulism, which reclaims popular voluntarism even as it reveals the logic that motivates representative democracy: a form that produces its radical other in the very moment it stabilizes itself in the party system. Populism is not the product of some malevolent force and does not put democracy on siege as an external enemy would do. Populism is the produce of the very "good" model of democracy that stabilized our societies after World War II.

This process toward catch-all parties and then party cartelization evolved hand in hand with the depletion of popular sovereignty. Bernard Manin explains this process well at the end of his 1997 book, which sketches the outlines of a theory about the growth of audience democracy.[27] The expansion of globalized financial capitalism has progressively weakened the decision-making power of sovereign states (democratic ones in particular). And a globalized labor market has narrowed the possibility of striking the kind of social-democratic compromise between capital and labor that served as a foundation for postwar party democracy.[28] The weakening of state sovereignty to accommodate global corporate business encounters the people's call for closed borders, as if democratic citizens thought that they could protect their political power by demanding that free movement be contained and that free competition salary and social benefits be reduced. This is the contemporary motor of *sovereignism*. As in the past, populism associates the politics of social redistribution with protectionist policies. In addition, the dramatic phenomenon of terrorism (often associated with Islamic extremism) propels a politics of state security at the expense of civil rights and stresses the nationalistic character of democracy as a vital condition of cultural and religious identity, which must be protected against external enemies. The split between popular anti-Enlightenment sentiments and economic distress, on the one hand, and a cultural discourse that is dominated by cosmopolitan elites, on the other, results in a representative deficit. This, in turn, opens a political space for populist leaders and their antiestablishment plans. Populism is a global phenomenon that has been fostered by the global culture it censures. It comes to play two roles that were traditionally played by social-democratic parties: denouncing social inequality and the privileges of the few (who do not need national belonging to protect their interests), and reclaiming the power of popular sovereignty and its emphasis on the priority of majority interests. It plays these two roles by orienting governments toward giving priority to short-term national interests. The decline of party organization marks a formidable turning point in privileging the "here" and "now" will of the majority, whereas organized parties were "ways to advance long-term projects extending beyond the lifespans of individuals."[29]

Is democracy close to an end? If democracy is a historical construct—as I argued earlier—we should not be surprised by its possible decline. The ancients were so aware of the temporality of all forms of governments that they theorized a cycle of changes, as well as ways to block it. The American Federalists were similarly oriented, although in a much more optimistic disposition, when they tried to design a written constitution that would force human vices to function as stabilizing factors that could block decline. An awareness of the finitude of democracy can serve as an antidote to the triumphalism of a "closed model" of democracy. It is also the condition for understanding the institutional shortcomings of that model. At the same time, consciousness of historical mutation can also cause distress, and can heighten the risk of falling back to antidemocratic solutions. Today's democratic imagination seems trapped between the proverbial Scylla and Charybdis: either it freezes and eternalizes the model of the Glorious Thirty or it embraces transformations that might be necessary but bring uncertain results.[30]

The challenges to constitutional democracy come from two opposite sides: the oligarchic few, who already control the decision-making process; and the popular many, who claim that the only way they can redress the inequality of their power is by claiming the priority of the majority over all other parts of society. The oligarchic mutation and the populist mutation represent identical challenges. In both cases, it is the regulative principle of openness and impartiality *(erga omnes)* that is devalued. In a condition of "fake impartiality," and factual domination of the socially powerful, the legitimacy of constitutional democracy is fatally eroded. If decisions *ad personam* are persistently made by the few, why should it be a scandal when the many reclaim it for themselves? The battle between the many and the few risks ending at the point that Aristotle warned his contemporaries about: with the emergence of a factional government that functions as an arbitrary expression of the will to power of the ruling force (be this the few or the many). Paradoxically, the populist ambition of transcending Right and Left divisions is an important indicator of this process of factionalism.

All populist movements claim to represent a turning point in party politics. They want to represent only the "true" people, beyond Right and Left divisions. Certainly, while populists resist being identified, and while they claim to propose visions of popular interests that are alternative—either exclusionary nationalist (right wing) or radically inclusive (left wing)—they still have the populist style of political action in common. Left-wing forms of populism claim to be inclusive (for instance, of new immigrants) and an-

tiprotectionist; in this sense, they are the opposite of right-wing nationalist populists. But they do not make their claim in the name of democratic promises—rather, they frame it as a movement of opposition against the establishment, much as right-wing populism does. *Neither Right nor Left* or *beyond Right and Left* is the common denominator of today's various populists.[31]

"When I am asked," Alain once wrote, according to Raymond Aron, "if the cleavage between right-wing and left-wing parties, between men of the Right and men of the Left, still has a *meaning,* the first idea that comes to me is that the questioner is certainly not a man of the Left."[32]

Certainly, "national" and "popular" are different adjectives; only the latter can be truly empty and thus potentially more inclusive than the former one. This, according to Ernesto Laclau, makes it democracy-friendly. But the populist rendering of the people is not fully inclusive, as we have seen in this book. It is defined by an a priori act of exclusion (of the establishment), which seeks to freeze itself in the "right" people, regardless of who those people are. The basic social meaning of its constitutive people ends up compromising the inclusiveness of democratic populism. Whether it is nationalist or radically democratic, the logic is the same. In both cases, the binary of "the establishment" versus "the people" is needed. Each of them is external to the other and in need of the other, as each is defined by not being like the other. This becomes the only opposition that matters: one that is simple and intuitive, colorless, and beyond party ideologies. Based on this shared structural simplification, it follows that populist democracy is "beyond left and right." This is now the common denominator that crisscrosses populisms in their various geopolitical experiences.

This is the source of skepticism about populism that has oriented me in writing this book. Predictably, it has a political meaning (like populism itself, which never was, and never will be, purely an "academic" position).

To some scholars and intellectuals, the destiny of democracy depends on the capacity of the Left to imitate the Right, at least by becoming populist, hence "the importance of re-appropriating the term populism."[33] Moreover, the only thing that seems capable of resisting and defeating right-wing populism is leftist populism. Traditional social-democratic or reformist parties are not only weak, they are structurally incapable of defending democracy from neofascist and nationalist enemies, because they are based on a reflexivity that is hardly emotionally affecting. A radical populist counterpopulism would seem capable of putting an end to the problems created by neoliberal governments—governments that have been supported by cartel parties and mainstream coalitions, have disaffected militants and citizens, and have generated electoral apathy and a palpable sense of impotence in

political engagement.[34] After decades of trust in procedures, in legal strategies, and in institutions within democracies that pledged to achieve social justice, reinjecting voluntarism into politics seems necessary. This is because democracies have changed their direction toward market criteria of distribution, and procedures have shown themselves to be powerless—in fact, they have shown themselves to be hypocritically capable of becoming vehicles of the oligarchic classes. Mobilizing the people to act politically acquires energy from the "grievances and *ressentiments*" generated by the unredeemed promises made by successive democratic governments.[35] This is where the novel trust in populism within the democratic and leftist camp lies. The assumption here is that populism is content-empty: that it is a neutral means, the name of sheer voluntarism in politics, that relies on a rhetorical style and politics as craft. The myth of a leader unifying the many by means of a powerful and simple discourse, or personal charisma, suggests a vision of populism as a mechanical and neutral instrument. This, in turn, suggests that a populist strategy could do in the present what organized social-democratic or progressive parties have done in the past.

This portrayal *seems* appealing, because it assures democrats that they can commandeer "the style" of populist politics in the service of their hopes for political and social renewal. My central claim here is that this hope is false. The machinery that a populist leader *en marche* toward state power is primed to put in motion is far from neutral. Pro-populist leftist assumptions about populism are mistaken, because populism is not merely a tool that can be harnessed to reformist or conservative plans. It is not simply "a style of politics"; in order to be successful, populism has to transform the basic principles and rules of democracy itself. In so doing, it leads politics and the state toward outcomes that citizens cannot control. Populism inevitably proceeds to exalt and ensure the prominent role and power of the leader. This occurs for the simple reason that the success of the narrative rests on the success of the leader—and both of these things are contingent on the leader's authority over the people and its parts.

The populist people *abdicates its power* to the leader, because without him or her, it does not exist as a collective subject ruling the state. This abdication cannot be avoided if a populist politics is to be successful. As such, populism is girded by a paradox it cannot resolve. Regardless of its radical and reformist program, its actualization within the state and society depends essentially on the authority of the leader, the leader's small group of supporters, and the faith people have in him or her. Here the leftist mistrust in the figure and role of a leader traditionally lies. Making the party a *collective leader* inspired by a theory that could not be arbitrary constructed by any individual leader was Antonio Gramsci's answer to prepare for the

gradual work of hegemonic change and to do so by countering the risk of personalization, particularly in a situation of "war of position," as in electoral democracy.[36] Gramsci thought, quite reasonably, that unifying the people through "libidinal" or "affective" identification with a leader could not and was not in and by itself a sufficient condition for making hegemonic politics into a progressive or democratic politics.[37] The hegemonic project would succeed in proportion as it neutralized the growth of the politics of personality. One might thus say that Gramsci's hegemonic project was meant to block any individual leader from succeeding in acquiring domination by intervening on the meaning and instrumental implementation of ideology.[38]

My central claim is that populism cannot answer the problems that populists are reacting against. It is true that the factors explaining specific populist successes and impacts are deeply contextual. It is also true that populism takes several forms. But we can agree that populism is related to a popular perception of malfunctioning of the constitutional government, as well as popular perception about the inadequacy of representative institutions. Populism indicates the existence of systemic political corruption, which has been facilitated by economic inequality. Answering populist criticism would require democrats to intervene in populist constitutional and political arguments, rather than demonizing them. It would require them to revise some basic rules of the game in a way that returns direct decision-making power to citizens and also gives them more stringent control over their representatives. It would require them to reconfigure political parties, both in their internal organization and in the role they play in the institutions (sometime, as in some parliamentary democracies, it may be reasonable to make them constitutional), or to put more stringent control on their financial resources; and to rewrite parties' charters and structures so as to make them active in interpreting and representing partisan claims (and to emancipate them from the oligarchic potentates who rule them, and who find it advantageous to stress partisan divisiveness or, alternatively, endorse mainstream politics, depending on what is convenient to their plans and their affluent donors).[39] Antiparty movements are dangerous but not unjustified or useless because there is not perhaps a static form for parties to exist.[40] They reveal mutations of representative democracy that need to be analyzed and answered. Institutional imagination is a resource that belongs to democracy. If democracy cannot be separated from the habit of self-exploration and experimentation, and if it cannot be separated from dissent and contestation, then institutional and procedural innovations are its urgent task today. Party democracy, so successful and important for a few crucial decades, has proved itself to be inadequate for governing a society

that no longer relies on structural organizations of workers and citizens and in which, moreover, net democracy acquired credibility as a more direct expression of the popular will. It perpetuates rampant political corruption, which institutional checks alone are unable to contain and correct. Party democracies have reached the threshold that separates them from factional politics—including populism, which is an explicit affirmation of politics in the service of a part. Populism is, in all respects, a product of the malfunctions of party democracy.[41] This is where my book begins, and where it ends: with a dissection and investigation of the risks that arise when democracy stretches toward populism.

NOTES

Introduction

Epigraph: Norberto Bobbio, *The Future of Democracy,* trans. from the Italian by Roger Griffin, ed. Richard Bellamy (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p. 17.

1. Edward Albert Shils, *The Torment of Secrecy* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1956); Gino Germani, *Authoritarianism, Fascism, and National Populism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1978); Roger D. Griffin, "The 'Post-fascism' of Alleanza Nazionale: A Case Study in Ideological Morphology," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 1, no. 2 (1996): 123–145.
2. These observations are broadly derived from Federico Finchelstein and Nadia Urbinati, "On Populism and Democracy," *Populism* 1, no. 1 (2018): 1–24. See also Enzo Traverso, *Les nouveaux visages du fascisme* (Paris: Textuel, 2017); Federico Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism in History* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017); John B. Judis, *The Populist Explosion: How the Great Recession Transformed American and European Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); Michael L. Connitt, ed., *Populism in Latin America,* 2nd ed. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002); Alan Knight, "Populism and Neo-populism in Latin America, Especially Mexico," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 30, no. 2 (1999): 223–248; Kurt Weyland, "Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics," *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 1 (2001): 1–22; Carlos de la Torre and Enrique Peruzzotti, eds., *El retorno del pueblo: El populismo y nuevas democracias en América Latina* (Quito, Ecuador: FLACSO, 2008); Carlos de la Torre, *Populist Seduction in Latin America* (Athens: Ohio State University Press, 2010); Kirk A. Hawkins, *Venezuela's*

Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, eds., *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); and Steven Levitsky et al., *The Challenges of Party Building in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

3. Ghiţa Ionescu and Ernest Gellner, eds., *Populism* (London: Macmillan, 1969); Yves Mény and Yves Surel, eds., *Democracies and the Populist Challenge* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Pierre-André Taguieff, "Le populisme et la science politique," *Vingtième-siècle: Revue d'histoire* 56 (1997): 4–33; Piero Ignazi, *Il popolo escluso: Profilo del Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989). See the excellent reconstruction of the early reports on populism in European discourse by Anton Jäger, "The Semantic Drift: Images of Populism in Post-war American Historiography and Their Relevance for (European) Political Science," *Constellations* 23, no. 3 (2017): 317–319.
4. Isaiah Berlin's comments in "To Define Populism," précis of the conference held in London in 1967, *Government and Opposition* 3, no. 2 (1968): 177; Margaret Canovan, "'Trust the People!' Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy," *Political Studies* 47 (1999): 2–16; Cas Mudde, "In the Name of the Peasantry, the Proletariat, and the People: Populisms in Eastern Europe," *East European Politics and Societies* 15, no. 1 (2001): 33–53.
5. Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005); Laclau, "Populism: What's in a Name," in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy,* ed. Francisco Panizza (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 22–49; Jason Frank, *Constituent Moments: Enacting the People in Postrevolutionary America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Chantal Mouffe, "The 'End of Politics' and the Challenge of Right-Wing Populism," in Panizza, *Populism,* pp. 50–71; Mouffe, "The Populist Moment," democraciaAbierta, December 5, 2016, https://www.opendemocracy.net/democraciaabierta/chantal-mouffe/populist-challenge; Nancy Fraser, "Against Progressive Neo-liberalism: A New Progressive Populism," *Dissent Magazine,* January 28, 2017, https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/nancy-fraser-against-progressive-neoliberalism-progressive-populism.
6. Marco D'Eramo, "Populism and the New Oligarchy," trans. from the Italian by G. Elliott, *New Left* 82 (2013): 5–28; Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Yascha Mounk, *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Crown, 2018).
7. William H. Riker, *Liberalism against Populism: A Confrontation between the Theory of Democracy and the Theory of Social Choice* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1982).
8. Nadia Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured: Opinion, Truth and the People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), introduction.
9. Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 5.

10. The path I follow resonates with a view broadly shared in contemporary scholarship, according to which populism made its appearances in connection with the crisis of political representation or of an existing form of representative government. See in particular Kenneth M. Roberts, "Populism, Political Mobilizations, and Crisis of Political Representation," in *The Promise and Perils of Populism: Global Perspectives,* ed. Carlos de la Torre (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), pp. 140–158.
11. This should impel us to avoid fideism, and to hold a critical perspective about the contingent nature of constitutional democracy; John Dunn, *Breaking Democracy's Spell* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 34.
12. Andrew Arato, "How We Got Here: Transition Failures, Their Causes, and the Populist Interests in the Constitution," Public Seminar, October 11, 2017, http://www.publicseminar.org/2017/10/how-we-got-here/.
13. Bobbio, *Future of Democracy,* p. 30.
14. Mouffe, "Populist Moment."
15. *Oxford English Dictionary,* http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/view/Entry/147930?redirectedFrom=populism#eid (accessed February 1, 2019).
16. Laclau, "Populism," p. 40.
17. Christopher Meckstroth, *The Struggle for Democracy: Paradoxes of Progress and the Politics of Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 179.
18. Margaret Canovan, *The People* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), p. 87.
19. The analysis of electoral competition as ruled by catchall parties, with the primary goal of expanding their electorate more than their members or affiliates, was provided many years ago by Otto Kircheimer, "The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems," in *Political Parties and Political Development,* ed. Joseph La Palombara (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 177–200.
20. A rich and useful analysis of the "imperfect forms of either totalitarianism or democratic politics"—namely, "authoritarian regime" and whether it can prepare for transition to democracy—can be found in Juan J. Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," in *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology,* ed. Erik Allardt and Stein Rokkan, with a foreword by Seymour M. Lipset (New York: Free Press, 1970), pp. 252–254. That populism leads to "Competitive authoritarianism" is the central thesis of Steven Levitsky and James Loxton, "Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism: The Case of Fujimori's Peru," in Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism*, pp. 160–181.
21. Meanwhile Chávez "attacked the Internet as 'a battle trench' that was bringing 'a current of conspiracy'"; Evgeny Morozov, *The Dark Side of Internet Freedom: The New Delusion* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), p. 113.
22. Michael Saward, *The Representative Claim* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
23. After winning the elections in 1949, General Juan Domingo Perón said, "We have given the people the opportunity to choose. . . . The people have elected us, so the problem is resolved"; quoted in Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and*

Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism (London: Verso, 2011), p. 189. In a style that reminds us of the constitutions "granted" by kings to their subjects in nineteenth-century Europe, Perón's elections were *octroyées,* or conceded to the people by their paternal ruler; elections played a confirming, rather than a selecting, function.

24. While 'mixed government' was originally an ancient category, Bernard Manin adapted it to governments based on elections in *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
25. Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured,* introduction; and beforehand, Nadia Urbinati, *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), particularly chap. 1. Manin renders the idea of diarchy I propose with the spatial metaphor of a split between the "higher will" and the "lower will" in *Principles of Representative Government,* p. 205. The conception of diarchy I use is meant to convey the idea of this distance in a similar way, while avoiding reference to a hierarchical order.
26. According to Richard Tuck, this separation was inaugurated by modern theorists of sovereignty and was essential for democracy to flourish; *The Sleeping Sovereign: The Invention of Modern Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
27. For more on this, see Chapter 3.
28. The word "demagoguery" did not have a pejorative meaning in classical democratic practice, and a demagogue could steer the assembly in either a tyrannical or a more democratic direction; Melissa Lane, "The Origins of the Statesman: Demagogue Distinction in and after Ancient Athens," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 73, no. 2 (2012): 179–200.
29. Urbinati, *Representative Democracy,* chap. 1.
30. For a discussion of populism's relation to democracy and liberal democracy, see Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, "Populism and (Liberal) Democracy: A Framework for Analysis," in Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism,* p. 10.
31. Minimalist theorists of electoral democracy confirm this more-than-minimal assumption when they presume that elections work on the condition that competitors comply with the rules of the game and have developed an ethics of trust. As such, their theory is in fact not so minimal after all; see Adam Przeworski, "Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense," in *Democracy's Value,* ed. I. Shapiro and C. Hacker-Cordón (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 23–55.
32. Bobbio, *Future of Democracy,* p. 25.
33. Josiah Ober, *Demopolis: Democracy before Liberalism in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), preface; Elizabeth Anderson, "How Should Egalitarians Cope with Market Risks?," *Theoretical Inquiries in Law* 9 (2007): 61–92, in which she argues that democrats should retain some risks in their projects of bringing more social equality.
34. Illiberal democracy has been defined as a regime that mixes elections and authoritarianism; see Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007); on the

same line of thought, Mounk, *People vs. Democracy;* and Levitsky and Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*. For a counterargument against the hybrid of illiberalism and autocracy with democracy, see Ober, *Demopolis,* pp. 10–11.

35. "'Freedom' was not included in the list of conditions for a political system because, in a minimal sense, it is almost a pleonasm for politics; and because, in a more elaborate sense, it is a derivative of an already existing political system or culture"; Bernard Crick, *In Defense of Politics,* 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 184.
36. See Claus Offe, *Europe Entrapped* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), p. 144. I would simply repeat what Immanuel Kant wrote about "perpetual peace": since peace means an "end to all hostilities," a mere suspension of hostility is not peace but a truce—hence, "to attach the adjective 'perpetual' to it is already suspiciously close to pleonasm"; Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (1795), in *Political Writings,* ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 93.
37. Quoted in Laclau, *Politics and Ideology,* p. 189.
38. Democracy either is "minimal" (namely, voting as vetoing) or is populism: Riker, *Liberalism against Populism,* particularly pp. 241–253.
39. This also holds for direct democracy, according to some of the most perceptive scholars of ancient Athenian democracy. For an excellent discussion of this conception of democracy in relation to the challenge posed today by populism, see Paulina Ochoa Espejo, "Power to Whom? The People between Procedure and Populism," in de la Torre, *Promise and Perils,* pp. 59–90.
40. Jonathan White and Lea Ypi, *The Meaning of Partisanship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 148.
41. Thus Jürgen Habermas famously spoke of the "co-originality" of political liberty and individual liberty: "Constitutional Democracy: A Paradoxical Union of Contradictory Principles?," *Political Theory* 29, no. 6 (2001): 767.
42. For this reason, I think that the schematic adjustment of liberalism and democracy proposed in political science is unsatisfactory and abstract; a better view comes from political theorists who understand how democratic procedures and rights, civil and political, connect to each other in a deeper sense. For a comparison of these two typologies of democracy, see, for instance, Guillermo O'Donnell, "Horizontal Accountability in New Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 3 (1998): 112–126; and Bobbio, *Future of Democracy,* in particular pp. 65–67. On this issue, see also Maria Paula Saffon and Nadia Urbinati, "Procedural Democracy: The Bulwark of Equal Liberty," *Political Theory* 41 (2013): 441–481.
43. Ober, *Demopolis,* p. 7.
44. Ibid.
45. Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1987), p. 24.
46. Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contribution to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy,* trans. William Rehg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), chap. 7.

47. It may be useful to refresh our memory of the ambitions of fascism:

> Fascism is therefore opposed to all individualistic abstractions based on eighteenth century materialism. . . .
>
> . . . The Fascist conception of life stresses the importance of the State and accepts the individual only in so far as his interests coincide with those of the State. . . . It is opposed to classical liberalism which arose as a reaction to absolutism and exhausted its historical function when the State became the expression of the conscience and will of the people. Liberalism denied the State in the name of the individual; Fascism reasserts the rights of the State as expressing the real essence of the individual. . . .
>
> No individuals or groups (political parties, cultural associations, economic unions, social classes) outside the State. . . . Fascism is therefore opposed to Socialism. . . .
>
> After socialism, Fascism trains its guns on the whole block of democratic ideologies, and rejects both their premises and their practical applications and implements. Fascism denies that numbers, as such, can be the determining factor in human society; it denies the right of numbers to govern by means of periodical consultations; it asserts the irremediable and fertile and beneficent inequality of men who cannot be leveled by any such mechanical and extrinsic device as universal suffrage. Democratic regimes may be described as those under which the people are, from time to time, deluded into the belief that they exercise sovereignty, while all the time real sovereignty resides in and is exercised by other and sometimes irresponsible and secret forces. Democracy is a kingless regime infested by many kings who are sometimes more exclusive, tyrannical, and destructive than one, even if he be a tyrant. (Benito Mussolini and Giovanni Gentile, "The Doctrine of Fascism" [1932], in Mussolini, *Fascism Doctrine and Institutions* [1935], http://www.worldfuturefund.org/wffmaster/Reading/Germany/mussolini.htm.)

48. Rogers Brubaker, "Between Nationalism and Civilizationism: The European Populist Moment in Comparative Perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 8 (2017): 1195.
49. Ober, *Demopolis,* p. xv.
50. Paul Taggart, "Populism and the Pathologies of Representative Politics," in Mény and Surel, *Democracies and the Populist Challenge,* p. 67.
51. Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.,* trans. from the French by Samuel Weber (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p. 90.
52. Benjamin Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism: Difference, Populism, Revolution, Agitation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).
53. Jan-Werner Müller, "Towards a Political Theory of Populism," *Notizie di Politeia,* no. 107 (2012): 23.
54. Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured,* pp. 129–131.
55. Illuminating is the beginning of the book *Populism* edited by Ionescu and Gellner in 1969: "A spectre is haunting the world—populism."
56. Isaiah Berlin, "In Search of a Definition," in *The Roots of Romanticism,* 2nd ed., ed. Henty Hardy, with a foreword by John Gray (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 1–2.
57. Berlin, "To Define Populism," p. 138.
58. Berlin, "In Search of a Definition," p. 2.
59. Duncan Kelly, "Populism and The History of Popular Sovereignty," in *The Oxford Handbook of Populism,* ed. Cristóbal Rovita Kaltwasser, Paul

Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 512–513.

60. Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk, "The Democratic Disconnect," *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 6 (2016): 5–17.
61. Adam Przeworski, *Why Bother with Elections?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), pp. 2–3.
62. Germani, *Authoritarianism.*
63. Andrzej Walicki, "Russia," in Ionescu and Gellner, *Populism,* pp. 62–96; Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956); Taguieff, "Le populisme et la science politique."
64. Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981); Cas Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist," *Government and Opposition* 39, no. 3 (2004): 541–563.
65. C. B. Macpherson, *Democracy in Alberta: The Theory and Practice of a Quasi-Party System* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953).
66. Nadia Urbinati, "Democracy and Populism," *Constellations* 5, no. 1 (1998): 110–124.
67. De la Torre, *Populist Seduction in Latin America.*
68. Berlin, "To Define Populism," p. 138.
69. Enrique Peruzzotti, "Populism in Democratic Times: Populism, Representative Democracy and the Debate on Democratic Deepening," in *Latin American Populism in the Twenty-First Century,* ed. Carlos de la Torre and Cynthia J. Arnson (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), pp. 61–84; Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism.*
70. The antiliberal and antiparliamentary implications of the fascist move against parties was perspicaciously recognized by Hannah Arendt: "The only typically modern aspect of the Fascist party dictatorship is that here, too, the party insisted that it was a movement; that it was nothing of the kind, but merely usurped the slogan 'movement' in order to attract the masses, became evident as soon as it seized the state machine without drastically changing the power structure of the country, being content to fill all government positions with party members." *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), p. 257.
71. Julius Evola, *Il fascismo visto dalla destra: Note sul terzo Reich* (Rome: G. Volpe, 1979).
72. "If the State is truly to represent the nation, then the people composing the nation must be part of the State," recited a publication by the Confederation of the Industrialists in 1939, quoted in Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism,* p. 258n95.
73. Raymond Aron, *Sociologie des Societés Industrielles: Esquisse d'une thèorie des régimes politiques* (Paris: Le Centre de Documentation Universitaire, "Les Cours de la Sorbonne," Sociologie, 1958), p. 50.
74. The usage of the metaphor of "family resemblance" to study populism was first proposed in Ionescu and Gellner's edited collection, *Populism,* in 1969.
75. Carlo Ginzburg, "Family Resemblances and Family Trees: Two Cognitive Metaphors Author(s)," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (Spring 2004): 548.

Ginzburg refers to Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* 2nd ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (1958; repr., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998), §67, wherein, concerning the attempt to define the word "game," he wrote, "I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than 'family resemblances'; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. And I shall say: 'games' form a family."

76. Ginzburg, "Family Resemblances and Family Trees," p. 549.
77. Quoted in Federico Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 88.
78. Peruzzotti, "Populism in Democratic Times," pp. 72–84.
79. Nicos Poulantzas's study of fascism contains a definition of "transmutation" that fits my reading of populism in relation to democracy. Transmutation of feudal ideology, or of the ideology of liberal nationalism in fascism, means not that those elements can serve different systems, transiting from one regime to another, but rather that a regime can incorporate elements from other regimes and organize them into an ideology that is somehow unique, or not identifiable with the other regimes; *Fascism and Dictatorship: The Third International and the Problem of Fascism* (London: NLB, 1974), p. 128.
80. Antonio Gramsci, "Forze elementari," *L'Ordine Nuovo,* April 26, 1921, in *Scritti giovanili,* ed. Paolo Spriano (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1971), p. 428.
81. Müller, *Contesting Democracy,* particularly chap. 1.
82. The Gran Consiglio was informally instituted by Benito Mussolini in 1923, but only became an official organ of the state, or the government of the regime, in 1928. It was originally composed of a mix of politicians and technocrats, not necessarily fascist, and a number of people, directly and each time nominated by Mussolini *motu proprio* according to the issues discussed in the Consiglio, derived from the most important sectors of state bureaucracy and agrarian and industrial classes; Alberto Aquarone, *L'organizzazione dello Stato totalitario* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965), pp. 15–22.
83. Manin, *Principles of Representative Government,* chap. 6.
84. The expression "legacy organization" is used by Paolo Gerbaudo, *The Digital Party: Political Organization and Online Democracy* (London: Pluto Press, 2019), p. 13. See on this topic Peter Mair, "Populism Democracy vs. Party Democracy," in Mény and Surel, *Democracies and the Populist Challenge,* pp. 81–98.
85. See Nadia Urbinati, "A Revolt against Intermediary Bodies," *Constellations* 22, no. 4 (2015): 477–486.
86. See Gerbaudo, *Digital Party,* in particular pp. 1–21 and 81–91.
87. Manin, *Principles of Representative Government,* p. 226.
88. An impressive list of publications has been provided by Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda" (Working Paper Series, no. 13-0004, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 2016).

89. Ionescu and Gellner, *Populism;* Mény and Surel, *Democracies and the Populist Challenge;* Paul Taggart, *Populism* (London: Open University Press, 2000); Mudde, "Populist Zeitgeist"; Laclau, *On Populist Reason;* Müller, *What Is Populism?;* Judis, *Populist Explosion;* Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016); Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).
90. A concise and excellent overview of the history of interpretations of populism can be found in Carlos de la Torre, "Populism Revived: Donald Trump and the Latin American Leftist Populists," *The Americas* 47, no. 4 (2018): 734–738.
91. Maria Victoria Murillo, "La historicidad del pueblo y los límites del populismo," *Nueva Sociedad* no. 274 (March–April 2018): 165–174.
92. Taggart, "Populism and the Pathologies," p. 66.
93. By Margaret Canovan, see the above-cited *Populism; People;* and "'Trust the People!'"; and also "Taking Politics to the People: Populism as the Ideology of Democracy," in Mény and Surel, *Democracies and the Populist Challenge,* pp. 25–44.
94. Ernesto Laclau, "Toward a Theory of Populism," in *Politics and Ideology,* p. 147.
95. Bonnie Honig, "Between Deliberation and Decision: Political Paradox in Democratic Theory," *American Political Science Review* 101 (2007): 8. To the "paradox" of determining the people is also devoted the book by Frank, *Constituent Moments.*
96. Mudde, "Populist Zeitgeist," p. 543.
97. Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, "Populism and Political Leadership," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership,* ed. P. T'Hart and R. A. W. Rhodes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 383.
98. For a basic historical understanding of humanist republicanism, see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought,* vol. 1, *The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).
99. Moffitt, *Global Rise of Populism,* p. 3.
100. For a critical analysis of this descriptive approach, see Espejo, "Power to Whom?"; and Moffitt, *Global Rise of Populism,* pp. 138–140.
101. In Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, "Populism and (Liberal) Democracy," p. 10. On the same page: "Just as it is misleading to conflate democracy with liberalism, so, too, is it a mistake to regard democracy before liberalism as antithetical to liberalism," as if only liberalism had the power to clean democracy of its endogenous illiberal populism.
102. Kurt Weyland, "Neoliberal Populism in Latin America and Eastern Europe," *Comparative Politics* 31 (1999): 379–401; Knight, "Populism and Neo-populism."
103. Weyland, "Clarifying a Contested Concept," p. 14.
104. Pierre Rosanvallon, *La contre-démocratie: La politique à l'âge de la defiance* (Paris: Seuil, 2006), p. 276.
105. Weyland, "Neoliberal Populism," p. 381.

106. Within this broad domain of strategic reading, important work has been done by Guillermo O'Donnell and the scholars who have included populism within his theory of delegative democracy and authoritarian democracy; Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 1 (1994): 55–69; Peruzzotti, "Populism in Democratic Times."
107. These ideas are contained in the main works by Ernesto Lacual and Chantal Mouffe. See in particular Laclau and Mouffe, "Hegemony and Radical Democracy," in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics,* 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2001), pp. 149–194; Laclau, *On Populist Reason;* Francisco Panizza, "Introduction: Populism and the Mirror of Democracy," in Panizza, *Populism,* pp. 1–31; Arditi, *Politics on the Edges.* For a reconstruction and critical interpretation of the hegemonic reading of populism see Yanni Stavrakakis, "Populism and Hegemony," in Kaltwasser et al., *Oxford Handbook of Populism*, pp. 535–553.
108. Ernesto Laclau, "The Future of Radical Democracy," in *Radical Democracy: Politics between Abundance and Lack,* ed. Lars Tønder and Lasse Thomassen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 256–262.
109. Paolo Gerbaudo, *The Mask and the Flag: Populism, Citizenship and Global Protest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 6–9.
110. Laclau, "Future of Radical Democracy," p. 259.
111. It should not come as a surprise that the first to detect and study populism was a politician, not a scholar: Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *What the "Friends of the People Are" and How They Fight the Social-Democrats* (1894), in *Lenin: Collected Works,* vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960), pp. 129–332, https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1894/friends/index.htm.

    To Andrzej Walicki, the concept of populism "owes incomparably more to Lenin" than anyone else, as he "gave it a more concrete historical and sociological connotation." "Russia," p. 65. Lenin analyzed the Russian ideological and intellectual movement known as *narodnik,* or "the friends of *narod* [the people]." *Narodnik* came to be used in the late nineteenth century to distinguish the early literary forms of populism from subsequent forms, which were more political and connected to reactionary ideologies or terrorism. Lenin's Russia was not democratic; nor was it yet largely industrialized or capitalistic. And his ambition was that not of the scholar but of the political leader. As a political leader and a partisan, he was interested in discovering the roots of revolutionary socialism within the political culture of his country in order to make socialism appear endogenous, not imported from abroad. See in particular Richard Pipes, "Russian Marxism and Its Populist Background: The Late Nineteenth Century," *Russian Review* 19, no. 4 (1960): 316–337; Neil Harding, "Lenin's Early Writings: The Problem of Context," *Political Studies* 23, no. 4 (1975): 442–458; and Maurice Meisner, "Leninism and Maoism: Some Populist Perspectives on Marxism-Leninism in China," *China Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (1971): 2–36.

112. Maria Paula Saffon and J. F. González-Bertomeu, "Latin American Populism: An Admissible Trade-Off between Procedural Democracy and Equality?," *Constellations* 24 (2017): 416–431.
113. Populism's malleability makes it just as suitable a vehicle for rightist parties as for leftist ones; its detachment from socioeconomic referents entails that it "can in principle be appropriated by any agency for any political construct"; Perry Anderson, *The H-Word: The Periphery of Hegemony* (London: Verso, 2017), p. 96.
114. Mouffe, "'End of Politics'"; Íñigo Errejón and Chantal Mouffe, *Podemos: In the Name of the People,* preface by Owen Jones (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2016).
115. Anderson, *H-Word,* p. 96.
116. Laclau and Mouffe, "Hegemony and Radical Democracy," p. 165.
117. I have already developed this idea of populist representation in "Revolt against Intermediary Bodies."
118. Rosanvallon, *La contre-démocratie.*

1. From Antiestablishment to Antipolitics

Epigraph: C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 4.

1. This chapter elaborates on Nadia Urbinati, "Antiestablishment and the Substitution of the Whole with One of Its Parts," in *Routledge Handbook of Global Populism,* ed. Carlos de la Torre (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 77–97.
2. Donald Trump's Inaugural Address, Washington, DC, January 20, 2017, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Donald_Trump%27s_Inaugural_Address.
3. Thus millionaires like Berlusconi, Perot, and Trump fit populist antiestablishmentarian rhetoric, as they "can be considered more authentic representatives of the people than leaders with a more common socio-economic status"; Cas Mudde, "Populism: An Ideational Approach," in Rovira Kaltwasser et al., *Oxford Handbook of Populism*, p. 28.
4. Levitsky and Loxton, "Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism: The Case of Fujimori's Peru," in Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism,* p. 167.
5. Levitsky and Loxton, "Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism," p. 162.
6. Kazin, *Populist Persuasion,* pp. 280–281.
7. Democracy started its modern career opposing aristocracy, as we learn from the invaluable historical work of R. R. Palmer, in particular his two-volume book *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959–1964); a rich excerpt of it is in his "Notes on the Use of the Word 'Democracy' 1789–1799," *Political Science Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (1953): 203–226.

8. I analyzed the widespread phenomenon of reaction against intermediation in "Revolt against Intermediary Bodies"; I will return to this theme at the end of the book.
9. Kenneth M. Roberts, "Populism and Democracy in Venezuela under Hugo Chávez," in Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism,* p. 153.
10. Wolfram Nordsieck writes that populist parties are part of the right-wing political spectrum as "protest parties that appeal to the fears and frustrations of the public"; quoted in Daniele Archibugi and Marco Cellini, "What Causes the Populist Infection? How Can It Be Cured?," openDemocracy, March 24, 2017, https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/daniele-archibugi-marco-cellini/what-causes-populist-infection-how-can-it-be-cure.
11. Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780–1840* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 12.
12. Marco Cremonesi, "Salvini liquida il centrodestra: La prospettiva è popolo contro élite," *Corriere della Sera,* May 22, 2018, https://milano.corriere.it/notizie/politica/18_maggio_22/salvini-liquida-centrodestra-prospettiva-popolo-contro-elite-bc228452-5d80-11e8-b13c-dd6bf73f9db5.shtml.
13. Canovan, *Populism,* p. 265.
14. Margareta López Maya, "Popular Power," in de la Torre and Arnson, *Latin American Populism,* pp. 375–377.
15. Roberts, "Populism and Democracy," p. 46.
16. Peruzzotti, "Populism in Democratic Times," pp. 70–71.
17. Nancy Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 43.
18. Pierre Rosanvallon, *La légitimité démocratique: Impartialité, réflexivité, proximité* (Paris: Seuil, 2008), p. 43.
19. Mair, "Populist Democracy vs. Party Democracy," pp. 84, 89.
20. Manin, *Principles of Representative Government,* pp. 228–229. A synthesis and overview of the "antiparty system" mode appears in Carlo Invernizzi Accetti and Christopher Bickerton, "Populism and Technocracy: Opposites or Complements?," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 20 (2016): 186–206.
21. Raymond Polin, *La liberté de notre temps* (Paris: Vrin, 1977), pp. 229–255; Bobbio, *Future of Democracy,* p. 123. I thank David Ragazzoni for suggesting that I read the issue of antipartyism through the subtler category of *merecracy,* an English translation provided by Roger Griffin of Bobbio's *merocrazia* in *Future of Democracy.*
22. Rosanvallon, *La légitimité démocratique,* p. 28.
23. The seed of the democratic character of representation germinates from the paradox that although a representative is supposed to deliberate about things that affect *all members* of the polity, he or she is supposed to have a sympathetic relation *only to a part.* Hans Kelsen, *On the Essence and Value of Democracy,* trans. B. Graft, ed. N. Urbinati and C. Invernizzi Accetti (1929; repr., Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), chap. 2. The relation of ideological sympathy and communication between the representative and his

or her electors is necessary precisely *because* political representation must exclude legal checks and is not a contract. "The criterion of autonomy therefore cannot demand, even as an ideal, a wholly unencumbered legislator, one who acts utterly unswayed by political pressures and partisan loyalties": Dennis F. Thompson, *Political Ethics and Public Office* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 113.

24. Sarah L. de Lange and Tjirske Akkerman, "Populist Parties in Belgium: A Case of Hegemonic Liberal Democracy?," in Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism,* pp. 31–32.
25. Kazin, *Populist Persuasion,* p. 15.
26. Mudde, "Populist Zeitgeist," p. 546.
27. Canovan, "Taking Politics to the People," pp. 26–28.
28. The emancipation of political parties from pestilential factions is the object of a long story and the source of the construction of representative government, as we learn from the seminal work by Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels*. "The parties, in fact, have played a major role as *makers* of governments, more especially they have been the makers of democratic government"; Elmer Eric Schattschneider, *Party Government,* with a new introduction by Sidney A. Pearson Jr. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), p. 1; see also Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), particularly chap. 1. For an excellent overview of this argument, see Massimiliano Gregorio, *Parte Totale: Le dottrine costituzionali del partito politico in Italia tra Otto e Novecento* (Milan: Giuffrè, 2013), particularly chap. 1.
29. Mair, "Populist Democracy vs. Party Democracy," pp. 84–85.
30. Levitsky and Loxton, "Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism," p. 163.
31. Weyland, "Neoliberal Populism."
32. Populist actors in some European and Latin American countries have recently used the media to merge the opinion of the majority with public opinion, have acquired large consensus and used state power to favor and strengthen their constituency, have thus weakened institutional control of government and furthered corruption, and finally have used the state to promote their majority in clear violation of democracy's diarchy.
33. See Andrew Arato, "Political Theology and Populism," in de la Torre, *Promise and Perils of Populism,* pp. 31–58.
34. The adjectives "pure" and "impure," as connected to the "outside" and the "inside" of state power, have been explained by Mudde as evidence of the ideological Manichean construction devised by populism.
35. Andreas Schedler, "Anti-Political-Establishment Parties," *Party Politics* 2, no. 3 (1996): 293.
36. Maximilien Robespierre, speech to the Convention, July 26, 1794, http://www.bartleby.com/268/7/24.html.
37. Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchic Tendencies of Modern Democracy,* trans. Eden Paul and Cedar Paul, with an introduction by Seymour Martin Lipset (New York: Free Press, 1962), p. 56.
38. Laclau, "Future of Radical Democracy," pp. 258–259.

39. Ibid., p. 258. This is why Karl Marx's universal class does not fit any kind of hegemonic game, because hegemony is a terrain on which a part makes a claim to universality but does not translate the whole society into a one-class kind of universality; this is also what democracy is about, as a political order based on a majority–opposition divide; yet populism does not presume permanent dialectics as democracy does, and although it resists the temptation to annul competition, its winning part acts in power as the best part, not as one winning part among others.
40. This is Mudde's argument, to which I shall return later.
41. The term "the people" "has two sets of connotations, one more inclusive than the other. It can mean either *the whole people,* everyone, or the *common people,* the nonelite"; Canovan, *Populism,* p. 277.
42. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, "Populism and (Liberal) Democracy," pp. 8–9.
43. Mudde, "Populist Zeitgeist," p. 543.
44. Richard Heinisch, "Success in Opposition—Failure in Government: Explaining the Performance of Right-Wing Populist Parties in Public Offices," *West European Politics* 26, no. 3 (2003): 91–130; Paulina Ochoa Espejo, "Populism and the People," *Theory and Events* 20, no. 1 (2017): 92–99.
45. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, "Populism and Political Leadership," p. 382.
46. Ibid.
47. Mudde, "Populism," p. 28.
48. Taggart, "Populism and Pathologies," p. 74.
49. Carlos de la Torre, "Neopopulism in Contemporary Ecuador: The Case of Bucaram's Use of the Mass Media," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 12, no. 4 (1999): 562.
50. Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured,* chap. 3; Arato, "Political Theology and Populism."
51. Mouffe, "Populist Moment."
52. Panizza, "Introduction."
53. Arditi, *Politics on the Edges,* p. 65.
54. Corporate rule is "a forgotten topic in democratic theory"; Hélène Landemore, "In Defense of Workplace Democracy: Towards a Justification of the Firm–State Analogy," *Political Theory* 44, no. 1 (2016): 53.
55. Relations of power within private corporations are less person-to-person relationships and more systemic forms of domination that the rights enjoyed by corporations make almost irresistible; see Alex Gourevitch, "Quitting Work but Not the Job: Liberty and the Right to Strike," *Perspectives on Politics* 14, no. 2 (2016): 307–323. See also Philip Pettit, *On the People's Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 115–117.
56. Although when we talk of democratic legitimacy we go ideally back to the Athenian assembly of all the citizens, the idea of an absolute will of the sovereign body of the people comes to us from the sixteenth-century conceptualization of state sovereignty provided by Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes: "They suggested that in casting democracy in this way, they were being

faithful to the model of classical Athens, in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. But, mischievously or not, they were actually quite innovative in the image they proposed," adapting democracy to the centralized power of the state's will, to be materialized in the making and enforcing of laws; Pettit, *On the People's Terms,* p. 189.

57. Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (New York: Palgrave, 2005).
58. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract; or, Principles of Political Rights* (1762), in *Basic Political Writings,* trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), bk. 3, chap. 1.
59. C. M. Conaghan, *Fujimori's Peru: Deception in the Public Sphere* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2005), p. 30.
60. Kazin, *Populist Persuasion,* p. 263.
61. Marco Tarchi, "Populism Italian Style," in Mény and Surel, *Democracies and the Populist Challenge,* pp. 120–138.
62. Kathleen Bruhn, "'To Hell with Your Corrupt Institutions!' AMLO and Populism in Mexico," in Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism,* p. 92.
63. Mills, *Power Elite,* p. 343.
64. John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861), in *On Liberty and Other Essays,* ed. John Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), particularly chap. 6, "Of the Infirmities and Dangers to Which Representative Government Is Liable."
65. Mills, *Power Elite,* p. 354.
66. Ibid., p. 278; Piketty, "Brahmin Left vs. Merchant Right."
67. Piero Ignazi, *Party and Democracy: The Uneven Road to Party Legitimacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 175.
68. See Wolfgang Merkel, "Is There a Crisis of Democracy?," *Democratic Theory* 1, no. 2 (2014): 11–25.
69. Marco Revelli, *Populismo 2.0* (Turin: Einaudi, 2017).
70. The meagerness of the liberal argument has been pointed to by Eric A. Posner and Adrian Vermeule, *The Executive Unbound: After the Madisonian Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
71. Mills, *Power Elite,* pp. 16–17.
72. Müller, *What Is Populism?,* pp. 58–60.
73. See Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government,* particularly chap. 3; and Gaetano Mosca's speech in the Italian Senate on December 19, 1925, in defense of the Parliament against fascist populism, in his *Partiti e sindacati nella crisi del regime parlamentare* (Bari: Laterza, 1949), pp. 277–285, an excerpt of which is in James Hans Meisel, *The Myth of the Ruling Class* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), pp. 225–226.
74. Yannis Papadopoulos, "Populism, the Democratic Question, and Contemporary Governance," in Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism,* pp. 54–55.
75. Roberts, "Populism and Democracy," p. 149.
76. Ibid.
77. Kazin, *Populist Persuasion,* p. 280.
78. Ibid., pp. 280–281.

79. Quoted in Mouffe, "'End of Politics,'" p. 63.
80. Quoted in Canovan, "Taking Politics to the People," p. 43n2.
81. Canovan, *Populism,* p. 212.
82. Carlos de la Torre and Cynthia J. Arnson, introduction to de la Torre and Arnson, *Latin American Populism,* p. 22.
83. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince,* chap. 8, and *Discourses,* bk. 1, chap. 16, in *Selected Political Writings,* ed. and trans. David Wootton (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994).
84. John P. McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 146.
85. Bobbio, *Future of Democracy,* p. 93; Jeffrey Edward Green, *The Eyes of the People: Democracy in the Age of Spectatorship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 203.
86. Canovan, *The People,* pp. 80–83.
87. Machiavelli, *The Prince,* pp. 48, 32, and 48, respectively.
88. When it emerged in the early 1980s, the Northern League used to portray the Left as elitist and antidemocratic because of its traditional vocation of attracting the intellectuals, its mistrust of common people's opinion, and its antipathy toward the ordinary mentality of the self-made man. To come to our time, Trump did not use gentle expressions to refer to "college" people during his electoral campaign; Marco Tarchi, "Italy: A Country of Many Populisms," in *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy,* ed. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (New York: Palgrave, 1988), p. 94.
89. Taggart, *Populism;* see also his "Populism and the Pathologies."
90. Jason Easley, "Newt Gingrich Claims That Obama Not the GOP Governs for the Elite," August 5, 2010, https://www.politicususa.com/en/gingrich-obama-elite.
91. I take these quotes from the analysis of Ernest Preston Manning and his new party (1990–1992) offered by David Laycock, "Populism and Democracy in Canada's Reform Party," in Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism*, pp. 46–67.
92. Burchard's words are in Mills, *Power Elite,* p. 3.
93. Laclau, *On Populist Reason,* pp. 157–158.
94. Mills, *Power Elite,* pp. 18–19.
95. Canovan, "'Trust the People!,'" p. 5.
96. This is the problem that Slavoj Žižek points to when he shows the switch from structural argument to ideological creation of the unifier: for populists (and Laclau), "the cause of the troubles is ultimately never the system as such but the intruder who corrupted it (financial manipulators, not necessarily capitalists, and so on); not a fatal flaw inscribed into the structure as such, but an element that doesn't play its role within the structure properly. For a Marxist, on the contrary . . . the pathological (deviating misbehavior of some elements) is the symptom of the normal, an indicator of what is wrong in the very structure that is threatened with 'pathological' outbursts"; Žižek,

"Against the Populist Temptation," *Critical Inquiry* 32, no. 3 (2006): 555–556.

97. Roberts, "Populism and Democracy," p. 153.
98. Bobbio, *Future of Democracy,* pp. 65–67.
99. "Corporate rich, as a capitalist stratum, deeply intertwined with the politics of the military state"; Mills, *Power Elite,* p. 343.
100. Manin, *Principles of Representative Government*, pp. 194–195.
101. Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 106.
102. Canovan, "Taking Politics to the People."
103. Kelsen, *Essence and Value of Democracy,* p. 88.
104. Ibid., p. 91.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid., pp. 93–94.
107. Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured,* chap. 4.
108. Sofia Näsström, "Democratic Representation beyond Elections," *Constellations* 22, no. 1 (2015): 2.
109. Ochoa Espejo, "Power to Whom?"
110. Näsström, "Democratic Representation beyond Elections," p. 2.
111. Urbinati, *Representative Democracy,* chap. 1.
112. Steven Holmes, "Precommitment and the Paradox of Democracy," in *Constitutionalism and Democracy,* ed. Jon Elster and Rune Slagstad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 233.
113. Kelsen, *Essence and Value of Democracy,* chap. 6.
114. Hence, economists and political scientists have stressed "the pervasive connection between the short term protection characteristics of populists' policies and the supply of anti-elite rhetoric . . . the absence of concerns for future consequences." The "short term protection" focus is "common to most types of populism: the protection from immigrants, protection from Chinese products or protectionism more generally—mostly by right-wing populists—and protection of entire classes or the whole people from unequal treatment or exploitation—mostly left-wing redistributive policies—can easily be found in the platforms of Trump, UKIP [the UK Independence Party], the Five Star movement in Italy, and all other recent examples"; Luigi Guiso et al., "Populism: Demand and Supply" (CEPR Working Paper, Bocconi University, Milan, October 30, 2018), pp. 1–3.
115. "Governments give priority to their short-term national interests—and this all the more so, the more strongly they are exposed at home to the undertow of right-wing populism"; Jürgen Habermas, "'New' Perspectives for Europe," Social Europe, October 22, 2018, https://www.socialeurope.eu/new-perspectives-for-europe.
116. A synthesis and overview of the "antiparty system" mode combined with epistemic (or technocratic) ambitions can be found in Accetti and Bickerton, "Populism and Technocracy."

117. Then, of course, the idea of an ancestral goodness of the people fuels a politics of resentment against the elites who rule without deserving it; Kazin, *Populist Persuasion,* p. 3.
118. Roberto Casaleggio and Beppe Grillo, *Siamo in guerra: Per una nuova politica* (Milan: Chiarelettere, 2011).
119. This argument is not new in Italy, as the movement known as Uomo qualunque (Everyone's Movement) conquered several seats in the Constitutional Assembly (voted on by universal suffrage in 1946). Guglielmo Giannini, its founder, was the author of a book titled *The Crowd,* in which he provided a blueprint of a "government only technical" and with no party, a vision that Grillo would warmly accept. Giannini spoke of the crowd as "a peaceful and laborious majority" and "an irresistible force that all [rulers] have to be prepared" to follow. Guglielmo Giannini, *La folla: Seimila anni di lotta contro la tirannide* (1945), shorter version, with a preface by Sandro Sette (Soveria Mannelli, Italy: Rubettino, 2012), p. 58 (my translation). On the Everyone Movement, see the excellent doctoral dissertation by Charles Day Douglass, "The Shaping of Postwar Italian Politics: Italy, 1945–1948" (thesis no. T28368, Department of History, University of Chicago, August 20, 1983), pp. 3–4.
120. Mudde, "Populist Zeitgeist," p. 547.

2. The True People and Its Majority

Epigraph: Mario Tronti, "We Have Populism Because There Is No People," trans. David Broder, Verso Books blog, March 27, 2013, https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/1261-mario-tronti-we-have-populism-because-there-is-no-people. Originally published in Italian with the title "Populismo," in *Democrazia e diritto,* 2010, p. 4.

1. On the idea of democratic people's indeterminacy, there is a large convergence in the theoretical literature between the realistic tradition and the republican one; see in particular Sartori, *Theory of Democracy Revisited,* p. 23; and Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (1963; repr., New York: Pelican Books, 1977), pp. 77–79.
2. Canovan, *The People,* p. 65.
3. Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: Norton, 1988), pp. 90–91.
4. Bruce Ackerman, *We the People: Foundations* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 19. The rule of law provides protection from state abuse to individual citizens and different groups in society; it relies on the principle of "collective autonomy," according to which the people ought to obey only laws they have themselves participated, directly or indirectly, in making; see Miguel Vatter, "The Quarrel between Populism and Republicanism: Machiavelli and the Antinomies of Plebeian Politics," *Contemporary Political Theory* 11, no. 3 (2012): 43; and

Paul Blokker, "Populist Constitutionalism," in de la Torre, *Routledge Handbook of Global Populism,* p. 116.

5. In the Manichean differentiation between "the pure people ('us') and "the corrupt elite" ('them'), populists "normally" make reference also to "global institutions and/or foreign powers" as agents that undermine "the principle of political self-determination" in order to make decisions that are in their interests—this "oversimplification of reality whereby populist actors appeal to chauvinistic sentiments and develop conspiracy theorists" makes leftists and rightists converge as both "inward-looking"; Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, "Explaining the Emerge of Populism in Europe and the Americas," in de la Torre, *Promise and Perils of Populism,* p. 206.
6. Laclau, *On Populist Reason,* chap. 5. See the exchange between Laclau and Žižek on populism as ideological constructivism in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000). On the process of "abstraction," see Arato, "Political Theology and Populism," p. 44.
7. Andrew Arato, *Post Sovereign Constitutional Making: Learning and Legitimacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 9, 291–292.
8. Istvan Hont, "Permanent Crisis of a Divided Mankind: The Contemporary Crisis of the Nation-State in Historical Perspective," *Political Studies* 42 (1994): 166–231.
9. For an authoritative reconstruction of the evolution of sovereignty in relation to the idea of "agency" or the making of the law (thus the emergence of the concepts of legislative, executive, and juridical power) see M. J. C. Vile, *Constitutionalism and the Separation of Powers* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1998), chap. 2.
10. Bertrand de Jouvenel, *Sovereignty: An Inquiry into the Political Good,* trans. J. F. Huntington (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1992); C. E. Merriam, *History of the Theory of Sovereignty since Rousseau* (Union, NJ: Lawbook Exchange, 1999); Christopher W. Morris, *An Essay on the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), chap. 7. For a historical reconstruction of the debates that brought the development of modern notions of people and popular sovereignty, see Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought,* particularly vol. 2.
11. Morgan, *Inventing the People*, p. 152.
12. Bernard Yack, "Popular Sovereignty and Nationalism," *Political Theory* 28, no. 4 (2001): 518.
13. Nadia Urbinati, "Representative Democracy and Its Critics," in *The Future of Representative Democracy,* ed. Sonia Alonso, John Keane, and Wolfgang Merkel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 23–49.
14. On these forms of representation, see the seminal work by Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).
15. Aristotle, *Politics,* with an English translation by H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 285 (1289b27–1289b29).
16. Ibid.; Vile, *Constitutionalism,* pp. 25–26.

17. On *ante litteram* Schumpeterian medieval democracy (particularly in Saint Thomas's *Summa*), see Pasquale Pasquino, "Democracy: Ancient and Modern, Good and Bad," in *Democracy in a Russian Mirror,* ed. Adam Przeworski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 116.
18. The theorists of absolute monarchy (and of absolute sovereigns) were clear in assuming that representation would deprive the sovereign of its will to power and thus transfer that power to the representatives—Robert Filmer, Jean Bodin, Hobbes, and Rousseau converged in this vision; see Urbinati, *Representative Democracy,* particularly chap. 2.
19. Vile, *Constitutionalism,* p. 25, which also reads, "Thus the major concern of ancient theorists of constitutionalism was to attain a balance between the various classes of society and so to emphasize that the different interests in the community, reflected in the organs of the government, should each have a part to play in the exercise of the deliberative, magisterial, and judicial functions alike."
20. The argument that equality is the condition for trusting elections (and accepting the verdict of the majority counting) can be detected already in Guicciardini's *Dialogo del Reggimento di Firenze;* but see Yves Sintomer, *Petite historie de l'expérimentation démocratique: Tirage au sort et politique d'Athènes à nos jours* (Paris: La Découverte, 2011).
21. The argument has been clearly stated by Sartori, *Theory of Democracy Revisited,* pp. 21–38.
22. Canovan, *The People,* p. 66.
23. Josiah Ober, "The Original Meaning of Democracy," *Constellations* 15, no. 1 (2008): 3.
24. Democracy had also the meaning of a regime beyond the demos actually ruling. As we learn from Eukrates's *nomos* regulating when the Areopagites were and were not forbidden to climb the hill of Ares, they were forbidden when "the demos and the democracy were overthrown." The stele that recorded the law "served as a sort of boundary-marker" *(horos)* indicating the circumstance in which democratic magistrates were not allowed to enter public places and thus perform political functions when democracy was not in power. "If Athenian magistrates (and other citizens) respect the law' restriction upon their participation in nondemocratic regimes, those regimes will be denied both the appearance of legitimacy and the expertise necessary to sustain them. And so antidemocratic interludes will be correspondingly ephemeral: short detours on the long democratic road"; Josiah Ober, *Athenian Legacies: Essays on the Politics of Going on Together* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 22.
25. Ober, "Original Meaning of Democracy," pp. 3–4.
26. Ibid., p. 7.
27. As with the Athenians in Solonian times, American populists of the nineteenth century denounced the indebtedness as an "experience of subjection"; Canovan, *Populism,* p. 22.
28. Fergus Millar, *The Roman Republic in Political Thought* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2002), pp. 176–177.

29. Paul Cartledge, *Democracy: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 257. Cartledge also states, "It could equally be argued that Polybius got Rome's constitution seriously wrong precisely because he tried to apply Greek categories to alien Roman institutions," Ibid., 255.
30. McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy,* p. 31.
31. E. M. Atkins, "Cicero," in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought,* ed. Christopher Rowe and Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 492.
32. Juvenal, *The Satires,* a new translation with an introduction by Hubert Creekmore (New York: New American Library, 1963), p. 55 (176).
33. The Senate was prior, and although the ten tribunes of the plebs (elected only by popular votes) were "not technically magistrates" and thus not senators, and although they had veto power on all legislation, it was a fact that "custom and precedent demanded that any legislative proposal be vetted in advanced by the Senate, and key Senatorial players could even use one Tribune to veto another Tribune"; Cartledge, *Democracy,* p. 256.
34. *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860 . . . Première série (1787 à 1799),* vol. 8, *Du 5 mai 1789 au 15 septembre 1789* (Paris: Librairie administrative de Paul Dupont, 1875), pp. 111–118.
35. Ibid., p. 113.
36. But sovereignty as *imperium* (with "the root sense of giving orders and being able to enforce obedience to them") was one of the new ideas that emerged with imperial Rome; Melissa Lane, *The Birth of Politics: Eight Greek and Roman Political Ideas and Why They Matter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 289.
37. Kant, *Perpetual Peace,* p. 101. In distinguishing the form of government (republican and autocratic) and the form of sovereignty (monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic), Kant argued that the former was based on representation and that although an autocrat also can speak as a "servant of the state" (this was the case of Frederick II), only a republic would be truly representative because it is a mode of government in "accord with the principle of right" no matter "what kind of constitution in force" (ibid., p. 102).
38. I have arrived at the same conclusion as Tuck in his *Sleeping Sovereign,* although he achieved it by proceeding from the doctrine of sovereignty and I did it by starting from the representative turn, which codified the gap between sovereignty and government.
39. "A Parliament . . . must not become so isolated from the people as to render absurd the claim to speak for the people," which entails that the fictional people (the sovereign) cannot be so distant from the social one; for the part (the parliament) to claim to represent the whole (the people), a vicinity between them [the part and the whole] should needs to be perceived; Morgan, *Inventing the People,* pp. 89–90.
40. Hence representation designates a relation of interdependence that always involves both parts—the elected and the citizens: "The important thing about the legal idea of representation is that the *persona repraesentata* is only the

person represented, and yet the representative, who is exercising the former's right, is dependent on him"; Hans G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 141n250.

41. I analyzed this historical conjuncture in Urbinati, "Representative Democracy and Its Critics."
42. Yack, "Popular Sovereignty and Nationalism," pp. 520–521.
43. Hence a "no-party democracy" defines a scenario in which the absence of adversarial conditions works as a radical factor of destabilization; White and Ypi, *Meaning of Partisanship,* p. 70.
44. Urbinati, *Representative Democracy,* chap. 1.
45. Concerning representation as "speaking for" and "standing for," see Pitkin, *Concept of Representation,* chaps. 4–6. Concerning representation's constructivism, see Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy;* the theory of representation as "claim making" has been devised by Saward, *Representative Claim.*
46. Yack, "Popular Sovereignty and Nationalism," p. 521.
47. Kelsen, *Essence and Value of Democracy,* chap. 5.
48. Frank, *Constituent Moments,* p. 33.
49. Yack, "Popular Sovereignty and Nationalism," p. 521.
50. Ibid.
51. In commenting on the policy of Andrew Puzder, labor secretary in Trump's cabinet, Judy Conté, who oversees the federal advocacy for the National Employment Law Project, wrote that Puzder "doesn't view laws and regulations as things that help protect the most vulnerable from exploitation. He looks at them as things that hinder him from doing what he wants to do"; Russ Buettener and Noam Scheiber, "Pick for Labor Was Adversary of Labor Dept," *New York Times,* February 4, 2017.
52. Ochoa Espejo, "Power to Whom?"
53. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, "Populism and (Liberal) Democracy," pp. 16–17.
54. Quoted in López Maya, "Popular Power," p. 378.
55. Sartori, *Theory of Democracy Revisited,* p. 24.
56. Ochoa Espejo, "Power to Whom?," p. 61.
57. Berlin in "To Define Populism," p. 175.
58. Przeworski, "Minimalist Conception of Democracy."
59. Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels,* pp. 51–53.
60. Ibid., p. 37.
61. Pettit, *On the People's Terms,* pp. 286, 290; Urbinati, *Representative Democracy,* p. 223.
62. Lefort, *Complications,* p. 114.
63. Aristotle, *Politics,* p. 397 (1304b1–1304b10).
64. Aristotle, *The Constitution of the Athenians,* trans. J. M. Moore (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 163–166 (xx–xxii).
65. The *Grand dictionnaire Pierre Larousse,* in volume 6, published in 1870 and probably written before the fall of Napoleon III, declares that "demagogue"

was peculiar to polemical usage of political language and then proposes a kind of apology of the role of the demagogue: "The term means simply leading the people; but since the peoples are not as yet capable of leading themselves, we do not see nothing criminal in trying to lead them" also because while the demagogue "believes he leads the crowd, in reality he undergoes the charm of the movement rather than impressing it." "Demagoguery" seemed thus to mean "a situation in which the people govern rather than being governed" (my translation).

66. To Hobbes, Aristotle's distinction between good and bad demagogues was thus untenable.
67. On the explanation of the difference between "majority principle" and "majority rule" (a difference that emerges as well when it relates to pluralism), see Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p. 17.
68. Arendt, *On Revolution,* p. 164.
69. James Mill, "Government" (1823), in *Political Writings,* ed. Terence Ball (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 27.
70. James Madison, "A Candid State of Parties" (September 26, 1792), in *James Madison: Writings,* ed. Jack Rakove (New York: Library of America, 1999), p. 530.
71. The rigorous counting of votes was directly connected to the respect of personal freedom and gave democracy the meaning of a system based on liberty; Domenico Musti, *Demokratía* (Rome: Laterza, 1995), pp. 55, 88–93.
72. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War,* trans. Moses I. Finley (London: Penguin Classics, 1972), pp. 86–87n87.
73. Aristophanes, *The Wasps,* in *Aristophanes* vol. 2, ed. and trans. Jeffrey Henderson, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 655–657.
74. See Mogen Herman Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes,* trans. J. A. Crook (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 147–148.
75. Ibid., p. 148.
76. As Ober explains, the term "demagogue" "derives from *dēmos* and the verb *agō* (to lead), while the latter derives from *dēmos* and the verb *agoreuō* (to speak in public assembly)," but "the two root verbs are themselves closely related"; Josiah Ober, *Masses and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 106n7.
77. Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels,* p. 52.
78. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems,* p. 40.
79. Aristotle, *Politics,* p. 397 (1304b20–1304b25).
80. Anthony B. Atkinson and Andrea Brandolini, "On the Identification of the 'Middle Class'" (ECINEQ Working Paper 217, Society for the Study of Economic Inequality, Palma de Mallorca, Spain, 2011).
81. Aristotle, *Politics,* p. 395 (1304b1–1304b10).
82. Laclau, *On Populist Reason,* p. 169.
83. Kelsen, *Essence and Value of Democracy,* chap. 6.

84. Edoardo Ruffini, *Il principio maggioritario: Profilo storico* (Milan: Adelphi, 1974), p. 34 (my translation).
85. Cartledge, *Democracy,* p. 113.
86. Cited in Ruffini, *Il principio maggioritario,* p. 22.
87. Some decades ago John Gilbert Heinberg offered an excellent definition of the principle of majority:

> The device of constitutional government theory does not consider the majority device either as the principle of democracy or as a descriptive general account of the operation of government in relation to the electorate or "the people." It is rather held to be a convenient method for decision-making in the processes of constitutional government. The electorate, the legislature, administrative boards, courts, and other legally-established groups charged with performance of definite governmental functions do, or may, make use of it. Decisions so reached are considered as not necessarily embodying greater force, greater wisdom, or greater ethical validity. Indeed, a naked numerical expression, unclothed by other factors that affect decision-making, stands suspect. In order to pass upon the ethics of a majority decision, the question must be raised and answered as to how the majority came to its decision. (John Gilbert Heinberg, "Theories of Majority Rule," *American Political Science Review* 26, no. 3 [June 1932]: 469.)

88. Pericles enacted policies of assistance to the poor that made possible public allowances for their participation in public offices; see Musti, *Democratía,* pp. 76–77.
89. Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels,* pp. 48–51.
90. Ibid., p. 51.
91. Marine Le Pen opened her electoral program for the 2017 presidential campaign by clarifying the goal of the Front National: "To regain our freedom and control over our destiny by restoring the sovereignty of the French people." "Factbox: Marine Le Pen's French Presidential Election Policies," Reuters, April 14, 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-election-programme-lepen-factb/factbox-marine-le-pens-french-presidential-election-policies-idUSKBN17G197.
92. Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory,* trans. from the French by David Macy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 13–20.
93. Adam Przeworski makes a similar argument in his comparative analysis of class conflicts, capitalism, and democratic stability (or uneasiness): *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 207–221.
94. Paul Blokker, "Populism as a Constitutional Project," Jean Monnet Working Paper 17/17 (New York: NYU School of Law, forthcoming), available at: https://jeanmonnetprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/JMWP-17-Paul-Blokker-1.pdf, p. 20.
95. Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, "The Concept of the Political: A Key to Understanding Carl Schmitt's Constitutional Theory," *Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence* 10, no. 1 (1997): 5–19; Paul Blokker, *New Democracies in Crisis? A Comparative Constitutional Study of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 9–100.

96. Both a negative and a neutral meaning of the term can be found in the work of Moses Finley, who, writing in a time in which bad demagogues proliferated, was, however, more prone to stress the former one: *Democracy Ancient and Modern,* 2nd ed. (London: Hogarth Press, 1985), pp. 38–75.
97. Lane, "Origins of the Statesman."
98. Aristotle, *Politics,* p. 401 (1305a30–1305a35); Przeworski, "Minimalist Conception of Democracy."
99. Joseph M. Schwartz, *The Future of Democratic Equality: Rebuilding Social Solidarity in a Fragmented America* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 178.
100. "Fujimori had campaigned in opposition to neoliberal 'shocks' in 1990, but he reversed course upon taking office and 'administered what is considered one of the most drastic economic restructuring programs in Latin America'"; Levinsky and Loxton, "Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism," p. 178.
101. Panizza, "Introduction," p. 9.
102. Müller, *What Is Populism?,* p. 62.
103. Laurence Blair, "Evo for Ever? Moral Scraps Term Limits as Critics Blast 'Coup' to Keep Morales in Power," *Guardian,* December 3, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/03/evo-morales-bolivia-president-election-limits.
104. A further example is the assault on the Constitutional Tribunal by the Polish government, according to the idea that it is not the tribunal that ought to have the final say on the Constitution's interpretation but rather Parliament or the government; see Blokker, "Populist Constitutionalism," pp. 116–117.
105. Remi Adekoya, "Poland Can Thumb Its Nose at Brussels as Long as the Cash Keeps Rolling In," *Guardian,* December 21, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/dec/21/poland-brussels-law-and-justice-eu-voting-rights.
106. In September 2017, Morales's Movement to Socialism party asked the South American country's highest court to rescind legal limits barring elected authorities from seeking reelection indefinitely, arguing that these violate human rights. "Bolivian Court Clears Way for Morales to Run for Fourth Term," Reuters, November 28, 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bolivia-politics/bolivian-court-clears-way-for-morales-to-run-for-fourth-term-idUSKBN1DS2ZX.
107. There are some exceptions, such as Pierre Rosanvallon, who identifies a populist regime with "ultra-présidentialism de type autoritaire," in which an "électoralisme majoritaire" rules; Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le bon gouvernement* (Paris: Seuil, 2015), pp. 174–179.
108. I derive this idea from Clava Brodsky, "Some of the People: Populist Constitution-Making in Hungary" (paper written for the colloquium "Interpretations of Democracy," Department of Political Science, Columbia University, Spring 2014).
109. The supposedly more democratic populism, Chávez's, was equally harsh in marginalizing opposition forces and obtained by means of his "manipulation

of popular sovereignty—mobilized through plebiscitary means"—and his overriding of "institutional checks and balances," thus making the rules of the game his ones; Roberts, "Populism and Democracy," p. 156.

110. Although it claims to represent the broader social interests of the many, the large majority that populism in power enjoys does not itself guarantee that the causes of social distress will be solved. In Latin America, for instance, popular constitutionalism stresses the role of an extensive popular participation while at the same strengthening the role of the decision maker: the "new constitutions expanded citizens' rights while simultaneously concentrating power in the executive"; Carlos de la Torre, "Populism and the Politics of the Extraordinary in Latin America," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 21, no. 2 (2016): 124.
111. Stephen Holmes and Cass R. Sunstein, "The Politics of Constitutional Revision in Eastern Europe," in *Responding to Imperfection: The Theory and Practice of Constitutional Amendment,* ed. Sandy Levinson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 276.
112. An exception is Blokker, "Populist Constitutionalism."
113. De la Torre, "Populism Revived," p. 749.
114. The drive toward unanimity of consensus has been motivated by some theorists of deliberative democracy—for instance, Joshua Cohen, "The Economic Basis of Deliberative Democracy," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 6 (1989): 25–50.
115. Kurt Weyland, "Why Latin America Is Becoming Less Democratic," *Atlantic,* July 15, 2013, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/07/why-latin-america-is-becoming-less-democratic/277803/, originally published in the *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 3 (2013): 18–32.

3. The Leader beyond Parties

Epigraph: Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince,* in *Chief Works and Others,* vol. 1 of 2, trans. Allan Gilbert (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1989), p. 26.

1. Canovan, "Taking Politics to the People," p. 26.
2. I have analyzed the differences between representative democracy and populistic democracy in Urbinati, *Representative Democracy,* pp. 110–124; I have argued that mandate representation is a process of unity and pluralism in Urbinati, "Representative Democracy and Its Critics."
3. White and Ypi, *Meaning of Partisanship,* p. 63.
4. Schattschneider, *Party Government,* pp. 12–18.
5. Bluntschli wrote that while we demand that a historian be impartial, "that he truthfully depict and justly assess all parties' behavior," we "do not demand that he should be a partisan, in other words, that he should be an insensitive mirror that indifferently takes in all scenes and coldly reflects them"; Johan Caspar Bluntschli, "What Is a Political Party?," abstract of his German book *Charakter und Geist der politischen Parteien* (1869), in

Perspectives on Political Parties, ed. Susan E. Scarrow (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 78–79.

6. Pitkin, *Concept of Representation,* pp. 106–107.
7. The difficulty of political scientists in squaring the circle of populism as either opposed to representation or favorable to it is well testified to in Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, "Populism and (Liberal) Democracy," p. 17.
8. Quoted in Francisco Panizza, "What Do We Mean When We Talk about Populism?," in de la Torre and Arnson, *Latin American Populism,* p. 108.
9. Laclau, "Populism," p. 40
10. Laclau, *On Populist Reason,* pp. 99–100.
11. Canovan, *The People,* pp. 97–98; Laclau, *On Populist Reason,* p. 100.
12. Loius Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *"Lenin and Philosophy" and Other Essays,* trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm (first published in *La Pensée,* 1970).
13. Panizza, to whom these words belong, lists the following four modes that make for the leader: "speaking like the people"—and this is the symbolic "irruption" into the public sphere that makes us recognize a populist leader when he or she emerges; "speaking for the people"—giving voice to popular complaints and grievances; using the political strategy of antagonism; and promising redemption (wherein one may find the normative aspect of populism); Panizza "What Do We Mean When We Talk about Populism?," in de la Torre and Arson, *Latin American Populism,* pp. 113–114.
14. On the conceptions of representation, see Yves Sintomer, "The Meanings of Political Representation: Uses and Misuses of a Notion," *Raisons Politiques* 50, no. 2 (2013): 13–34. Representatives, writes Manin, are chosen by the electors not so much because they are like them but mainly because they are unlike them in many respects (*Principles of Representative Government,* pp. 139–143).
15. Canovan, *Populism,* p. 196.
16. See Barry Eichengreen, *The Populist Temptation: Economic Grievance and Political Reaction in the Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
17. John P. McCormick, "The Contemporary Crisis of Democracy and the Populist Cry of Pain," *Iride* 44, no. 3 (2017): 539–554.
18. Canovan, "'Trust the People!,'" p. 11.
19. I do not, however, equate plebiscitary democracy and populism; for the distinction, see Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured,* particularly chap. 4.
20. Theodor Mommsen, *The History of Rome,* trans. with the sanction of the author by William Purdie Dickson (London: Bentley, 1900), 5:325, chap. 11. For an interesting discussion of the potential and risk of charismatic leadership in times of international crisis and the distinction between "democratic leadership" (Roosevelt and Churchill) and "ideological leadership" (Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin), see, respectively, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "On Heroic Leadership and the Dilemma of Strong Men and Weak Peoples," *Encounter*

(December 1960): 3–11, reprinted in Schlesinger, *The Politics of Hope* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), pp. 3–20; and Carl J. Friedrich, "Political Leadership and the Problem of Charismatic Power," *Journal of Politics* 23, no. 1 (1961): 3–24.

21. Mommsen, *History of Rome,* 5:324; Max Weber, "Parliament and Government in Germany under a New Political Order" (1918), in *Political Writings,* ed. Peter Lassmen and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 160–166, 201–204, 222.
22. Carl Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory* (1928), trans. and ed. Jeffrey Seitzer, foreword by Ellen Kennedy (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 370. In effect, as interpreters have noticed, Laclau's conception of populist politics is indebted to Schmitt, although the name of the German jurist does not figure in his *On Populist Reason;* see Arato, "Political Theology and Populism," pp. 42–43.
23. Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism,* p. 206.
24. The meaningful role of religion in social and political life linked Laclau to the antipositivistic tradition of the late nineteenth century, which he discussed brilliantly, and which reverberated in Weber's critique of both liberalism and Marxism, with their presumption of liberating politics and morals from the traditionalist irrationality of identification by faith and belief; see on this Andreas Kalyvas, *Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary: Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, and Hannah Arendt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), chap. 2.
25. From Juan Domingo Péron's words quoted in Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism,* p. 232.
26. On the role of Laclau in the making of Kircherism and the usage Kirchner made of Laclau's name and legacy before and after Laclau's death, see Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism,* pp. 211–216.
27. Kalyvas, *Democracy,* p. 59.
28. From the New York General Assembly, quoted in Michael A. Gould-Wartofsky, *The Occupiers: The Making of the 99 Percent Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 8.
29. Rainer Lepsius, "Charismatic Leadership: Max Weber's Model and Its Applicability to the Rule of Hitler," in *Changing Conceptions of Leadership,* ed. Carl F. Graumann and Serge Moscovici (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1986), p. 62.
30. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism,* p. 78 (but see the entire chap. 4).
31. Green, *Eyes of the People,* p. 2.
32. As Jeffrey K. Tulis has observed, when the primary interlocutor of the president is the people rather than Congress, the quality of communication or speech by the president changes, because his goal is not that of transmitting documents or special messages to the assembly but of moving public feelings "where the visible and audible performance would become as important as the prepared text"; Jeffrey K. Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 133.
33. Roberts, "Populism, Political Mobilizations," p. 143.

34. Napoleon, the first modern leader to use the plebiscite to entrench his imperial power, opened the door to a dictatorial usage of the appeal to the people. The text of the plebiscite proposed to the French people by Napoleon III was as follows: "The French people wants the preservation of the authority of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, and delegates him the necessary powers to establish a constitution based on the proposals contained in his proclamation of December 2, 1851"; on the role of the plebiscite in the making and unmaking of democracy, see Enzo Fimiani, *"L'unanimità più uno": Plebisciti e potere, una storia europea (secoli XVII–XX)* (Florence: Le Monnier, Mondadori, 2017). Plebiscitary authorization is made central to populism by Kurt Weyland, "Clarifying a Contested Concept"; and Robert Barr, "Populists, Outsiders, and Anti-establishment Politics," *Party Politics* 15, no. 1 (2009): 29–48.
35. The minister of commerce in Hugo Chávez's cabinet in 2006, quoted in López Maya, "Popular Power," p. 383.
36. See, among others, Giampietro Mazzoleni, "Populism and the Media," in Albertazzi and McDonnell, *Twenty-First Century Populism,* p. 58.
37. Quoted in Laclau, *On Populist Reason,* p. 216.
38. Speech delivered on January 23, 2010; "Chávez exige 'lealtad absoluta' a su liderazgo," *El Nuevo Diario,* January 23, 2010, http://elnuevodiario.com.ni/internacionales/66703-chavez-exige-lealtad-absoluta-su-liderazgo/; see also Margarita López Maya and Alexandra Panzarelli, "Populism, Rentierism, and Socialism in the Twenty-First Century: The Case of Venezuela," in de la Torre and Arnson, *Latin American Populism,* p. 250.
39. Sintomer, "Meanings of Political Representation," p. 18. "Bonapartism recognized the validity of the popular will to such an extreme degree as to concede to that will the right to self-destruction: popular sovereignty could suppress itself"; Michels, *Political Parties,* p. 213.
40. Adriano Prosperi, *Il Concilio di Trento: Una introduzione storica* (Torino: Einaudi, 2001).
41. Adriano Prosperi, "Demagoghi e partiti: Una sindrome italiana," introduction to Andrea Bocchi, *L'eterno demagogo* (Turin: Aragno Editore 2011), pp. xiii–xviii; see also Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory;* Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957); and Pitkin, *Concept of Representation,* pp. 106–108.
42. Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory,* p. 370.
43. Ibid.
44. Canovan, "'Trust the People!,'" p. 5.
45. Quoted in Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism,* p. 233.
46. Quoted in ibid., p. 232.
47. Anonymous, *Traité des trois imposteurs* (first published 1716; Amsterdam, 1777)—wherein the three impostor prophets were Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed, the founders of the three monotheistic religions responsible for conflicts and wars, fanaticism, and ignorance. The inspirer of this anonymous treatise was Baruch Spinoza; see Georges Minois, *The Atheist's Bible: The*

Most Dangerous Book That Never Existed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

48. Representation as embodiment and identity, which is the core of Schmitt's political theology, has been exalted (by Schmitt first of all) as the most radical alternative to liberalism and the electoral conception of representation, personifying authority and decisionism versus parliamentary bargaining and the plural publics that parties created; see Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy,* trans. Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); and for a comprehensive analysis of it, John P. McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism: Against Politics as Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chap. 4.
49. Benedict de Spinoza, *A Theologico-political Treatise,* in *"A Theologico-political Treatise" and "A Political Treatise,"* trans. with an introduction by R. H. M. Elwes (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2004), pp. 27–30. The literature on Spinoza's idea of prophecy is vast; I consulted in particular Heidi M. Ravven, "Some Thoughts on What Spinoza Learned from Maimonides about the Prophetic Imagination: Part 1: Maimonides on Prophecy and the Imagination," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 39 (2001): 193–214; and Heidi M. Ravven, "Some Thoughts on What Spinoza Learned from Maimonides about the Prophetic Imagination: Part 2: Spinoza's Maimonideanism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 39 (2001): 385–406.
50. Minois, *Atheist's Bible,* p. 22.
51. Russell Muirhead and Nancy L. Rosenblum, "Speaking Truth to Conspiracy," *Boston Globe,* August 15, 2016.
52. Spinoza, *Theologico-political Treatise,* p. 16. On the role of imagination in Spinoza's analysis of prophecy, see Daniela Bostrenghi, *Forme e virtù dell'immaginazione in Spinoza* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1996), chap. 3. On the alogical characters in the human intellect and their role in representative performance, see C. De Deugd, *The Significance of Spinoza's First Kind of Knowledge* (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1966); and Susan James, "Creating Rational Understanding: Spinoza as a Social Epistemologist," *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 85 (2011): 181–199, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8349.2011.00202.x.
53. On the emotional and imaginative component of representation as embodiment, see Pitkin, *Concept of Representation,* pp. 99–102.
54. Bruhn, "'To Hell with Your Corrupt Institutions!,'" p. 99.
55. Gerbaudo, *Digital Party*, p. 144.
56. Weyland, "Neoliberal Populism"; Paul Ginzborg and Enrica Asquer, *Berlusconismo: Analisi di un Sistema di potere* (Rome: Laterza, 2001). "Foreign scrutiny has largely focused on how Hungary's government has dismantled democratic checks and balances and created what Mr. Orbán calls an 'illiberal democracy' and embraced a hardline nationalist, anti-immigrant ideology. Yet as Fidesz has entrenched its control, a circle of wealthy businesspeople has arisen around the party and the prime minister—in essence, a group of loyalist 'oligarchs'"; Neil Buckley and Andrew Byrne, "Viktor

Orbán's Oligarchs: A New Elite Emerges in Hungary," *Financial Times*, December 20, 2017.

57. Hence Weyland said that "populism does not empower 'the people,' but invokes the people to empower a leader"; quoted in Roberts as a personal conversation, "Populism, Political Mobilization," p. 145.
58. Cas Mudde, *Are Populists Friends or Foes of Constitutionalism?* (Oxford: Foundation for Law, Justice and Society, in association with the Centre for Socio-legal Studies and Wolfson College, University of Oxford, 2013), http://www.fljs.org/sites/www.fljs.org/files/publications/Mudde_0.pdf.
59. Both the embodiment of popular will and the need for permanent mobilization it entails mean that it is "logical for populist governments to reach for the constituent power, and try to produce new documentary constitutions"; Andrew Arato, "How We Got Here? Transition Failures, Their Causes, and the Populist Interest in the Constitution, SSRN, September 1, 2017, p. 3, https://ssrn.com/abstract=3116219.
60. "Chávez was elected [the first time] because he promised to create a completely new form of democracy, a qualitatively distinct model of institutional and constitutional organization and a new type of political engagement for Venezuela's citizens"; Panizza, "What Do We Mean?," p. 98.
61. I discuss the difference between a personified base of hegemony and a collective one (which Gramsci called a "new" Prince) in Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured,* chap. 3.
62. O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," pp. 59–60.
63. Contrary to movement party (a model in which populist parties belong), mass party is based on a strong organization, a structural constitutionalizing form that limits the power of leaders while containing their personalist power; William J. Crotty, "A Perspective for the Comparative Analysis of Political Parties," *Comparative Political Studies* 3, no. 3 (1970): 267–296; Angelo Panebianco, *Modelli di partito: Organizzazione e potere nei partiti politici* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1982).
64. Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism,* p. 6.
65. Ibid.
66. Pitkin, *Concept of Representation,* p. 108.
67. Michels, *Political Parties,* p. 61.
68. Roberts, "Populism, Political Mobilization," p. 140.
69. My analysis of Podemos profits from an excellent paper by Lluis de Nadal Alsina, "From 'Horizontal' to 'Vertical': The Institutionalization of the Indignados Movement," delivered at the International Communications Association Annual Conference, Prague, May 2018.
70. Schattschneider, *Party Government,* p. 1.
71. See Cas Mudde, "The Paradox of the Anti-party Party: Insights from the Extreme Right," *Party Politics* 2, no. 2 (1996): 265–276 (although the essay is mainly concerned with right-wing populist parties).
72. Russell Muirhead, *The Promise of Party in a Polarized Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 26.

73. Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels,* p. 35; holist antipartyism is not a monopoly of Platonist philosophers; it is actually a "real political force" that aims to "extirpate pluralism." Antipartyism has composite roots, some openly aristocratic, some openly democratic, some neither. The beginning of representative government was in the name of antipartyism.
74. The Italian Communist Party's general secretary, Enrico Berlinguer, said a few weeks after the coup in Chile against Salvador Allende's elected socialist government, "Electoral majority would not be sufficient by itself to form a government that is destined to last and resist the frontal hostility of the remaining 49%"; Enrico Berlinguer, *Governo di unità democratica e compromesso storico: Discorsi 1969–1976,* ed. Gustavo Tomsic (Rome: Sarmi, 1976), p. 110 (my translation). A reading of the Italian Communist Party's hegemonic project as populistic was advanced early on (with polemical intentions) by Federico Mancini in his report on Italy delivered at the 1967 London School conference on populism; see Berlin, "To Define Populism," p. 160.
75. Roberts, "Populism, Political Mobilization," p. 148.
76. Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism,* pp. 23–24.
77. This is contrary to totalitarian parties, for which, Arendt wrote, "the need for action is transitory" because after its victory, the presence of the people has to be strictly controlled and, in effect, proves to be not so necessary. According to Arendt, politics as administration fits the totalitarian party in power better than social mobilization; Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism,* p. 315.
78. C. B. Macpherson, *The Real World of Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 20–27.
79. Arendt situated the opposition between "movement" and "party" at the origin of totalitarian parties, which "called themselves 'movements'" so as also to stress their "profound distrust for all parties" and for Parliament as the home of parties; *Origins of Totalitarianism,* p. 251.
80. "Modern democracy depends directly on political parties, whose importance grows the more the democratic principle is realized in practice"; Kelsen, *Essence and Value of Democracy,* p. 38. Democracy as "unthinkable" without parties has been theorized by Schattschneider, *Party Government,* p. 1037; as for the party system as something more than and different from the empirical fact of parties, also see Hofstadter, *Idea of a Party System,* chap. 1; and Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels,* pp. 1–21.
81. White and Ypi, *Meaning of Partisanship,* pp. 26–27.
82. Muirhead, *Promise of Party,* pp. 72–79.
83. White and Ypi, *Meaning of Partisanship,* pp. 36–37.
84. Ibid., pp. 87–95.
85. With Sartori, I take it to be a bias to call bias everything that serves mobilization politics, as generations of political theorists have suggested; *Theory of Democracy Revisited,* p. 146.
86. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems,* p. 65.
87. Bluntschli, "What Is a Political Party?," p. 75.

88. See Ignazi, *Party and Democracy,* chap. 1. All democratic constitutions, Bobbio writes, are pact based because they are made by the very protagonists (mostly elected ad hoc assemblies) who are not single-minded actors but party representatives, and their ideas of the society reflect differences in views and interests; Norberto Bobbio, "Origine e caratteri della Costituzione," in *Dal fascismo alla democrazia: I regimi, le ideologie, le figure e le culture politiche,* ed. Michelangelo Bovero (Milano: Baldini and Castoldi, 1997), pp. 165–166. One might say that partisanship is constitutive of the written agreement called "the constitution."
89. I discuss this conundrum and the vicinity of epistocracy and technocracy to populism in Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured*.
90. "'Silent majority' serves as a useful tool for populist entrepreneurs"; Rovira Kaltwasser, "Explaining the Emergence of Populism," p. 199. In effect, to some theorists, the way to neutralize populism is by scaling down partisan politics and expanding impartial agencies of decisions, in which disinterested judgment takes the place of competing for votes; Rosanvallon, *La contre-démocratie,* pp. 15–21.
91. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems,* p. 65.
92. Ibid.
93. Laclau, *On Populist Reason,* p. 224.
94. Ibid., p. 225.
95. In effect, populist theorists' bitterness is not with liberalism, which is, after all, a theory of conflict, but with the "moralistic" as a normative deliberative conception of democracy; we might say that the "agonistic model" of democracy (which Chantal Mouffe employs as a basis for a theory of populist democracy) comes from an elaboration from within Schumpeterian democracy; see Chantal Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000).
96. On Mouffe's notion of agonistic democracy, the positive evaluation of the existence and persistence of diverse and conflictive perspectives in the political arena, see Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox,* particularly pp. 80–107.
97. Kirchheimer, "Western European Party Systems."
98. For the logic of cartelization, see Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party," *Party Politics* 1, no. 1 (1995): 2–28.
99. Mouffe, "'End of Politics,'" pp. 50–56.
100. Mouffe's line is in Errejón and Mouffe, *Podemos,* p. 64.
101. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems,* p. 49.
102. It may be interesting to see how Tronti connects the growth of populism to the decline of leftist parties in Italy:

> When this characterization is abandoned—as it was already some years before the dissolution of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), effectively in the period after the death of Enrico Berlinguer—not only does the Communist people become extinct, but so, too, the political concept-reality of the people. We must be aware that when we today speak of 'popular strata' we are dealing with a sociological concept, a condition and a position of social presence—and not by

> chance, one that is impossible to grasp and impossible to represent politically. And, indeed, it can be grasped, it can be represented, precisely by way of anti-political positions. It is within this bind that we can locate populism. (Tronti, "We Have Populism Because There Is No People.")

103. Benedetto Fontana, "The Concept of Caesarism in Gramsci," in *Dictatorship in History and Theory: Bonapartism, Caesarism, and Totalitariansim,* ed. Peter Baehr and Melvin Richter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 181, 191–192.
104. Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere,* ed. Valentino Gerratana (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), pp. 1145–1146. On the intellectual background of Mussolini's fascist ideology see at least Charles S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy after World War I,* 2nd ed. (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); and A. James Gregor, *Mussolini's Intellectuals: Fascist Social and Political Thought* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).
105. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser speak of "sacralization of consensus" in "Populism and (Liberal) Democracy," p. 14.
106. See Saffon and Urbinati, "Procedural Democracy."
107. Laclau, *On Populist Reason,* p. 74.
108. These arguments had been made popular by Gaetano Mosca, who was not a fascist and who classified the theory of governments under the register of oligarchy, with representative government as the modern strategy of a minority chosen by the subjects—namely, the employment of means of persuasion to make suffrage simply a formal authorization of a choice already made by the candidate and "his friends," or the elites. Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class: Elementi di scienza politica,* ed. and rev. Arthur Livingston, trans. Hannah D. Kahn (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939), p. 154.
109. Paolo Pombeni, *Demagogia e tirannide: Uno studio sulla forma-partito del fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1984), pp. 7–43.
110. Giuseppe Bottai, "Vent'anni di 'critica fascista,'" *Primato,* May 15, 1943, in *"Primato," 1940–1943,* ed. Luisa Mangoni (Bari: De Donato, 1977), pp. 425–439.
111. On the identity of party, fascism, and the state—already stated by Fascist writers in 1992—see Pombeni, *Demagogia e tirannide,* particularly p. 41.
112. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism,* p. 256.
113. In populist regimes, too, social pluralism is more important than party pluralism—although no violence or repression derives from that. Describing Chávez's Nuevo Orden Comunicacional, which launched in 2005 (and became law in 2006), Margarita López Maya and Alexandra Panzarelli comment, "Parties shrunk in importance in comparison with the social organizations promoted by the presidency, which served to administer public services, defend the president, and/or mobilize the *chavista* bases at election times"; "Populism, Rentierism," p. 262.
114. Harvey C. Mansfield, "Whether Party Government Is Inevitable," *Political Science Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (1965): 532.

115. López Maya, "Popular Power," p. 382.
116. Quoted in Müller, *What Is Populism?,* p. 26.
117. Cynthia McClintock, "Populism in Peru: From APRA to Ollanta Humala," in de la Torre and Arnson, *Latin American Populism,* p. 231.
118. Quoted in López Maya, "Popular Power," p. 379.
119. López Maya and Panzarelli, "Populism, Rentierism," p. 240.
120. Bobbio, *Future of Democracy,* p. 122.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid., p. 124.
123. Claude Lefort, "The Question of Democracy," in *Democracy and Political Theory,* p. 18.
124. Ibid., pp. 12–20.
125. Mansfield, "Whether Party Government Is Inevitable," p. 530.
126. Lefort, "Question of Democracy," p. 17.
127. Laclau, "Future of Radical Democracy," p. 258.
128. Laclau, *On Populist Reason,* p. 228.
129. Ibid., p. 158.
130. Arato proposes that we read Laclau's populism as a return to Lenin "in the most voluntaristic version. He abandons not only the Marxian notion of class, as he should, but any plausible sociological alternatives (whether stratums, group, association, corporate entity, movement, etc.) seen as concepts with a content juxtaposed to empty, but constitutive, names"; "Political Theology and Populism," p. 47.
131. Laclau, *On Populist Reason,* p. 44.
132. Ibid., p. 159.
133. Ibid., pp. 160–163.
134. Bobbio, *Future of Democracy,* p. 123; Polin, *La liberté de notre temps,* pp. 229–255.
135. Rosanvallon, *La légitimité démocratique,* p. 28.
136. In Kelsen's *Essence and Value of Democracy,* p. 40, we read that "the division of the People into political parties, in truth, establishes the organizational preconditions for the achievement of . . . compromises" inside the parliament. Compromise, to Kelsen, is not simply instrumental to party politics but a practice that presumes limitation and the renunciation of holism.
137. See on this Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels,* in particular the introduction and pt. 1.
138. Hofstadter, *Idea of a Party System,* in particular chap. 1.
139. Ibid., p. 4.
140. The "political parties created democracy and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties"; Schattschneider, *Party Government,* p. 1.
141. Hofstadter, *Idea of a Party System,* p. 8.
142. Political science literature on this issue is huge, although political theory has shown interest in parties from normative reasons more recently and thanks to the work of Rosenblum and Muirhead; see Matteo Bonotti, *Partisanship and Political Liberalism in Diverse Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University

Press, 2017); and Valeria Ottonelli and Enrico Biale, "Intra-party Deliberation and Reflexive Control Within," *Political Theory*, first published October 20, 2018, 1–27, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0090591718806829.

143. Bluntschli developed "a conception of party in which what marked it out from competing political groups was its associates' common aim to pursue the good of the whole (here understood as the state, society, and the 'fatherland') rather than the good of the party"; White and Ypi, *Meaning of Partisanship,* p. 17.
144. Gregorio, *Parte Totale,* pp. 12–13.
145. This would be the argument used a century later in European countries to justify the expulsion of communist and fascist parties from electoral competition, what is now known as militant democracy.
146. This distinction "leads Bluntschli . . . to contradict his initial liberal premises rather than embracing the dominant idealistic approach. . . . The party is a subject of the state"; Ignazi, *Party and Democracy,* p. 55.
147. Lefort, "Question of Democracy," pp. 12–13.
148. Laclau, *On Populist Reason,* p. 169.

4. Direct Representation

Epigraph: Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism,* pp. 260–261.

1. On the several forms of party (from mass party to plural party to front party to movement party) and the inclusion of Podemos in the movement-party form, see Marco Damiani, *La sinistra radicale in Europa: Italia, Spagna, Francia, Germania* (Rome: Donzelli, 2016), pp. 136–143.
2. Gerbaudo, *Digital Party,* pp. 16–17.
3. Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society,* 2nd ed. (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).
4. See, respectively, Piergiorgio Corbetta and Elisabetta Gualmini, *Il partito di Grillo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013); and César Rendueles and Jorge Sola, "Paradigm Shift," *Jacobin,* April 13, 2015, https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/04/podemos-spain-pablo-iglesias-european-left.
5. Pablo Muçhuca, "Pablo Iglesias (Podemos): 'Falta Gente Joven y Sobra Casta en Política y Económica,'" Huffington Post, May 18, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.es/2014/05/18/pablo-iglesias-entrevista_n_5338870.html. An interesting analysis of the movement Indignados is offered by Ernesto Castañeda, "The *Indignados* of Spain: A Precedent to Occupy Wall Street," *Social Movement Studies* 11, nos. 3–4 (2012): 309–319; and Catherine MacMillan, "Welcome to the Carnival? Podemos, Populism and Bakhtin's Carnivalesque," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 25, no. 2 (2017): 258–273.
6. Gerbaudo, *Digital Party*, p. 13.
7. Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, "Populism: Corrective *and* Threat to Democracy," in Mudde and Kaltwasser, *Populism,* pp. 207–208.

8. Schmitt explained the difference between the type of referendum that belongs to the system of parliamentary legislative state (i.e., abrogative or propositional of laws that the parliament decided or will decide) and the other type, in which "'the people' emerge as the exclusive, definite figure of a democratic-plebiscitary system"; Carl Schmitt, *Legality and Legitimacy,* trans. Jeffrey Seitzer, with an introduction by John P. McCormick (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 62.
9. See the analysis, historical and juridical, of the plebiscite in Fimiani, *"L'unanimità più uno."*
10. Weber, "Parliament and Government in Germany," p. 221. Weber further stressed that a plebiscite can also be used for sanctioning a dictator: "Either the leader arises by the military route—like the military dictator, Napoleon I, who then has his position confirmed by plebiscite. Or he rises via the civil route, as a non-military politician (like Napoleon III) whose claim on the leadership is confirmed by plebiscite and then accepted by the military" (ibid.).
11. Quoted in Isser Woloch, "From Consulate to Empire: Impetus and Resistance," in Baehr and Richter, *Dictatorship in History and Theory,* p. 33.
12. Marx to Engels from London, May 18, 1870, in *Letters of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels 1842–1895,* Marx Engels Internet Archive, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1870/letters/70_05_18.htm. On the ambiguity between direct democracy and plebiscite, see, among others, Roberts, "Populism, Political Mobilization," pp. 143–144.
13. In Schmitt's jargon, the distinction between plebiscite and "bourgeois" individual suffrage was precisely meant to convey the perfunctory value of voting, which was indeed a shout or acclamation because it was not expected to make each individual (let alone the minority) public, but only the majority. Voting thus counted not as an expression of the equal right of each but as an expression of the incorporation of all in the collective public. Public voting, versus secret ballot, was for the obliteration of the individual, his or her participation in the making of opinions, and his or her decision; Schmitt, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy,* particularly pp. 16–17.
14. In the French plebiscite of 1802, official concern did not center on the prospect of "no" but on abstention; Woloch, "From Consulate to Empire," p. 34.
15. Nico de Federicis, "Plebiscitarianism and Democratic Society: An Outline," in *Exploring the Crisis: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Investigation,* ed. Andrea Borghini and Enrico Campo (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2015), p. 178.
16. Christopher H. Achen and Larry M. Bartel, *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), chap. 2.
17. Bobbio, *Future of Democracy,* pp. 65–66.
18. Saward, *Representative Claim,* p. 1.
19. Pitkin, *Concept of Representation,* pp. 106–109. Jane Mansbridge coined the expression "gyroscopic representation" to explain this phenomenon, in

"Rethinking Representation," *American Political Science Review* 97 (2003): 515–528.

20. Rosanvallon, *La contre-démocratie,* pp. 19–28.
21. See Urbinati, *Representative Democracy,* chap. 1.
22. Rosanvallon, *La contre-démocratie,* chap. 1. To offer a complete picture of the unavoidable tensions within representative government, I should mention that some political scientists have proved, with logical and empirical evidence, that the most verifiable form of accountability, the retrospective one, is weak and flawed; see John Dunn, "Situating Democratic Political Accountability," in *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation,* ed. Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 329–344; and Achen and Bartels, *Democracy for Realists,* pp. 135–145.
23. Roberts, "Populism, Political Mobilization," pp. 143–144.
24. "Under autocratic rule the mass of the people are completely excluded from power"; Canovan, "Taking Politics to the People," p. 26.
25. See in particular Griffin, "The 'Post-fascism' of Alleanza Nazionale"; Traverso, *Les nouveaux visages du fascism*; Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism.*
26. Moffitt, *Global Rise of Populism,* p. 104.
27. Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured,* p. 2.
28. Urbinati, *Representative Democracy,* chap. 1.
29. Pierre Rosanvallon, *La démocratie inachevée: Histoire de la souveraineté du peuple en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), pp. 62, 49. For an excellent analysis of two ways of interpreting voting—whether transcription of interests or of political opinions—see Jeremy Waldron, "Rights and Majorities," in Waldron, *Liberal Rights: Collected Papers 1981–1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp. 49–51. On the effect of fragmentation of movements and parties and the formation of new parties provoked by forms of direct democracy like referenda, see Andreas Ladner and Michael Brändle, "Does Direct Democracy Matter for Political Parties? An Empirical Test in a Swiss Canton," *Party Politics* 5, no. 3 (1999): 295–296; and Yannis Papadopoulos, "Analysis of Functions and Dysfunctions of Direct Democracy: Top-Down and Bottom-Up Perspectives," *Politics & Society* 23 (1995): 424–428.
30. Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels,* p. 364.
31. Ibid.
32. López Maya and Panzanelli, "Populism, Rentierism," p. 253.
33. Mansbridge, "Rethinking Representation."
34. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms,* pp. 299–313.
35. Ochoa Espejo, "Power to Whom?," pp. 80–81.
36. López Maya and Panzarelli, "Populism, Rentierism," pp. 252–254.
37. Rosenblum, *On the Side of the Angels,* p. 43. "The leader who molds his followers to suit his aims and interests is, if anything, making them representing him"; Pitkin, *Concept of Representation,* p. 110.
38. Quoted in Luke Mayville, *John Adams and the Fear of American Oligarchy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 53.

39. There is an interesting article on Schumpeter's Caesarist democracy by Josiah Ober, "Joseph Schumpeter's Caesarist Democracy," *Critical Review: A Journal of Politics and Society* 29, no. 4 (2017): 473–491.
40. Manin, *Principles of Representative Government,* pp. 206–218.
41. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems,* p. 41.
42. Stein Rokkan, "Mass Suffrage, Secret Voting and Political Participation," *Archives européens de sociologie* 2, no. 1 (1961): 132–152.
43. White and Ypi, *Meaning of Partisanship,* pp. 147–148.
44. Giovanni Sartori, *Elementi di politica,* 3rd ed. (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995), p. 46.
45. Manin, *Principles of Representative Government,* pp. 220–221.
46. Schattschneider, *Party Government,* p. 210.
47. Mair, "Populist Democracy vs. Party Democracy," p. 87.
48. Tarchi, "Populism Italian Style," p. 137.
49. Mauro Calise, "The Italian Particracy: Beyond President and Parliament," *Political Science Quarterly* 109, no. 3 (1994): 452.
50. Damian Tambini, *Nationalism in Italian Politics: The Stories of the Northern League, 1980–2000* (London: Routledge, 2001), chaps. 3, 4; Tom Gallagher, "Rome at Bay: The Challenge of the Northern League to the Italian State," *Government and Opposition* 27, no. 4 (2007): 470–485.
51. Filippo Tronconi, *Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement: Organization, Communication and Ideology* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015).
52. The literature is vast on this topic; I limit myself to mentioning a recent English work by Ignazi, *Party and Democracy,* particularly chap. 7.
53. I developed this argument in Urbinati, *Representative Democracy,* pp. 38–39.
54. Manin, *Principles of Representative Government,* pp. 223–224.
55. All populist movements, Yves Mèny and Yves Surel write, exhibit a strong reservation, or even a hostility, to the mechanisms of representation in the name of one collective affirmation of the will of the electors or the people; "The Constitutive Ambiguity of Populism," in Mèny and Surel, *Democracies and the Populist Challenge,* pp. 1–21.
56. López Maya and Panzarelli, "Populism, Rentierism," p. 252.
57. Moffitt, *Global Rise of Populism,* in particular chaps. 5, 6. The propaganda function of television, wrote Eco, consists not only in giving time every day to the leader (which is seldom possible in a constitutional democracy) but also in giving the unwanted voice the chance to talk first in a debate and identifying it with the opinion to be opposed:

> Television works this way. If there is a debate about a law, the issue is presented and the opposition is immediately given the chance to put forward all its arguments. This is followed by government supporters, who counter the objections. The result is predictable: he who speaks last is right. If you carefully follow all the TV news programs, you will see this strategy: the project is presented, the opposition speaks first, the government supporters speak last. Never the other way around. A media regime has no need to imprison its opponents. It doesn't silence them by censorship, it merely has them give their arguments *first*. (Umberto Eco, *Turning Back the Clock: Hot Wars and Media Populism: Hot Wars and Media Populism* [New York: Harcourt, 2006], pp. 144–145.)

58. Moffitt, *Global Rise of Populism,* pp. 125–126.
59. Casaleggio and Grillo, *Siamo in guerra,* p. 86.
60. Ibid.
61. Roberto Biorcio and Paolo Natale, *Politica a 5 stelle: Idee, storia e strategie del Movimento di Grillo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2013), chaps. 1, 2.
62. Tom Dowe, "The Netizen: News You Can Abuse," *Wired,* January 1997, p. 54.
63. Cass R. Sunstein, *On Rumors: How Falsehoods Spread, Why We Believe Them, What Can Be Done* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), p. 42.
64. A mine of information and insightful analyses is Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion,* 5th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2012).
65. This view complies with the model of representation as claim making proposed by Saward, *Representative Claim,* chap. 2.
66. James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds* (New York: Anchor Books, 2005), p. 58.
67. Jowett and O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion,* p. 160.
68. I attempted the comparison between these new phenomena and previous revolutions and uprisings in Nadia Urbinati, *Democrazia in diretta: Le nuove sfide alla rappresentanza* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2013).
69. Rosanvallon, *La contre-démocratie,* chap. 2; John Keane, *The Life and Death of Democracy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009).
70. From the start, the blog attracted the interest of the international press, which rated it one of the best of its kind, and it earned the admiration and support of Joseph Stiglitz.
71. Gerbaudo, *Digital Party*, p. 15.
72. "V-Day, Casaleggio: Orgoglioso di essere un populista," DirettaNews.it, December 1, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZ3SCKSCLow. See also Corbetta and Gualmini, *Il partito di Grillo*.
73. In 1949, just a few years after Italian party democracy was born, Olivetti published the most radical and clear justification of why democracy needed to abolish parties: *Democrazia senza partiti,* a book announcing the dream of a self-governed, corporate society made of functional "communities," which were to be kept together by a philosophy of subsidiarity and an ethics of responsible participation in the organization of collective life, economic as well as political. (An English edition with the title *Democracy without Political Parties* was published by Olivetti's publisher, Community Movement, in 1951.)
74. Simone Weil, *On the Abolition of All Political Parties,* trans. Simon Leys (Melbourne: Black, 2013); see Damiano Palano, *La democrazia senza partiti* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2015).
75. The meet-ups recover some practices of traditional democratic activism, and the platform connects them with M5S representatives in the institutions. The Rousseau platform is meant to organize digital democracy in a more systematic way, thus receiving law proposals from the citizens and allowing discussion of the proposals representatives should advance in the institutions. Yet this instrument is the object of criticism and legal screening because it is

privately owned by Davide Casaleggio (the son of the late founder) and does not provide any guarantee that procedures of participation and control are applied.

76. At the beginning, the movement practiced forms of consultation that are familiar in contemporary democracies (and which were used in the process of constitutional revision in Iceland), such as deliberative assemblies of citizens, participatory budgeting, and various jury forms of popular consultation, in which forms as diverse as deliberative democracy, elections, and lotteries function together. On "citizen juries" and other forms of "citizens' assembly," see Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright, eds., *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations as Empowered Participatory Governance* (London: Verso, 2003); and Hélène Landemore, "Inclusive Constitution-Making: The Icelandic Experiment," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 23, no. 2 (2015): 166–191.
77. The February 2013 meeting held by leaders of the Democratic Party and of M5S to see whether it was possible to build a coalition government was streamed live, and was of course a failure. Holding a negotiation in public was a propaganda strategy M5S used to prove it would never accept a politics of alliance. On the internet as "hypocrisy-generative" in the moment it claims to promote transparency, see David Runciman, "Political Theory and Real Politics in the Age of the Internet," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 25, no. 1 (2017): 18.
78. M5S did well in the administrative elections of 2012 and 2016: it won control of the borough council and the mayorship Parma, one of the richest industrial cities of the north, and the mayorships of Turin and Rome. It reached Parliament with the equivalent of 25 percent of the vote in the elections of February 2013.
79. Biorcio and Natale's *Politica a 5 stelle* describes and analyzes M5S's program as containing five key points: a redefinition of the relationship between citizens and state institutions, a defense of the environment, the improvement and enlargement of the welfare system, an increase in the budget for public education and academic research, and the reduction of great powers in the economic sphere.
80. Chris Demaske, *Modern Power and Free Speech: Contemporary Culture and Issues of Equality* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), pp. 39–41. The argument that free speech is a right of the citizen and has a direct connection with the principle of self-determination was made by Justice Louis Brandeis in 1920 and revised recently by Robert C. Post, "Recuperating First Amendment Doctrine," *Stanford Law Review* 47 (1995): 1249–1281. I have written about this issue in Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured,* chap. 1 and conclusion.
81. In the following analysis I relied heavily on the aforementioned manuscript by Nadal Alsina, "From 'Horizontal' to 'Vertical.'"
82. Zeynep Tufekci, "Capabilities of Movements and Affordances of Digital Media: Paradoxes of Empowerment," Connected Learning Alliance, January 9, 2014, https://dmlcentral.net/capabilities-of-movements-and-affordances-of-digital-media-paradoxes-of-empowerment/.

83. Errejón and Mouffe, *Podemos,* p. 25.
84. Cristina Flesher Fominaya, "Debunking Spontaneity: Spain's 15-M/Indignados Autonomous Movement," *Social Movement Studies* 14, no. 2 (2015): 142–163.
85. For an analysis of the charter of Italy's Democratic Party (founded in 2008) and the plebiscitary consequences provoked by instituting open primaries to choose the secretary of the party, see Antonio Floridia, "Modelli di partito e modelli di democrazia: Analisi critica dello *Statuto* del PD," in *Il Partito democratico: Elezione del segretario, organizzazione e potere,* ed. Gianfranco Pasquino (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2009), p. 223.
86. Quoted in Nadal Alsina, "From 'Horizontal' to 'Vertical.'"
87. Gerbaudo, *Digital Party*, pp. 131–132.
88. Ibid., pp. 133–141.
89. On the new charter of Italy's Democratic Party as oriented toward a plebiscitary party identified with the figure of the leader through the primaries, see Nadia Urbinati and David Ragazzoni, *La vera Seconda Repubblica* (Milan: Cortina, 2016), pp. 179–202.
90. Frances McCall Rosenbluth and Ian Shapiro, *Responsible Parties: Saving Democracy from Itself* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), chap. 1.
91. Decline of parties lowers the bank against populist pundits; George Wallace made his "Trump-like appeal in 1968, and he enjoyed Trump-like levels of public support," but he operated in "a different world" in which primaries mattered little and the party establishment "would never back his candidacy"; Levitsky and Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die,* pp. 46–47.
92. Voro Maroto, "El líder valenciano de Podemos compara el 'cesarismo' de Pablo Iglesias con el de Franco y Sadam Hussein," ElDiario.es, February 6, 2017, http://www.eldiario.es/cv/Monedero-Iglesias-Errejon-Hitler-Podemos_0_609639447.html.
93. Ethan J. Leib and Christopher S. Elmendorf, "Why Party Democrats Need Popular Democracy and Popular Democrats Need Parties," *California Law Review* 100, no. 1 (2012): 70.
94. Among the critics of party democracy, Hannah Arendt is perhaps an exception in acknowledging that "it is no less true that the best it [the party] has achieved is a certain control of the rulers by those who are ruled," although it "has by no means enabled the citizen to become a 'participator' in public affairs"; *On Revolution,* p. 268.

Epilogue

Epigraph: Habermas, "Constitutional Democracy," p. 775.

1. The tradition in the study of social movements as essential protagonists of democratic politics that I rely on dates back to the experience of the 1960s and 1970s; see in particular the social analysis by Alberto Melucci, partly translated into English, such as in *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the*

Information Age (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). See also Jürgen Habermas, "New Social Movements," *Telos* 1981, no. 49 (1981): 33–37; his essential *Theory of Communicative Action,* vol. 1, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society,* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1981); and Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995). The debates on the role of the "new social movements" in the critical analysis of liberal values would take us a long way from our topic. Yet I should at least mention that Ernesto Laclau's discourse theory of populism is situated within the broader debate provoked by Habermas's critical evaluation of the "new social movement." An overview of this debate can be found in Henry Krips, "New Social Movements, Populism and the Politics of the Lifeworld," *Cultural Studies* 23, no. 2–3 (2012): 242–259.

2. For a critical and polemical reconstruction of conservatism as inherently married to a politics of reaction (at times violent) against democracy, see Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Donald Trump,* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
3. "Bad voting"—or voting without "sufficient moral or epistemic justification"—distorts "electoral outcomes" and leads to bad output; Jason Brennan, "Polluting the Polls: When Citizens Should Not Vote," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 87, no. 4 (2009): 535–549. More recently, see Achen and Bartels, *Democracy for Realists,* chaps. 1–3. The "realist" argument translates issues of discontent into issues of incompetence and irrationality: James S. Fishkin, *Democracy When the People Are Talking: Revitalizing Our Politics through Public Deliberation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 209.
4. Dunn, *Breaking Democracy's Spell,* p. 4.
5. Premonitory were the words used by Alain Touraine and Samuel Valenzuela in the abstract of their 1996 report *Democracy versus History:*

> Today, democracy's principal enemies are no longer tradition and belief but, on the one hand, fundamentalist community-based ideologies (whether their contents be nationalistic, ethnic or theocratic), which use modernity as a means of domination, and on the other hand, the blind trust in an open market, where cultural identities are mixed. Under these conditions, democratic thought must cease being prophetic. Democracy can no longer turn toward a promising future but toward a space to be reconstructed, to make room for the free construction of personal life and for the social and political forms of mediation that can protect it. (*Democracy versus History,* Reihe Politikwissenschaft 34 [Vienna: Institut für Höhere Studien, 1996], http://nbnresolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-266822.)

6. Giambattista Vico, *The First New Science* (1724), ed. and trans. from the Italian by Leon Pompa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 66.
7. Reinhart Koselleck, "Crisis," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 2 (2006): 357–400.
8. David Runciman, *The Confidence Trap: A History of Democracy in Crisis from World War I to the Present* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. xiv.

9. Merkel, "Is There a Crisis?," p. 23; Simon Tormey, *The End of Representative Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015); Claus Offe, "Democracy in Crisis: Two and a Half Theories about the Operation of Democratic Capitalism," openDemocracy, July 9, 2012, https://www.opendemocracy.net/claus-offe/democracy-in-crisis-two-and-half-theories-about-operation-of-democratic-capitalism. See also Nadia Urbinati, "Reflections on the Meaning of the 'Crisis of Democracy,'" *Democratic Theory* 3 (2014): 6–31.
10. Dani Rodrik traces the origins of today's populism to the shock of globalization; "Populism and the Economics of Globalization" (CEPR Discussion Paper 12119, Center for Economic Policy Research, London, 2017). On the same line, other scholars show how the backlash against globalization is a response to rising income inequality; Lubos Pastor and Pietro Veronesi, "Inequality Aversion, Populism, and the Backlash against Globalization" (mimeo, University of Chicago, 2018). For a discussion of the economic factors that explain the growth of populism, see Giuso et al., "Populism." See also Michele Alecevich and Anna Soci, *Inequality: A Short History* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2018), particularly pp. 127–132.
11. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms,* pp. 481–488.
12. Tony Negri, "On the Yellow Vests and the New Wave of French Insurrection," Copyriot.com, December 9, 2018, https://non.copyriot.com/antonio-negri-on-the-yellow-vests-and-the-new-wave-of-french-insurrection/.
13. Michel Crozier, Samuel P. Huntington, and Joji Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission* (New York: New York University Press, 1975).
14. On the link between "partisanship" and "friendship" among citizens, see White and Ypi, *Reason of Partisanship.* An excruciating and at times desperate description of the effects of Trumpism on ordinary public speech is offered by Levitsky and Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die,* pp. 210–219. However, the cure for this rampant propaganda made of linguistic "sincerity" through only "institutional channels" (ibid., p. 217) seems to paralyze party opposition instead of strengthening it.
15. Some inspiring pages are in Frank, *Constituent Moments,* pp. 237–254.
16. Habermas, "Constitutional Democracy," p. 775.
17. Pierre Rosanvallon, "Democratic Universalism as a Historical Problem," *Constellations* 16, no. 4 (2009): 547.
18. Ibid., p. 548.
19. Wendy Brown, *Politics out of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
20. "Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae," wrote Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Oratore,* 2.36; in synthesis, history illuminates the truth and is the life of memory; "history is life's teacher"; Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Oratore,* in *On Oratory and Orator,* trans. J. S. Watson (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1860), p. 92.
21. "To cling to the old model of the monolithic party is to sink into nostalgia for a irretrievable past"; Colin Crouch, *Post-democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), p. 111.

22. Simon Tormey recently wrote on populism as a symptom of crisis, treating it as capable of producing both negative and positive effects; "Populism: Democracy's *Pharmakon?*," *Political Studies* 39, no. 3 (2018): 260–273.
23. Chantal Mouffe, *For a Leftist Populism* (London: Verso, 2018), p. 24.
24. Piketty, "Brahmin Left vs. Merchant Right."
25. Donatella della Porta, *Can Democracy Be Saved?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013); Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino, eds., *Assessing the Quality of Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).
26. Right wing and left wing are a "false dichotomy" as "two sides of the same [liberal] coin," writes John Dunn in the introduction to his *Traditionalism, the Only Radicalism: A New Mythos for Modern Heretic*s (London: Study Press, 2015), pp. 6–8.
27. Manin, *Principles of Representative Government,* pp. 218–234.
28. For a compelling analysis of the impact of globalized financial capitalism on the very system of values of each society, see Alain Touraine, *After the Crisis* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014); on the change of the meaning of labor and its gradual dissociation form prospects of social and political change, see Anson Rabinbach, *The Eclipse of the Utopias of Labor,* Forms of Living (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018).
29. Jonathan White, "Archiving for the Future: The Party Constitution," in *Institutions for Future Generations,* ed. Axel Gosseries and Iñigo Gonzléz-Ricoy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 353–365.
30. Publications on the destiny of democracy are growing numerous; see an interesting analysis of the most recent works in Adam Tooze, "Notes on the Global Condition: Democracy's Twenty-First-Century Histories," Adam Tooze's website, February 9, 2018, https://adamtooze.com/2018/02/09/notes-global-condition-democracys-twenty-first-century-histories-call-comments/.
31. See, for instance, the most representative ideologue of the French right wing, Alain de Benoist, *Le moment populiste: Droite-gauche, c'est fini!* (Paris: Pierre-Guillaume de Roux, 2017).
32. Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals,* trans. from the French by Terence Kilmartin (New York: Norton, 1962), p. 3.
33. Errejón and Mouffe, *Podemos,* p. 127.
34. Fraser, "Against Progressive Neo-liberalism"; Tatiana Llaguno, Krytyka Polityczna and European Alternatives, "Emancipatory Movements Must Have a Populist Dimension: An Interview with Nancy Fraser," Political Critique.org, September 7, 2017, http://politicalcritique.org/opinion/2017/emancipatory-movements-must-have-a-populist-dimension-an-interview-with-nancy-fraser/.
35. Hans-Georg Betz, "Conditions Favoring the Success and Failure of Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Contemporary Democracy," in Mény and Surel, *Democracies and the Populist Challenge,* p. 196.
36. However, in parliamentary regimes there was, according to Gramsci, the chance of a Caesaristic leader in cases of a dramatic need of overcoming partisan divisions, and in the case of parliamentary England during the

cabinet of Ramsey MacDonald. The representative leader in electoral democracy was Gramsci's equivalent of Weber's plebiscitarian leader within parliament; Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere,* pp. 1194–1195, 1619–1622. On the challenging issue of the role of the leader in leftist social movements, see Dieter Groh, "The Dilemma of Unwanted Leadership in Social Movements: The German Example before 1914," in Graumann and Moscovici, *Changing Conceptions of Leadership,* pp. 33–52.

37. Mouffe writes in her *For a Left Populism,* p. 70, "Affective bonds with a charismatic leader can play an important role. . . . There is no reason to equate strong leadership with authoritarianism." But on what grounds can we say that there is no such a reason?
38. I discussed Gramsci's conception of leadership and his mistrust in the charismatic leader of the hegemonic movement in Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured,* pp. 153–157.
39. Parties remain "fundamental to the avoidance of anti-egalitarian tendencies of post-democracy. But we cannot rest content with working for our political goals solely by doing so through a party"; Crouch, *Post-democracy,* pp. 111–112. Some proposals for reforming parties have been recently put forward on both sides of the Atlantic; see, for instance, Ignazi, *Party and Democracy,* pp. 247–258; and Leib and Elmendorf, "Party Democrats Need Popular Democracy," particularly pp. 91–113.
40. Hence I agree with Mouffe when she points her critical finger at existing social-democratic or simply center-left parties, which certainly had an important role in stabilizing and expanding democracy after World War II but seem now to be "prisoners of their post-political dogmas"; *For a Left Populism,* p. 21.
41. One might say what a bright antifascist said of the success of fascism in Italy: "There is no question that one of the reasons for the fascist success was the degeneration of parliamentary life"; Carlo Rosselli, *Liberal Socialism* (1930), trans. from the Italian by William McCuaig (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 128.

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I wrote this book between 2016 and 2018, when populist leaders and movements were elected to government in my two countries, Italy and the United States. These were also the first elections in which the internet and social networks, and not traditional parties, were the protagonists. Writing this book has reminded me that democracy is a plastic reality; it is subjected to transformations that are not always pleasant or desirable, but that are nonetheless capable of metabolizing changes and of changing the direction of nations. This does not make it feeble or weak. Democracy is open to risk, and populism is the risky phenomenon this book studies.

My interest in populism dates back to the early 1990s, when it was on the rise in some European countries. From then onward, populism has progressively occupied the scene of politics at the global level, to become one of the most often employed words by politicians and academics alike. Over the years the literature on populism has grown, as has the list of colleagues and students who have contributed to my understanding of this phenomenon. I have several people to thank for drawing my attention to it when it was still a "nonissue" and then helping me to study it better. My greatest debt of gratitude is first of all to students at Columbia University, some of whom have meanwhile become teachers and researchers. I would like to thank in particular Carlo Invernizzi Accetti, Sinead Carolan, Alexander de la Paz, Xavier Wyche Flory, Rob Goodman, Ben Mylius, Nicole Peisajovich, David Ragazzoni, Maria Paula Saffon, and Camila Vergara. I also record my sincere thanks to Lisa Disch, Piero Ignazi, Bernard Manin, John McCormick, Jan-Werner Müller, Nancy Rosenblum, and Charles Sable, with whom the conversation on populism and related themes dates back several years. I had the chance to discuss chapters of the book at conferences, seminars, and workshops at Oxford University, Bocconi University in Milan, the University of Oslo, Fondazione Giangiacomo

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