Why the Poor Don't Rule:
An Archive of Democracy as Threat

Amir Fleischmann
Western Political Science Association

Introduction

When we think of democracy today, we tend to think of it in terms of a shining promise, a beacon of freedom and equality for all. Nowhere is this expressed more archetypically than by Barack Obama (2018), who sees in democracy "a vision of equality and justice and freedom … built on the premise that all people are created equal, and they're endowed by our creator with certain inalienable rights". This vision, he argued, would be the harbinger of "peace and more cooperation in pursuit of a common good" (Obama, 2018). That today, this way of thinking of democracy has almost become a tired cliché occludes the fact that this is not how political theorists understood democracy for thousands of years. No sharper contrast can be drawn than with Plato, who defined democracy as that which "comes into being after the poor have conquered their opponents, slaughtering some and banishing some, while to the remainder they give an equal share of freedom and power" (557a). Democracy, for Plato, is not characterized by a promise of cooperation and freedom for one and all, but by the threat of the violent dispossession of the empowered few by the disempowered many. It isn't the "pursuit of a common good", but a system that gives the impoverished masses the means and opportunity to assert their sectional interest in seizing the resources and power of the few. It is the threat of an empowered and self-conscious majority looming over those in power, with hunger in their bellies and anger in their eyes.

Yet, this strand of thinking about democracy has become submerged as liberal democratic states have, to varying degrees, succeeded in containing the threat of the empowered

poor. They have done so by transforming the poor from the complicated and exemplary subject of democracy into a demographic problem to be solved (Kalyvas, 2019) and by designing institutions meant to stymie attempts by the excluded many to wield majoritarian democratic power to effect redistribution (Winters, 2017). Consequently, instead of understanding democracy as that apparatus which allows the poor to use their numerical superiority to seize power and property, today democracy has become associated mainly with liberal constitutionalism, sterile decision-making, competition between special interest groups, and an electoral process largely divorced from social movements in the streets and on the picket lines. If the broader project of this dissertation is to understand why the democratic threat has not been made good, then this chapter seeks to bring to light a distinctive way of thinking about democracy: democracy as threat. This threat has two components: the threat of redistribution and that of the rule of the poor. This chapter focuses on the former, and I will explore the latter in the next chapter of my dissertation.

Conceptualizing democracy as threat challenges us to approach some of the key questions of democratic theory differently. Democracy is threatening because it opens up the space for the self-constituted poor, or any other coalition of the excluded, to come together in the streets and use their superior numbers to unseat elites and bring about a real redistribution of power and wealth. Rather than seeing democracy as the promise of pluralism and cooperation, theorizing democracy as threat means embracing a notion of democracy as the fearsome, sectional rule of the majority. Further, it rejects views of democracy that are limited to interest group competition, instead positing the poor as the essential democratic subject. The poor, in this line of thinking, is a complex collective political subject. It isn't defined in terms of income, but rather many different kinds of exclusion and deprivation, as well as a belief in their capacity for action and change. This subject is not pregiven, but instead must constitute itself.

In order to uncover this strand of thinking, this chapter assembles an archive of democracy as threat. My use of the archive draws on the work of Kathi Weeks (2021), whose reconceptualization of this mode of assemblage is uniquely well-suited to my project. In contrast to the naturalness implied by the notion of tradition, the constituent parts of the archive sit together uncomfortably, emphasizing the fact of their curation. Unlike a genealogy, the archive format refuses to posit a linearity among the collected works that builds to something progressively. Instead, by rejecting any pretence of consistency and leaning into the contingent nature of the included contents, the archive format allows me to assemble a collection of texts that, in unison, let us see something new about democratic theory. Rather than emphasizing "cumulative development through time", like a tradition or genealogy, the archive's power "depends on what each text amplifies in the others, how reading them in proximity to one another produces new insights as they build on and reformulate shared themes and commitments, or when their occasional differences are magnified such that the disruption they instigate assumes new meanings" (Weeks, 2021, 857). This is not a pre-existing literature; the works I've gathered here are not ones that are typically read together. Rather, the archive emphasizes my act of constitution through the work of curation. By bringing together texts that lack even a semblance of "theoretical commonality or political solidarity" (Weeks, 2021, 844) my own archive goes even beyond Weeks' work in showing the potential of this mode of assemblage. In the process of doing so, I am able to draw out a theory of democracy as threat that goes beyond the individual projects that constitute the archive.

The archive contains four sets of authors, each contributing to our understanding of this tendency within democratic theory in a different way. The first draws from the history of democratic theory authors who fear the threat of the empowered poor and work to contain them. They direct our attention to the poor as a fearsome and complex political subject and

emphasize that arriving at a sense collective interest is not straightforward thing. The second box in the archive looks at contemporary theorists of radical democracy who exhort us to embrace the threat of a transformative, anti-oligarchic democracy. They further clarify this distinctive way of thinking about the poor, highlighting that this collective subject does not come into being automatically, but must be self-constituted. The third box considers Marxist theorists, who vindicate the fears of the thinkers in the first box. They push us to look beyond liberal democracy and instead see socialism as a product of a sectional, majoritarian democracy – in a word, the dictatorship of the proletariat. The communists also contribute to our understanding of the poor, arguing that the poor need an agent to bring them together, and the (communist) party is that agent. The final box contains theorists of democratic conflict, authors who don't cite one another, but all approach the question of how the democratic subject comes into being. Respectively looking at social cleavages, redistributive welfare programs, crowds, and electoral institutions, they help us think about the relationship between social movements, government institutions, and redistribution in a holistic way, as part of the same process. Together, the works that constitute the archive bring into sharper relief an important and recurring idea within democratic theory that has not yet been recognized as such. The undercurrent that emerges goes beyond the terms of any one project within it. It brings to light a set of themes that have been present in democratic theory for millennia, but which has not yet been given the attention its due.

By bringing together these disparate authors through the archive, I uncover a series of precepts about democracy as threat. This is a theory of majoritarian democracy in conflict, which exceeds the bounds of proceduralism. It focuses on the relationship between economic power and political power, thus making it an anti-oligarchic theory of democracy. Conceptualizing democracy in this way means locating it in the interplay between social

movements and democratic institutions that allow the many to effectively apply coercive pressure to effect redistribution. Critically, it gives the poor pride of place in our thinking about democracy but complicates our understanding of that subject. Indeed, democracy as threat demands that we understand subject formation in a dynamic way, rather than as the automatic result of demographic characteristics. It is no sure thing that the disempowered will identify on the basis of their collective interest, or even identify as a collective at all. Democracy as threat draws our attention to the conditions that make it possible for this collective subject to emerge, as well as the strategies that those in power use to make sure it doesn't.

The archive also uncovers a set of lacunae within this approach to democracy. There is significant disagreement among the authors in the archive over whether democracy as threat ought to be understood as a fleeting insurgent movement or as something that can and ought to be built into to our political institutions. Similarly, the various authors are at odds over whether democracy as threat is meant to abolish of inequality, provide a temporary reprieve from the oppressive power of the few, or offer a set of tools to counteract the translation of economic power into political power. These differences and the dilemmas they reflect are indicative of different approaches to democratic practice within the archive. If democracy means levelling and the abolition of property, it remains an open question what a threatening democratic practice looks like on an ongoing basis, as a system of governance.

The archive of democracy as threat challenges us to think about democratic theory and its history differently. It recentres the poor within democratic theory, while complicating our understanding of this collective subject. Democracy as threat also provides a way to think about how groups of people come to understand what is in their interest that doesn't fall into the paternalistic trap of false consciousness. Instead of distinguishing between "real" and "synthetic" interests as some (e.g., Wolin, 2010, 204) attempt, the work of the archive shows

that how we perceive our interest is a product of how we identify at a given moment. Just as with our identity, our interests are dynamic, and may be threatening to entrenched power or relatively innocuous. Finally, theorizing democracy as threat allows us to see how formal democratic institutions, redistributive policies, and popular action on the streets, picket lines, and barricades all cohere within the broader concept of democracy. Each alone does not paint the full picture, but together we are able to see how group identity, interest, redistribution, and democratic action affect and are affected by these three domains.

With inequality rising to startling levels all over the world and with social movements exploding into the streets in unprecedented numbers, the theory of democracy as threat is highly relevant to this political moment. It can help us understand the menacing augury of the threat, once again rearing its head; but it can also help us understand the ways this same threat of the many has historically been contained by the few.

Who's Afraid of Democracy?

The first box in the archive contains the work of canonical Political Theory and historic enemies of democracy who recognized and sought to contain its threat. Alongside Henry Ireton and Aristotle[1], whom we've already encountered in the previous chapter, we find core texts of 18th and 19th century liberalism, including John Stewart Mill and the so-called Founding Fathers of the American Revolution: John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison. Their work, both in theory and practice, have much to contribute to this section of the archive and the development of a theory of democracy as threat.

Their fears and misgivings about democracy point us towards one of the precepts of democracy as threat: that the poor, the central figure in this line of thinking, is not defined on

[1] They will be discussed in the introduction

the basis of a specific class position, but rather on the basis of exclusion from power – which can take many forms. In a letter to James Sullivan, Adams argued against extending the voting franchise to women – something his wife Abigail ardently supported. Adams argued that extending the franchise to women would create a slippery slope, leading to the eventual enfranchisement of men without property as well. He claimed that, like women, "Men … who are wholly destitute of Property, are … too little acquainted with public Affairs to form a Right Judgment, and too dependent upon other Men to have a Will of their own" (Adams 1776). This framing is interesting because it shows that the need to contain democracy as threat is not only about keeping the propertyless masses in their place, but also about ensuring that power is kept away from other marginalized groups, such as women. This perspective is foundational to this way of thinking about democracy and is shared by others in the archive. It is not the plebeian or proletarian class that bring the threat of redistributive democracy to bear, but rather a "revolutionary alliance of the oppressed" (Dean, 2016, 28).

Later in the same letter, Adams reveals that the real risk of allowing women and the propertyless masses to vote is that it would "confound and destroy all Distinctions, and prostrate all Ranks, to one common Levell [sic]" (Adams 1776). Here we can see that he isn't afraid of the irrationality or stupidity of the disenfranchised, but precisely the opposite: that they would act in their own (apparent) self-interest and bring about a material redistribution of power and resources. As with Ireton and Cromwell, would-be Levellers are the real source of anxiety. Adams is even clearer elsewhere, arguing that if the franchise were extended to the propertyless majority "Debts would be abolished first; taxes laid heavy on the rich, and not at all on the others; and at last a downright equal division of every thing [sic] be demanded, and voted" (Adams, 1787). This is not the behaviour of a group of people whose lack of property ownership makes them unable to furnish a cogent programme for governance. No! For Adams

the propertyless have a clear agenda, based on a common interest, that he expects them to implement quickly should they gain the right to vote. It is precisely that common interest that he found so threatening.

Yet, simply having a government that styles itself 'democratic' is not sufficient to bring democracy's threat to bear. In an 1813 letter to John Adams, Thomas Jefferson understood that there was "no [need to] fear … an equalization of property" under American democracy, as "enough of [the wealthy] will find their way into every branch of the legislation to protect themselves" (Cappon, 1988, 388). The failure of democracy to make good on its threat suggests that the voting franchise alone is insufficient to bring about this kind of transformative politics. The theory of democracy as threat takes Jefferson at his word and draws our attention to what still is missing, as well as the intentional strategies the propertied few have used to secure their wealth from the power of the many.

Jefferson could feel safe about the low chances of the poor and excluded seizing American institutions because they had been designed to prevent exactly that. The Constitutional Convention took place amidst rising anger about inequality and the need for the wealthy to defend their property against the threat of redistribution (Winters, 2017, 179). In Federalist 10, James Madison argued for institutions that would contain democracy as threat. He was anxious about the potential power of the propertyless masses under a democracy, which he viewed as "incompatible with personal security or the rights of property" (Madison 1998). Madison's anxieties are indicative of what Winters (2017) describes as the "fundamental tension between democracy and oligarchy" (177) that has been a consistent feature of American history. He argues that since the Founding Fathers and right up until *Citizens United* in the present, the empowered few have worked "to recast wealth defence as a civil right of the rich" (Winters, 2017, 178) and make redistributive polices appear both unconstitutional and unjust.

Consequently, the Framers worked to devise institutions that would prevent the poor from coalescing into a majority strong enough to achieve redistribution. Madison's proposals to mitigate the effects of factions were in fact designed to prevent the citizenry from uniting on the basis of "the most common and durable source of factions": "the various and unequal distribution of property" (Madison 1998). Hence, Madison proposed federal structures that would prevent a faction of the propertyless majority from wielding state power. He did this by dividing power between the states and federal government, and by creating divisions of power that would prevent a majority from acting. As Sheldon Wolin (2010) argues, "the true target of [Madison's] attempt to thwart majority rule was not the threat of a numerical majority, but that of heterogenous movement aimed at addressing real political and economic inequalities" (279). Madison also stymied the poor majority by using the constitution to prevent states from enacting redistributive monetary policy and by creating institutions like the senate and the supreme court, which were, and continue to be, dominated by the rich (Winters, 2017, 186-187). By designing American institutions to mitigate the possibility of an emergent coalition of the disempowered, Madison was able to contain democracy as threat.

In *Considerations on Representative Government*, John Stewart Mill (2008) warns would-be democrats of the threat of "sinister interests", defined as "interests conflicting more or less with the general good of the community" Mill, 2008, 292). Democracies are particularly susceptible to sinister interests, as the majority might choose to govern in their own particular interest, rather than in the general interest of the community. Mill (2008, 294) points to a variety of different majorities that could fall sway to sinister interests: religious, racial, national, and class. Mill does, however, seem particularly threatened by the prospect of rule by the poor majority. He goes so far as to say that "one of the greatest dangers … of democracy … lies in the sinister interest of the holders of power: it is the danger of class legislation…" (Mill, 2008, 299). This

leads us to our second precept: in contrast to Mill's fear, democracy as threat embraces the notion of a sectional interest. Rather than equating the sectional interests of the empowered few and the disempowered many, democracy as threat firmly advocates for the interest of the latter over and against the interest of the former.

What makes Mill's analysis stand out compared with the others in this box is his discussion of 'interest'. Whereas Plato, Aristotle, and Adams all assumed that the poor have a straightforward interest in redistribution, Mill complicates this picture considerably. For him, the desire for redistributive policies is the "very natural (I do not venture to say whether probable) results of a *feeling* of class interest" (Mill, 2008, 295, emphasis added). I argue that the word feeling is key here because it shows that how we perceive our interest depends on whether we feel connected with others on the basis of class, or on the bases of religion or race or nationality, as he suggested in the previous paragraph. It is only when people understand themselves as part of a group that their interest manifests on that basis. Mill further distinguishes between our "real" interests and perceived interests. Though the "real" interest is predicated on "the dictate of justice and the general good" (Mill, 2008, 298), when it comes to political actors, "it is not what their interest is, but what they suppose it to be, that is the important consideration" (295). And what we suppose our interest to be, Mill argues, depends on who we are. While Mill (2008) seems ambivalent about whether who we are is a constant (296) or changes depending on group identification (294) or proximity to power (297), the success of Madisonian institutions at controlling factional interest suggests that our perceptions of our identity and our interests are fluid rather than fixed. The fluidity of identity and how that affects our perception of our interests is an important insight from this way of thinking about democracy and is central to the story of how the democratic threat was contained.

This box of the archive demonstrates the recurrent presence of democracy as threat down across the centuries. This is a critical feature of democratic theory that goes back to its foundations. This analysis also foreshadows that the threat is not levelled on the basis of economic class alone but can come from any group of people systemically excluded from power. If democracy is supposed to represent popular power and popular sovereignty, then it should mean redistribution and taking up the sectional interest of the disempowered majority against empowered few. This means power for the propertyless, but also other historically excluded groups, such as women, ethnic and racial minorities, and the disabled – to name but a few. But, as the variegated identities just listed show, identifying on the basis of exclusion from power is no automatic process. And this is the second aspect that has been foreshadowed in this section: that anxiety about the threat was misplaced because the majority do not always identify on the basis of their exclusion from power. Interest and identity are malleable effects of ongoing processes. How we identify and how we consequently perceive our interest can be shaped by government institutions. This section has shown how American institutions were designed to stymie the emergence of the poor as a self-conscious collective subject. The subsequent sections will further develop our understanding of the poor and clarify the conditions necessary for its manifestation.

Radical Democracy and the Rule of the Poor

While the historic thinkers whose work I collected in the previous box were fearful of, and sought to contain, democracy as threat, contemporary theorists of radical democracy exhort us to think about democracy as the threat of the empowered poor. This section of the archive looks at the work of Paulina Tambakaki (2019), Andreas Kalyvas (2019), Sheldon Wolin (1994; 2010), Jacques Rancière (1999; 2014) and Martin Breaugh (2016; 2019; 2022), whose work challenges us to put the poor and disempowered at the heart of the way we think about

democracy. These theorists all express a dissatisfaction with liberal democracy and the need for a more radical formulation of democratic values that is capable of getting beyond mere proceduralism.

These thinkers deepen our understanding of the poor as a collective political subject that must actively constitute itself. For Kalyvas (2019), "democracy occurs only when the poor join together to constitute themselves into a political subject as an organized and self-mobilized force united around the principles of liberty and equality, lucidly and deliberately, against wealth and its exploitative relations of subordination and domination" (540). These theorists argue that the subject of democracy as threat is the poor or the many, a group they define primarily in terms of its exclusion from power and property. For Tambakaki (2019), the poor are defined by their non-identity, which "designates a 'deprived existence', that is, a certain hollowness of economic and political being that nonetheless constitutes in its own hollowness some thin basis for collective identification" (505-506). For Kalyvas, (2019, 543) the poor are similarly defined in terms of their subordination, their lack of property, and the fact that they constitute the majority. Importantly, as I argued in the last section, the subject of democracy as threat is not defined solely in terms of class position, but rather in terms of this exclusion from power, which can take the form of many different kinds of oppression and marginalization. Thus, the poor or the many as "characterized by the great diversity of its makeup" (Breaugh, 2016, 5) and its lack of political and economic power – not, importantly, its place in the relations of production, which defines a class such as the proletariat or the bourgeoisie.

Rancière describes the poor as the "part of those who have no part" (Rancière, 1999, 11). Those who have no part includes the materially impoverished, but also others who are not included in the social order and are not fully counted among the demos: foreigners, women, and

racial minorities, to name but a few. But it is not merely the fact of being excluded that constitutes the part that has not part. He argues that

> "The struggle between the rich and the poor is not social reality, which politics then has to deal with. It is the actual institution of politics itself. There is politics when there is a part of those who have no part, a part or party of the poor. Politics does not happen just because the poor oppose the rich. It is the other way around: *politics (that is, the interruption of the simple effects of domination by the rich) causes the poor to exist as an entity*" (Rancière, 1999, 11, emphasis added).

In the normal order of domination, the poor are not a political subject – they do not count. The concerns of the many do not matter to the few who rule. Politics happens when this prevailing order of domination comes into question, and the poor are able to assert that they do count, that they ought to determine the ordering of their own lives, and that the unequal distribution of wealth and power represents a wrong. As Dean (2012) argues, "the part-of-no-part thus does not designate the objectivity of an empirical group excluded from the political domain. It's not another way of referring to a politics of identity by locating a marginalized other. Nor is it a synonym for the proletariat. Rather, the part-of-no-part designates the *interruption* of a given order by those who have no part" (80). Thus, we can see that the poor is not a demographic subject that appears once one's incomes fall below a certain percentile, but rather a political subject established through struggle and contestation. It claims the mantle of 'the people' for itself, as it rejects the order in which it has no part.

The collective identification of the poor is not an automatic process, even though it occurs on the basis of dispossession from property and exclusion from power. For Tambakaki (2019), exclusion and dispossession represent only "some thin basis for collective identification" (506) and for Kalyvas (2019) "there is … no guarantee or certainty" (540) that such identification will take place. Neither a demographic nor an empirical category, for Breaugh (2019), the poor "designates the movement by which 'anybody and everybody' decide, in a

concerted fashion to go from political exclusion to inclusion" (4). Wolin goes so far as to argue that current political institutions in the United States work to inhibit the possibility of a majority identifying on that basis. The gutting of social programs, the lack of party representing the interests of the poor, and the failure of political institutions to make progress on issues affecting people's lives all work to "obscure real cleavages in order to substitute synthetic ones" (Wolin, 2010, 204). I, however, take issue with Wolin's characterization of these potential cleavages as real or synthetic. To claim that identifying on the basis of cultural signifiers (e.g., one's stance on abortion or "Critical Race Theory") is less "real" than identification on the basis of one's proximity to power and resources is to fall into the trap of paternalistic diagnoses of false consciousness. The theory of democracy as threat that I am putting forward allows us to distinguish these types of identification, not as real or synthetic, but as threatening to power or harmless. This is a key insight that working through the archive allows us to see.

A key function of democracy from this perspective is that it seeks to prevent economic power from translating directly into political power. Seen in this way, democracy can again become a "vehicle for transformation" and not merely a set of procedures (Tambakaki, 2019, 499). This point is critical to a theory of democracy as threat: it is not simply about the presence of ostensibly democratic institutions, but about the people's ability to work on, through, and against them in a way that brings the coercive power of their numerical superiority to bear. Indeed, it is this collective power that "functions… as a threat that hovers over and inevitably limits oligarchic tendencies" (Tambakaki, 2019, 510). This way of thinking asserts that "democracy is neither a form of government that enables oligarchies to rule in the name of the people, nor is it a form of society that governs the power commodities. It is the action that constantly wrests the monopoly of public life from oligarchic governments, and the omnipotence over lives from the power of wealth" (Rancière, 2014, 82). It does so by giving the poor and

disenfranchised other avenues to redress grievances and ways to reclaim power from the minority who would presume to monopolize it (Kalyvas, 2019, 545; Wolin, 2010, 251).

Though the first box showed the lengths to which the propertied few will go to contain democracy as threat, there are moments when the "threat" has been realized – although they are episodic and did not lead to final and thoroughgoing transformation of society. These moments demonstrate that the poor of democracy as threat is not a pregiven demographic group waiting to be studied, but rather a coalition that comes into being on the basis of and through political action. For Wolin, this kind of democratic action is best characterized by the relationship between the anti-war movement of the sixties and seventies and the Congress of that time. The anti-war movement provided popular (and disruptive) democratic pressure, while the politicians provided representation and institutional expression. Thus, the popular movement politics and national debate it spurred were played out in government by a Congress that was (at least somewhat) connected to the people and willing to give voice to their opposition to the war – something that, Wolin (2010, 104) laments, was not the case with the anti-war movement of 2003. Breaugh's work details many examples of 'Plebeian democracy', but the most central to his story is the Aventine Secession during the time of the Roman Republic. In this example, the ancient Plebeians withdrew their bodies and their labour from Rome itself to force the Patrician aristocracy to recognize their political rights. This example illuminates democracy as threat in two ways. First, it is exemplary of how the poor and dispossessed can use their numerical majority coercively to extract real concessions in terms of power and resources. Second, it shows that the poor who are the subject-actor of democracy as threat are not a pre-constituted group, but, instead, come "into being … through a political *experience*" (Breaugh, 2016, 5, emphasis in original).

Rather than seeking to abolish the distinction between the powerful few and the excluded many, these authors see the power of democracy as threat in providing avenues for the many to assert themselves against the power and resources of the few. The vision of democracy for which they argue is not meant to permanently abolish the distinction between poor and rich, between included and excluded. While Kalyvas (2019, 546) is clear that "a democracy that does not periodically frighten the rich, as a kind of informal check that aims to restrain their ambitions, is no democracy at all", he also argues against any attempts by the poor to liquidate the rich. Such moves, he worries, amount to a 'totalitarian' attempt to put an end to politics by imposing a homogenous social structure and eradicating antagonism. For Kalyvas (2019), this would be nothing less than "democracy gone mad" (548). For Breaugh as well, the endurance of the categories of powerful few and disempowered many stems more from a pessimism about politics than from a view of that distinction as critical to the social structure. Breaugh's argument is that the power of 'plebeian democracy' – his name for democracy as threat – comes not from its ultimate and final success, but from the interruption it creates in the ruling order. Though the plebs cannot hope to overthrow the order decisively, the interruption by itself has long-lasting positive effects. Compared with the theorists in the first box who feared the total abolition of private property and the rule of the poor, this seems like a somewhat modest or unsatisfying goal. The ability to momentarily contest or counteract the vast power and resources of the few is a far cry for the abolition of that power and the seizure of those resources.

Even if these thinkers fall short of the anxieties of the Ancients and the American Founders, they do provide us with a model of ongoing democratic practice under the framework of threat: movements that challenge the political monopoly of the few and seek to prevent the translation of economic power into political power. The tension between the need for an

ongoing form of democratic practice and the expectation the democracy would result in the abolition of inequality is a lacuna for this way of thinking about democracy that is yet to be resolved.

Bringing these texts together in the archive allows me to further the develop the precepts of democracy as threat. The poor are cast as the central figure of democracy, but the poor of this story is not defined in terms of a lack of material resources alone. Indeed, they are defined on the basis of many different lacks – power, dignity, recognition, and esteem, to name a few – but also the capacity to imagine something more than their lot in life, to demand democratic equality, and to take action on the basis of that demand. The poor must constitute themselves as a collective subject – a process that does not happen automatically. This box has also shown that a key function of democracy as threat is to oppose the monopolization of political power by those who have amassed economic wealth. It is a sectional, anti-oligarchic democracy that opposes the power of the many to the wealth of the few. The thinkers in this box provide us with a framework for thinking about democratic action with the poor as the central collective subject. Yet, they fall for short of what really threatened the thinkers of the first box: the abolition of property and the redistribution of wealth and power. The next box will engage communist writers and leaders who go further in demanding the rule of the poor.

The Dictatorship of the Poor

In *State and Revolution*, Lenin (1943) asserts that "taken separately, no kind of democracy will yield socialism. But in actual life democracy will never be taken separately" (65). This quote is indicative of a broader Marxist approach to democracy: one that sees democracy as a key steppingstone to socialism, but which is keenly aware of its limits. Though democracy is insufficient to achieve socialism by itself, understanding why it "will never be taken separately" and what additional factors are needed will sharpen the precepts of democracy as threat. This

box of the archive brings together Marxist thinkers from three centuries – Marx and Engels, Lenin, Lukács, and Jodi Dean – whose work and political struggle vindicates the fears of the thinkers in the first box. Not content with a mere interruption of the ruling order, these thinkers saw the final abolition of private property and class distinction as their goal. Even though democracy is neither the goal nor end of their political project, their inclusion highlights the distinctive way of thinking about democracy as threat present in Marxist thought.

Despite the thinkers in this box expressing a certain dismissive skepticism about democracy, they also contend that its logic of equality and commitment to majoritarian rule are conducive to socialism. Thus, while Lenin (1943) argues that elections offer little more than allowing the people "to decide every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and oppress the people through parliament" (40), he still contends that liberal democracies are more conducive to the struggle for socialism than autocracies. The key to understanding why Lenin thinks bourgeois democracy is nonetheless conducive to revolution is that it proclaims a certain logic, which revolution and proletarian democracy bring to its conclusion. Lenin (1943) sums up this logic neatly by stating "democracy means equality" (82). Lukács (2009) makes the same point, arguing that the values proclaimed by the great bourgeois revolutions – equality and popular sovereignty – can only actually be brought about by proletarian revolution (47). And for Dean (2012), despite her claim that democracy already characterizes the field of struggle in the West (65), it is only "the dictatorship of the proletariat [that] puts into the practice the purpose and end of democracy, making it serve the many and not the 'money-bags'" (71). Democracy is not "taken separately", but always comes with a logic of equality that has effects beyond the franchise. The disjuncture between the equality on which democracy is predicated and the inequality that is delegitimizes the rule of the few and gives impetus to the many.

For democracy to yield socialism, two additional factors must be present: the proletariat must constitute the majority and they must be conscious of their interest as a class. These two factors help us understand Marx's (1852) erroneous prognostication about the Chartist movement, that universal suffrage's "inevitable result, here, is the political supremacy of the working class" (2). Though he did expect suffrage to lead to the rule of the proletariat in England, he did not assume that votes alone were enough to usher in working class rule. The word "here" is the key giveaway: Marx thought that there were conditions present in England that would allow the working class to rule. Indeed, he clarifies that "Universal Suffrage is the equivalent for political power for the working class … [only] where the proletariat forms the large majority of the population, [and] where, in a long though underground civil war, it has gained a clear consciousness of its position as a class" (Marx, 1852, 1). For the proletariat to achieve power, the vote alone is not enough. It must also (obviously) have a numerical majority and, crucially, must have a certain consciousness of its identity and interests. In Marxist lexicon, it must not only be a class in itself, but a class for itself. Marx's mistake is not naiveite about the power of the vote, but rather a misdiagnosis of the conditions in England.

The authors in this box put forward a distinctive way to conceptualize democratic majorities, which further clarifies why democracy alone will not lead to communist equality. Lukács argues that liberal democracy has certain bourgeois class characteristics that work to stymie working class rule. If we take the notion of majority uncritically, at face value, it is easy to see why one would think democracy would lead to redistribution: the poor and exploited are always in the majority. This is the same assumption we saw from Plato and Adams earlier. Lukács, however, encourages us to have a dialectical concept of the majority, one that understands that there are many possible majorities which can form, depending on how people are interpolated by the ruling order. From this perspective, we can see that because bourgeois

democracy interpolates people as individuals (rather than members of a class) popular majorities that do not threaten the entrenched power and wealth of the few are more likely to emerge. Bourgeois democracy thus has the result "of binding the individual members of these classes as single individuals, as mere 'citizens', to an abstract state reigning over all classes; of *disorganizing these classes as classes* and pulverising them into atoms easily manipulable by the bourgeoisie" (Lukács, 2009, 64, emphasis in original). As we saw, Madison designed American institutions with this goal precisely in mind – that of shattering the citizenry into so many fractious fragments to prevent the emergence of a majority of the poor. Lukács (2009) further points to colonial racism – much like hetero-patriarchy, white supremacy, and jingoism today – as one way that the few have "divided the oppressed [and] provoked a struggle of exploited against exploited instead of their united struggle against their common exploiters" (45).

Engaging with these thinkers in the context of the archive highlights the nuances in the way they understand the role of the proletariat and the composition of the democratic majority. In the context of early twentieth century Eastern Europe the proletariat by itself did not constitute the majority of the population. Hence, before the proletariat could seize power, it would have to "to unite all the toilers and the exploited in the struggle against the bourgeoisie" (Lenin, 1943, 22). This is not an automatic process or the result of objective demographic characteristics, but a coalition that must be actively forged by the proletariat. Lukács (2009, 24) and Lenin (1943, 22) both point to the proletariat's uniquely important place in the system of production to explain why that class is singularly capable of forging a 'revolutionary alliance of the oppressed' out of the disparate toiling masses. From our own vantage point in the post-industrial, late-capitalist West, however, the claim that the proletariat is *uniquely* capable of uniting these groups seems less plausible. This has even led Dean to embrace Rancière's way of thinking of the people as 'the part that has no part', itself indicative of the failure of the social

order to account for everyone. Thus, "'class struggle' designates this incompleteness, rupture, and contestation rather than the positivity of a conflict between empirically given and demographically conceived social groups" (Dean, 2012, 82).

If we are to bring the logic of democracy to its natural conclusion and make good on its threat, then we must replace the "dispersed individuals of liberal democracy" with "the direct and fearsome rule of the collective people" (Dean, 2012, 70). Lukács similarly argues that explosive indignation and anger at oppression is not enough to bring about social revolution. They need a sense of themselves as a group with united interests if the threat of democracy is to be made good. But this is something "the masses can only learn through action; they can only become aware of their interests through struggle" (Lukács, 2009, 34). The many realizes its unity and collective interest through action – protests, strikes, and uprisings.

The poor need an agent to bring them together. For these authors, the party is that agent. This marks a point of divergence with the thinkers in the previous box, even though both agree that this collective political subject can only emerge through action. For the Marxists, it would not be possible for a self-conscious and unified class to emerge out of the undifferentiated mass of people without the party structure. Collective actions may allow people to give voice to their exclusion and see their needs connected with others, as well as a sense of empowerment and belief that they can change things. But institutional structures, like the party, are needed to sustain these movements beyond their momentary eruptions (Dean, 2012, 233). For Lenin, therefore, the party cannot be seen as fully distinct from the people or the class, as it gives form to the latter and allows it to have a sense of its unified interest and act toward that end. Thus, the question "of 'from above' or 'from below', 'the dictatorship of leaders' or 'the dictatorship of masses' cannot but appear as childish nonsense" (Lenin, 2018, 34). The task is instead "to connect leaders-class-masses into one single indissoluble whole" (Lenin, 2018, 35).

Rather than a democracy that governs for everyone, the threatening democracy achieved in the dictatorship of the proletariat names the rule of the exploited majority in their own interest and against that of the powerful few. If bourgeois democracy was a tool of the few to oppress the many, then proletarian democracy (or, we might say, democracy as threat) represents "the suppression of the oppressors by the whole force of the majority of the people" (Lenin, 1943, 38). This democracy will represent "for the first time … democracy for the people, for the majority" (Lenin, 1943, 74). Its achievement, however, is not the abolition of class nor the end of class struggle. Class distinction will remain "for years" (Lenin, 2018, 29), after the revolution, and the party form and proletarian democracy will be needed to counteract the centrifugal forces working to disband the popular majority. Yet, as a tool for the maintenance of proletarian power the truly democratic state will wither away as class is eventually abolished. Hence, "the more complete the democracy, the nearer the moment when it begins to be unnecessary" (Lenin, 1943, 84). At a certain level, this is in line with Kalyvas and Tambakaki, who see democracy as the structure through which class struggle plays out. For all of them, democracy would not be necessary in the absence of this kind of social antagonism. For Kalyvas (2019, 548), the abolition of this antagonism is at once utopian and tyrannical. Yet, for the thinkers in this box it is the horizon to which we strive, something which is not "a state of 'being'" but "a process of 'becoming'" (Lukács, 2009, 70).

Placing these thinkers in the broader context of the archive further develops the precepts of democracy as threat. It gives us a distinctive way to think about the majority within a democracy – as the subject wielding democratic power for its sectional interest, but also as something that is itself an object of contestation and struggle. For the poor to form a threatening democratic majority an agent must unite different sections of the exploited masses beyond the

proletariat alone. For the thinkers in this box, the communist party is the only actor up to the task.

The work done in this box has also intensified our sense of the lacunae that result from this way of thinking about democracy. Whereas the thinkers in the previous box seemed to have a certain fatalism about the possibility for prolonged rule by the poor, the ones in this box see it as our political horizon. Indeed, the communist dictatorship of proletariat seems to come closer to the democratic rule of the poor that threatened Plato and John Adams than Breaugh's momentary plebeian upsurges or Kalyvas' contention that democracy is meant to be a corrective to prevent economic dominance from translating into political domination. This represents a major critique of radical democracy. Nonetheless, the radical democrats have a much sharper notion of democratic practice than the communists in this box. For the latter, democracy will eventually wither away along with the state, and is not meant as a system of governance in communist society. For the communist thinkers assembled here, what democracy looks like the day after the revolution remains an unanswered question.

The texts in this box and the preceding one have both stressed that the poor brings itself into being as a collective subject through action. Despite this, the practical manner in which this occurs remains undertheorized thus far. We know that this collective subject is forged through action in the streets, but the question of what gets people out in the streets in the first place demands further exploration. The next box brings together theorists of democratic conflict, social movements, welfare programs, and crowds to answer that question.

Shifting Identities, Crowds, and Institutions

C.B. MacPherson argued that a transformation in people's conceptions of themselves was needed before a threatening democratic movement could emerge. Indeed, if we look at examples of some of the most threatening social movements in American history – from the 19th

century Populists (Goodwyn, 1978, 70), to the mine workers' movement in Appalachia (Gaventa, 1980, 160), and to the African American Civil Right Movement (Piven and Cloward, 1979, 203) – we'd see that each of these movements required a shift in how the central actors understood themselves before they were willing to fight for equality. Though MacPherson draws our attention to the need for this kind of transformation, he does not go into specifics about how such a transformation can take place. This box of the archive brings together theorists of democratic conflict who analyze the process of subject formation in a dynamic way. These theorists rarely cite one another and explore this process in different domains. Nonetheless, they share an understanding of identity and interest formation as an ongoing process that is central to how we think about democracy as threat. By looking at political cleavages (Walker, 1966; Schattschneider, 1975), electoral institutions (McCormick, 2011), welfare programs (Soss, 2004; Piven and Cloward, 1979), and crowds (Piven and Cloward, 1979; Dean, 2016) we're able to better understand how and when the poor are able to constitute themselves as a collective subject.

In their respective work on democratic theory in the mid-twentieth century, E. E. Schattschneider and Jack Walker show that the struggle over which social conflict is most salient is critical to understanding when democracy is threatening and when the threat has been contained. In his book *The Semisoveriegn People*, Schattschneider argues that politics is fundamentally about conflict and about expanding the scope of conflicts to include more people – for example, transforming a conflict between an individual worker and the boss into a conflict between the boss and every worker. But because not all conflicts can be salient, politics is also a battle over which conflicts cleave the central antagonism that determines which group identities become dominant and determinative of broader political alignment (Schattschneider, 1975, 64-65).

Thus, part of the struggle for democracy is the struggle for a threatening central cleavage. For democracy to be threatening, the salient antagonism must be one that allows the majority to identify on the basis of their exclusion from power and their capacity for action. Less threating identity alignments – the kinds Madison sought to build into American institutions – tend to discourage political participation and instead generate apathy. Walker warns us, however, not to mistake apathy for satisfaction with how things are. Instead, we ought to be aware that apathy could just as easily signal a disturbing lack of faith in the capacity of democratic institutions to be an agent for material change (Walker, 1966, 289). For Walker (1966), "one of the chief characteristics of our political system has been its success in suppressing and controlling internal conflict" (290). For democracy to manifest as threat, a political conflict over the issue of equality must achieve salience in such a way that the excluded majority are able to constitute themselves as a collective political subject.[2]

Theorists in the previous boxes have argued that identification on the basis of exclusion does not happen automatically, and this is supported by empirical research. Kuziemko, Norton, et al (2015) and Condon and Wichowsky (2020) both found that support for redistribution increased after exposing individuals to their respective treatments, which forced the respondents to think more consciously about their own economic position relative to others. Crucially, however, these papers also found that awareness of one's economic position is not enough to motivate people to actually take action for redistribution. Indeed, exposure to the treatments tended to make respondents less likely to believe in their own capacity for change

[2] This is what makes this theory different from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's theory of hegemony. While they also draw our attention to the fluidity of the central, ordering social antagonism, unlike a theory of democracy as threat they don't locate democratic action within a particular type of subject. What makes democracy as threat distinctive and what the archive has drawn our attention toward is the notion of the poor as the indispensable democratic actor.

(Condon and Wichowsky, 2020) or made them less trustful of the government to actually implement redistributive policies (Kuziemko, Norton, et al 2015). One's income falling below a certain level is not enough to make someone identify primarily on that basis – even if that person is made painfully aware of their position in the socio-economic hierarchy. Something more is needed for people to feel connected on the basis of exclusion and – crucially – confident enough to do something about it.

Theorists of crowds and social movements like Piven and Cloward, as well as Dean, provide one avenue for understanding how to overcome this challenge. In their respective work, they argue that the social order and ruling ideology structurally inhibits the formation of group consciousness among the poor – something asserted in the first three boxes and borne out by empirical research. The crowd plays a pivotal part in allowing people to break out of this trap. Indeed, "the emergence of a protest movement entails a transformation both of consciousness and of behaviour" (Piven and Cloward, 1979, 3-4). In such moments of crisis, when social contradictions become acute and unignorable, the system loses legitimacy, the impossible becomes possible, and people take action. It happens when "a problem faced by one becomes a condition faced by many" (Dean, 2016, 89) and represents "the *threat* of the collective power of the masses, the force of the many against those who would exploit, control, and disperse them" (Dean, 2016, 7, emphasis added). The crowd allows us to see politics as inhering and manifesting in collective action, not individual decisions. Echoing Piven and Cloward writing half a century earlier, Dean asserts that "the very fact that crowds amass, that the people can be seen as having left their proper place, disrupts one social order and creates the possibility of another" (Dean, 2016, 116). Nonetheless, something must motivate people to come out into the streets in the first place. Institutions have a pivotal role to play in that initial step.

In his book *Machiavellian Democracy*, John McCormick (2011) provides us with a possible framework for how democratic institution could be structured to create the conditions for democracy as threat. He uses Machiavelli to envision a set of institutions that would forge the collective consciousness on the basis of class, thereby empowering the poor and to keeping elites in check. The institutions for which McCormick (and his Machiavelli) advocate are meant not only to give the people their own avenues "to patrol more exalted citizens" but also to heighten class consciousness and class conflict, both of which they see as healthy for a polity (McCormick, 2011, 16). A key function of these institutions is to enable the poor to see themselves as a distinct constituency, and to use the threat of their collective power to keep elites in line. Instead of Madisonian institutions designed to foreclose the possibility of democracy manifesting as threat, McCormick proposes institutions that work to encourage that very eventuality. While McCormick's Machiavellian institutions would certainly help polarize social antagonism around issues of inequality and redistribution, I worry he is putting the cart before the horse. To actually create these kinds of institutions would require large scale social movements already organized around the same issues.

Soss' and Piven and Cloward's respective work on welfare programs show us how government institutions already in place can engender or stymie the emergence of threatening social cleavages. These studies are particularly pertinent because they focus on programs that are themselves redistributive, and thus show how redistribution – the threat at the centre of this chapter – can be both means and ends for democratic movements.

Looking at welfare programs under the neoliberal turn, Soss' (2004) work shows us that these programs have a disorganizing and isolating effect on welfare recipients – a neo-Madisonian approach, we might say. The case workers and bureaucracy with which recipients must deal in order to receive their benefits makes them feel insecure, powerless, distrustful of

government, and unable to assert themselves. Similarly, because welfare recipients are depicted in the media as lazy and undeserving, actual beneficiaries feel a need to distance themselves from the broader group to avoid feelings of shame. This estranges welfare recipients from one another, preventing group consciousness from emerging. Thus, we can see how "beliefs that may protect self-esteem ["I'm not lazy, like most welfare recipients"] in everyday life function to obscure group-based political interests" (Soss, 2004, 318). Verba and Schlozman (1977) provide further insight here with their findings that "the experience of unemployment is a lonely and humiliating one" that seems "to be universally accompanied by withdrawal from community life" (294). Thus, unemployment is itself alienating and isolating, and makes individuals less likely to identify themselves as part of a group.

Piven and Cloward show the opposite – how welfare programs, even in their failures, can be generative of threatening social movements. In the 1960s, Piven and Cloward helped lead a welfare rights movement that aimed to use the underfunded welfare system to provoke a crisis that they thought would lead to a broader uprising capable of extracting more thoroughgoing concessions. Their strategy involved getting millions of additional eligible people onto the welfare rolls (Piven and Cloward, 1979, 276). This would have the dual results of getting people the help they deserve and overloading the rolls and triggering a broader social crisis. This crisis, they argue, could then be used to mobilize the poor in vast numbers and push for more fundamental social change: the establishment of a national minimum income standard.

The provocation of a crisis by a social movement to generate coercive pressure on the government to enact redistributive change makes this movement emblematic of democracy as threat. Piven and Cloward saw this strategy as in line with the tactics of the Civil Rights Movement, which in their account, succeeded by forcing "a major political crisis" that could not be ignored (Piven and Cloward, 1979, 283). Indeed, Mark Stears argues that leaders of the

movement sought to create "a constant state of unease amongst those who maintained and profited from the racial injustice, a sense that the social order could explode any minute" (Stears, 2010, 157) in order to transform American society and the distribution of power. It is not their demands for democracy, but the way their tactics applied pressure to the democratic system to achieve those demands that make the Civil Rights Movement emblematic of democracy as threat.

The welfare rights movement experiment highlights the tension at play in the relationship between institutions and social movements – one of the lacunae of democracy as threat. On the one hand, we see that institutions play a key role in generating the collective consciousness that forms the base of social movements: in this case, welfare recipients are cast as a group through their common frustrations with the welfare system itself. A sense of oppression may be spontaneous, but Dean argues it takes the party to forge collective consciousness. For Walker (1966) too, "dissatisfaction alone is not a sufficient cause [for collective action]; it must be coupled with the necessary resources and the existence of potential leadership which can motivate a group to take action" (293). Institutions like a party or trade union are needed to give direction and concrete purpose to the righteous fury of the crowd. On the other hand, however, Piven and Cloward (1979) argue that the over-institutionalization of the welfare rights movement was responsible for its ultimate failure: "once grievances came to be dealt with through negotiations between welfare rights leaders and welfare officials, group action no longer seemed necessary, and group consciousness disintegrated. The sense of participation in something larger than oneself, the sense of belonging to a movement, was gradually lost" (330). They caution against strategies that aim to convert mass movements into permanent organizations and "draw people away from the streets and into the meeting rooms" (Piven and Cloward, 1979, XXII).

This question runs right to the heart of the issues raised by theorizing democracy as threat and was foreshadowed in the tension between the insurgent democracy of Breaugh and Wolin and the institutionalized party of the communist thinkers. At this point in the project, it isn't clear to me that either side is correct or that there is a resolution to this question. On the one hand, democracy seems unlikely to manifest as threat in the absence of institutions designed to make it easier for the poor and excluded to identify themselves as a collective actor with unified interests. On the other hand, experience has shown that there is a real tendency for such institutions (be they parties or trade unions) to ossify over time, become conservative, and lose the insurgent quality that made them able to bring their threat to bear on those in power. Indeed, the case may be that both aspects are needed at once and that the two compliment, rather than contradict, each other. Miguel Abensour (2011) makes the point that there isn't a contradiction between institution and insurrection if "the constitutional act, the fundamental norm, recognizes the people's right to insurrection" (XXV). In this way, insurgent democracy can support and be supported by institutions the encourage and legitimize popular democratic movements, allowing both to sustain themselves over time. Nonetheless, even this formulation may not be sufficient for those like Breaugh or Wolin who see democracy as something fugitive or interruptive. More broadly, this debate points to the richness of the undercurrent in democratic theory that has been the focus of this paper. The analysis in this box has shown that understanding democracy as threat means thinking about the relationship between social movements, government institutions, and redistribution in a holistic way, as part of the same process

Conclusions

Since the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump in 2016, liberal media outlets and academics have been raising the alarm that democracy is 'under threat' (see, e.g.

Applebaum, 2020). Populist movements are painted as a threat challenging entrenched democratic institutions and cultures. There *is* something threatening about the people in the streets – but this is the threat of democracy, not a threat to it. In a moment when inequality is rising to startling levels and people across the West are losing faith in their democratic institutions, there is an urgent need for a vision of democracy that is truly transformative. To the extent that liberal moves to 'defend democracy' have fallen flat, it might be because they appeal to an empty vision of democracy, one that isn't centred on the poor and the question of redistribution. This idea of transformative democracy surging forth in the name of equality is not something new, but something that goes back to the very foundations of democratic theory. By assembling an archive of democracy as threat, this paper has sought to bring to light an important way of thinking about democracy that has been obscured as our institutions have ossified into stilted proceduralism.

Each box of the archive deepens our understanding of this way of thinking, revealing a set of precepts for democracy as threat. We see that these texts focus on the poor as the essential subject of democracy. Yet, the poor in this story are not a demographic group defined by income. They are a political subject, one that only comes into being through an act of self-constitution when the ruling order is made questionable. This collective subject is united by deprivation, but also by a belief in their capacity for action and their ability to effect meaningful change. Thus, we see that conceptualizing democracy as threat means having a dynamic way of thinking about identity and interest. Democracy as threat also leans into its majoritarian nature. Rather than put up barriers in the way of nascent majorities or reduce democracy to interest group competition, this way of thinking sees the sine qua non of democracy as coercive power wielded in the sectional interest of the disempowered many against that of the empowered few. The majority of democracy as threat is concrete and specific – not any majority, but the

particular majority of the poor. That concrete content results from democracy as threat's focus on the relationship between economic power and political power, thus making it an anti-oligarchic democracy.

The archive has also revealed a set of lacunae that come with this way of thinking about democracy. One is whether this type of democracy must remain outside the bounds of political institutions or can only come to fruition by way of them. The question of whether institutions like unions or parties or even government programs are necessary for democracy to be threatening or work to stymie that threat remains unresolved and is exemplary of the complex way democracy as threat approaches the relationship between institutions, redistribution, and crowds that we saw in the final box. Similarly, the end of democracy as threat remains elusive. While many thinkers in the archive argue that it should lead to a final abolition of property, others argue that it is meant primarily to equalize the political power imbalance that comes with economic wealth, and others still argue that it is merely a temporary reprieve for the ruling order. While the final abolition of property is more in line with the threat that struck fear into the hearts of Plato and James Madison, it does not serve as the basis for ongoing democratic practice. What democracy looks like the day after the revolution, once the threat has been made good, remains to be solved.

Theorizing democracy as threat is important because it challenges some of the key assumptions of democratic theory. In a rebuke to the kind of thinking exemplified by Dahl or Madison, democracy as threat demands that we think of democracy as majority rule, not interest group competition. Furthermore, it complicates the way we think about interest that is attentive to whether a majority threatens entrenched power, without accusing citizens of false consciousness when they have other priorities. Rather than condescendingly whinging about "people getting their fundamental interests wrong" (Frank, 2004, 1), democracy as threat

understands that interest is not 'fundamental', but rather a product of how we understand our identity at a given moment.

This retelling offers a vision of democracy capable of striking fear in the hearts of those who walk the halls of power. The archive allows us to bring together a diverse set of texts that are not usually in conversation with one another and which only sit together uncomfortably. Despite their at times contradictory normative commitments and theoretical perspectives, placing them beside one another gives us a different perspective on their collective insights. While it shows us what can be possible if the people take to the streets in righteous anger, it also tells us of the immense barriers that have been put in their way.

Works Cited

Abensour, Miguel. 2011. *Democracy against the State: Marx and the Machiavellian Moment*. Translated by Max Blechman and Martin Breaugh. Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity.

Adams, John. 1776. "Letter to James Sullivan." Founding.Com. May 26, 1776. https://founding.com/founders-library/american-political-figures/john-adams/letter-to-james-sullivan/.

———. 1787. "Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States." The Founders' Constitution. 1787. https://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch16s15.html.

Aristotle. 1982. *The Politics of Aristotle*. Translated by Ernest Barker. London: Oxford Univ. Pr.

Breaugh, Martin. 2013. *The Plebeian Experience: A Discontinuous History of Political; Translated by Lazer Lederhendler*. Columbia Studies in Political Thought/Political History. New York: Columbia University Press.

———. 2019. "The Plebeian Experience and the Logic of (Radical) Democracy." *Constellations* 26 (4): 581–90. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12425.

———. 2022. "A Democracy without Titles? 1871 Against the Politics of the Few." In . University of Raboud, Nijmegen, Netherlands.

Cappon, Lester J., ed. 1988. *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams*. Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Virginia by the University of North Carolina Press.

Condon, Meghan, and Amber Wichowsky. 2020. *The Economic Other: Inequality in the American Political Imagination*. Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press.

Dean, Jodi. 2012. *The Communist Horizon*. London ; New York: Verso.

———. 2016. *Crowds and Party*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso.

Frank, Thomas. 2004. *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*. 1st ed. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Gaventa, John. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Oxford: Clarendon press.

Goodwyn, Lawrence. 1978. *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kalyvas, Andreas. 2019. “Democracy and the Poor: Prolegomena to a Radical Theory of Democracy.” *Constellations* 26 (4): 538–53. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12451.

Kuziemko, Ilyaba, Michael I. Norton, Emmanuel Saez, and Stefanie Stantcheva. 2015. “How Elastic Are Preferences for Redistribution? Evidence from Randomized Survey Experiments.” *The American Economic Review* 105 (4): 1478–1508.

Lenin, Vladimir Ilyitch. 1943. *State and Revolution*. New York: International Publishers.

———. 2018. *“Left-Wing” Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. Eastford, CT: Martino Fine Books.

Lukács, Georg. 2009. *Lenin: A Study on the Unity of His Thought*. Translated by Nicholas Jacobs. London; New York: Verso.

Macpherson, Crawford Brough. 1990. *The Life and Time of Liberal Democracy*. Opus. Oxford: Oxford university press.

Madison, James. 1998. “The Federalist Papers No. 10.” Text. December 29, 1998. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed10.asp.

Marx, Karl. 1852. “Free Trade and The Chartists.” Marxists.Org. August 2, 1852. https://marxists.architexturez.net/archive/marx/works/1852/08/25.htm.

———. 1934. *The Civil War in France*. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company.

McCormick, John P. 2011. *Machiavellian Democracy*. Cambridge, [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Mill, John Stuart. 2008. *On Liberty and Other Essays*. Edited by John Gray. Oxford World’s Classics. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Obama, Barack. 2018. “Transcript: Obama’s Speech Defending Democracy.” *The New York Times*, July 17, 2018, sec. World. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/17/world/africa/obama-speech-south-africa-transcript.html.

Piven, Frances Fox, and Richard A. Cloward. 1979. *Poor People’s Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. New York: Vintage books.

Plato. 2007. *The Republic*. Translated by Desmond Lee. London: Penguin Books ltd.

Rancière, Jacques. 1999. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Translated by Julie Rose. Minneapolis, Minn.: Univ. of Minnesota Press.

———. 2014. *Hatred of Democracy*. Translated by Steve Corcoran. London New York: Verso.

Schattschneider, E. E. 1975. *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*. Hinsdale, Ill: Dryden Press.

Soss, Joe. 2004. "Making Clients and Citizens: Welfare Policy as a Source of Status, Belief, and Action." In *Deserving and Entitled: Social Constructions and Public Policy*, edited by Anne L. Schneider and Helen M. Ingram, 291–328. New York: State University of New York Press.

Stears, Marc. 2010. *Demanding Democracy: American Radicals in Search of a New Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tambakaki, Paulina. 2019. "Rethinking Radical Democracy." *Contemporary Political Theory* 18 (4): 498–518. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-018-00284-x.

Verba, Sidney, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1977. "Unemployment, Class Consciousness, and Radical Politics: What Didn't Happen in the Thirties." *The Journal of Politics* 39 (2): 291–323. https://doi.org/10.2307/2130053.

Walker, Jack L. 1966. "A Critique of the Elitist Theory of Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 60 (2): 285–95. https://doi.org/10.2307/1953356.

Weeks, Kathi. 2021. "Scaling-Up: A Marxist Feminist Archive." *Feminist Studies* 47 (3): 842–70. https://doi.org/10.1353/fem.2021.0039.

Winters, Jeffrey A. 2017. "Wealth Defense and the Complicity of Liberal Democracy." *Nomos* 58: 158–225.

Wolin, Sheldon S. 1994. "Fugitive Democracy." *Constellations* 1 (1): 11–25. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8675.1994.tb00002.x.

———. 2010. *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism*. 5. printing, and 1. paperback printing. Princeton: Princeton University Press.