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Sofia Näsström

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# Representative Democracy as Tautology

## Ankersmit and Lefort on Representation

Sofia Näsström *Stockholm University, Sweden*



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**ABSTRACT:** Representative democracy is often assessed from the standpoint of direct democracy. Recently, however, many theorists have come to argue that representation forms a democratic model in its own right. The most powerful claim in this direction is to be found within two quite different strands of thinking: the aesthetic theory of Frank Ankersmit and the savage theory of Claude Lefort. In this article, I show that while Ankersmit and Lefort converge in their critique of direct rule, they provide us with two distinct models of democracy. Aesthetic democracy, I argue, in the end falls short as a democratic recuperation of representation. It reduces representation to delegation. Savage democracy proves more fruitful in this respect. It offers a representative view of politics without committing itself to the premises associated with political delegation.

**KEY WORDS:** *action, aesthetics, Ankersmit, conflict, delegation, democracy, election, Lefort, representation, totalitarianism*

## Introduction

Is representation democratic? If there are questions that provoke disagreement among political theorists, this is certainly one of them. To advocates of direct democracy it is no coincidence that early proponents of representative government contrasted representation with democracy. When Madison asserts that the voice of representatives is ‘more consonant to the good of people than if pronounced by the people themselves’, he simply testifies to its undemocratic nature.<sup>1</sup> Representation has little to do with popular rule. It is an aristocratic idea, a device by which to forestall the kind of popular rule associated with Athenian democracy.<sup>2</sup> However, if direct rule for many years has served as the archetype of democracy one can today witness a renewed interest in the idea of representation. Many contemporary theorists contend that the critique against representative government is misdirected. The impulse to consider modern democracy through

Contact address: Sofia Näsström, Department of Political Science, Stockholm University, S-10691 Stockholm, Sweden.  
Email: sofia.nasstrom@statsvet.su.se

the eyes of Athens is in fact what constitutes the main obstacle to a democratic conception of representation. It blinds itself to the significance of modern forms of democracy. It is high time to assess representative democracy on its own terms.<sup>3</sup>

In this article, I shall examine the argument in favour of representation.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly enough, the most powerful claim in this direction is to be found within two radically different strands of thinking: the aesthetic theory of Frank Ankersmit and the savage theory of Claude Lefort.<sup>5</sup> What Ankersmit and Lefort have in common, I argue, is that they rethink the relationship between democracy and representation. The question is not whether representation is democratic or not, that is, if it matches up with the ancient ideal of a people ruling itself. Representation *is* democracy. It is the modern form of popular rule. We must, as Ankersmit writes, therefore 'distrust all efforts, in political theory and in practice, aiming to undo this doubling by seducing us with deceitful visions of unity and harmony'.<sup>6</sup> In a similar vein, Lefort cautions against the temptation to restore unity in society. It does not eradicate division, but it leads to the totalitarian image of the 'People-as-One'.<sup>7</sup>

Still, to claim that division is a necessary condition for democracy is not new. It is an argument associated with, among others, Edmund Burke and Joseph Schumpeter. So what makes the claim made by Ankersmit and Lefort into a 'democratic' recuperation of representation? As I shall argue, there are important differences between Ankersmit and Lefort in this respect. While they both admit their allegiance to Machiavelli's idea of the brokenness of political reality, they provide us with two distinct models of democracy. The problem with the aesthetic model is that while it asserts that democracy dwells in the gap between representatives and represented, it indirectly associates democracy with the actions of representatives. This makes it difficult to see what separates aesthetic representation from the model of delegation advanced by Schumpeter, other than on the ontological level. Savage democracy comes off better in this respect. It avoids both the pitfalls of contrasting modern democracy with Athens, and the equally unfortunate move of committing itself to the premises associated with political delegation.

The argument falls into four sections. In the first section, I introduce the debate on democracy and representation, with particular attention given to the distinction between representation and election. In the second section, I examine the argument in favour of representation. What is democratic about representation, and on what grounds can one make such a claim? In the third section, I undertake a closer examination of the aesthetic and savage model of democracy. The point is to show that a representative politics may take different forms, all depending on whether we adopt an aesthetic or savage viewpoint. I finally conclude with some brief reflections on the political relevance of the aesthetic and savage model of democracy.

## Democracy and Division

Sooner or later, scholars of representative government are bound to reflect upon the relationship between democracy and representation. In so doing, they usually run into a strange puzzle. On the one hand, representation requires a division of the people. It implies that people govern indirectly, through election of representatives. On the other hand, representation – in order to serve as a principle for self-government – demands some kind of identification between representatives and represented. How else could one claim that people govern themselves? To understand why representation forms such a provocative idea to many theorists, and to separate it from the problem of election, it is useful to enquire into the distinction between direct and indirect rule.

This topic is at the centre of Bernard Manin's book *The Principles of Representative Government*. According to Manin, the difference between direct and indirect democracy lies primarily in the process of selecting governors. In Athens, the democratic concern was how to achieve rotation in office, and lot was the appropriate mechanism to guarantee this alternation between governors and governed. With the modern consent tradition, however, the device of election gradually replaces that of the lot. When democracy no longer consists in holding office, but in consenting to those who do, election becomes the appropriate means of linking governors with governed. For unlike the lot, which is the voice of no one, election is the voice of the people. It guarantees that the governors govern with the consent (majority) of the governed.<sup>8</sup>

Still, to understand the problem associated with representative democracy it is not enough to focus on the means of selection. Lot and election are not only two ways of selecting governors, the one built on chance and the other on choice. They are two models of self-government. Lot is a mechanism that serves to achieve rotation in office. It makes citizens self-governing over time. Election is a more static device. For although it grants all citizens the right to consent to power, it also – by this very same move – gives rise to a standing division between governors and governed. This means that modern theorists face an additional task. They must show how election, apart from giving citizens an equal right to consent to power, also gives them equal partaking in government. In what sense does consenting to power, by election of representatives, mean that I am self-governing? Am I not simply following the decrees of *others*? The challenge is not technical, i.e. how to link the decisions of representatives with the preferences of the electorate. The problem is more fundamental. The task is to show that, while people are not ruling in person, they are somehow ruling anyway.

This division is what spurs the debate on democracy and representation. It must be distinguished from the problem of selecting governors. Representation, as Hanna Pitkin points out, is a re-presentation; a making present again. It refers to the idea that something not literally present nevertheless can be considered present in a non-literal sense.<sup>9</sup> The contention is that citizens can be both present and absent

in the rule of society. They can govern, although they are not *literally* governing. If we listen to Rousseau, this contradiction bears witness to the futility of representation as a form of self-government. For how could citizens be self-governing without actually ruling themselves? The citizens of England believe themselves to be free, he writes, but they are 'free only during the election of the members of Parliament'. Immediately afterwards they sink back into slavery. For the will of the people 'is either itself, or something else; there is nothing in between'.<sup>10</sup>

The democratic outlook of Rousseau often carries over into our days. As Nadia Urbinati argues, representative government has from the day of its inception 'been defined from the standpoint of a view of democracy as direct or immediate democracy'.<sup>11</sup> When Benjamin Barber criticizes representation for being incompatible with democratic virtues as freedom, equality, and social justice,<sup>12</sup> or when Joseph Schumpeter deems the general will the product rather than the driving force of politics,<sup>13</sup> they both take it for granted that democracy means direct rule. It is on this description that Barber rejects representation as an improper form of government, and Schumpeter dismisses modern democracy as an instrument in the hands of the ruling classes.<sup>14</sup>

Recently, however, things appear to have changed. Rather than making direct rule into the touchstone of democracy – the standard by which to assess whether governments live up to their democratic assignments – many theorists have come to regard representation as a democratic model in its own right. According to Manin, 'representative democracy is not a system in which the community governs itself, but a system in which public policies and decisions are made subject to the verdict of the people'.<sup>15</sup> Or, in the words of John Dunn: to believe that people can control representatives to the extent that they rule over themselves 'is an illusion, and probably a somewhat malign illusion: either self-deception, or an instance of being deceived by others, or very probably both'.<sup>16</sup> So while Rousseau is right in claiming that citizens are free only during the election of representatives, this is not so much a failure as a *characteristic* of modern democracy. In modern democracies, we are indeed ruled by others, 'but we select them and we replace them with our votes'.<sup>17</sup> Admitting this, we are able to modify the somewhat excessive claims made in its name.

Frank Ankersmit and Claude Lefort are probably among the most radical advocates of representation. Rather than accepting representation as a second-rate device in the absence of direct rule, they turn the question around. The division inherent in modern democracy is not an impediment to popular rule, a void to be resolved or filled in by means of unity. It is on the contrary its essential condition. By this argument, Ankersmit and Lefort change the burden of proof to the advantage of representation. Direct rule now becomes a violation of democracy, a conservative ideal caused by the failure to distinguish modern from ancient rule.

The argument is counter-intuitive. Are we now, as good democrats, to agree with these thinkers when they point to the illusionary ideal of direct rule? When

us that representation and democracy have different origins. If democracy stems from ancient Greece – it involves direct participation in the rule of the *polis* – representation is of medieval origin. It is associated with two features largely absent from life in Athens: feudal rule and the divine right of kings.<sup>18</sup> A democratic reading of representation thus seems anachronistic. On the other hand, it is precisely the intention of these authors to redefine what we take as the origin of democracy. They question the standpoint from which we judge what *is* democratic or not. This makes the argument in favour of representation more difficult to dismiss than one would at first think.

## What is Democratic about Representation?

In a series of books, Ankersmit calls attention to what he calls the ‘aesthetic’ nature of representative democracy.<sup>19</sup> What guides the aesthetic model is the idea that politics is about perspective rather than truth. It is Machiavelli who provides the first account of this model of representation.<sup>20</sup> According to Ankersmit, previous (and later) theorists of representation have a tendency to focus on the identification between representatives and represented. They base the relationship on a more fundamental order, be it on reason, God, self-preservation, or truth. One such model is the medieval version of representation, according to which the representative represents the people before the monarch.<sup>21</sup> Another model is seen in the social contract tradition, and its attempt to found politics on the universal capacity of reason.<sup>22</sup>

What these theories have in common is that they are ‘mimetic’. The relationship between the representative and the represented is supposed to take place against the backdrop of a more fundamental order, which encompasses them both. The result is that ‘there is no room for the introduction of an essentially new element in the transition from the person represented to the representative’.<sup>23</sup> Truth reigns, and politics is, to borrow Bonnie Honig’s terms, ‘displaced’.<sup>24</sup> What Machiavelli gives us is something radically different. Rather than trying to negotiate the conflict between representatives and represented through union or consensus, he makes conflict into the paramount feature of politics. ‘All laws that are made in favour of freedom’, he writes, ‘arise from their disunion.’<sup>25</sup> According to Ankersmit, this brokenness of political reality echoes in the opening words of *The Prince*:

[J]ust as men who are sketching the landscape put themselves down in the plain to study the nature of the mountains and the highlands, and so to study the low-lying land they put themselves high on the mountains, so, to comprehend fully the nature of the people, one must be a prince, and to comprehend fully the nature of princes one must be an ordinary citizen.<sup>26</sup>

The central point made by Ankersmit is that politics is perspectivist. The people have one perspective and the prince another, and there is no third standpoint by which to negotiate the conflict between them. If one wants to understand the

prince one must be an ordinary citizen, and if one wants to understand the people one must be a prince. Reason, being introspective, is therefore inappropriate as a means of coming to terms with politics. Perspectives are all there is. By this reading, Ankersmit dissociates himself from two strands of thinking on representative democracy.

Firstly, he questions the view that representation is about achieving identification between rulers and ruled.<sup>27</sup> It is a mistake to think that politicians should close the gap between themselves and their voters. 'A representative body that is *not* divided', he writes, 'is a contradiction in terms, is useless and superfluous, because it will make decisions that could just as well have been reached without it.'<sup>28</sup> Secondly, he rejects the claim that representation is an invention introduced to solve problems associated with large-scale democracies. There is more to representation than that. Like Emmanuel Sieyès, Ankersmit makes representation into a general heuristic for the understanding of political reality.<sup>29</sup> Representation is not an institution added to a pre-existing political reality. Political reality rather comes into being *through* representation. It is only by virtue of the gap between representatives and represented that we can see anything at all in politics.<sup>30</sup>

But, it is one thing to admit that modern democracy builds on a division between rulers and ruled, quite another to claim that this division is in the service of popular rule. What makes representation into a *democratic* form of government? In *The Concept of Representation*, Hanna Pitkin at one point raises the question whether there is an order of precedence in representative government. Is the alignment between representatives and represented a two-way association, or is one side of the association in some way more fundamental? Pitkin's answer is that the people must be prior to those who represent them. For, she writes, there is a great difference 'between changing the subjects to suit their ruler, and changing the ruler to suit his subjects'.<sup>31</sup> If there is no priority, the representative may demand that the people abide by *his* will. Representative government, therefore, requires that there is first a people, and only then its representatives:

As the 're' in 'representation' seems to suggest, and as I have argued in rejecting the fascist theory of representation, the represented must be somehow logically prior; the representative must be responsive to him rather than the other way around.<sup>32</sup>

Ankersmit rejects such priority between the people and their representatives.<sup>33</sup> By arguing that the people pre-exists the inauguration of representatives, one forsakes the visibility of democratic politics. To prove his case he turns to aesthetics. In modern art, it is widely acknowledged that a painting not only reproduces reality. The painting is rather what organizes reality, insofar as it makes us see the world in a certain way (rather than in another). Reality does not exist in any meaningful sense until we have made a representation of it, placed it 'before us at a distance'.<sup>34</sup> In a similar vein, and along with Machiavelli and Sieyès, Ankersmit claims that democratic politics only comes into being by way of representation itself. It requires a combination of indifference and distance. It requires

indifference, since if each citizen intervened in politics ‘even a small country would immediately be paralyzed’. In modern societies, we cannot make every decision ourselves, but need representatives to do this. It requires distance, moreover, since the decisions taken by these representatives must be visible to us. We can only control what we can see.<sup>35</sup>

This is why, to Ankersmit, the mimetic theory of representation saying that there should be identification between rulers and ruled is ‘not the realization of democracy, but an invitation to tyranny’.<sup>36</sup> It does not serve the good of the people. A body of people fully coinciding with itself is incompatible with the visibility of politics. It thwarts the opportunity of the people to reflect upon and judge the actions of their representatives. In a democratic society, popular power is neither associated with the people, nor with its representatives, but with representation itself: with the very fact that there *is* a gap between the two. The failure to see this is what makes Rousseau reject representation as a democratic form of government.<sup>37</sup> For while Rousseau is right in contesting the mimetic theory of representation – there cannot be unity between representatives and represented – he draws the wrong conclusions. The gap between rulers and ruled is not an obstacle to political equality. It is ‘the origin of all legitimate political power and the only guarantee for the possibility of an effective democratic control of the exercise of legitimate power’.<sup>38</sup>

If Ankersmit associates democracy with Machiavelli’s brokenness of political space into rulers and ruled, Claude Lefort associates modern democracy with Machiavelli’s teaching of politics as a brokenness of *time*. According to Lefort, the central point made by Machiavelli is that human discourse oversteps the boundaries between the mortal and the immortal. It creates ‘the experience of a dialogue which breaks down the barriers of time’, a dialogue ‘that cannot be broken down into a “once” and a “now”’. In such an experience, he continues, ‘immortality does not look down from on high’.<sup>39</sup>

In Lefort’s view, one cannot grasp the logic of modern democracy without examining the transition from sovereignty to popular sovereignty, what he calls the ‘democratic revolution’.<sup>40</sup> It is from within the matrix of the theological–political logic of the Ancien Régime that we must begin if we are to understand the nature of modern democracy. In monarchical regimes, power was vested in the body of the king. The king was the unifying centre of society. His body gave society a specific form, an awareness of ‘what *one* meant to the *other*’.<sup>41</sup> The king, Lefort writes in words reminding us of Ernst Kantorowicz’s study on *The King’s Two Bodies*, was:

... at once subject to the law and placed above laws, he condensed within his body, which was at once mortal and immortal, the principle that generated the order of the kingdom. His power pointed towards an unconditional, other-worldly pole, while at the same time he was, in his own person, the guarantor and representative of the unity of the kingdom. The kingdom itself was represented as a body, as a substantial unity, in such a way that the hierarchy of its members, the distinction between ranks and orders appeared to rest upon an unconditional basis.<sup>42</sup>

With the rise of popular sovereignty, however, this image of the body no longer holds sway. The people does not have the same status as the king. It is neither mortal nor immortal. The fact that the composition of the people changes every time a new person is born into society, or someone else passes away, makes the body of the people impossible to grasp in its entirety. It is a moving target. This is perhaps why appeal to 'the people' has raised suspicions among both advocates and critics of democracy.<sup>43</sup> For how is one to secure the stability and continuity of the political order, given that the source of this order – the people – is changing?<sup>44</sup> If the king is a visible presence, a natural body whose power can be transferred to a new person at the moment of his death, the people does not have such natural existence. It only exists in the minds of people. In order for there to be something like 'the Swedish people' one must, as Edmund Morgan points out, be prepared to *imagine* this unity.<sup>45</sup>

At the same time, this symbolic figure of the people is not immortal. It cannot be separate from the ones who are dressed up in its imagination. What is characteristic for popular sovereignty is that it lacks the kind of transcendental and immortal support once lent to the king. The democratic revolution is construed under conditions of secularization. It replaces the 'divine right' of the king with the legitimate force of the people. Any attempt to negotiate conflicts *among* the people by appealing to an instance *above* the people is therefore bound to be illegitimate. It calls forth powers of an other-worldly nature, powers too convincing to be true.

This combination of factors makes the people into a strange being indeed. If the body of the king was at once mortal and immortal, at once under and above the law, the people is neither mortal nor immortal. The status of the people rather reminds one of what Ernst Kantorowicz calls the time of the angels, or the *aevum*.<sup>46</sup> It occupies a place between the temporal and the eternal. According to Lefort, this ambiguous status of the people is the defining mark of modern democracy. What happens in the democratic revolution, in the move from the king to the people, is that the 'corporeality of the social' dissolves.<sup>47</sup> There is no longer a given centre in politics. In modern democracies, the locus of power 'appears as an empty place and those who exercise it as mere mortals who occupy it only temporarily'.<sup>48</sup> If the body of the king was the unitary anchor of the monarchical regime – the centre from which all power, knowledge, and law emanated – the people is bodiless.<sup>49</sup> It does not have an essence. The democratic society is a political order founded on the *absence* of foundations, and, as such, a political order constantly in search of its own foundations. In modern democracies, '[t]here is no law that can be fixed, whose articles cannot be contested, whose foundations are not susceptible of being called into question'.<sup>50</sup> This is the meaning of democracy as an empty place, or 'savage'.<sup>51</sup> The seat of power is there, but it remains open to contestation.

328 Like Ankersmit, Lefort is sceptical of the idea that the people can be prior to those who represent them.<sup>52</sup> The people is a symbolic identity. It does not exist

until it has made 'a quasi-representation of itself'.<sup>53</sup> To suggest that one can stave off political mistreatment by having recourse to a more fundamental political body is therefore misguided. 'The people' is what we dispute, not what we are. Still, the fact that modern democracy lacks a visible basis of power can also be a source of great confusion and mistrust. If there is no given basis of power, where do we turn if we are unsatisfied with the situation in our own society? Must we not, as Pitkin suggests, assume that the people is the ultimate source of power after all? How else can we hold someone responsible?

According to Lefort, it is against this background of an indeterminate power that we must understand the emergence of totalitarianism.<sup>54</sup> Totalitarianism springs from a quest for certainty. It is nourished by an attempt to *restore* the unitary power associated with the king, and 'to banish the indetermination that haunts the democratic experience'.<sup>55</sup> When this happens, the symbolic or representative character of modern democracy – the idea of power as an empty place – is undermined. Power is materialized in a body claiming to include within itself all the forces of society.

Yet, if totalitarianism springs from an attempt to restore the unitary body of power, Lefort is careful to point out that this restoration is quite different from what was once torn apart.<sup>56</sup> Totalitarianism is not analogous to the despotic regime once associated with the sovereign king. The power exercised by kings, however cruel and tyrannical, was still limited. In the theological political logic of the Ancien Régime, the king was supposed to obey a superior power. He was expected to comply with a higher and divine law. With the overthrow of the sovereign king, this restriction on power disappears. In modern secular societies, there are no limits to the will of the people. The reason for this is that there is, and should be, no higher authority than the people itself.

In the turn from sovereignty to popular sovereignty, a new form of despotism is thus born, what Lefort calls the 'People-as-One'. The term People-as-One signifies that the seeds of a totalitarian society are not primarily exposed in the brutality of its regime. They are revealed in the scope of its claims. Totalitarianism, Lefort writes, is a power from within. It arises when power 'rules as though nothing existed outside the social, as though it had no limits (these are the limits established by the idea of a law or a truth that is valid in itself)'.<sup>57</sup> If the king was both above the law and subject to law, both father and son of justice, the totalitarian regime is a 'oneness'. It is secularized and omnipotent at the same time.

Can democracy ever escape this problem? The radical indeterminacy of modern democracy – the fact that the source of its power always remains hidden and anonymous – makes democracy into an unstable regime. It yields a totalitarian quest for unity. But to Lefort, this is a risk that comes with the overthrow of absolute power, and, as such, a risk that every democratic project must learn how to live with. The central point is that this lack of a clear and institutional definition of the people also guarantees the continuity of the democratic struggle.

It signifies that in a democratic political order no one (god, the nation, the party) can put an end to the practice of questioning. Modern democracy is non-foundational, always open to yet another debate.

## Priorities of Representation

Representative democracy has a deceptive simplicity to it. Although it refers to a system of indirect rule, it turns more complicated once we enquire into the linkage between representation and democracy. If we listen to Ankersmit and Lefort, 'representative democracy' is in fact a tautology. Representation is not a principle added to the idea of popular rule, a concession made in the face of modern political conditions. It forms the essence of democracy. Without representation, no democracy.

As I shall demonstrate, however, there is a crucial difference between how aesthetic and savage democracy conceive of representation. The problem with the aesthetic model is that, while it does much to democratize representation, it falls short of its theoretical aspirations. If Pitkin seeks to safeguard democracy against tyranny by giving precedence to the people, Ankersmit makes the same move – albeit to the advantage of representatives. He indirectly confirms the power of representatives over the represented. Savage democracy offers a more promising reading. Instead of giving priority to representatives or represented, Lefort links representation to an ongoing contestation about the appropriate form of society. He opens up the path to a representative politics beyond political delegation.

Let us begin with aesthetic democracy. In *Aesthetic Politics*, Ankersmit seeks to establish the democratic status of representation. In representation, he writes, power 'lies between the elector and the person elected, or between the citizen and the state, and it really forms the heart of the democracy'.<sup>58</sup> The essence of his argument is that there is no objective knowledge in politics. Political reality is not simply there. It only comes into being 'after and due to representation'.<sup>59</sup> What makes representation superior to direct rule is the fact that since 'there is no objectively given proposal for political action on the part of the people represented . . . we need representation in order to be able to define such proposals at all'.<sup>60</sup>

Considering this, one would expect Ankersmit to encourage some kind of interaction between representatives and represented. In the absence of objective knowledge, compromise and creativity replace consensus and choice as the motivating forces of democracy.<sup>61</sup> Choosing representatives every four years, or taking decisions on behalf of the citizenry, is therefore not enough. In order for democracy to be representative – rather than 'mimetic' – it must initiate a process of creativity *between* representatives and represented.<sup>62</sup>

As it turns out, however, political creativity is a one-sided affair. It is almost exclusively associated with the actions of representatives.<sup>63</sup> The bias is evident once we take the notion of aesthetics into account. When Ankersmit turns to painting

drawing a portrait.<sup>64</sup> If most people would think of the sitter of the portrait as existing prior to the portrait itself, Ankersmit refuses such priority. Representation effects an unbridgeable gap between what is present and absent.<sup>65</sup> It means that the sitter is both present (in the portrait) and absent (from the portrait). The same proposition holds true in politics. Just as art requires a certain distance – the visual rendering only comes to the fore in the gap between the sitter of the portrait and the portrait – democracy only makes sense ‘to the extent that a certain doubling takes place in the political entity democratically governing itself’.<sup>66</sup>

But who paints the portrait that gives rise to the aesthetic gap between sitter and portrait? Or who acts in politics? What is important to note is that the aesthetic gap between sitter and portrait presupposes the creative undertaking of an artist. Without a creative initiative, there will be no art or aesthetics to begin with. To Ankersmit, this initiative is reserved for the representative. The representative, he tells us, is ‘the political “artist” par excellence’.<sup>67</sup> The politician possesses the ‘creative genius’ of the painter. He has ‘the essentially aesthetic talent of being able to represent political reality in new and original ways’.<sup>68</sup> This priority of the representative runs counter to Ankersmit’s own idea of aesthetic democracy. If democracy is to be representative in the sense given by Ankersmit, creativity must take place in the interaction between the people and their representatives. It cannot be sourced in the one or the other.

In an attempt to circumvent the problem, Ankersmit introduces a distinction between possessing and using power. He argues that while the politician can make *use* of power, it is ‘in possession’ of neither the representatives nor the represented.<sup>69</sup> The power exercised by the politician is simply borrowed. Still, the rationale behind the distinction is not clear. Granted that no one possesses power, who grants its usage to the politician? Why associate the usage of power with the politician, rather than with the people?<sup>70</sup> The problem is that if no one possesses power, delegating power to the representative (or the represented) is not a viable option. But the problem runs still deeper. Not only is the priority of the representative at odds with aesthetic democracy. Precisely because Ankersmit associates democracy with an aesthetic gap between representatives and their constituencies, but fails to *keep* it there, the aesthetic model takes on an elitist character that reminds much of Schumpeter. It is difficult to see what distinguishes aesthetic representation from his model of delegation. In the end, the compromise is the same. Representatives act, and people are their passive spectators. They watch and judge.

Let me elucidate the problem by briefly examining an area where Ankersmit and Schumpeter agree: on the idea of politics as a conflict between incommensurable forces. Like Ankersmit, Schumpeter emphasizes the indeterminacy of politics. In modern societies, there is no ‘common good’ that all citizens can agree on. Citizens have different and incommensurable political interests. Even on the individual level, there is a shortage of rational unity. For as soon as the citizen turns to politics, as opposed to matters related to his own profession, he submits to ‘extra-rational or irrational prejudice and impulse’.<sup>71</sup> This is why we need

independent and professional politicians to take decisions in our place. In the long run, government *for* the people is more satisfactory to the people than government carried out by the people itself.<sup>72</sup>

The point is, however, that if Schumpeter sees indeterminacy as a reason for *rejecting* democracy, Ankersmit holds the opposite view. While he agrees to the incommensurability of politics, he thinks it a mistake to hold this against democracy. Replacing democracy with political leadership will not do. The absence of a common good is not a problem, but a characteristic of democracy. It testifies to its aesthetic nature. This is a different claim; more assuming in that it purports to be democratic. Nevertheless, the aesthetic model remains essentially the same as the one proposed by Schumpeter. In both cases, indeterminacy serves to justify political delegation. It speaks for the independence of representatives. In the face of political incommensurability, Ankersmit writes, aesthetic democracy is more important than ever. For it is 'thanks to representation that the politician may succeed in rising above the chaos of these incommensurabilities'.<sup>73</sup>

At the centre of the aesthetic model is the Machiavellian insight that the desires of the people and their representatives balance each other out. The representatives want to dominate, and the people want not to be dominated, which means that 'when those who are popular are posted as the guard of freedom, it is reasonable that they have more care for it, and since they are not able to seize it, they do not permit others to seize it'.<sup>74</sup> The contention is that power resides neither with the people nor with their representatives, but in the space between them. It forms a 'consistent immanence' of democracy itself.<sup>75</sup>

Claude Lefort explicitly rejects this view. Savage democracy does not imply that participants in society 'deny one another the right to take power'.<sup>76</sup> To claim that power is an empty place is not equivalent to saying that power belongs to none of *us*. This, Lefort argues, 'still indicates the presence of a group which has an image of itself, of its space and of its bounds'.<sup>77</sup> Power cannot be modelled on the figure of community. It does not take place between two pre-existent groups, like electors and elected. The empty place rather refers to the division that institutes this common space. It 'marks a division between the *inside* and the *outside* of the social'.<sup>78</sup>

The difference between aesthetic and savage democracy has to do with the nature of the representative gap, whether it is spatial (aesthetic) or temporal. In savage democracy, the logic of representation originates in the transition from the king to the people. What happens in the dissolution of the body of the king is that the ultimate markers of certainty disappear. The revolution against the king makes the identity of the people subject to an ongoing contestation. We do not first have the people fighting the king, and then its representation. Since there is no ultimate pole (other-worldly or worldly) to fall back upon, the people is from the beginning bound up with 'the impossibility of establishing its essence'.<sup>79</sup> It does not have a substance. This lack of a stable and secure foundation is the defining mark of savage democracy. It prevents the democratic project from

Is the argument convincing? In a short passage of *Aesthetic Politics*, Ankersmit compares his own version of democracy with the one worked out by Lefort.<sup>80</sup> He argues that, unlike Lefort, who seeks to 'transcend' the political machinery, his own version forms the 'heart' of democracy. It takes place between, and not beyond, electors and elected. Ankersmit is right in claiming that Lefort locates power beyond the division between electors and elected. He is wrong in his conclusions, however. The attempt to ascribe theologically based aspirations to the theory of savage democracy arises out of a narrow reading of representation. The constitution of society into an inside and outside does not transcend democracy, if by this we mean that it operates beyond the constraints of representative democracy. If Ankersmit locates the heart of democracy in the space between electors and elected, Lefort locates the heart of democracy in the constitution of the electoral system itself. In savage democracy, universal suffrage bears witness to the democratic nature of society. Not because it gives rise to a gap between electors and elected, but because it makes the body of the people dissolve into an empty place:

Nothing . . . makes the paradox of democracy more palpable than the institution of universal suffrage. It is at the very moment when popular sovereignty is assumed to manifest itself, when the people is assumed to actualize itself by expressing its will, that social interdependence breaks down and that the citizen is abstracted from all the networks in which his social life develops and becomes a mere statistic. Number replaces substance.<sup>81</sup>

Lefort is not here trying to pinpoint a weakness of modern democracy. He is not claiming that citizens can be reduced to mere 'numbers'. What he is saying is that universal suffrage testifies to the symbolic nature of democracy. The institution that is supposed to consolidate the people into a single body, to make them speak with one voice, in fact makes the body of the people disintegrate. It indicates that no one in society can be consubstantial with power. According to Lefort, it is not a coincidence that universal suffrage for a long time was resisted not only by conservatives and liberals, but also by socialists. The struggle against universal suffrage was not due to class conflict alone. It was 'provoked by the idea of a society which had now to accept that which cannot be represented'.<sup>82</sup>

Despite claims to the contrary, this means that the *institutionalization* of conflict is an essential aspect of savage democracy. The apparatus of election prevents individuals and groups from incorporating power within themselves. It makes the exercise of power into an empty place, 'subject to the procedures of periodic redistributions'.<sup>83</sup> But, while savage democracy requires institutionalization, it would be a mistake to confine savage democracy to election. It is here, I think, that we find the main difference between aesthetic and savage democracy. When Ankersmit locates representation in the aesthetic space between electors and elected, he ties democracy closely to the electoral system. He does not admit of change, save for variations pertaining to the relative balance of power between electors and elected. The basic democratic scene is already in place.

To Lefort, however, this scene is itself the subject of representation. By placing representation in the constitution of society, savage democracy triggers a process of circularity between society and its political institutions. Representation is not a synonym for election. A representative politics may in fact take different forms, deliberative or participatory. All that is required is that there is an institutionalization of conflict, and that the institution in question prevents individuals and groups from incorporating power for their own ends.<sup>84</sup> From a savage point of view, the relationship between electors and elected is therefore secondary to the institution of election. Election is democratic, not because it makes the exercise of power visible to the people, but because the lack of an identifiable source of power yields a societal process of questioning. It keeps the political contestation going.

The difference between aesthetic and savage democracy – between representation as a device of visibility and action – is evident in their respective approaches towards history. For while both Ankersmit and Lefort conceive of democracy as a society grounded in history, this argument takes on different meanings. Historical writing is an important aspect of Ankersmit's thinking on representation. It informs his view on politics. Like democracy, history is a past that we cannot approach unmediated, as a brute fact. It only comes into being through representation. It is precisely the role of the historian to compensate 'for the absence of the past itself'.<sup>85</sup> History is more than that, however. Like Burke, Ankersmit makes history into the metalanguage of democracy and politics.<sup>86</sup> Democracy does not equal history in that both take place through an aesthetic act of representation. Rather, history is the means through which we understand democracy itself. If Rousseau claims that history 'conceals' human nature, Ankersmit notes that Burke is right in that history 'reveals' human nature.<sup>87</sup> The point he makes is that if we want to reflect upon democracy, we should turn to history rather than reason. This insight is itself the teaching of history. For if we were to ask about 'the conditions of the possibility of history . . . the only reasonable answer to it will be a historical answer all over again'.<sup>88</sup> Historical writing permits us to 'make an objective decision about political values and ideals'.<sup>89</sup>

This view stands in sharp contrast to savage democracy. Democracy, in Lefort's understanding, is 'a society without history'.<sup>90</sup> By this argument, Lefort does not seek to reinforce the ahistorical view of Rousseau. Savage democracy is not comparable with the anarchical state of nature associated with the social contract tradition. The term 'savage' has, as Miguel Abensour points out, more in common with Emmanuel Levinas's understanding of an-archy as the break up of unity in the understanding of politics.<sup>91</sup> The contention is that modern democracy inaugurates a bodiless power right from the start. It cannot be synchronized in the present. The moment the people consolidates itself into a unitary will it paradoxically dissolves into an empty place. With this in mind, I suggest that we reformulate the savage notion of the empty place as an 'empty time'. If aesthetic democracy takes place in history, savage democracy is better understood as a break up of history. The democratic revolution does not pass through the experi-

ence of the people. The democratic revolution *is* the people. It only exists in the moment of its enactment.

How then does one think of democracy in terms of action? This is the point where savage democracy reveals its greatest strength, but also its greatest weakness. If Ankersmit can turn to history to answer this question, this option is not open to Lefort. Savage democracy refers to a society without history. This uncertainty, I take Lefort to mean, is the price we have to pay for living in a democratic society. There is no higher law or historical viewpoint to fall back upon. It all hinges on the actions of people.

## Concluding Remarks

Let me conclude with some brief remarks on the political significance of aesthetic and savage democracy. It is commonly acknowledged that many western countries today are experiencing a crisis of representative democracy. Lower voting rates combined with new forms of political participation have not only raised the question whether representation is the optimal form of political organization. They have also given rise to political tensions. We often hear of an increasing estrangement between politicians and their constituencies. Can the aesthetic and savage model assist in the understanding of this problem?

What is intriguing about aesthetic and savage democracy is that they rethink the status of representation. By equating democracy with representation, and representation with division, Ankersmit and Lefort challenge two powerful positions on representative democracy. Not only do they object to the view that direct democracy is superior to representative democracy. They also question those who, from the same democratic outlook, equate democracy with common identification between representatives and represented. The point they make is that representation is a device of separation, the means by which a democratic society reproduces and transforms itself. This is why a representative politics that seeks to close the gap between representatives and their constituencies is misguided. What one achieves in the move is not democracy, but bureaucracy.<sup>92</sup>

In light of these considerations, aesthetic and savage democracy may be just the right models to theorize the present crisis. They reveal that there are limits to the way we *conceive* of representation. For by applying the traditional idea of representation on the crisis – reaching the conclusion that estrangement is impossible to prevent under present circumstances – we are led to doubt the democratic status of representation itself. We may find it difficult to see the democratic potential in a situation devoid of common identification. Like Rousseau facing the idea of national representation, we are likely to fall prey to resignation – and all for the wrong reasons. The central teaching made by Ankersmit and Lefort is that the crisis we experience is not so much a crisis for representative democracy as a crisis for a specific version of this idea: one that links representation with unity.

At the same time, it is important to stress the difference between Ankersmit and

Lefort. The present crisis can be interpreted quite differently, depending on whether we adopt an aesthetic or savage viewpoint. If we listen to Ankersmit, the problem has to do with the relative balance of power between electors and elected. Representative democracy refers to a system in which citizens hold representatives accountable through general and regular elections. Today, however, we have reached a situation where elected politicians have to account for their own accountability. There is a general mistrust of politicians in society, and, in response, politicians try to close the gap between themselves and their voters. They seek to mirror the will of the people.

To Ankersmit, this closure is the main source of the present crisis.<sup>93</sup> When citizens complain about politicians being elitist, or when representatives seek common points of reference with their voters, they remain tied to a 'mimetic' way of thinking. They fail to recognize that the gap between them is productive. It enhances visibility in politics. What is needed today is not more political involvement by the citizens – it only blurs the distinction between representatives and represented – but courageous and autonomous action on the part of representatives:

There has been too much *rapprochement* between state and citizen in the recent past rather than too little. Precisely because politicians feel tempted to nestle as closely as possible to voters they lost the appetite for independent action and became the mere executors of the changing, chaotic, and ill-defined political intuitions of citizens.<sup>94</sup>

Lefort's concern lies elsewhere. In savage democracy, representation has less to do with the balance of power between electors and elected, and more to do with the significance of the electoral system itself. The institution of universal suffrage testifies that modern society is 'sustained by the dissolution of the markers of certainty'.<sup>95</sup> It is constantly in search of its own legitimacy. This means that if the electoral system suffers a crisis, one cannot restrict the problem to the internal balance between electors and elected. One must look to society for an answer, since it is here that the institution of universal suffrage acquires its meaning.

Society is difficult to pin down, however. On the one hand, the present crisis could indicate that modern democracy is undergoing change. Unlike Ankersmit, Lefort does not reduce representation to a relationship between electors and elected. A representative politics can take different forms. New social movements, in combination with new forms of communication, could therefore indicate that a new democratic revolution is under way. On the other hand, election does have the advantage of carrying a process of depersonalization within itself. It replaces substance with numbers, and thereby triggers a process of questioning. No one has the last word. Considering this, the problem facing representative democracy could be a source of concern. For if, as Lefort writes, it is characteristic for democracy that 'number replaces substance', the opposite would also have to be true.<sup>96</sup> Substance replaces number. Could it be that the present crisis of the electoral system, far from pointing to the disintegration of society, in fact bears witness to the consolidation of a new certainty?

## Notes

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1. James Madison, 'Federalist 10', in A. Hamilton, J. Madison and J. Jay (1961) *The Federalist Papers*, ed. C. Rossiter, p. 82. New York: Penguin.
2. For the classical defence of direct democracy, see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'On the Social Contract', in D.A. Cress (ed.) (1987) *The Basic Political Writings*, book 3, ch. 15. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co. For a contemporary argument against representation, see Benjamin Barber (1984) *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. Hanna Pitkin (2004) 'Representation and Democracy: An Uneasy Alliance', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 27(3): 335–42.
3. Theorists who pursue this line of reasoning are, among others, Bernard Manin (1997) *The Principles of Representative Government*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Frank Ankersmit (1996) *Aesthetic Politics: Political Philosophy Beyond Fact and Value*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. (2002) *Political Representation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Claude Lefort (1988) *Democracy and Political Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (1986) *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, ed. J.B. Thompson. Cambridge: Polity Press. Nadia Urbinati (2004) 'Condorcet's Democratic Theory of Representative Government', *European Journal of Political Theory* 3(1): 53–75. John Dunn, 'Situating Democratic Political Accountability', in A. Przeworski, S.C. Stokes and B. Manin (eds) (1999) *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, pp. 329–44. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. David Plotke (1997) 'Representation is Democracy', *Constellations* 4(1): 19–34. Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes and Bernard Manin (1999) *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Jane Mansbridge (2003) 'Rethinking Representation', *American Political Science Review* 97: 515–28.
4. From an empirical point of view, it may seem odd that political theorists today seek a democratic recuperation of representation. In political science, representation already *has* the status of a democratic institution. The problem lies elsewhere: how to improve accountability in the face of party decline and voter apathy. But the relationship between democracy and representation is not in any way resolved, or outdated. Putting representation on a par with democracy does not tell us how they relate, or, indeed, if they relate. As we shall see in this article, the significance of representation and its connection to democracy is subject to debate.
5. Ankersmit (1996, 2002, in n. 3) and Lefort (1988, 1986, in n. 3). For a discussion of aesthetic representation, see Kari Palonen (2004) 'Parliamentarism: A Politics of Temporal and Rhetorical Distances', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften (ÖZG)* 15(4): 111–25. For a discussion of savage democracy, see Miguel Abensour (2002) "'Savage Democracy" and "Principle of Anarchy"', *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 28(6): 703–26. Oliver Marchart (2004) 'Representing Power. Public Space, the Artist, and the Body of the Leader', *ÖZG* 15(3): 95–110. Bernard Flynn (2005) *The Philosophy of Claude Lefort: Interpreting the Political*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 'Aesthetic politics' is Ankersmit's own term. The term 'savage', while occasionally used by Lefort, I borrow from Abensour. Abensour examines different meanings of the term, such as its

- relationship to human rights and democracy. In this article, I discuss the latter.
6. Ankersmit (1996, in n. 3), p. 347.
  7. Lefort (1986, in n. 3), chs 8, 9; (1988, in n. 3), chs 1, 11.
  8. The distinction between ancient and modern self-government, between participating in government and consenting to those who do, is of course not always that clear. John Stuart Mill, while concerned with representative government, recommends public service for the citizens: 'Let a person have nothing to do for his country, and he will not care for it.' John Stuart Mill, 'Representative Government', in H.B. Acton (ed.) (1972) *Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government*, p. 204. London: J.M. Dent & Sons. For a reading of Mill as a thinker who displaces the distinction between the ancients and the moderns, see Nadia Urbinati (2002) *Mill on Democracy: From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
  9. Hanna Pitkin (1967) *The Concept of Representation*, pp. 8–9. Berkeley: University of California Press. For a similar definition, see Ankersmit (2002, in n. 3), p. 109. Ernesto Laclau (1996) *Emancipation(s)*, p. 97. London and New York: Verso.
  10. Rousseau (n. 2), p. 198. Rousseau is not alone in making this argument. In his *Study on Sovereignty*, Joseph de Maistre calls attention to the same problem. He draws a different conclusion, however. Unlike Rousseau, who takes the division to confirm the pre-eminence of direct participation in the rule of society, de Maistre uses it as an intellectual weapon against popular rule:

It is said that the people are sovereign, but over whom? – over themselves, apparently. The people are thus subject. There is surely something equivocal if not erroneous here, for the people which command are not the people which obey. It is enough, then, to put the general proposition, 'The people are sovereign' to feel that it needs an exegesis. This exegesis will not be long in coming, at least not in the French system. The people, it will be said, exercise their sovereignty by means of representatives. This begins to make sense. The people are a sovereign which cannot exercise sovereignty . . . ([1965] 'The Sovereignty of the People', in *The Works of Joseph de Maistre*, ed. J. Lively. New York: Schocken Books.)
  11. Urbinati (n. 3), p. 53.
  12. Barber (n. 2), pp. 135, 145–6.
  13. Joseph Schumpeter (1976) *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, p. 263. New York: Harper Perennial.
  14. As Urbinati argues, Joseph Schumpeter, together with Gaetano Mosca and Robert Michels, 'endorsed Rousseau's general will as the norm of democracy only to conclude, predictably, that democracy was an illusory ideal used by the ruling class to conceal the invariably elitist character of parliamentary regimes'. Urbinati (n. 3), p. 55.
  15. Manin (n. 3), p. 192.
  16. Dunn (n. 3), p. 343.
  17. Przeworski et al. (n. 3), pp. 4–5.
  18. See, among others, Otto von Gierke (1990) *Community in Historical Perspective: A Translation of Selections from Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht*, ed. A. Black, tr. M. Fischer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ernst Kantorowicz (1997) *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
  19. Ankersmit (1996, 2002, in n. 3).
  20. Ankersmit (2002, in n. 3), p. 190. Others who according to Ankersmit hold this view are Edmund Burke and Emmanuel Sieyès.
  21. Ankersmit (1996, in n. 3), pp. 26, 30.
  22. Ankersmit (2002, in n. 3), ch. 6.

23. Ankersmit (1996, in n. 3), p. 30.
24. Bonnie Honig (1993) *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*. Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press.
25. Ankersmit (2002, in n. 3), p. 189. Quoted from Niccolo Machiavelli (1996), in *Discourses on Livy*, tr. H.C. Mansfield and N. Tarcov. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
26. Ankersmit (2002, in n. 3), p. 190. Quoted from Niccolo Machiavelli (1984) *The Prince*, tr. G. Bull. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
27. Identification, in Ankersmit's use of the term, pertains both to a politics of 'ideas' and 'identities', as long as representation takes place against the backdrop of a common ground. On ideas and identities in representative democracy, see Iris Marion Young (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Anne Philips (1995) *The Politics of Presence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Jane Mansbridge (1999) 'Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent "Yes"', *Journal of Politics* 61(3): 628–57.
28. Ankersmit (1996, in n. 3), p. 38.
29. Emmanuel Sieyès (2003) *Political Writings*, ed. M. Sonenscher. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co. For Ankersmit's discussion of Sieyès, see (1996, in n. 3), pp. 29, 46, 50–1.
30. Ankersmit (2002, in n. 3), p. 115.
31. Pitkin (n. 10), p. 108.
32. *Ibid.* p. 140.
33. Ankersmit (2002, in n. 3), pp. 113–14, 190. In this respect, he follows in the footsteps of Emmanuel Sieyès. Sieyès is famous for rejecting the republican view of politics as anchored in a pre-existent people. In his view, it contradicts the idea of government as a voluntary association of free and equal individuals. 'The social contract', he writes in words reminiscent of those of Hobbes and Locke, 'binds the associates to one another'. Sieyès, 'What is the Third Estate?' (n. 30), p. 12. To claim that there is first a political association, and then a contract with representatives, is therefore to mistake freedom for its opposite. The political association only comes into being by way of representation. See Michael Sonenscher's introduction to Sieyès's idea of representation in *Political Writings*.
34. Ankersmit (1996, in n. 3), p. 47.
35. *Ibid.* pp. 103–4.
36. *Ibid.* p. 104; (2002, in n. 3), ch. 6.
37. Ankersmit (1996, in n. 3), pp. 28–9.
38. *Ibid.* p. 347.
39. Lefort (1988, in n. 3), p. 273. See also Claude Lefort (2000) *Writing: The Political Test*, ed. and tr. D.A. Curtis, pp. 109–41. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press.
40. The term democratic revolution he borrows from Tocqueville. For a discussion of the 'democratic revolution', see also Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London and New York: Verso.
41. Lefort (1988, in n. 3), p. 17.
42. *Ibid.* p. 16. See also Kantorowicz (n. 19).
43. Lefort (1988, in n. 3), p. 19.
44. As Sir Robert Filmer argues, the people cannot rule themselves. For those who 'are the people this minute, are not the people the next minute'. Sir Robert Filmer quoted from Simone Chambers (2004) 'Democracy, Popular Sovereignty, and Constitutional Legitimacy', *Constellations* 11(2): 153–73, at p. 154. On the changing nature of the people, see also Edmund Morgan (1988) *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America*. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co. Hannah Arendt

- (1964) *On Revolution*, Chs 4–5. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. Bernard Yack (2001) ‘Popular Sovereignty and Nationalism’, *Political Theory* 29(4): 517–36. Jefferson and Paine both recognized the problem of change in the set-up of the American constitution. However, they reduced it to a generational question. The people who live today are not identical with those who will live in 20 years, which is why Jefferson demands a new revolution every twenty years: ‘for the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time, with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure’. Jefferson in a letter to Colonel Smith 1787, in (1944) *The Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. A. Koch and W. Peden, p. 436. New York: Random House.
45. Morgan (n. 45). On the importance of narratives and stories in the construction of peoples, see Rogers M. Smith (2003) *Stories of Peoplehood: The Politics and Morals of Political Membership*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
  46. Kantorowicz (n. 19), p. 280. ‘The angels’, Kantorowicz writes, ‘were like man, created: but man’s transitory tempus could not be theirs, since angels were eternal beings, bodiless, immortal.’ On time and continuity, *ibid.* ch. 6. For a discussion on Kantorowicz, see Lefort (1988, in n. 3), ch. 11.
  47. Lefort (1986, in n. 3), p. 303.
  48. *Ibid.*; (1988, in n. 3), p. 17.
  49. As Quentin Skinner argues, it is Thomas Hobbes who first articulates the understanding of popular sovereignty as a non-place. Leviathan, which Hobbes characteristically refers to as a ‘mortal god’, is a power separated both from rulers and ruled. It exists independently of both the people who once instituted it and those currently acting in its name. Quentin Skinner (1999) ‘The State’, in R. Goodin and P. Pettit (eds) *Contemporary Political Philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell.
  50. Lefort (1986, in n. 3), p. 303; (1988, in n. 3), p. 17.
  51. For various meanings of the term ‘savage’ in the theory of Lefort, see Abensour (n. 5), pp. 704–10.
  52. ‘If we bear in mind the monarchical model of the Ancien Regime, the meaning of the transformation can be summarized as follows: democratic society is instituted as a society without a body, as a society which undermines the representation of an organic totality.’ Lefort (1988, in n. 3), p. 18.
  53. *Ibid.* p. 12. See also Marchart (n. 5).
  54. For the discussion on totalitarianism: Lefort (1986, in n. 3), chs 8–9; (1988, in n. 3), ch. 1. See also Hannah Arendt in (2004) *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Schocken Books.
  55. Lefort (1986, in n. 3), p. 305.
  56. *Ibid.* pp. 286–91, 305–6 and (1988, in n. 3), pp. 13–14.
  57. Lefort (1988, in n. 3), p. 13. On immanentism, see Jean-Luc Nancy (1991) *The Inoperative Community*, ed. P. Connor. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press. Or as Arendt describes it: ‘In contradistinction to both tyrannical and authoritarian regimes, the proper image of totalitarian rule and organization seems to me to be the structure of the onion, in whose center, in a kind of empty space, the leader is located; whatever he does – whether he integrates the body politic as in an authoritarian hierarchy, or oppresses his subjects like a tyrant – he does it from within, and not from without or above.’ Hannah Arendt (1993) *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, p. 99. New York: Penguin Books. In a recent article, Lefort criticizes Arendt’s conception of totalitarianism for being too limited. Arendt ‘denounced the myth of the One without considering the scheme of a new symbolic order. That is the reason why she has not measured the abyss that separates two forms of society: totalitarianism and modern democracy.’ Claude Lefort (2002) ‘Thinking with and against Hannah

- Arendt', *Social Research* 69(2): 447–59, at p. 459.
58. Ankersmit (1996, in n. 3), p. 105.
  59. Ibid. p. 47. Also *ibid.* p. 39, and (2002, in n. 3), p. 196: '[R]epresentation deals with the "organization of truth rather than truth itself"'.
  60. Ankersmit (1996, in n. 3), p. 47.
  61. Ibid. pp. 58, 252; (2002, in n. 3), ch. 8.
  62. Ankersmit (1996, in n. 3), p. 50.
  63. See e.g. Ankersmit (2002, in n. 3), pp. 12, 116, 198.
  64. Ankersmit (1996, in n. 3), pp. 28–9, 43; (2002, in n. 3), p. 196.
  65. Ankersmit (2002, in n. 3), p. 109. Ankersmit (2001) *Historical Representation*, p. 11. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
  66. Ankersmit (1996, in n. 3), p. 345.
  67. Ankersmit (2002, in n. 3), p. 198.
  68. Ibid. p. 117.
  69. Ankersmit (1996, in n. 3), p. 50.
  70. In one passage, Ankersmit identifies the artist as the people. He argues that power 'originates in the decision of the people to allow the body of the people to be divided into representatives and persons represented' (1996, in n. 3), p. 50. If this were the case, we would expect to find the creative initiative in politics on the side of the people. The many references to the politician tell a different story, however.
  71. Schumpeter (n. 14), p. 262. Ankersmit is not only concerned with the irrationality of citizens. In contemporary societies, we do not only have the problem with 'the inconsistent' but also with 'the unstable and floating voter' (1996, in n. 3), p. 362.
  72. Schumpeter (n. 14), p. 256.
  73. Ankersmit (2002, in n. 3), p. 235.
  74. Ibid. p. 190.
  75. Ankersmit (1996, in n. 3), p. 105.
  76. Lefort (1988, in n. 3), p. 226.
  77. Ibid.
  78. Ibid. p. 17.
  79. Ibid. p. 18.
  80. Ankersmit (1996, in n. 3), pp. 104–5.
  81. Lefort (1988, in n. 3), pp. 18–19, 226; (1986, in n. 3), p. 303.
  82. Lefort (1988, in n. 3), p. 19.
  83. Ibid. p. 17.
  84. Ibid. pp. 226–7.
  85. Ankersmit (n. 66), p. 11. For a discussion of Ankersmit's aesthetic reading of history, see Mark Bevir and Frank Ankersmit (2000) 'Exchanging Ideas', *Rethinking History* 4(3): 351–72. Heikki Saari (2005) 'On Frank Ankersmit's Postmodernist Theory of Historical Narrativity', *Rethinking History* 9(1): 5–21. John Zammito (2005) 'Ankersmit and Historical Representation', *History and Theory* 44: 155–81.
  86. Ankersmit (2002, in n. 3), pp. 1–4; (n. 66), Introduction.
  87. Ankersmit (2002, in n. 3), p. 37.
  88. Ibid. p. 67.
  89. Ibid. p. 4.
  90. Lefort (1988, in n. 3), p. 16.
  91. Abensour (n. 5). For a discussion of the role of an-archy in politics, see also Sofia Näsström (2004) 'The An-Archical State: Logics of Legitimacy in the Social Contract Tradition', dissertation, Stockholm Series in Politics 99, Department of Political Science, Stockholm University.

92. Ankersmit (2002, in n. 3), pp. 115–18; (1996, in n. 3), p. 104; Lefort (1986, in n. 3).
93. Ankersmit (1996, in n. 3), pp. 354–72.
94. Ibid. p. 355.
95. Lefort (1988, in n. 3), p. 19.
96. Ibid.