The papers published in this issue of Social Alternatives ‘Searching for Leadership’ discuss a variety of perspectives on political leadership and the challenges of governance. On page 13 the theme editor Patrick Weller suggests that there ‘can be no universal formula for successful leadership’. Participating authors address the different skills required, given the circumstances and difficulties that leaders must deal with, in order to lead. It was a challenge to develop a design idea that could embody the international flavour and signify the range of aspects of leadership the articles in this issue address. The design was chosen to reflect the diverse vocabulary associated with leadership.

After discussing concepts and possible graphics with the co-ordinating editor, Bronwyn Steven’s, it was decided that a selection of words and concepts describing political aspects of leadership would be an ideal cover graphic. After scanning the articles for appropriate words a list of 40 that would give voice to the content was selected. In order to create a design that has impact a specific bold typeface was chosen for readability. Contrasts were created with a variety of colours. The ability in the digital realm to arrange and manipulate type aided easy emphasis of this issue’s theme heading. The title was scaled up to be larger than the supporting glossary of political terms. The layers of typography create a textural quality to the overall graphic with text and colours layered on top of one another and at the same time a clear vocabulary of words relating to politics, government and leadership emerges.

The role of Typography has had a long history in delivering political messages. As Francis (2011) explains that type is a motivator of communication which reflects the historical and the political experience of the epoch in which it was created:

There has always been a profound historical and political dimension to typography from its very inception. The Blackletter Johannes Gutenberg used for his 42-line Bible (c.1455), demonstrates that typography had a seismic historical and political impact. Gutenberg’s press later enabled the writings of Martin Luther to be disseminated, changing the religious and political contours of our world forever (Francis 2011).

Reference:
Social Alternatives is an independent, quarterly refereed journal which aims to promote public debate, commentary and dialogue about contemporary social, political, economic and environmental issues.

Social Alternatives analyses, critiques and reviews contemporary social issues and problems. The journal seeks to generate insight, knowledge and understanding of our contemporary circumstances in order to determine local, national and global implications. We are committed to the principles of social justice and to creating spaces of dialogue intended to stimulate social alternatives to current conditions. Social Alternatives values the capacity of intellectual and artistic endeavour to prompt imaginative solutions and alternatives and publishes refereed articles, review essays, commentaries and book reviews as well as short stories, poems, images and cartoons.

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Editorial decisions are made democratically by the Social Alternatives editorial collective. Each edition involves the work and cooperation of a guest editor, liaison editor (to assist guest editors), general editor, poetry editor, short story editor, book reviews editor, cover designer and desktop publisher. A liaison editor is responsible for managing the editing and publication process. After contributions are blind refereed, the editorial collective has final control over publication. Where necessary the editorial collective calls on the advisory board to assist with refereeing articles.

Contributions

Social Alternatives accepts work focused on the aims of the journal. The journal also accepts proposals for themed issues from guest editors. Proposals may emerge from workshops, networks or conferences. For specific enquiries about the submission of articles, short stories, poetry or book reviews please contact an editor with appropriate responsibilities.

Submissions of articles, commentaries, reviews and fictional works are subject to double blind peer review and should be emailed to the general article editor. Authors are encouraged to consider and reference papers previously published in Social Alternatives to promote ongoing discussion. Submissions should be double-spaced with page numbers on the bottom right. Academic articles should be approximately 3,000-5,000 words, commentaries and review essays between 800 to 1,500 words, book reviews 800 words, short stories 1,000 words and poetry up to 25 lines. Submissions must include:

- copyright release form
- title page listing contributing authors, contact details, affiliation and short bio of approximately 80 words
- abstract should be a maximum of 150 words
- three - five keywords.

Please use Australian/English spelling and follow Harvard referencing. Submit tables, graphs, pictures and diagrams on separate pages. Remove in-text references identifying authors and replace with [name removed for the review process].

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All leadership is contingent. What works in one institutional setting may not work in another. Within a single institution, what works at one time may be a disaster at another. In times of crisis the demands on national leaders will be very different from those when the principal task is the manipulation of routines, the continuing problems of daily governing. Consequently, there can be no universal formula for successful leadership. We need to determine in each case the broad circumstances in which the leaders must work, the institutional framework that they must manage, the way they gained and hold their positions and the particular events that make demands on their skills. Even then it would be a brave observer who would say with any certainty what the leader should do. They must always balance demands, pressures, ideology and ambition, nearly always within an environment of uncertain facts and unpredictable outcomes. It is easy to develop declaratory leadership axioms: be bold, have a plan, lead from the front. The issue for each case is always how, when, why and to what extent.

This edition on leadership seeks to identify some of the different skills that leaders apply and the particular problems that circumstances have created for leaders. Some situations were matters of choice, even if the events then get out of control. Some are determined for the leader by outside events. At times, new forms of leadership have been tried in an attempt to undermine the status quo. National leaders exist in large and small states but the dynamics are different in each. What are the implications of this? Further, we should not assume that only national leaders can be treated as leaders. Opposition leaders may set the tone for the conduct of politics and the directions of future governments. Leaders of international organisations have their own challenges as they seek to direct their institutions.

To understand leaders and the role of leadership, we therefore need to ask how leaders, across countries and organisations, large and small, with or without control over events, in different conditions, choose to lead and what skills they use and what may explain their position.

The first article, ‘The Modern Autocrat’ explores some of the myths that have surrounded the debates on prime ministers as leaders. One myth asserts that prime ministers have become more powerful because they have become more ambitious and seek to control everything their government does. This is not a new argument; such accusations have been thrown at prime ministers for centuries. In practice, technology allows modern leaders to do things their predecessors could not, but ambition to control was ever-present. Prime ministers were never content to sit back and let their ministers decide everything. Prime ministers have always worked with and through their ministers. To understand leadership today we need to know our history.

In the second article, ‘Transforming a Transactional Debate’ which examines the politics of Brexit, Dennis Grube looks at the way that politicians used words in that event. Words are the weapons of politicians. Grube uses ‘rhetorical discourse analysis’ to show how their speeches could appeal to logic and emotion and the ways that their statements are received. The ‘Leave’ campaign may have had the more evocative phrases and delivered them effectively. Theresa May could, in the ensuing battle for the leadership, present herself as a ‘safe pair of hands’. That image may have been tarnished with her later electoral misjudgment, but at first it worked. Words, and the rhetoric that presents them, are a key leadership skill.

In the third article, ‘Political Leadership and Political Parties in the Age of Trump’, John Kane examines that special case, President Trump. How could he win? Kane explains his rise from the deep-set political disaffection with the economic circumstances. Trump was the response to that disaffection and his disruptive style was right for the times. Kane also asks how he will be able to govern. If a president campaigns as the anti-government leader, what happens when he is in government and trying to lead? Without any experience of politics, and out of sympathy with the leadership of his own party, he governs amidst charges of chaos and crisis. He seems not to care. These are questions that his very different style of leadership raise.

Trump and Brexit raise the spectre of populism, the appeal to the electors over the top of the traditional
structures, all made easier by the emergence of new media. In the fourth article, ‘Populist Leadership’, Duncan McDonnell asks questions about the emergence of populist leaders in Europe. In what way are they ‘of the people’? Are they charismatic, as the populist image often implies? Are the parties leader-centred? Can they survive the departure of the leader around whom they have been built? The answers, he shows, are far more diverse than might have been initially expected.

Thus far, the articles have dealt with the leadership of large developed states. Electors may think they know their leaders because they see them on the media, but that portrayal is a carefully cultivated image. In the fifth article, ‘The Personalisation of Democratic Leadership in small states? Evidence from small states’, Corbett and Veenendal look at small states, particularly small island states, and ask why they have survived as democracies despite the usual arguments that claim personalised regimes become authoritarian. They identify the close contacts between leaders and constituents, the lack of ideology, the long-standing rivalries between dominant individuals and the systems of clientism and patronage, but still illustrate that democracy continues in conditions where its survival might be questioned.

Leadership is not just about being in office. How leaders of the opposition develop their policies to improve their chances of winning will shape the politics of a country. In the sixth article, ‘The Personalisation of Democratic Leadership? Evidence from small states’, Graham Maddox argues that there is a difference between constitutional opposition and a strategy that just seeks to destroy a government by any means and at any cost. He looks back in history at examples where sometimes bi-partisanship backed needed politics and where the opposition was orderly. He argues that the ‘oppose at all costs’ strategy may win government, but at a considerable cost later.

The final article shifts the focus to international organisations. Xu’s article, ‘Leaders in International Organisations’, points out that member states elect a leader of their organisations. Often they are people of distinction, former prime ministers or diplomats. The member states then insist that the organisations should be ‘member-driven’; they, not leaders, should make choices. So the leaders must learn how to nudge, influence, and persuade without asserting overt leadership. They work as diplomats, as politicians and as managers to work with all parts of the organisation in the hope that some progress is made. It is a different form of leadership, one demanded by their institutional position and the nature of the remit they have been given.

Different conditions, different institutions, different circumstances make their demands of leaders. They respond by choosing from among the array of available skills they need to try to drive, nudge, and manipulate conditions. There can be no one correct way to lead, even for people in the same job. They shape their rhetoric and their tactics for diverse objectives, some more creditable than others. They must choose and hope they get it right.

**Author**

Patrick Weller is Professor Emeritus in the School of Government and International Relations at Griffith University where he was Professor of Politics from 1984-2015. Among his publications are Malcolm Fraser Prime Minister 1989, Cabinet Government in Australia, 2007 and Kevin Rudd Twice Prime Minister 2014. His next book, The Prime Minister’s Craft will be published by Oxford University Press in 2018.

**POETRY DEDICATION**

Many of the poems in this issue pay tribute to one of Australia’s great poets, Rae Desmond Jones, who died recently in Sydney. Born in Broken Hill in 1941, Rae published nine books of poetry as well as novels and short stories. In addition to his writing Rae was also a community activist and became involved in the fight to stop the over-development of the inner-western Sydney suburb of Summer Hill. He became one of the leaders of the local campaign, being elected to Ashfield council and Mayor from 2004 to 2006. Rae was a supporter of Social Alternatives and his work has appeared in the journal over the years. The poems in this issue appeared in It Comes from All Directions: New and Selected Poems, Grand Parade Poets, 2013

“It is impossible to overestimate the importance of Rae Desmond Jones’s work in the evolution of contemporary Australiana poetry” (Les Wicks).

**Love is an Itch**

You can’t scratch (in public)
As it moves down your body
Eventually it arrives at the heart
You sashay the street
Don’t touch the ground
& roll to music that isn’t there

_Rae Desmond Jones,
Summer Hill, NSW_
‘The Modern Autocrat’: Myths and debates about the power of prime ministers

Patrick Weller

This article disaggregates some of the debates that underpin claims that prime ministers have become too powerful. Since conventions are ambiguous and there is no constitutionally valid job description, prime ministers in Westminster systems can largely determine what they want to do and how they do it. They always did; the tests are political, not constitutional. The argument that prime ministerial government has replaced cabinet government presents a false dichotomy as prime ministers work through cabinet as often as they act individually. The idea that modern prime ministers seek power in a way that their predecessors did not ignores the evidence of history; the accusations are as old as the prime ministership. Technology indeed allows them to do things their predecessors could not, but the drive to power can be found in the history of prime ministers in every country and in every age.

The prime minister left Australia in April on a boat for the United States. While he crossed that continent by train, he instructed that no cabinet decisions be finalised until the draft proposal had been sent to him for approval. He sailed the Atlantic to Britain; there he made a series of decisions on behalf of Australia in the Imperial War Cabinet, often without reference to the Australian cabinet. His ministerial colleagues either read about the decisions in the press or approved them without information. He bought a shipping line for Australia and attended the international peace conference in Versailles where he made commitments on behalf of the country. Finally, he returned home on 23 August: not the same year he had left but a year later. He was overseas as prime minister for 15 months in 1918-19 (Weller 2009: 39-43).

That was exceptional, but also instructive. Billy Hughes may have been unusual in his cavalier disregard for usual practice and for the confidence he took to the Versailles conference as a national representative. He may have stretched the discretionary powers he had given himself to the limit, but he was able to do it. Those actions were an indication of the flexibility of the prime minister’s powers and of the uncertain conventions that guided the operations of government. They provide the foundation for any discussion of the modes of prime ministerial authority, for if it was possible for him to act that way, it was possible for any prime minister at that time to do so. His extremes illustrate the powers available to prime ministers.

In this article I want to disaggregate some of the muddled debates that underpin the much-debated topic of too powerful prime ministers and examine them one by one. This will provide an alternative understanding of the more obvious assumptions that are often made.

The Institutional Framework

The institutions provide the framework within which prime ministers must work. In part the institutions are legal constructs, set out in constitutions or enshrined in legislation, that determine the structures within which governments will work. Written constitutions, such as those in Australia or Canada, may be settled in their wording, or so hard to change that it is unlikely that they can be altered. But they still provide only a limited description of how the system actually works. The Australian constitution describes a monarchical system; prime minister and cabinet are never mentioned. The sections in the constitution on executive government are scant, even though everyone knew that these were the key institutions because they had been in operation in the colonial governments for decades. So in part their powers are also grounded in conventions. Their precise powers can vary from year to year because the operation of the institutions will often be adjusted for political advantage. The prime ministers of the new Commonwealth nations thus inherited the powers of the British prime minister (although not initially the unfettered capacity to run their own foreign policy; they were still seen as extensions of the British empire). Those powers still depended for their legitimacy and continuity on the support of a still non-democratic parliament and on their formal authority from the sovereign.
Of course the initial position changed. There never has been a rigid constitution; even if the words do not change, the interpretations do, and those changes will be contested. Universal suffrage and the growth of the size of the electorate alter the relationship between government and voters; but they do not circumscribe the powers of prime ministers nor define them. The position developed as a consequence of that initial inheritance, the actions of the prime ministers themselves and often just sheer luck (Strangio et al. 2016: 3).

On a day-to-day basis those conventions and informal practices engender uncertainty about what prime ministers can do. What is a convention? Sir Kenneth Wheare (1960) argued that a convention required a degree of acceptance. But conventions hold no legal status (or they would not be conventions). They can be regarded as embedded traditions, practices that both sides of politics regard as beneficial for the smoother running of government. The longer the existence of precedents, the more embedded the practices, and the greater is the cost of choosing to ignore them. Yet if the benefits to be gained from breaking or ignoring a convention are greater than the opprobrium for doing so, any side in politics will consider it. Because conventions are not laws, they cannot be enforced in a court. Because they are not written down and officially agreed, they will remain a matter of interpretation, even convenience. Even a codification of conventions (itself almost a contradiction in terms) could never be so inclusive that it will cover all possibilities. When prime ministers or other politicians chose to ignore a convention, they will argue that it did not really exist, or that it meant something else, or their critics were self-interested (for debate, see Blick 2016).

This political flexibility is essential anyway. Just as we would be horrified if we were required to live in the same way, and in the same conditions, as our grandparents, so we should be amazed if the practices of government had NOT changed over the last century. We want our leaders to take account of technology, new ideas, better modes of governing. To look back as though the past provided better or more principled politics (itself a myth) is to forget how tough, rigid and circumscribed life could be then. Traditions and practices mutate with the times. So too must our understanding of the activities of prime ministers.

The Lack of a Job Description

What is the job of the prime minister? There is no job description against which their activities can be measured. Prime ministers have always exercised such powers as they could, when they wanted to have an influence. That lack of precision provides scope for action; prime ministers often do whatever they see as necessary to win. Their critics want their power limited (Benn 1981; Walter and Strangio 2007: 9-12). In some cases critics even suggest that prime ministers should not be permitted to take initiatives or to drive policy and that they should revert to what these critics claim were their original function: to ensure political and policy coherence among ministers (Blick and Jones 2010a: 176). In parliamentary systems, they argue, ministers should be the crucial agents for introducing new initiatives. Most of the time, of course, they are. Prime ministers will choose in which areas of activity they are involved. The rest will be left to their colleagues. The essence is how, where and why they choose to drive the government and what they then do about it.

With no definition of their role, there have been efforts to tease out informal understandings. The Canadian Privy Council Office (PCO 1977) divided the prime minister’s activities into two categories: the prime minister’s prerogatives and the prime minister’s priorities. The first category includes all those tasks that come with the position: the selection of ministers, the chairing of cabinet, settling the administrative arrangements, answering questions in parliament. These were the responsibilities of prime ministers that ensured that the government ran smoothly and as a team. They can be described as the functions that make prime ministers the ‘first among equals’, with the emphasis on the ‘equals’.

Prime ministers’ priorities were all those areas in which they chose to become involved, the areas that mattered to them. Some, such as budgetary negotiations and international summits, are effectively de rigeur; prime ministers cannot avoid participation. Others, such as the establishment of policy priorities and government strategies, may be important for their government’s success but are nonetheless choices. A few may be areas of personal interest – prime ministers say that they want to be education prime ministers or infrastructure prime ministers: Howard focused on industrial relations reform, Rudd on responding to climate change and Abbott on parental leave. The policy areas are those for which they hold great passion, the place where they want to leave a legacy. Where prime ministers intend to lead, they will be very much the ‘first among equals’.

The concern here is to understand the powers and impact of prime ministers. That is a different enterprise from one that, starting with a political theory, asks what they should do, or should be allowed to do. Critiques of prime ministers often begin with a set of normative assumptions about what prime ministers should do, within established institutional settings and given conventions.

It is possible to identify five different lines of argument that provide often normative views of what prime ministers should or should not do.
A Proper Role?

First is the proposition that there is a set of proper functions that prime ministers should fulfil if they are to do their job responsibly. Prime ministers, according to these advocates, have grabbed more power than they should have. They are part of a collective government and should run it more collectively; they should concede more independence to their ministers; they should not get involved in the detail of policy.

In part these arguments are an exercise of advocacy: they are establishing normative expectations about the prime ministers’ roles and assert that this is how governments should be run. They are espousing an essentially limited constitutional role for prime ministers. Their expectations are presented as obvious home truths: cabinet should decide; prime ministers should manage the cabinet and government systems but should not drive their own preferences; ministers shall be responsible for policy initiatives. Often these truths are expounded on the grounds that they once existed: the advocates want a nostalgic return to the ‘good old days’, when, first, cabinet government prevailed, and, secondly and crucially, when their countries were (apparently) so much better governed. Both propositions are highly contestable. Besides, they seldom ask who will tell prime ministers they cannot act in certain ways, nor do they ask what sanctions could exist to enforce a rule that seeks to constrain the most powerful person in the land!

Canadian Richard French (1979: 388) has categorised those advocates as the ‘theorists’, concerned with a proper role for leaders which, regrettably, they too often exceed. By contrast the second group were the ‘pragmatists’, who explored how prime ministers and cabinets chose to operate and how they assessed their performance. The significant point is that nowhere in any of the Westminster systems is there a set of rules prescribing how prime ministers should proceed or what they should do. Any standards of behaviour or descriptions of powers must be developed by the observer; they may provide a measuring stick to assess performance, but the criteria have no constitutional status or political standing. When I asked one prime minister what were his priorities in taking office, he responded: ‘I did what the job required’. There were perceptions, expectations, responsibilities and immediate demands, but no book of guidelines, and certainly no hard rules with sanctions to apply if they were ignored. It was always so.

Prime ministers determine what they want to do and what they can do. There will be political calculations, based on a deep understanding of what they perceive as possible in a political environment where they have struggled to the top and what the times demand. A prime minister with a new electoral mandate sees the task differently from a person who has taken over a tired and divided government. The responsibilities look different too for the same prime minister at different points of a term in office. What appears possible to an optimistic neophyte may seem very different after ten years in office.

Therefore an understanding of the institutional environment will tell only part of the story. The prerogatives are continuing because they come with the position; the priorities will vary from year to year. The same prime minister in any given system will spend time on a range of different policy areas or problems, sometimes by choice, sometimes by necessity.

As ever, Yes Prime Minister summed it up epigrammatically. The prime minister was told: ‘There are many things a prime minister can do. There are a lot of things others want him to do. But there are few things a prime minister must do’.

Declining Accountability to Parliament

Another form of comparison is temporal, both within and across systems. Whenever the role of prime ministers in parliament is raised, contrasts are made between modern prime ministers and William Gladstone who spoke often in parliament and spent far more time in the House of Commons than his modern counterparts (Grube 2013: 27-33). Of course! Speeches in parliament were the principal means, outside his legendary (often lengthy) public stump speeches, through which he could explain his views. Parliamentary proceedings were reported verbatim in newspapers. That is no longer so. Apart from question times and the odd dramatic occasion, the press are not interested in the proceedings of the Houses. By contrast Tony Blair spent little time in the Commons; he saw the action as elsewhere.

It is a misleading comparison. Prime ministers always have changed their mode of communications to the one best able to get the message across. With radio came the fireside chats. Television brought interviews or addresses to the nation. Prime ministers are always keen to speak directly to the people, without their views being ‘interpreted’ by journalists; talk back radio allowed them to respond live and without editing. Twitter accounts provide direct access to their followers, without need for any intermediaries, and in a form that allows them to be succinct, dogmatic, and brief. Critics complain that modern prime ministers do not take their parliaments seriously. The question surely is not whether Gladstone was a more responsible prime minister because he used the parliamentary forum, but what use Gladstone would have made of modern communications and how he would have
adjusted his style. Prime ministers still take parliament seriously, but use their time differently.

Centralisation

Another argument is that modern prime ministers centralise. They often do but that trend may be in part due to the technological ability to do what formerly was impossible. One example can make the point. In 1950 the Australian external affairs minister, Percy Spender, discovered that Britain was about to commit troops to a United Nations force in Korea. Determined that Australia not be seen as being dragged in by the tail, he wanted to announce Australia's commitment first. Prime Minister Robert Menzies was at sea, between Britain and New York. Left with the decision by a nervous acting prime minister Fadden, Spender released a statement announcing that Australia would respond positively to the United Nations appeal, with the condition that: 'The nature and extent of the forces will be determined after the conclusion of discussions which the prime minister will have in the United States.' Menzies was only told of the commitment when Spender contacted him on board ship on an insecure trans-ocean phone. Spender noted: ‘He was obviously put out. He said little; and in the circumstances I could not say much, but even over the distance of some 12,000 miles, I was aware of the sourness in his voice’ (cited in Weller 2009: 110-111).

Prime ministers do not appreciate their countries going to war without their being told first. Is the incident an example of prime ministerial delegation or simply technological incapacity? It could not happen now with 24-hour contact possible, not only when prime ministers are at sea but also in the air. A Menzies with modern communications would have insisted on having the final decision. What has changed is what they can do, not what they might want to do.

Cabinet and Prime Ministers As Alternatives

Other arguments have also tended to develop dogmatic normative interpretations of what are essentially pragmatic practices. One contrasts cabinet government with prime ministerial government. The former, the argument implies, is collective, the latter personal. Prime ministers decide or cabinet decides. The two are seen as incompatible. Within that argument are assumptions about what constitutes ‘proper’ cabinet government: it is usually presented as a process in which cabinet maintains a continuing collective discussion of all the key issues of the day and makes all the decisions. In practice, prime ministers have always decided which issues will be discussed with their cabinet ministers (itself selective, since the cabinet often does not include ‘all’ the ministers) and which by a smaller group such as a war cabinet. On occasions prime ministers may make a ‘captain’s choice’, a term used by Australian prime ministers to defend decisions where none of their colleagues had been consulted and where they arrogated to themselves the right to do whatever they wanted. In between the two extremes is a wide range of circumstances. They include cases where everyone was consulted but in the knowledge that their leader’s decision was already public and what was required was support, even acquiescence, rather than robust debate. On other occasions opinions may even be sought without any meeting being held at all, but the outcome is still regarded within the system as a collective decision. The debate on what constitutes a cabinet meeting and a cabinet decision is lively.

For prime ministers, cabinet fulfils two principal requirements. They want to ensure that there is a degree of coherence and consistency in government policies (the policy incentive) and they want to ensure they have the political support necessary to push through their ideas (the political incentive). To achieve these ends they need a degree of consistency in managing issues so that these two objectives can be satisfied, or at least balanced (the process incentive). In what meeting and through what process these outcomes are achieved are less significant than the outcome. Attendance may be small, in a war cabinet, or extensive, in full cabinet. Officials and advisers may or may not be present; it will depend on the national practices and desired processes. Often prime ministers will use cabinet to support a decision already made, sometimes even announced. To many practitioners the key issues in debates about collective decisions should be about consultation and participation, rather than exclusively about attendance at specific meetings.

In any case the choice is not a matter of either the prime minister deciding or the full cabinet determining government policy. It never has been an either/or situation but a range of processes through which prime ministers work with and around their colleagues to determine government directions. Sometimes cabinet nominally authorises, sometimes it is informed, sometimes its members will not like the decision but will acquiesce to the authority of their leader. They all represent cabinet government. However far back we go, this situation prevailed. Instead of trying to develop false dichotomies, we need to ask how and why prime ministers used what tactics to ensure policy, political and process outcomes, and what happened when they failed to do so effectively.

Power Hungry Prime Ministers?

A second fallacy is to assume that prime ministers have become more power-hungry, wanting to centralise authority for its own sake. Many of the critics complain that modern prime ministers (indeed almost all prime ministers) want to gather for themselves levers of power that their predecessors, proper seekers after consensus
and agreement, would never have pulled. Modern leaders, they assert, do not understand the constitution and practices of Westminster and seek to arrogate for themselves powers that are inappropriate. In summary, the ambitions and character of the leaders have changed.

There is no consistent evidence for such a proposition. The charge that modern prime ministers have been uniquely determined to control all the decisions of their government is simply historically wrong; accusations of similar practices have been consistent across the centuries, as long as heads of government were recognised as prime ministers. Nor is that surprising. Ambition and the search for power are common to every government everywhere. A Wolsey or a Cromwell, in service of their king, had the same political ambitions and skills that Machiavelli wanted, but could only write about. The question is always how they should be applied.

Just look at the records and descriptions of past prime ministers. Go back to the very first who is given that title, Robert Walpole. One ally stated in 1741: ‘He did everything alone ... while those ciphers of the Cabinet signed everything he dictated ... without the least share of honour or power’ (Blick and Jones 2010: 56). A critic complained that:

this minister having obtained a sole influence over all our public counsels has not only assumed the sole direction of public affairs, but has got every officer of state removed that would not follow his direction, even in the affairs belonging to his own proper department (Blick and Jones 2010: 56).

Similar comments have been made across the centuries. William Pitt’s government in 1806 was described as ‘a cabinet of cyphers and a government of one man alone’. The Duke of Wellington was seen as the ‘sole minister and decidedly superior to all. Ministers dare not have an opinion, but must move to the right or the left as this dictator may think proper’ (Blick and Jones 2010: 58). Lloyd George became ‘virtually the president of a state’. Members of cabinet became ‘not colleagues who can weigh decisions but subordinates who can accept them’ (Laski quoted in Blick and Jones 2010: 59).

In Canada there are similar accounts of prime ministers doing as they pleased. Prime minister Robert Borden recalled of a cabinet meeting in World War I: ‘The discussion was lengthy and eventually became so wearisome that I interposed, informing my colleagues that they had made me sufficiently acquainted with their views, that the duty of decision rested with me, and that I would subsequently make them acquainted with my conclusion’ (Bliss 1994: 80). With R.B. Bennett, prime minister in the 1930s, ‘the story went round that when Bennett was seen mumbling to himself, he was holding a cabinet meeting. ‘He was not above asking the opinions of others ... he was only above accepting them’ (Bliss 1994: 113). Gordon Robertson, later clerk of the Privy Council Office in Canada, explained what happened when Mackenzie King lost interest in cabinet in his later years:

More than once he left his ministers arguing over some point in a cabinet meeting while he went around the corner to his office in the East Block to have tea. Both he and his colleagues knew that they could reach no conclusion without him (Robertson 2000: 62).

In Australia colonial premiers were accused of being ‘modern autocrats’, even before federation was achieved (Weller 2009: 2).

Not every leader may be seeking to dominate all their colleagues. Some choose only those items where they are particularly interested. Others delegate, and become concerned only when crises emerge. However, few prime ministers can afford not to be concerned most of the time.

The ‘good old days’ when cabinet government really worked collegially were either in the distant past or when the speaker was in government. Some of Jim Callaghan’s advisers told a parliamentary committee in 2010 that they worked for the last prime minister who practised cabinet government (See the evidence of Lords Lipsey and Donoghue in House of Lords Inquiry 2010: 46-47). Yet ten years earlier, John Macintosh (1962) and Richard Crossman (1963) had declared that cabinet government was dead and had been replaced by prime ministerial government. Crossman wrote before he became a minister but saw no reason to change his opinion based on his experience (Crossman 1972).

The key issue is not whether these portraits of driven leaders are accurate, although there is no reason to assume they are not. Rather they illustrate that prime ministers have always been accused of seeking to dominate their colleagues, of wanting to get their own way. Ministers are seen to acquiesce, not prepared to challenge their leader; those outside cabinet, whether civil servant or academic, still complain that ministers are too subservient, too cowed, and too self-interested to stand up against the leader.

Not all prime ministers seek to use their powers brutally; some may be more collective in their manner. However, a consultative approach may as often represent the velvet glove that camouflages a strong determination as be an actual devolution of authority. The more recent claims
about Blair's single-mindedness on action on Iraq, or about Abbott’s ‘captain's choices', however justified, are merely the last in a long line of accusations directed at premiers over 200 years. We should not muddle new ways of trying to exercise prime ministerial authority with the idea that prime ministers today want to wield power that their predecessors deliberately shunned as a matter of constitutional propriety.

It is ahistorical to imply that once, despite their records of often aggressive management, those earlier leaders were all great believers in collective government, rather than sometimes practising collective government as a means of gaining support for their preferred policies. Of course prime ministers differ in their approach and style. In Britain a Lloyd George was followed by a Baldwin, a Churchill by an Attlee. In Australia Menzies and Holt, and later Hawke and Keating, had very different styles. That is not a judgement on their effectiveness, or even their determination, but on their style and their methods. Just as there is no job description there is no formula for controlling cabinets; effective prime ministers all find their own style of management.

There is no unidirectional trend in growing ambitions. We cannot assume modern prime ministers have a desire to control that their predecessors lacked or deliberately chose to forego and that therefore the character of political leaders has changed for the worse in the last fifty years. There is no persuasive evidence that such a decline in the character of politicians has occurred. It is just that we, as do all our predecessors, judge our current politicians, struggling to solve the bitterly contested problems of the day, through jaundiced and self-interested eyes. Their predecessors are judged on their records, not by their daily struggles, by their necessary if slightly dubious compromises, by their ruthlessness and occasional betrayals. In their time they were seen as just as political, manipulative, hungry for control and for power. History often smooths out the anger.

What Has Changed?
What obviously has changed is the environment in which prime ministers work and the technology they can use both to oversee government and to communicate to the world beyond. The story is one of improved modes of interaction, of the ability to talk to colleagues anywhere in the world, to manage cabinet processes through internet links. Overlong cabinet submissions are prevented because an electronic template can prevent submissions from exceeding word limits. Technology provides tools for management that prime ministers of 50 or more years ago would have loved to use if they had been available.

Technology is neutral. The advantages that prime ministers notionally can gain from modern technology may be more than offset by the increasing demands such technology places on them. The (comparatively) measured pace of the media fifty years ago is now a frenzied day-long demand for responses to every conceivable event. Prime ministers have become obsessed with winning the daily media round; they are required to have an answer to every query. They need help to just stand still, to retain the position of their predecessors as much as developing new capacities.

The discussion needs to be less about the vaulting ambition of prime ministers – that was always present, in some cases more nakedly evident than others – and more about their capacity to control and oversee their political machinery. Analysis needs to acknowledge the changes in their circumstances. They must deal with external crises like global financial crises, or changes in international leadership. Internally their capacity changes too over time; they may become more experienced, more skilful at the same time as becoming tired, distant and removed from public contact. They can run out of ideas. Once popular with the public their image later becomes jaded, as each election becomes harder to win.

So we can return to Hughes. If a prime minister then could act so wilfully, then the capacities to do so existed, even if they were not always exercised. It is absurd to see a trend. Rather there are opportunities for those who want to stretch their influence. I am not denying that with improved technology prime ministers have accrued additional capacity. I do argue that prime ministers have always sought to accumulate power and earlier prime ministers would have seized the opportunities that their successors have but which were never available to them. Power is there to be used and in our system, just by getting there, prime ministers have shown the capacity to find it and the ability to use it.

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The Front Window

it is raining softly
as an old Greek woman
dressed in black walks
along the path with
a big brown paper parcel
the spray tapers on
the roof opposite like Durer’s hands & i know if i take a rubber
i can obliterate the world
the old woman looks at me
& her face is folded & cracked
& her eyes are small
I take the rubber
& she looks down as she begins to disappear
because she is heavy i rub harder
& she becomes gradually faint
& weak
She drops the parcel &
It splits on the wet ground
& sets loose a swarm of angry bees
their tails are fat &
they beat against the glass & live although i rub them out one by one they are a plague

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On the Day Neil Armstrong Died

I sat on a patient sandstone rock
(which I legally own) in my rebellious backyard
Corridors of light opened & closed
As the trees along the fence shuffled & shifted, Discomforting a yellow eyed bird.
A dry leaf cracked as a skink
Peered at me insolently before retreating.
A waxing gibbous moon
Watched me with her big stone eye
With the courteous gravity of quiet dust.

*RAE DESMOND JONES,*
*SUMMER HILL, NSW*

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RAE DESMOND JONES,
SUMMER HILL, NSW
Transforming a Transactional Debate: Leadership and the rhetorical road to Brexit

DENNIS C. GRUBE

The United Kingdom views its relationship with Europe through the prism of history. The often-fractious connections of the past 1,000 years underpin the contemporary debate about Britain’s place in Europe. The Brexit referendum of 2016 was a defining, transformational moment in the life of the nation as both the ‘remain’ and the ‘leave’ camps searched for ways to persuade a divided electorate. This article draws on theories of rhetorical leadership to examine why the leave side was ultimately more successful in making its case for change. Utilising the established distinction between transactional and transformational styles of leadership, the article argues that Prime Minister David Cameron and other ‘remainers’ misread the moment by focusing too narrowly on economic arguments. They offered transactional reasons for staying in the EU, failing to match the transformational arguments of the ‘leavers’ who were able to capture the emotional significance of the historical moment.

What is the EU actually for? In the midst of the rancorous Brexit referendum, little consideration was given to this fundamental question as the duelling ‘remain’ and ‘leave’ campaigns wrestled for the future of Britain. I was recently at a seminar given by a former senior politician from an EU country. In introducing his theme, he suggested that the ‘EU is the most successful peace process in history’. It’s a thought-provoking point. The EU took shape on a continent which had in the space of four decades in the twentieth century fought the two biggest wars in human history, at the cost of countless millions of lives. In their wake, former enemies emerged not just as friends, but as a social and economic bloc. Buttressed by a combination of liberalism and democracy it drew together an ever-expanding group of countries after the fall of the Soviet Union.

The United Kingdom has long seen itself as a country apart. It is European by geographical accident rather than cultural inclination. As historians such as Linda Colley (2009) have persuasively argued, the very force that first gelled Great Britain together as a unified nation was the sense of shared struggle in the wars against France of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The tumultuous and unpredictable continent of Europe was the ‘other’ against which Britain could define itself. It is impossible to analyse the extraordinary campaigns on the Brexit question without seeking to understand this historical context of British exceptionalism. In the British imagination, Europe is the continent of revolutions and upheavals – of uncurtailed passions and autocratic restrictions. As I discuss below, during the Brexit debate Europe was seen – even by those who supported Britain’s continued membership of the EU – as an economic convenience rather than a spiritual home. A shared tectonic plate does not equate to a shared view of the world.

This historical background provides the context for what follows, which takes as its research question: why did the arguments of the remain campaign fail to prevent a majority vote for Brexit? I look for the answers to that question through an examination of the rhetoric of the Brexit debate, and the extent to which different leaders were able to project the ‘right’ kind of arguments at the right moment in order to actually persuade voters. I begin by examining theoretical perspectives on the rhetorical power of leaders. I then position the rhetorical choices of the campaign within a leadership lens by applying one of the best known analytical leadership...
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In this type of environment, the rhetorical choices that
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Blair lamented in his final year in the prime ministership,
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is the fact that in the modern governance environment,
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difficult position that they must be seen to simultaneously
as ignoring the will of the people is likely to soon face a
it is the people who are sovereign. A leader perceived
perspectives of others. And second, in democratic theory
'many even powerful leaders depend upon the actions and
First, the reality of power is that it is dispersed amongst
the components of a speech act that exist beyond the
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study for RPA are the arguments used by leaders – the
in a democracy for leaders to circumvent intransigent
institutions by essentially going over their heads to the
real bosses in any democracy – the people themselves. A
sufficiently roused populace will then – the theory goes –
exert popular pressure on the other arms of government
to stop opposing the agenda of a popular president.

In order to study how rhetoric shapes the political world,
Alan Finlayson and his co-authors have devised a
methodological approach that they label as ‘rhetorical
political analysis’ (RPA) (Finlayson 2007; Finlayson and
Martin 2008; Atkins and Finlayson 2013). The objects of
study for RPA are the arguments used by leaders – the
contentions with which they try to persuade their fellow
citizens. This includes analysing the use of similes and
metaphors, and the construction of a narrative, but also
the components of a speech act that exist beyond the
actual words used – such as the context, the audience,
the style of speech adopted and so on (see Finlayson
2007: 554-559).

In Finlayson’s conception, debates occur within the
political ‘arena’ in which the weapons are the various
dichotomies – transactional as against transformational
leadership. Using techniques of ‘rhetorical political
analysis’ I then examine the ways in which the public
comments of key players shaped different views of what
Brexit would deliver.

Rhetorical Leadership in a Democracy
Political leaders in democracies are at one and the same
time powerful and constrained. They are powerful
because they hold the keys to the full institutional armoury
of the state. The exchequer, the military, the Civil Service
– these are the forces which British prime ministers can in
theory unleash as they see fit (subject only to the approval
of the Crown). Yet, as political leaders are only too aware,
such power is at worst illusory and at best constrained.
First, the reality of power is that it is dispersed amongst
colleagues, officials, civil society, and the parliament itself – and it is almost impossible for prime ministers
to act effectively without some degree of support from these
other actors (Weller 1985). The literature on the
‘core executive’ (Dunleavy and Rhodes 1990; Weller et
al. 1997; Elgie 2011), and recent literature on the idea of
‘court politics’ (Rhodes and Tiernan 2015) reveals just how
much even powerful leaders depend upon the actions and
perspectives of others. And second, in democratic theory
it is the people who are sovereign. A leader perceived
as ignoring the will of the people is likely to soon face a
reckoning at the ballot box. As Kane and Patapan (2010
and 2012) argue, this places democratic leaders in the
difficult position that they must be seen to simultaneously
lead and follow the people at one and the same time.

Added to these institutional and democratic restraints
is the fact that in the modern governance environment,
political leaders are also pushed by time and technology
to govern at speed. The realities of 24/7 media scrutiny,
and the pace of government, mean leaders are having to
move faster. Decision-making is faster, policy-making is
faster, and being nimble is the order of the day. As Tony
Blair lamented in his final year in the prime ministership,
time has become the scarcest resource in politics.

You have to respond to stories also in real time. Frequently the problem is as much assembling
the facts as giving them. Make a mistake and you
quickly transfer from drama into crisis. In the 1960s
the government would sometimes, on a serious
issue, have a Cabinet that would last two days. It
would be laughable to think you could do that now
without the heavens falling in before lunch on the
first day. Things also harden within minutes. I mean
you can’t let speculation stay out there for longer
than an instant (Blair 2007).

In this type of environment, the rhetorical choices that
leaders make become even more important. Their words
will not only help to shape a debate, but will in many ways
represent the most substantive contribution that they have
time to make to a particular policy process. In many ways, in
the modern environment, to talk is to govern (Grube
2013: 12).

There is an established strain of American scholarship
which analyses the power of the President to reach out and connect directly with ‘the people’ through the
speeches they give. Jeffrey Tulis (1987) dubs this the
‘rhetorical presidency’, and Samuel Kernell (2006) sets
out the advantages of ‘going public’. The foundation of
the rhetorical presidency is that it recognises the capacity
in a democracy for leaders to circumvent intransigent
institutions by essentially going over their heads to the
real bosses in any democracy – the people themselves. A
sufficiently roused populace will then – the theory goes –
exert popular pressure on the other arms of government
to stop opposing the agenda of a popular president.

Recent scholarship has begun to translate the idea of a
‘rhetorical presidency’ across into the different institutional
settings of Westminster systems of parliamentary
government (Toye 2011; Grube 2013). Under the
conditions of constant communication that characterise
modern governance, the rhetorical premiership (or
rhetorical prime ministership) offers similar opportunities
to those in the USA. Prime ministers make their case
for change not in order to persuade their fellow MPs in
parliament – most of whom will follow the prime minister
for reasons of party loyalty anyway – but to persuade
‘the country’. A well-executed rhetorical strategy cannot
only wrong-foot potentially intransigent MPs, but can also
head-off likely opposition within a prime minister’s own
cabinet. By keeping proposals close within a tight-knit
group of advisers, prime ministers can spring them as a
surprise on all those who – given the time and space –
might have tried to head off a measure privately but are
unlikely to challenge the prime minister in public.

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arguments that different sides are willing to put forward about a particular issue. The 'winner' is the side that is able to persuade the most people that they are right. Rhetoric, in the Aristotelian sense, is first and foremost a tool of persuasion. And arguments are not simply to be found in the words that are put forward, but also in the beliefs that are part and parcel of the arguments that they underpin. As Finlayson has it, "To believe something is to accept the (many kinds of) reasons that can be presented for so believing it; to present and explain a belief to others is to present the arguments that are part and parcel of the belief" (2007: 551).

The component parts of RPA are focused on analysing ‘the proofs actors bring forward in justifying claims and giving reasons for others to share them’ (Atkins and Finlayson 2013: 162 – emphasis in original). In doing so, the approach harks back to what Aristotle first identified as the three means of persuasion available to the rhetorician: ethos, logos and pathos. Ethos refers to the authority of the speaker – i.e. we listen to a speaker because of who they are and the extent to which we respect them. Pathos is the emotional power to sway an audience – i.e. we are persuaded by a speaker because we feel emotionally connected to their points. Logos represents the logical power of the content of a speech – i.e. we are convinced by the logic of the speaker’s arguments. All three types of appeal or rhetorical proof were in evidence during the Brexit referendum campaign, and help to provide insights into why the ‘leave’ side won. I turn now to examining what the rhetoric of the Brexit debate revealed about the leadership style of the different participants.

Transforming a Transactional Debate

One of the best-known categorisations from the vast literature on leadership is the distinction between transformational leaders and transactional leaders (Bass 1990). Originally applied to leadership in the realm of private enterprise, the dichotomy has also proven useful for scholars seeking to analyse aspects of political leadership (e.g. Kakabadse and Kakabadse 2011; Williams et al. 2009; Maslin-Wicks 2007). Transformational leaders are those seen as able to inspire and energise others, often through making use of intangible traits like charisma. Transactional leaders may not display the public flair of their transformational brethren, but instead are adept at the kind of detailed, determined negotiation, networking and problem solving needed to actually make change happen.

These traits are observable not just in what political leaders do, but in what they say and how they say it. The Brexit debate in the UK provided a study in contrasts in the types of leadership on display. During the referendum debate itself, the leave campaign had some distinct advantages.

First, they had a range of charismatic speakers capable of reaching out to different parts of the electorate. Second, they had a narrative capable of easy explication, and deeply rooted in existing British cultural traditions about the place of Europe in the British psyche. This combination of a narrative, and speakers able to articulate it, positioned the campaign as delivering a transformational form of leadership for what was undoubtedly a transformational moment in the life of the state.

In contrast, despite a consistent lead in the polls for much of the campaign, the remain camp suffered from deficiencies in both aspects. First, they struggled to find the kind of charismatic rhetorician capable of matching the efforts of Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage for the leave campaign. David Cameron as prime minister was leading a campaign he was perceived as being ambivalent about. Some of the senior ministers supporting him, including Theresa May and Philip Hammond, were seen as being reluctant remainers or even closet leavers who did little to rally people in support. Labour, under the direction of Jeremy Corbyn, was mired in internal dissension as its leader was also perceived as supporting a cause he did not in fact believe in as a long-term critic of the EU in his own right. Late entries into the debate by Gordon Brown failed to have the galvanising effect that his intervention in the Scottish independence referendum had been able to engineer two years earlier. In the absence of a charismatic leader or a transformational message, the narrative from the remain campaign became transactional – focused on the alleged economic and trade benefits of staying in the EU. There was little evidence of a wider transformational narrative able to make a positive case for the European Union as a whole, as well as Britain's place within it.

The Brexit referendum debate, and its aftermath as the UK formally triggered article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, shows the wide power of political rhetoric as a leadership tool. The debate was framed by the way that leaders gave it shape through their rhetorical choices. The side with the transformational narrative won the day. In the aftermath of the referendum itself, the new prime minister Theresa May was able to seize the initiative through a very different kind of rhetoric. Having been a reluctant 'remainer' herself, and criticised for largely sitting out the actual referendum debate, May rose to the top of her party not because of her soaring rhetoric, but because of her perceived transactional competence.

Following the highs and lows of a passionate and draining referendum campaign, May was able to offer a different kind of leadership to an exhausted populace and a divided party. In the speech launching her bid for the leadership of the Conservative Party, Theresa May cast herself as a safe pair of hands following a period of uncertainty.
and upheaval. Hers was the candidacy of clear headed reassurance rather than a call to arms for revolutionary change. ‘The process of withdrawal will be complex, and it will require hard work, serious work, and detailed work. And it means we need a Prime Minister who is a tough negotiator, and ready to do the job from day one’ (May 2016). It was a transactional appeal that juxtaposed starkly against the perceived qualities of Boris Johnson, who most pundits had predicted as her likely leadership rival prior to his spectacular withdrawal from the race.

Johnson was the magician who had delivered Brexit, only to be adjudged by his colleagues as lacking the transactional skills required to turn the rhetoric of Brexit into a policy reality. As the future Home Secretary Amber Rudd noted when debating Johnson in the lead up to the referendum: ‘He is the life and soul of the party, but he is not the man you want driving you home at the end of the evening’ (as cited in The Guardian 2016). His leadership appeal was as a transformational charismatic leader who had delivered the kind of dynamic, persuasive leadership for the leave campaign that neither David Cameron nor Jeremy Corbyn had been able to muster for the remain campaign. Johnson had the ability to inspire an audience not through a projection of his competence or even through the logic of his arguments, but through the appeals to pathos – the capacity to connect with the emotions of his listeners. His speech one month before the referendum was typical of his style:

We can see the sunlit meadows beyond. I believe we would be mad not to take this once in a lifetime chance to walk through that door because the truth is it is not we who have changed. It is the EU that has changed out of all recognition; and to keep insisting that the EU is about economics is like saying the Italian Mafia is interested in olive oil and real estate (Johnson 2016).

Looking at Johnson’s speech through the lens of ‘rhetorical political analysis’ reveals the secrets of why his rhetoric was so successful. It was in many ways a piece of political theatre – the delivery was dynamic, giving it both energy and a perceived authenticity. This was particularly important given the fact that Johnson had prevaricated on his support or opposition to Brexit for days before definitively making his position clear. The language itself was rich with imagery and metaphor. ‘Sunlit meadows’ were offered (underpinned with a self-conscious irony). The public were riled to ‘walk through the door’ – the metaphor of a moment of choice, of a doorway that stood open but could quite quickly close if the opportunity was not seized. And the simile of the Italian Mafia was classic Johnson – witty, humorous, accessible, and delivered once again with the rhetorical exuberance of someone deliberately choosing to go over the top.

In contrast, throughout the campaign David Cameron and Jeremy Corbyn, both ostensibly on the side of remain, seemed unable to emerge from transactional arguments about the cost of leaving Europe. There was no positive narrative for why Europe was not just something to be tolerated in the national interest, but to be embraced as an integral part of British identity. In his speech on 9 May, Cameron focused on the practical benefits of Europe in a way that sought to appeal to pragmatic heads rather than transformational hearts.

I believe that, despite its faults and its frustrations, the United Kingdom is stronger, safer and better off by remaining a member of the European Union. Better off? Certainly. We are part of a single market of 500 million people which Britain helped to create. Our goods and, crucially, our services – which account for almost 80% of our economy – can trade freely by right. We help decide the rules. The advantages of this far outweigh any disadvantages (Cameron 2016).

Just days before the referendum, Cameron once more used the full resources of his office to give a final speech imploring a remain vote. He spoke from a lectern outside the doors to Number 10 Downing Street. As a setting, it immediately expressed the gravity of what he had to say. It also positioned it as a speech to the whole country – addressed by the nation’s prime minister outside the doors of his official residence. In content, the focus was once more not a positive narrative about Europe so much as a fear-based transactional narrative about what might happen to Britain if it left. He sought to stir people’s emotions by reference to ‘the hopes and dreams of your children and grandchildren’ but then tied those hopes and dreams to the transactional benefits of staying within the EU. ‘If we left, our neighbours would go on meeting and tolerating in the national interest, but to be embraced as an integral part of British identity. In his speech on 9 May, Cameron focused on the practical benefits of Europe in a way that sought to appeal to pragmatic heads rather than transformational hearts.

Conclusion

It is not possible in the space available here to undertake a full rhetorical analysis of all the twists and turns of the Brexit debate. What is clear is that the contemporary debate needs to be assessed within the context of hundreds of years of British ambivalence about Europe, and the fact that the issue of EU membership has divided and splintered the Conservative Party ever since the 1970s. In an extraordinary political irony, the sum result of the referendum and its aftermath was initially to place the Conservative Party in a position of political dominance, based on the issue that had once threatened to tear it
apart. A divided, disenchanted Labour Party had been unable to craft a clear position on the defining issue of the time. When the Labour Peer Lord Mandelson was asked in a television interview during the early part of the 2017 general election campaign what the Labour position was on Brexit, his answer was: 'Well, search me …' (as cited in Smith 2017).

In contrast, the Conservatives were able to present not only a clear position, but also a leader perceived as having the skills to deliver it. Johnson's transformational charisma of the referendum campaign gave way to the transactional competence seen as the defining leadership quality of Theresa May. But politics never stands still, and – at the time of writing – May's perceived transactional competence has very quickly given way to doubts about her viability as a long term prime minister. The extraordinary result of the 2017 general election, in which the initially unassailable Conservative lead gave way to the reality of a hung parliament, has left an ongoing question mark over May's leadership. May's intention to fight the election solely on the question of which leader was best placed to deliver on Brexit melted away as elements of her party's manifesto – including the so-called ‘dementia tax’ – took centre stage.

Further research is undoubtedly needed on the range of motivations that pushed Britons to vote to exit the EU. Questions of immigration policy, economic independence, and cultural difference all loomed large as issues. But leadership undoubtedly mattered. It played its part amongst these other variables to shape the referendum campaign and its aftermath. In particular, the Brexit issue highlights that the rhetorical choices of leaders provide one of the most visible manifestations of the kind of leadership style that they represent. It remains to be seen whether May's abilities as a transactional leader will allow her to cling to power and lead her party into Brexit negotiations. It may be that the Conservatives will turn once more towards a transformational leader to counteract a resurgent Labour Party and redefine Britain’s place in a future outside the EU.

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**The Coronation**

in the corner of the small square park
a rat picks at a lunchwrap
the night is quiet & the moon is still
the clouds shift above the sober
winter trees & their branches are edged
with ice
everywhere about me small insects
scratch through grass & leaves
i wait below the aureola of lights
the city & the hum of cars
silence & darkness
the woman who is inside me
all the time has turned & faced me
her long hair brushes the side of my
cheek the breeze of a razor
she turns her hands & smiles
i am a little afraid but calm
i want to die
in the corner the rat picks
into the soft centre of a sandwich
i tremble like dry paper

**Being Poor**

is not having good clothes & walking everywhere
with the knee out of your jeans
when you can’t afford a haircut
the police stop you to ask your name
they step from their cars
& stand up close then they breath on you
the smell of steak & onions
you are afraid they don’t smile
& push their hips out to the side so you see their gun
& on the car seat papers & clipboard
a radio stuttering accusations
everybody with a job walks past you in a hurry
to go somewhere carrying sandwiches and a cup of yoghurt
with a plastic spoon & they look
with flat eyes
you go home to watch the black & white television
to ignore the fight next door
the slamming doors & the breaking glass
the dribbling sentimental poor
the worst is when your wife doesn’t say get a job
because she tries to understand
the kids stare from the kitchen with snotty unwashed faces
the yellow grit of defeat
when you had a job you filled drums with bolts
& the boss was getting a government grant to train you
to put bolts in drums & you felt guilty you didn’t like it
but he fired you the day the money ran out
& you felt guilty that you were relieved
in the ces the interviewer chews the end of his pen
you itch but don’t scratch
he thinks you’re another whingeing seedy dirty & boring person
& you agree

**Rae Desmond Jones**,  
**Summer Hill, NSW**
Political Leadership and Political Parties in the Age of Trump

JOHN KANE

This paper examines the broad context of Trump’s rise to understand the challenge he presents to contemporary political understanding. He is the American exemplar of a worldwide trend of political disaffection around the world rooted in the travails of the global political economy. The paper first looks at the challenges faced by long-established political parties everywhere in managing, or failing to manage, economic crises. It then outlines how the crisis of parties has been historically manifest in America, which in turn provides the context for assessing the rise of Trump and the brand of leadership he offers. Intrinsic to this analysis is the crucial difference between political leadership in an institutionally complex democratic system and the kind of business leadership upon which Trump prides himself. Having thus appraised Trumpism within political parameters both broad and narrow, the paper makes a brief assessment of the likely fate, not just of Trump himself, but of the whole American party system with, it argues, particularly damaging consequences for Republicans.

President Donald Trump, according to New York Times columnist Frank Bruni, is fashioning a new model of leadership, one that struts and seethes and whines and consigns traditional leadership virtues to the junkyard of the quaint. Who, he asks:

among the presidents of the last half-century has been so publicly cavalier about conflicts of interest, so blithe about getting away with whatever grifts he could, so lavishly mean-spirited and so proudly rude? Who among those presidents made so little concession to decorum? (Bruni 2017).

Trump’s ascendancy is certainly unprecedented in a modern developed nation, but what does it mean for America and the world, and what does it portend for political leadership in general? Is Trump a sui generis phenomenon whose rise and fall, when it happens (and bookmakers have been laying odds since Day One), will seem like a bizarre anomaly once normalcy returns and we awake from our nightmarish dream? Or does he herald a new normalcy, a reshaping of the old political world into one whose lineaments and consequences we can yet but dimly perceive?

To tackle the Trump leadership phenomenon at an early stage of his presidency is clearly perilous. The target is not so much moving as in chaotic convulsion. And yet I believe it is worth examining the larger meaning and context of his rise and the challenge he presents to contemporary political understanding. There seems broad agreement, after all, that Trump is merely the American exemplar of a more general trend, and that the many instances of political disaffection and upheaval around the world are rooted in the recent historical trajectory of the global political economy.\footnote{To begin understanding Trump, then, it is necessary to place him in this wider, global context. This means understanding the severe challenges that long-established political parties and their leaders have confronted in managing, or failing to manage, contemporary economic crises. We must then outline how the crisis of parties has been historically manifest in the American case, which in turn provides the context for assessing the rise of Trump and the brand of leadership he offers. Intrinsic to this analysis is the crucial difference between political leadership in an institutionally complex democratic system and the kind of business leadership upon which Trump prides himself. Having thus understood Trumpism within political parameters both broad and narrow, we will be in a position to make some brief assessment of the likely fate, not just of Trump himself, but of the whole American party system.}

Theoretical and Ethical Failures

The political world is undoubtedly in a very strange place, with long-standing verities up-ended and long-established parties everywhere in disarray or decline. Democracy itself seems in retreat in Eastern Europe and Turkey. The only certainty seems to be the prospect of
continuing uncertainty. The proximate origins of all this lie in the financial meltdown of 2007-8 and its considerable aftershocks which, interacting with resurgent Russian nationalism, terrorism, Middle Eastern chaos and a consequent uncontrollable flood of refugees, threw Western governments into confusion and the whole post-war liberal international order into something resembling crisis. The pressing issue became how best to address these conditions so as to re-establish order and found some plausible orientation toward a positive future. But reasonable argument on this was made more difficult by the heightened level of resistance to ‘experts’ telling ‘us’ (the public) what to think or do (McClay 2009: 145-146; Pisani-Ferry 2016). We thus entered a baffling ‘post-truth’ era in which ‘alternate facts’ had political currency.

Experts must carry some of the blame for this, especially economic experts who viewed their rigorously ‘scientific’ discipline as imperial over all other social sciences (Lazear 2000: 102-103). Economists provided ideological, technical and mathematically-modelled support for financial structures and instruments that ultimately proved to be grounded in quicksand (Kane 2016: 84-88). The consequent disaster presented governments with an acute problem. Economists had assured them that the problem of economic management had been solved, largely through monetary controls (‘the Great Moderation’). When these assurances proved false and recovery proved elusive, to whom were political leaders to turn for advice but to the very economists who had led them astray?

There was advice aplenty but no true consensus of analysis, prognosis and policy, with the result that few affected governments responded well or creatively to the challenges presented. Indeed, many efforts to shore up crumbling structures seemed only to exacerbate underlying problems. The general floundering was thus in part a failure of theory, but it was also a political failure on the part of experts. Even if some had produced cogent analyses and indicated plausible policies, none had captured an influential political constituency capable of turning theory into reality. Absent an elite political consensus, nothing much could be done.2 The only alternative was muddling through, and there was a great deal of that.

Achieving a working consensus had been accomplished before, around the theories of John Maynard Keynes in the post-Depression era and then around the ‘neoliberal’ theories of Milton Friedman and his followers after the stagflation crises of the 1970s and ’80s (see Mirowski and Plehwe 2009). Historically-minded people expected that the gravest financial crisis since World War II and the failure of the neoliberal model informing it would cause another such ‘paradigm shift’. This did not happen.3 Though many ‘heterodox’ economists offered sharp critiques of economic orthodoxy and presented policy alternatives, none commanded agreement among political leaders. The result was policy confusion and competition as advocates of economic stimulus vied with defenders of austerity, often in blatantly moral more than purely economic terms.4

In America, President Obama’s sterner instincts for root-and-branch reform of a banking industry whose gross imprudence had brought the world to its knees were curtailed by the conservative advice of Secretary Treasury Timothy Geithner, who argued for generous bail-out schemes for financial institutions while leaving struggling homeowners to survive as best they could (see Green 2010; Barofsky 2012: 138-150; Kane 2014: 184-185). Obama and Geithner were aggrieved that they received small recognition for their achievements (they had, after all, saved the world). But what their ‘practical’ economic policies overlooked (as did ‘practical’ European policies) was the fact that an epic financial failure also represented a colossal ethical failure that caused lingering moral outrage. A sense of injustice was generated by billions of taxpayer dollars poured into the very institutions at the heart of the problem, even as ordinary people lost jobs and homes under regimes of enforced austerity, and as cases of blatant fraud and manipulation among financiers went unprosecuted or received negligible fines (for a Wall Street Journal analysis see Eaglesham and Das 2016). As crisis turned to economic stagnation, the gaping ethical hole at the heart of the modern economy caused a general loss of public trust (Bennett and Kottasz 2012; Edelman 2016).

This ethical issue produced a backlash against globalisation and against established leaders who had presided over its progress. Alternative leaders arose presenting unorthodox (though hardly original) diagnoses of what had gone wrong and what was needed to correct things. Opportunities opened for non-traditional leaders like Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in America, Jeremy Corbyn in Britain, Geert Wilders in Holland, Norbert Hofer in Austria and Marine Le Pen in France, even Pauline Hanson in Australia. The casualties were not just traditional leaders but the parties they led, as most dramatically exhibited in the French presidential elections of 2017. In them the formerly dominant Socialist and Republican parties failed and the presidency fell to a party (En Marche!) formed ad hoc around a candidate, Emmanuel Macron, whose sole political virtue was that he presented a moderate alternative to Le Pen. But traditional parties almost everywhere were in a state of crisis having lost their ideological bearings and been rendered suspect in the view of their old constituencies.
There were of course other complicating factors contributing to political turmoil – terrorism and an influx of refugees, especially in Europe – but these must be seen in the context of years of stagnation or decline of ordinary wages and persistently high unemployment (or underemployment) especially among the young. People worry less about foreign intruders taking their jobs when jobs are plentiful and rewarding. The problem was that traditional parties and their leaders had shown little real appreciation of the condition to which a globalised economy had brought their own constituents or what might be done to amend matters. Nearly a decade on from the crisis, debt continued to mount precipitously, banks were bigger and possibly more fragile than ever, interest rates were stuck near zero and even below without encouraging much in the way of capital expenditure or job creation (see BIS report by Caruana 2016). Incipient signs of recovery encouraged little real optimism amid a climate of lost faith and uncertainty. And it was in this climate that Donald J. Trump mounted and carried his most surprising leadership challenge.

The Crisis of American Parties

At the heart of the crisis afflicting traditional parties around the Western world was the disappearance of the political middle ground, which is to say the loss of a believably alternative Left. The neoliberal success of New Labour and the New Democrats and their ilk in the last part of the twentieth century was based on a calculated move to the Right premised on the political failure of ‘socialism’ globally and a consequent coming to terms with the apparent triumph of business and free markets. Certainly, this had the advantage of robbing the Right of its traditional garments, but the crowding to the Right reduced the Left to a small un-reconstructed rump and opened a gaping hole in the political centre. This was not readily apparent so long as easy credit masked the decline of middle class incomes and the steep rise in inequality, but became an urgent problem when exposed by financial crisis and economic stagnation. Then the vacuum at the centre sucked in so-called populist leaders of either far Left or (more often) the far Right (a Right which notably mixed elements of cultural xenophobia with old Left anti-globalisation policies). In America, Hillary Clinton tried to occupy a middle ground that no longer existed and was perceived as representative of an ‘establishment’ that had manifestly failed and was widely resented.

The lessons of Hillary’s loss are still being pondered by Democrats, some of whom claim they did not really lose since she won the popular vote. But they knew well enough how the shift of a few crucial votes in swing states can determine the electoral college outcome. The Democratic Party plainly forfeited the votes of a white working class which had gone to Obama in two previous elections by taking them for granted (Hillary failed even to visit Wisconsin during the campaign). The surprising force and popularity of Bernie Sanders’ primary campaign gave the warning of the shift in popular mood, and Hillary took note and tried to adjust Leftward. But it was too late and too unconvincing given the Clintons’ history of complicity in shaping the modern political economy. She was a weak Centre candidate offering a disillusioned electorate mere competence when it was seeking something more, namely something that carried conviction.

Enter Trump, stage Right, following his cruel devastation of the large Republican Party field. If the Democrats had their problems, those of the Republicans were deeper and in the long run more damaging. Trump was not a Republican – he merely carried the Republican brand as a matter of convenience. Yet he was a candidate that modern Republicanism had both enabled and arguably deserved. Trumpism presented a genuine and perhaps terminal challenge to a party already under a severe historical stress. We must understand this history if we are to understand the Trump phenomenon.

Modern Republicanism is permanently enmired in long-term conservative reaction to the 1930s’ New Deal politics of Franklin Roosevelt’s Democrats. Anti-New Dealers could make little headway among a post-war generation that saw active government as a force for progress and stability – and indeed leading ‘moderate’ Republicans, from Ike Eisenhower up to and including Gerald Ford, largely accepted the New Deal settlement. Their dominance within the party underpinned the ‘liberal consensus’ that ruled at home and abroad till the end of the Vietnam War. During this period the forces of reaction strengthened their hand by creating an unlikely ‘fusion’ between libertarians and moral-traditionalists (reinforced in the 1970s by accommodation of the nascent Christian evangelical Right), their gaping contradictions masked by shared anti-communism (Diamond 1995: 25-36). Fusion required compromises, as when libertarians deferred to the States’ rights views of moral traditionalists on the desegregation of public schools. The alliance thus embedded a racist element in the heart of conservative Republicanism that would bear fruit in the notoriously successful ‘Southern strategy’ of the 1970s, which converted old Southern Democrats, hostile to the civil rights movement, into Republicans (Himmelstein 1990: 29-62, 97-197).

The collapse of communism in the late 1980s removed the essential glue holding fusion conservatives together. Divisions were somewhat masked in the 1990s by sheer historical inertia and by continuing shared hostility toward intrusive big government, but also by the triumphalism of a clamorous new set of ‘neo-conservatives’ seeking to
capitalise on post-Cold War unipolarity to stamp American authority conclusively on the world. But neconservative crusading came to grief in Iraq under George W. Bush, whose end-of-tenure was also marked by the gravest economic crisis since the Depression. Renewed disillusionment with foreign adventurism, persistent economic malaise and the election of America’s first black president presented the perfect combination of factors to test the real character and strength of contemporary Republicanism. Unfortunately it widened existing fissures and revealed a great deal of ugliness at the party’s core.

The political calculations of mainstream Republicans in the Obama era helped bring on their party’s crisis. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell’s strategy of ‘Just say No!’ to every Obama policy was brutally effective but ultimately counterproductive (see Green 2011; Drew 2014). His adamant opposition to the passage of ‘Obamacare’, and the hysterical rhetoric deployed in the process, ignited an ultra-conservative grassroots movement, the Tea Party, which was vitriolic and frankly racist in its rejection, not just of Obama’s policies, but of his person. (And Trump cemented his reputation among Tea Party types by championing the anti-Obama ‘birther’ controversy.) But the Tea Party was a viper taken to the Republican Party’s bosom, for it signalled the ultimate breakdown of fusion conservatism.

This movement from the heartland became an instrument of revenge of Republican footsoldiers for the contempt and neglect they had long suffered at the hands of an elite Republican (largely Eastern) ‘establishment’ that alternatively flattered and ignored them. Its passionate members held more adamantly and literally to the famed ‘principles’ that mainstream Republicans mouthed – small government, low taxes, balanced budgets, a strong military etc – but when in office fudged or compromised. The insurgent movement deployed these principles effectively against incumbent Republicans, including congressional members of long-standing who were successfully challenged in primary contests by Tea Party-approved candidates. In time moderate Republicans became practically extinct, while even reliably conservative members of the Republican ‘establishment’ were forced to appease and placate the adamantly extreme core or risk challenge to their incumbency.6

The Trump phenomenon can be understood only against this long historical background, for Trump’s campaign strategy played resoundingly to heartland anger. His inflammatory style exposed the pusillanimity and hypocrisy of routine purveyors of familiar Republican doctrine, which was why he so handily demolished his opponents in the primaries, including the one most favoured by the old establishment and benefitting from most of its largesse, Jeb Bush (‘low energy’). Trump’s rhetoric ignited latent feelings of resentment at elite suppression of full-throated expression of ‘regressive’ sentiments. Traditional Republican ‘dog-whistle’ racist invocation was replaced, under Trump’s influence, by frank prejudice. Serving the interests of rich rentiers was shown to have limited purchase among a class burdened by debt and with declining economic prospects – thus Trump’s unlikely appeal to blue collar victims of global competition. Trump, in other words, called the bluff of ‘respectable’ Republicans and thereby threw them into ideological disarray. They could not in superficial conscience accept him but neither could they, in deepest conscience, deny him (Ribuffo 2015) – though many, realising the danger, tried during the campaign to terminate him.

And then, of course, he won.

**Trump as Leader**

Republicans now had to ingest Trump’s toxic body and hope it would not prove fatal. On the face of it November 2016 was a Republican triumph as the party would reign in Congress and the White House. Undivided government historically permits administrations to accomplish a great deal electorally, but times have changed.

For one thing, the Republican leadership in the House of Representatives hardly controls its own membership, unbalanced by the activities of 30-odd members of the so-called Freedom Caucus allied to the Tea Party. This ultra-conservative group was instrumental in causing former Speaker John Boehner’s resignation in 2015. Current Speaker Paul Ryan hesitated long before accepting the post knowing the challenge he would face, and in fact ideological puritans were central to the failure of his first major piece of legislation under the Trump administration, the preliminary attempt to refashion Obamacare with the American Health Care Act 2017.7

Moreover, no secure relationship existed between the new president and congresssional Republicans, not just because Trump had no political experience but because many prominent members (including Ryan) had vociferously opposed him during his campaign. Their patched-up peace would be severely tested as the administration sought to impose its will on the political system.

In undivided government, legislators typically look to the White House for effective leadership. Trump had given elaborate notice of what kind of leadership to expect, disclosed in his claim of success in business. America’s political leaders, he claimed, had failed Americans by not taking sufficient care of their central interests and by allowing America’s formerly super-bright national star to dim on the world stage. Trump sold himself as
a hard-headed businessman able to hammer out deals with various protagonists for the benefit of himself and his shareholders, only now his shareholders would be the American people. His negotiating skills would be employed with manufacturing firms and with foreign governments to ensure that Americans (‘real’ Americans) would never again be short-changed. In the process, he would ‘make America great again’ (Thompson 2017).

Trump’s implicit case was that political leadership is not just a different kind of leadership, but an inferior kind. It is always fatally compromised by cross-cutting political demands, by partisan loyalties and enmities, and by dependency on external financial resources. It is thus incapable of the decisiveness that denotes true leadership. Decisions are never truly in the national interest but only in the service of some section or sections. Trump offered clarity and genuine decisiveness. As a self-professed, self-made billionaire he had only to heed his own views of what the national interest required and act accordingly, for he owed nothing to anyone. In a sense this was true. He was the Joker in the Republican deck and, in his irreverent barnstorming showman’s fashion, he had outfoxed all the political professionals. They owed him, not vice versa.

Nevertheless, he owed a debt to the people who elected him, and there’s the rub. His true ‘followership’ was actually quite thin from the beginning. As Hillary-supporters never tire of pointing out, over half of those who voted in November did not vote for Donald Trump, which did not matter a jot for his gaining office but left an awful lot of people proclaiming that ‘he is not our president’. Nor did Trump make any attempt, either in his inaugural address or thereafter, to reach out to the dismayed multitude and offer to lead the nation as a single nation. Rather he doubled down on the divisiveness that had marked his campaign and in the process provoked a storm of liberal protest such as the US has not seen in decades.

But of those who did vote for him, how many can be described as true followers? Voting figures suggest that party identification played its usual major role at the last minute (Vavrek 2017), meaning habitual Republican voters, whatever they personally thought of Trump, could not bring themselves to vote for a Democrat (maybe especially that Democrat). A thin layer of disenchanted, mainly white working-class voters in crucial rust-belt states tilted the balance Trump’s way, and perhaps these are his true and only real followers. They are his ‘basket of deplorables’ and proud of it, his ‘forgotten people’, the narrow base on which he (and former Chief Strategist Steve Bannon) hoped to rebuild an archaic version of American, quasi-racialist nationalism.

But even here we may doubt the depth and solidity of such followership. Reports at the time revealed that many voters believed less in Trump and his promises than in his capacity to stick it to Washington and the ruling ‘elites’ of both parties. And Trump was not wrong in diagnosing a perceived failure of political leadership as a cause of public dissatisfaction. He was in many respects an improvised explosive device lobbed into ‘the establishment’ by a crucial wedge of supporters, who seemed pleased enough by the effects of his initial weeks of power. But was their main purpose to destroy the whole political structure or just to get its attention and hopefully tip policy meaningfully in their direction? Suicide bombers are by definition disposable, and for Trump to survive his havoc-making he would have to convince his deplorables over time that he would indeed make a noticeable difference to their lives and fortunes. Failing that he had no political base to fall back on except the power of the executive office itself.

That is, to be sure, a considerable resource, but also a vulnerable one without some secure and reliable constituency, something Trump perhaps did not appreciate when he assumed office. The Republicans in Congress are certainly not that. Wrong-footed by an upstart celebrity who nevertheless delivered them the presidency, they wanted to make the most of their opportunity but could not easily control the political agenda with such an unpredictable tenant in the Oval Office. During a series of early presidential gaffes, mis-steps and outrages, they showed remarkable solidarity in backing ‘their’ president, but the pressures were bound to increase dangerously over time. With a Congress unable to manage the president, and a president unable to manage Congress, the recipe for continuing chaos was set.

Trump’s vaunted capacity as negotiator and deal-maker would seem advantageous given that deal-making, both within Congress and between Congress and White House, is (or used to be, pre-Obama) of the essence of American politics. But there is a critical difference between business leadership and democratic political leadership. CEOs of business firms are like monarchs whose writ runs large within their organisations. Their most important negotiations are with external firms and agencies, in the way monarchs deal with other independent monarchs, using diplomacy that often includes subterfuge, misdirection and outright bullying (Irwin 2017). Internally they decide on strategy, promulgate it and order that it be followed.

The president can similarly command through executive orders, and Trump has exulted in delivering them. But there is a limit to what can be achieved in this way, and such orders are vulnerable to overthrow by succeeding
administrations (Rudalevige 2017). Any lasting legacy must be secured by legislation and the president cannot order Congress to pass anything. He cannot even command his ‘own’ party. Trump’s blunt CEO style was thus out of place in an American system designed to prevent monarchical behaviour. Nothing can be achieved legislatively without considerable negotiation, deal-making and horse-trading. Undertaking presidential leadership generally means learning severe lessons in humility, a Christian virtue not prominent in Trump’s ethical universe.

The president does have extensive authority over the huge federal bureaucracy, but Trump and his conspiracy-minded cronies hate that body. It is ‘the deep state’, an even greater ‘enemy of the people’ than the mainstream press because it is less visible. Trump immediately set about trying to dismantle or weaken the offices most ideologically repugnant to him – for example, environmental and energy agencies – partly by staffing them with people fundamentally opposed to their legislated purposes. But this ‘permanent government’ is a many-headed entity containing many long-term professionals with ways of striking back, as Trump soon discovered in his fraught confrontations with the FBI.

The only way a president lacking a significant political base but holding levers of power can ensure longevity is the authoritarian route of engineering a coup (not for nothing does Trump admire Putin and Duterte). But the fragmented US political system, whatever its manifest faults, is unlikely to permit that. Trump found, to his fury, that obscure federal judges in obscure parts of the country had the power to thwart his temporary bans on immigration. True, he has authority over judicial appointments at many levels and will undoubtedly use this vengefully. A major early accomplishment from a Republican point of view was his enablement of the appointment of a conservative judge to the Supreme Court. Yet once judges are in place and free to decide cases as they will, it is impossible for the executive to order, or even predict, what particular judgments will be made. In other words, the separated powers of the American political system are likely to frustrate Trump’s style of leadership every time he attempts to exercise it – unless of course he learns political prudence, which seems a very long shot indeed.8

Conclusion

It is impossible to account for Trump’s ascendancy without explaining, in addition to his own unworldly ego, the historical and structural conditions that made it possible. Of course there are always incidents and accidents that might have drastically changed the course of history (could Bernie have won?) but structure remains crucial when systemic forces are at play. I have argued that disillusionment with politics-as-usual afflicts almost all developed countries and must be traced to economic and political shifts that occurred back in the 1970s and ‘80s (Bauman 2016). Loss of faith in traditional parties and their leaders to address either acute or slow-burning issues, especially economic ones, opened the way for non-traditional contenders of either Right or Left. In the American context, the New Democrats’ close association with neoliberal globalising policies placed them at a disadvantage, which Trump took full advantage of in his appeal to formerly Democratic blue-collar voters.

Yet Trump’s victory merely underscored the task that the Democratic Party must face in adjusting to a changing political climate; it did not destroy the party. It is far less clear that Trumpism has not delivered a fatal blow to the Republican Party, at least as currently constituted. I have tried to show that the party was approaching a terminus ad absurdum before Trump came along, having become the virtual captive of its most extreme wing. Trump both exposed and profited from this internal disarray. The appeal of his mix of xenophobic Right and illiberal Left policies revealed the real distance that existed between the party’s elites (and elite backers) and grassroots supporters. If, as I have claimed, democratic leadership success requires creating a solid centre from which to govern, the Democrats would seem at least to have a chance of reconstituting the abandoned middle; the Republicans seem hardly capable of inspecting the ground never mind occupying it. Of course Republicans benefit inordinately from skewed districting in many states, overemphasising their representative success and giving them a secure electoral base whatever happens. If a party that has professed, at least since Reagan’s day and at its most august levels, to believe that government is always the problem never a solution, yet nevertheless comes to occupy all branches of government and signal fails to govern effectively or, worse, governs blatantly for the enrichment of those who need it least, it is hard not to imagine that a day of reckoning is near.9

References


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End Notes
1. As Edward Luce argues at persuasive length in his recent (2017) book.

2. Thomas Palley (2012: 186-208) argues that economists falsely calling themselves ‘Keynesian’ prevent what he calls ‘structural Keynesianism’ taking hold and thus obstruct political moves to a ‘shared prosperity’ global model.


4. It was startling to see the long-running European dream dissolve into grid-locked US politics. The title of their book says it all: it’s Even Worse Than It Looks: How neoliberalism survived the financial meltdown, Verso, New York.

5. Famous conservative intellectual William F. Buckley was instrumental in this process (see Buckley 1972).

6. Mann and Ornstein (2012) argue that Republicans are the problem in grid-locked US politics. The title of their book says it all: it’s Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System
Collided with the New Politics of Extremism. See also Skocpol and Williamson (2012).

7. The Ryancare (or Trumpcare) bill was withdrawn before a vote was taken because Caucus opposition made it clear it could not pass. After various conservative amendments it was narrowly passed on May 4, 2017, but was a non-starter for Senate Republicans.

8. Paul Krugman (2017) has warned, however, that thanks to Republican complaisance 'it can still happen here'.

9. Some hope that Trump's tenure might mark the last gasp of the old global order and the beginning of a new one based on different state-market arrangements (see Kaletsky 2017).

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**Fertility**

there
where space time ends
no-God is breathing

*Rae Desmond Jones, Summer Hill, NSW*

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**The cripple**

a red-faced old man strode ahead of her
With an expression of irritation & contempt
As she shuffled on cheap glassy tiles
But her cheekbones were high & proud
& her pale blue eyes skewered his back
So sharp that the shock of loathing
Must pierce the armour plating of his chest.

*Rae Desmond Jones, Summer Hill, NSW*
Populist Leadership

The rise of populists across the globe has been one of the most-discussed political phenomena of the twenty-first century. These ‘saviours of the people’, promising to make their countries great again, have emerged and enjoyed electoral success in systems as diverse as Australia, France, the Netherlands, India, Venezuela and the United States. But what makes a leader ‘populist’? Are they really charismatic as is often claimed? And are their movements and parties here to stay or will they crash and burn after the leader falls from grace? This article sets out the key defining features of populism and charisma, before looking in depth at the relationships between populist leaders and their parties in Italy and Switzerland. It concludes that, while populist leaders may come and go, populism in Western democracies appears here to stay.

What are ‘Populist’ Leaders?

Like many political concepts (think of the uses and abuses of the term ‘liberal’ for example), ‘populism’ has long suffered at the hands of politicians, journalists and scholars themselves. Unlike labels such as ‘conservative’ or ‘socialist’, very few leaders and parties over the past century have willingly referred to themselves as ‘populist’ and the term is now used almost exclusively pejoratively in political exchanges. Within these, ‘populist’ is synonymous with ‘irrational’, ‘playing to the crowd’ and ‘irresponsible’. Recalling Dylan Thomas’s definition of an alcoholic as ‘someone you don’t like who drinks as much as you’, politicians therefore deploy the label ‘populist’ to denigrate proposals or actions by their adversaries, such as giveaway budgets, however similar these measures may be to their own.

By far the greatest abusers of the term however have been the media, including the quality press. In a single week in 2013 for example, The Economist (which promotes its style guide as a bible of linguistic and terminological clarity) referred to Australia’s Tony Abbott, Iran’s Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the New York Mayor Bill de Blasio and the coup in Egypt all as ‘populist’.1 The myriad and contradictory ways in which the media uses the term were already well documented before the recent explosion of public and media interest in the topic (Bale et al. 2011). Since then, however, we have seen ‘populism’ in public discourse increasingly employed in inconsistent and undefined ways by journalists and commentators to denote any kind of appeal to the people, mild rebukes of elites, crowd-pleasing measures, new non-mainstream right or left-wing movements and ‘catch-all’ politics (McDonnell 2013a).

Nor are academics blameless for the conceptual confusion around the term. Peter Wiles’s observation...
'to each his own definition of populism, according to the academic axe he grinds' continues to have a certain validity over 40 years later (Wiles 1969: 166). In particular, scholars from different parts of the world tend to view their populist leaders as the archetypal ones and to define the concept through geographic and personality-specific lenses. We find this distinction especially between those working on Latin American populists (such as Juan Perón in Argentina or, more recently, Hugo Chávez in Venezuela) and those who study cases in Western democracies. For example, Kurt Weyland (2001: 14) asserts that 'populism is best defined as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers'. However, while this definition may fit those cases of Latin American populism on which Weyland is an expert, it does not apply to well-organised populist parties in Western Europe such as the Swiss People’s Party or the Danish People’s Party which, as we will discuss later, appear to be much less dependent on individual leaders for their long-term survival.

Despite the confusion outlined above, there has been an emerging consensus within the literature on populism in recent decades about the key features that most scholars agree must be present to define a party or leader as 'populist'. Firstly, populists – whether of Right or Left – claim to be standing with a virtuous and homogeneous ‘people’ against a set of bad ‘elites’ whose actions threaten the wellbeing and sovereignty of the people (Canovan 1981: 294). This moral division between ‘the people’ and ‘the elites’ is the basis for what is probably the most widely-used current definition (by Cas Mudde) of populism as ‘a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite”, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people’ (Mudde 2007: 23). Since populism is conceived of as a ‘thin-centred ideology’, this implies that we find it hand-in-hand with ‘thick’ ideologies of Left and Right or with similarly ‘thin’ ones such as nationalism (Freedon 1998). In other words, while a leader may be ‘left-wing populist’ like Syriza’s Alexis Tsipras in Greece or ‘right-wing populist’ like the Party for Freedom’s Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, populists will never be just ‘populist’.

Whatever their accompanying ideology, contemporary populist leaders present themselves as the ‘true’ democrats fighting to claw back the people’s sovereignty and control over its own destiny from corrupt, incompetent and far-away elites, be they in Canberra, Brussels or Washington. However, what popular control being restored by populists actually means when they obtain power tends to be at odds with the principles of liberal democracy (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2015). Hence, we have seen elected populist leaders such as Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, Viktor Orbán in Hungary and Donald Trump in the United States point to their mandate ‘from the people’ in order to challenge the checks and balances of liberal democracy (e.g. the independence of the judiciary or protections of minority rights) on the grounds that these restraints produce distortions of the people’s sovereign will.

Although such conceptions of ‘the people’ and ‘elites’ are common to populists of the Left and Right, right-wing populists display several specific features that we should note here. In particular, for right-wing populists, ‘the people’ are not only said to be oppressed by a series of political, cultural, media, financial and other elites, but are also construed as being under threat from ‘others’ who do not share the values of ‘the people’ (and, populists claim, are favoured by elites over their ‘own’ people). In recent decades, the key ‘others’ for right-wing populists in Western democracies like Marine Le Pen in France or Pauline Hanson in Australia have been immigrants (especially Muslims after the September 11 attacks in 2001), but in some cases the ‘others’ may also be homosexuals, ‘undeserving’ welfare recipients, members of the Romany community, Communist sympathisers or any group whose ethnic identity or religious and political beliefs can be depicted as setting them not just outside ‘the people’, but in clear opposition to them.

### Populist Leaders and Charisma

Having established what populism is, we now come to another slippery concept that is often used in relation to populist leaders: charisma. Indeed, many authors (myself included) have claimed that the presence of a charismatic leader is a cornerstone of populist parties (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008: 7; Weyland 2001: 22). Kirk Hawkins (2003: 140) even defines populism itself ‘as a charismatic mode of linkages combined with a democratic discourse that emphasises the embodiment of a popular will’. Similarly, Andrej Zaslove (2008: 324) includes in his conceptualisation of populism the presence of a charismatic leader ‘who claims to possess a direct and unmediated relationship with the people; he (or she) is of the people and speaks for the people’.

However, if we look more closely at how scholars of populism (again, including myself until a few years ago) have used the term ‘charismatic’ in relation to populist leaders, we can see that this is almost always based on our impressions about how leaders present themselves (as ‘saviours of the people’ endowed with extraordinary qualities) and how they perform in public (as galvanising speakers who can rouse crowds and do well on television) rather than on how their followers perceive them. Yet, this logic runs exactly contrary to what the classic texts on charisma tell us we should be doing. As the creator of the concept ‘charisma’ in the Social Sciences, Max Weber (1978: 242), specified: ‘what is alone important is how the individual is actually
regarded by those subject to charismatic authority, by his “followers” or “disciples”. Or, as a more recent scholar of charisma, Ann Ruth Willner (1984: 4–15), put it: ‘charisma is defined in terms of people’s perceptions of and responses to a leader. It is not what the leader is but what people see the leader as that counts in generating the charismatic relationship’. We therefore ‘must look to the responses of the followers, not to the leader, in order to know whether a charismatic relationship has been established’ (Willner 1984: 18).

So, charisma is about the follower’s perceptions of the leader. In particular, and again closely following the literature on charisma, we can say that a charismatic relationship is present between leader and follower when two key conditions are met: (1) the followers believe the leader is on a ‘mission’ and possesses unique powers; (2) followers completely and unquestioningly accept the authority of the leader. These beliefs, as we will see in the next section, are usually expressed in highly emotional terms. Intuitively, we think that populist leaders are ‘charismatic’ because they claim they are on a mission, their inner circle (or they themselves) claim they have unique powers and they often seek to control their parties with an iron fist. However, without examining whether these claims match the perceptions of their followers, we cannot know whether populist leaders really are charismatic or not. This will therefore be the subject of the next section.

Are Populist Leaders Always Charismatic?

So, are populist leaders always charismatic? I investigated this question in a study published in Political Studies a few years ago (McDonnell 2015). The analysis was based on interviews I had conducted in Italy and Switzerland between 2009 and 2011 with over 100 elected representatives and grassroots members of three populist parties whose leaders were widely said by both the media and fellow academics at the time to be ‘charismatic’. These leaders were Silvio Berlusconi of the People of Freedom/Forza Italia, Christoph Blocher of the Swiss People’s Party and Umberto Bossi of the Northern League.

What I found surprised me. I had specifically chosen to speak to people in the parties since, if charismatic relationships were present, they would surely be most easily found among the middle and lower ranks of the leaders’ own parties. Yet, only one of the three leaders – Umberto Bossi – really emerged as an indisputable case of a charismatic populist leader. Below I look briefly at what I found for the three leaders in turn.

In the case of Bossi, founder-leader of the Italian regionalist-populist party, the Northern League, I heard the same story right through the party, from MPs in Rome down to ordinary grassroots members in small provincial northern towns. There was clear evidence of a charismatic link between the populist leader and his followers. Interviewees spoke about Bossi in ways that indicated a strong emotional bond and a belief in his transformative and extraordinary powers. ‘He basically changed my vision of life’, one member told me when recalling the first time she had heard Bossi speak in public. Displaying a similar level of intensity, an elected representative in regional government commented that Bossi ‘is the only leader who is loved … completely loved.’ Almost all interviewees claimed that Bossi possessed a unique ‘sixth sense’ that enabled him to anticipate events. As one put it: ‘he can see further than a normal person can’. Another affirmed that Bossi ‘can foresee situations which many others would not even imagine’. That superior vision was why, as a grassroots member explained: ‘we have blind faith in him. Whatever he decides is fine with us.’ Others echoed this, saying that Bossi was ‘a prophet, not just a politician’. This view of the leader extended right through the party. When asked to describe Bossi, a key Northern League member of parliament said that he was ‘the one who gave us hope, who gave us the ideas and who still has that great capacity to read the future’. In short, those I spoke to considered Bossi to possess unique, almost superhuman, qualities; they believed he was on a mission to save northern Italy from the corruption and incompetence of Rome (and Brussels); none of them questioned his authority whatsoever and an intense emotional attachment was clearly and constantly present.

The case for considering Berlusconi a charismatic populist leader was less clear-cut. Interviewees did indeed profess their belief that he was on a mission to save Italy and that he possessed many unique qualities. One member said simply ‘he is a complete man’, while an MP emphasised Berlusconi’s mission (and consequent self-sacrifice) to save Italy, describing him as ‘the man who decided to enter politics even though he could have lived a quieter life as a businessman’. For many interviewees, Berlusconi’s successful career prior to entering politics meant that he was ideally placed to lead. As a grassroots member asserted: ‘he therefore has a better understanding of the country’s needs and what people really want. That is his unique ability: he really understands what people want’.

While interviewees accepted Berlusconi’s authority unconditionally, however, this seemed based not so much on their appreciation of his qualities or on any deep emotional attachment, but rather on the widespread acceptance that the party was his personal creation and possession. As one interviewee said, Berlusconi ‘decides the party stances whether you like it or not. If you like it, you stay. If you don’t, you leave. That is really clear’. An MP who was responsible for much of the party’s communications strategy explained: ‘This is a particular
type of party. There is a founder and then the party'. In fact, such was Berlusconi’s importance and role within the party that well over half of those I spoke to either openly said it would not have a future after Berlusconi’s political career ends or expressed significant doubts that it would. Overall, the types of extraordinary, visionary abilities attributed to the leader and the emotion with which followers talked about him that were present in the interviews with those in Bossi’s party were much less prominent in the interviews with Berlusconi’s followers. He was admired and unquestioned, but not revered in the way Bossi had been.

Finally, Christoph Blocher offered the weakest case for definition as a ‘charismatic’ populist leader. He was recognised by interviewees within his party as an excellent strategist and extremely intelligent. Echoing the views of many others, a cantonal MP told me: ‘He has enormous knowledge, if you have a chance to speak to him, then you will see that immediately: he knows so much!’ Like his fellow multi-millionaire Berlusconi, Blocher was also said by interviewees to have a ‘common touch’. For example, one described him as: ‘a very simple man, I mean, he’s very rich. But he seems like a simple citizen’. However, Blocher’s authority was certainly not unconditionally accepted. In fact, several interviewees criticised the media for depicting him as being more powerful within the party than was really the case. One complained that commentators ‘always think that Blocher is the boss’, but that the party was ‘much more’ than that. Another said simply that the focus on a single leader was ‘not exactly our culture … we are more for the party than for just one man’.

What emerged from this research is that even those populist leaders who have been most frequently described as ‘charismatic’ in the media and by scholars may in reality present the features of a charismatic relationship with their followers to very different degrees. As we have seen above, the extent to which those within parties view their populist leaders as ‘charismatic’ varies considerably. While ‘charisma’ and ‘populist leaders’ undoubtedly often go together, we should not presume they automatically do so.

**Is there Party Life beyond the Populist Leader?**

Our discussion above, in particular of Bossi and Berlusconi, raises another important question to which we now turn: given the position of some populist leaders within their parties, can these parties survive their leaders? Leadership change in any party of course is rarely simple, but it is likely to be much more complicated in populist parties with dominant leaders, many of whom have founded the party and have been its ‘face’ and ‘voice’ since the party’s creation. As Horiuchi et al. (2013: 8) show, ‘particularly powerful or otherwise iconic predecessors become hard acts to follow’ and we would expect populist leaders – whether genuinely charismatic or not – to fall into this category.

This question links to another contention that has been present in much of the theoretical literature on populism over the past decades: that populist parties are destined to be short-lived. One of the key scholars on populism, Margaret Canovan (2005: 89), wrote that ‘populist movements tend to be spasmodic, flaring up briefly and dying away almost as fast’. Likewise, Paul Taggart (2004: 270) asserted that: ‘populist politicians, movements or parties emerge and grow quickly and gain attention, but find it difficult to sustain that momentum and therefore will usually fade fast’.

While the implosion of Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party after its spectacular emergence in the late 1990s in Australia supported Canovan and Taggart’s view of populist parties as episodic creations, the trajectories of many of the more electorally successful ones in Western Europe over the past two decades suggest otherwise. To be sure, there are populist parties like those led by Berlusconi in Italy or Geert Wilders in the Netherlands whose lack of organisational structures and a solid, continuous grassroots presence suggests that they are not built to last (McDonnell 2013b; Mazzoleni and Voerman 2016). However, these ‘personal parties’ that are born and die with the leader now seem to be exceptions rather than the rule amongst populist parties in Western Europe.

Take, for example, the Northern League, the Danish People’s Party and the French National Front. We discussed earlier how those within the party he founded viewed Bossi. Nonetheless, since his resignation in 2012, the League has recovered from a disappointing 2013 general election result to reach new heights in the polls under Bossi’s successor, Matteo Salvini. Similarly, since the founder-leader of the Danish People’s Party, Pia Kjærsgaard handed over to Kristian Thulesen Dahl in 2012, the party has achieved its best ever results in the 2014 European Parliament election and the 2015 general election. Finally, while not a straightforward change of leadership given its ‘dynastic’ character, the replacement of Jean-Marie Le Pen at the head of the National Front with his daughter Marine in 2011 has heralded the beginning of the party’s rise in a series of elections, culminating most recently in her taking a third of the vote in the second round of the 2017 Presidential election (almost double her father’s best ever result).

In sum, populist parties and their leaders in the past often burned brightly before swiftly crashing to earth and some contemporary ones look likely to be as short-lived and/or
leader-dependent as much of the earlier scholarship on populism had envisaged (the second coming of Pauline Hanson and One Nation may well prove another case in point). However, the evidence from Western Europe now is that – while populist leaders are clearly extremely important for their parties – the lifespans of the latter may not always depend on the political lives of the former. In other words, these are increasingly now parties that can not only survive, but can thrive, under new leaders.

**Conclusion**

In his landmark volume on the topic, Paul Taggart (2000: 102), writes that ‘populism celebrates the ordinariness of its constituents and the extraordinariness of their leaders’. It exalts the common sense of the ‘good people’ and the uncommon capabilities of its leaders (who, nonetheless, remain ‘one of the people’). These leaders cast themselves as the savours of the people, fighting to save their prosperity, values and sovereignty from the hands of uncaring rapacious elites. Over the past two decades, we have seen this type of self-presentation in populist leaders as ideologically diverse as Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, and Pauline Hanson in Australia. Nonetheless, while populist leaders may depict themselves as ‘one of a kind’ charismatic leaders, I have shown in this article how they are not equally charismatic and that the parties they create do not have to disappear once their founders leave politics. Instead, as cases like the French National Front and the Italian Northern League demonstrate, populist parties are now confounding the expectations of those who thought they would be short-lived and/or tied to the fortunes of a single leader. Populist parties may be leader-centred, but these leaders can change without the parties necessarily suffering electorally or undergoing damaging internal splits. Or, to put it another way, populist leaders may come and go, but populism in Western democracies appears here to stay.

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**End Notes**

The Personalisation of Democratic Leadership? Evidence from small states

Jack Corbett and Wouter Veenendaal

Personalisation is said to be a new and defining feature of contemporary politics. The common presumption is that this trend has negative implications for democracy. We test this proposition against the experience of a group of countries for which hyper-personalisation is a ubiquitous feature of political life: small states. We examine six aspects of personalism: a) a strong connection between individual leaders and constituents; b) a limited private sphere; c) a limited role for ideology and programmatic policy debate; d) strong political polarisation; e) the ubiquity of patronage; f) the capacity of individual leaders to dominate all aspects of public life. In doing so we reveal that personalisation has both positive and negative effects. The result is a more nuanced and clear-eyed assessment of a trend that has important implications for all states around the world.

Introduction

The personalisation of politics is said to be on the rise, with the victory of Donald Trump emblematic of this broad shift across large, wealthy Western democracies. The success of anti-establishment or ‘populist’ leaders are said to be a symptom of a decline in traditional, party-based political representation. Across Europe and America voter turnout is decreasing, political parties are struggling to retain members, and professional politicians are increasingly despised (Stoker 2006; Hay 2007; Flinders 2012; Boswell and Corbett 2015). Combined, these trends are said to herald a new era of democratic government in these states, one in which, for better or worse, leaders matter more than ever.

The question for scholars is what the impact of this shift will be on the form and function of democratic government. Can democracy survive this onslaught of charismatic, anti-establishment individuals? And, if so, what might hyper-personalised democracy look like? Speculation and conjecture abound. One common assumption is that this new era is unprecedented. To be sure, democracy has survived without bureaucratised parties and professional politicians in the past. But that was before television, let alone the internet and a relentless 24-hour news cycle. Contemporary democracies appear to be trapped in a cycle (or spiral?) in which they place more and more stock in their leaders while at the same time making it harder and harder for them to do their job well (Runciman 2013).

The problem with these assumptions is that they have been barely tested empirically. Obviously, large, wealthy Western democracies are not alone in the democratic universe. Democracy can and does exist in other parts of the world, and often without the bureaucratised parties and professional politicians that are said to be ubiquitous features of modern government. Conventionally, democratic practice in other parts of the world is largely ignored because it is defined by its deficits; it is a poor, incomplete imitation of the real thing. This is no longer (and probably never was) true. If we want to provide a clear-eyed assessment of the challenges and opportunities presented by recent changes then, more than ever, we now need to pay attention and learn from the full spectrum of democratic experience. And while non-Western democracies are often implicitly or explicitly regarded as lagging behind the West in terms of democratic development, perhaps they could also be seen as frontrunners or prototypical cases, in the sense that they are already experiencing the phenomena that Western democracies are now starting to face.

In this article we attempt such a move. If the personalisation of politics is the defining feature of this new democratic age then we have the most to learn from those democratic states which experience highly personalised politics. The cases we choose are extreme examples: the world’s smallest states (in total 39 countries that have populations of 1 million or less). These states are the archetypal ‘face-to-face’ societies, in which politics has always been (and probably always will be) hyper-personalised. What’s more, small states are, statistically speaking, much more likely to be stable and long lasting democracies than their larger states, at least according to Freedom House and the World Governance Indicator for political stability (Anckar 2002). But, while this fact alone might assuage many fears and even prompt some to laud the merits of devolution, decentralisation and subsidiarity, we also sound a note of caution: hyper-personalised democracies work differently to larger mass-party democracies. Small tends to be democratic, but often in a markedly illiberal way (Baldacchino 2012; Erk and Veenendaal 2014).
This equivocal relationship between state size, democracy and liberalism has been central to a long tradition of democratic thought. Plato believed that the ideal size of a republic was 5,040 citizens, a figure reached by an exacting set of calculations. Rousseau’s Geneva had a population of 20,000, larger than modern day Pacific states Nauru or Tuvalu (population 10,000), and roughly the same size as Palau. For these thinkers, when it comes to politics, small is unequivocally beautiful because it ensures a sense of social cohesion and homogeneity in the polis. The alternative argument, most famously associated with the American founding fathers, is that smallness stifles pluralism and dissent. From this perspective, liberal freedoms are best guaranteed by large states in which ‘ambition could be made to counteract ambition’.

To test these alternative predictions we examine political practice in small states along six dimensions that we associate with the personalisation of politics. We draw on the findings of our own work on this topic over several years (see Veenendaal 2014; Corbett 2015a; Veenendaal and Corbett 2015; Corbett and Veenendaal forthcoming). This work has been reported on extensively elsewhere so here we simply summarise the relevant findings as they relate to the personalisation of politics. We conclude by returning to the normative discussion about the democratic merits of highly-personalised politics. The experience of small states provides evidence to support both the small is 'beautiful' and small is 'despotic' claims; small states tend to be democratic but often in a markedly illiberal way. And, given the diversity of the 39 states we consider – they have varying levels of wealth, political institutions, colonial legacies, and geographic locations – hyper-personalisation is the most obvious explanation for this. The upshot is a more nuanced and clear-eyed assessment of these trends that both assuages some of the most alarmist fears while at the same time highlighting the distinct limits of this type of personalised government for those who believe in the promise of liberal democratic ideals.

### The Personalisation of Politics: a six-part distinction

The literature on personalisation is diverse and multifaceted (Rahat and Sheafer 2007; McAllister 2007; Karvonen 2010). Historically it can be traced back to Max Weber’s (1978) description of ‘charismatic authority’ but today it encompasses work on the declining influence of mainstream parties and the parallel rise of radical left and right wing populism in Europe (e.g. Albertazzi and McDonnell 2015; Moffitt and Tormey 2014), the increasing presidentialisation of parliamentary systems (e.g. Heffernan 2003; Poguntke and Webb 2005; Dowding 2013), and the intensification of celebrity politics (e.g. Street, 2004; 2012; Wood et al. 2016). Drawing on the substantial literature on personalisation in large states, we define this phenomenon as including: a) strong connection between individual leaders and constituents; b) a limited private sphere; c) a limited role for ideology and programmatic policy debate; d) strong political polarisation; e) the ubiquity of patronage; f) the capacity of individuals to dominate all aspects of public life. We do not claim that these features of highly personalised politics are unique to small states. But we do argue that their impact is magnified by the effects of small size. We therefore address each in turn with specific reference to how politics is practised in small states. In doing so we focus on the features of democratic practice that

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**Table 1: All States with Populations Below 1 Million, Clustered by Region**

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This table lists all states with populations below 1 million, clustered by region.
are common to the states we consider (the differences between them are also important but we cannot cover them all off here).

1) **Strong connections between individual leaders and constituents.**

In most of the small states we analysed, individual citizens have direct and unfettered access to their political representatives. The smallness of the population, and the circumscribed social sphere to which all actors are confined entails that voters and politicians are likely to constantly meet and talk to each other. That is, rather than being mediated by party systems, in small states voters and politicians have considerable opportunities for direct, personal contact (Dahl and Tufte 1973: 87; see also Anckar 1999). This tendency is amplified by the overlapping private and professional roles that politicians undertake (Ott 2000). Politicians are more than just legislators: they are family members, friends, neighbours, or colleagues. a

On the one hand, this allows for direct and reciprocal communication between citizen and politicians, potentially enhancing the quality of political representation. On the other hand, it results in a strongly politicised society, and is likely to foster particularistic politics (Veenendaal 2013a). In most larger states, particularly in the digital age, direct contact between ordinary citizens and public officials remains unattainable, regardless of trends towards political personalisation. The sheer size of electorates in larger states means that political officeholders simply do not have the time and resources to communicate directly with all their constituents. This particular dimension of personalisation in small states is therefore clearly not part of the trend towards personalised politics in larger states.

2) **A limited private sphere**

Contemporary democratic politics in large states is characterised by a distinction between public and private, with the institutions that define the former regulating conduct in the latter. In small states, the private sphere is dramatically reduced while the public sphere is expanded beyond the narrow confines of formal institutions. As a consequence, small states tend to have relatively weak or superficial formal institutional structures, while the influence of their informal political dynamics and culture tends to be easier to observe. The result is a remarkably transparent political system but one in which clear lines of accountability are blurred and concern with corruption magnified (Corbett 2015b: 63-65). Overlapping public and private relationships between citizens and politicians entail that political divisions often influence private relationships, as a result of which politics often strongly affects people’s daily lives. In the smallest states, political allegiances are often deduced from family names, as a result of which political anonymity is strongly reduced. Again, simply for numerical reasons this particular feature of political personalisation in small states is unlikely to be emulated in larger democracies that experience a trend towards political personalisation.

3) **The limited role of ideology and programmatic policy debate**

In small states, political leaders are often elected because of who they are rather than what they stand for. As a result, political contestation focuses on the qualities and characteristics of individual politicians rather than party manifestos (Richards 1982; Veenendaal 2013b). While most small states do have political parties, these groupings generally do not have a substantive or ideological political agenda, and are mostly strongly centred around their political leader. Indeed, in a number of Pacific Island states, political parties are virtually absent from the political scene (Corbett 2015c; Veenendaal 2016). In other small states, parties are often political vehicles of individual political leaders, helping them to realise their electoral strategies and maintain their patron-client networks. This element of personalisation is a key component in discussions about the personalisation of politics in larger states, and in this respect politics in larger states might indeed become more similar to the small states surveyed here. However, in larger states the focus on individual politicians often primarily revolves around the charisma or personality of the politician in question. While these attributes are unquestionably important in small states as well, it is often also the personal connection or kinship relation that determines people’s support for a specific politician. In this sense, while both small and large states increasingly witness a decline of ideology and a focus on personal characteristics of politicians, the type of characteristics that persuade voters to support an individual politician might still be different.

4) **Strong political polarisation**

While the lack of ideology in small states could presumably result in a more consensual and harmonious political environment, our analysis reveals that politics in small states is often marked by strong polarisation, antagonism, and longstanding rivalries between individual politicians. In combination with the lack of a substantive political platform that could serve as a unifying force, polarisation often results in political instability in small states, as manifested by frequent government falls, fragmentation of political parties, and political splits. While the negative effects of personalisation on political stability have been identified in larger democracies as well (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Poguntke and Webb 2005; Mainwaring and Torcal 2006), comprehensive studies on the effect of personalisation on polarisation remain lacking. However,
the controversial political roles of Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, Donald Trump in the United States, and Viktor Orbán in Hungary suggest that individual leaders can indeed serve as a wedge between groups of voters. Certainly, this is what happens in small states where political competition between personalities is often fiercely antagonistic (Richards 1982; Veenendaal 2013b). In combination with the limited role of parties, this also potentially creates political instability, as political alliances are regularly broken, leading to intense fluctuation between periods of stable but largely authoritarian rule and periods of intense instability when government changes hands several times between elections.

5) The ubiquity of clientelism and patronage

In small states nobody is faceless. Rather than embodying a legal rational order, politicians in small states typically experience considerable pressure from constituents to personally provide material largesse. Close connections and overlapping public and private relations between citizens and politicians in small states generally translate into particularistic politics, among which clientelism, patronage, and nepotism predominate. In Caribbean small states, clientelism and patronage can be seen as substitutes for absent social welfare provisions, and are therefore sometimes regarded as the driving force of Caribbean democracy (Edie 1994; Duncan and Woods 2007). The smallness of electoral districts may result in a handful of votes making the difference between winning and losing an election, which increases politicians’ willingness to attract potential supporters by promising future benefits. Failure to do so often leads to electoral defeat. Patronage in the public sector is also common in small states, and public sector appointments are often made on the basis of political loyalties or personal connections (Benedict 1967; Sutton 2007).

Especially in larger new democracies, the link between personalised politics and patron-client linkages has long been recognised (O’Donnell 1994; Kitschelt 2000; Van de Walle 2002; Helme and Levitsky 2004), and the relative weakness of patron-client linkages in advanced Western democracies is often attributed to the predominance of substantive, programmatic and ideological forms of political contestation. So while the connection between personalisation and patronage politics surfaces in larger states as well, it is important to point out that patron-client linkages in small states are often very direct in nature, whereas clientelism in larger states like India, Indonesia, or Brazil requires vast networks of ‘brokers’ to create and sustain a particularistic network between voters and politicians. The key point is that while patronage may be synonymous with small state politics, we venture that it is a much more effective system of exchange in these settings relative to large states. In addition, due to the close links between citizens and politicians and the absence of political anonymity in small states, the prevalence of patron-client linkages also entails that citizens have a very personal stake in election results. In this sense, clientelism and patronage can also partially explain higher levels of voter turnout in small states (cf. Blais and Dobrzynska 1998).

6) The capacity of individuals to dominate all aspects of public life

As Paul Sutton underscores (2007: 203-204), ‘small states can be dominated by one or several individuals that can be difficult to remove from office, particularly when they have assembled powerful patronage machines and/or have concentrated the coercive power of the state in their hands’ (cf Ryan 1999). As this quote underscores, the concentration of power is a common feature of small states, and our analysis has revealed that this is true for both democratic and the few authoritarian small states (e.g Brunei and Djibouti), as well as those with different types of electoral system (majoritarian, parliamentary, presidential, and semi-presidential). An expanded public sphere and the absence of specialist roles creates opportunities for individuals to dominate politics in a manner that is virtually impossible in large states. The limited pool of qualified people entails that politicians in small states often combine multiple roles and functions, thereby enhancing their political clout. Pluralism is uncomfortable and dissent is often stifled while dependent constituents can be easily bought off (Peters 1992). The difference with larger states is that the concentration of power in the hands of single persons or a select few individuals is commonly associated with authoritarian regimes, while larger democracies are often characterised by profound horizontal and vertical decentralisation. So, while power concentration may be a feature of personalisation in hybrid regimes and authoritarian states, so far it is commonly not included in discussions about personalisation in larger, advanced democracies.

The augmented power of single political leaders can also be explained by the relative weakness of institutions that are supposed to function as a check on executive power. Since government is often the only professionally organised institution in small states, the executive tends to assume a very dominant position vis-à-vis institutions like parliament, the media, the judiciary, the bureaucracy, and civil society organisations. Many small state parliaments tend to function as rubber stamps, and do not really succeed in fulfilling their role of holding the government accountable. In similar fashion, media outlets in small states tend to be weak or strongly tied to political parties and individual leaders (Puppis 2009). In most small states jobs are either directly or indirectly controlled by the government, which further increases its opportunities...
to reward supporters and punish opponents. Finally, also within governments of small states, power tends to be strongly centralised in the hands of individual heads of state or heads of government. This is particularly the case in Caribbean small states, where prime ministers tend to have extremely powerful positions, also in relation to the other members of their cabinet (Sutton 1999; Ryan 1999).

In sum, this review of the dimensions of personalisation in small states reveals some profound differences between our concept and the broader usage of the term personalisation in the academic literature. While academic studies on personalisation in larger states primarily refer to a lack of ideology and a greater focus on individual politicians, our concept also included features like polarisation, patronage, the concentration of power, and the proximity between citizens and politicians. In this sense, our definition covers a much broader array of political characteristics than existing publications on larger states. In turn this provides for a more nuanced and clear-eyed analysis of the strengths and limitations of personalised politics, a phenomenon of growing importance to democracies across the globe.

Conclusion: The strengths and limits of politics in ‘face-to-face’ societies

Our analysis reveals that a) the personalisation of politics is ubiquitous in small states; and b) it has both positive and negative effects. The familiarity between citizens and politicians has often been regarded as a democracy-enhancing political feature, as it creates better opportunities for political representation and responsiveness (Dahl and Tufte 1973; Diamond and Tsaklik 1999; Ancar 2002). In addition, this closeness can foster political awareness, efficacy, and participation among citizens of small settings, because political decisions often have a direct impact on their personal lives (Anckar 2008). Moreover, the close connections between citizens and politicians provides a formidable obstacle to authoritarianism, as their extensive social connections prevent politicians from resorting to oppression or violence.

But, it is also clear that personalism simultaneously presents obstacles to democratic development. The relative absence of ideology and the focus on political individuals undermines substantive representation as politicians cannot be held accountable for their political actions. Patron-client linkages create social and economic dependency (Peters 1992) and strong polarisation and personal clashes can breed political instability and turmoil, and in extreme cases undermine cooperation. Moreover, the opportunities for political leaders to gather vast powers carries the risk of authoritarianism or dictatorial politics (Baldacchino 2012). In such instances, the reasons why some countries take a more democratic path than others is largely the product of contingent combinations of key personalities and circumstance.

Not all of these lessons are relevant for large states. Indeed, in some respects the benefits of smallness both exacerbate and offset the consequences of personalisation in small states. Indeed, hyper-personalised politics might prove to be a better outcome than the combination of limited ideology, polarisation, and leader dominance increasingly common to large, wealthy Western democracies. In which case, both the ancient Greeks and the American founding fathers are correct, albeit for different reasons; small may be democratic but often in a remarkably illiberal way. So, these extreme cases highlight that this type of hyper-personalised democracy is both possible and yet very different to the experience of North America and much of Europe. The lesson is that rather than personalisation precipitating a crisis of democracy, we contend it presents as a crisis for a particular type of democratic politics common to a handful of large and rich states.

Our analysis also has implications for how we study highly personalised politics. We drew on our own predominantly qualitative empirical work on the practice of politics in small states here. Our rationale is that because formal institutions are often sidestepped in small states, formal indicators and measures of regime categorisation do not tell us a great deal about how politics actually works in these settings. Instead, we probe the informal aspects of politics in small states, including the importance of family networks and community allegiances. The key point is that personalised politics requires a different approach than the predominantly quantitative analysis lionised by much of the discipline. New modes of politics may require new empirical as well as conceptual tools. By studying democracy in small states we learn something about large states, too.

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Despite recent events in Australian federal politics, the function of opposition is not actually to destroy governments. It should be regarded as a normally functioning part of parliamentary democracy, as important as government itself. Democracy is grounded in the belief that since the foundation is the people themselves, no selected, partial government can be good enough to rule in perpetuity. This does indeed imply the need to change governments from time to time, but in orderly fashion, as one government is replaced by a team already groomed for office and experienced, from the desks of ‘shadow ministers’, in dealing with the problems of the time. As human, therefore fallible, institutions, susceptible to the blandishments of power, governments must be kept under constant scrutiny, and the main function of opposition, besides preparing for office, is to be vigilant over all that government does, in the name of the people.

In his Quarterly Essay of 2012, David Marr pronounced that ‘Tony Abbott is the most successful Opposition leader of the last forty years’, and so raised serious questions about the measure of successful leadership in opposition. Undoubtedly, Abbott was the most destructive Leader of the Opposition since Malcolm Fraser in 1975, since he believed the job entailed little else than the dismantling of the government of the country. But such destructiveness cannot be all that there is to oppositional leadership in a properly functioning two party democracy. Indeed, if it is, then that democracy is not itself working. What successful oppositional leadership demands is Constitutional Opposition.

Leadership in opposition has not always been at the forefront of political study, although opposition itself received a hefty boost by the publication of Robert A. Dahl’s Political Opposition in Western Democracies in 1965. Unfortunately for Dahl, he lived in a country where the political system did not allow for the orderly conduct of political opposition, a fact that he had to admit: ‘A distinctive, persistent, unified structural opposition scarcely exists in the United States’ (Dahl 1965: 34).1 Dahl’s collection did, however, draw attention to the fact that orderly political opposition is integral to – essential to – a democracy, and is best served within two-party systems of government (McLennan 1973: 16-20; Potter 1965: 8; Duverger 1964: 286). To claim that opposition is integral to democracy is to imply that disruption and destructive behaviour are not conducive to smooth-running democratic government. Giovanni Sartori (1976) usefully characterised constructive or collaborative opposition as ‘constitutional’ opposition, while efforts to disrupt, which would threaten the existence of the system itself – ‘irresponsible opposition’ – could be called ‘contestation’. Plainly, Tony Abbott’s conduct as Leader of the Opposition did not result in the destruction of the system, but he gave every appearance of not caring whether it did or did not. To call his term ‘successful’ is surely problematic in terms of constitutional opposition. Undoubtedly Fraser’s involvement in the conspiracy (Hocking 2016) to destroy the elected Whitlam Government in 1975 severely threatened the very nature of responsible government in Australia.

The Functions of Opposition

Assuming that Australia is, generally speaking, a successful democracy, it is as well to consider opposition under the category of ‘constitutional opposition’. In this context, the office has four main functions:

a) to articulate grievances expressed against government executive action and legislation, to gather them as far as possible into a coherent case, and to express them forcefully to the government and to the public;

b) to criticise government policy according to the particular ideals and philosophies the Opposition has undertaken to represent;

c) to provide a practical political education for novice politicians of their own ideological stamp, and to groom aspiring talent for possible office in the ministry;

d) to form a coherent and well-prepared alternative government, standing ‘in the wings’ and ready to take centre stage as the government of the country when called upon by the electorate to do so. As J. S. Mill...
Once averred, government standards may fall; ‘Both teachers and learners go to sleep at their post, as soon as there is no enemy in the field’ (Mill in Punnett 1973: 3).

Yet the central function of the Opposition is b) to oppose what the government is doing. Constructive opposition may imply approving much of what the government puts forward, but an opposition would be failing in its function if it did not find reason to criticise much of what a government proposes. I do not here mean that every act of opposition should be designed to bring a government down. Yet the very notion of democracy presumes that all governments, as human institutions, are prone to error, and in the extreme, to the corruptions of power. Democracy, as ‘the people’s power’, signifies that no government is good enough to rule in perpetuity, and that, since all the citizens are to be represented to and by the government, then governments must be brought to taking all viewpoints into consideration. It is the chief function of opposition to see that the government of the day continues to act on behalf of the people. In this light, the Leader of the Opposition fulfils the most democratic function in the state, and much less emphasis should be placed on their failure at election to gain the prime ministership.

The Two-Party System

In searching for coherence in policy formation and in criticism of government action, the two-party system is an ideal instrument for the formation of government and opposition. At election time Australia is prone to a proliferation of party labels, especially in voting for the Senate, however, minor parties can become significant players in the interplay of politics. The Democratic Labor Party was a significant force in the 1950s. Following the constitutional crisis of 1975, the Australian Democrats also played an influential role in criticising government policy from a standpoint different from that of the official Opposition. More recently, the Greens promoted policies that challenged the consciences of the major parties on environmental issues, and its first leader, Senator Bob Brown, was a considerable force in Australian politics. In the second decade of the twenty-first century the Greens Leader, Senator Richard Di Natale, brings a powerful intellect to the parliamentary and wider public debate. More of an ephemeral and distractive nature, the Palmer United Party’s star passed through the political firmament like a dying comet. Subsequently its place was assumed by Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party; the ‘one nation’ apparently signingifying a homogeneous population dominated by ex-British colonists of Caucasian origin – the ‘Pauline Hanson’s’ denoting an inordinate focus on the personality of the Leader. Many other passing names of parties could be mentioned, but the significant fact of the Australian political system is that it is dominated by two sides: the Australian Labor Party and the Coalition between the Liberal Party of Australia and the National Party. The relative balance between them creates such stability as we have. Outside observers have been content to call the Australian a stable two-party system. If one or other of the parties is perpetually dominant, the system is not likely to function to its potential. It is one thing for an opposition party to articulate views other than those espoused by the government, but electors not favouring the government are likely to feel alienated if they are permanently excluded from the prospect of seeing policies they favour enacted. This situation applied to Australia between 1949 and 1972 when there was one ruling party. For this reason, alternation in power between government and opposition is desirable. Sartori offered the compromise:

Alternation should be loosely understood as implying the expectation rather than the actual occurrence of governmental turnover. Alternation only means, then, that the margin between the two parties is close enough, or that there is sufficient credibility to the expectation that the party in opposition has a chance to oust the governing party (Sartori 1976: 186).

It is incumbent on the leader of the opposition to keep the party electorally competitive.

The Executive Mind

It is this obligation on the part of the leader that compromises the prime function of opposing, and returns emphasis to the function d) above, namely, to prepare the team for government. The temptation here is to exaggerate the preparation for government into an all-out war of destruction against the incumbents. When this point is reached, opposition becomes more like contestation of the system and a threat to orderly democratic government. Opposition leaders may then prematurely adopt the well-known attributes of the Executive Mind, and that is to attain and hold onto power at all costs. As Bernard Crick discovered when he was canvassing options for the reform of the British Parliament, the Executive Mind tends to belittle the procedures of Parliament and to consider them something of a waste of time. ‘To them Parliament is a pretty futile place’ (Crick 1968: 4). On the government side, this means taking action wherever possible without reference to Parliament and avoiding public scrutiny. On the opposition side, this means disrespecting the common courtesies that democratic procedures ought to imply and using every opportunity to disrupt proceedings. Parliament is then likely to sink in the public esteem, and people become inured to treating the whole enterprise of politics with contempt.
Constructive Opposition

A large amount of legislation passes through the Parliament without controversy; that is, the Opposition has ‘waved’ through the legislation without rancorous debate. ‘Most legislation isn’t controversial and receives bipartisan support’ (van Onselen 2013). During the Labor prime ministership of Julia Gillard, the Government passed 482 pieces of legislation, only 13 per cent of which was opposed by the Coalition: ‘the opposition, supporting 87 per cent of legislation passed, is on a par with Labor’s record in opposition during the Howard years’ (van Onselen 2013). Van Onselen’s intention is to show that the contested legislation of the Labor Government of Gillard failed the tests of good quality and popular support, and that the Coalition Opposition was more of a success. Since this was a period of deliberate disruption of Parliament, the matter is best left for a subsequent discussion.

Instances of relative goodwill between the major alignments are discoverable, however. In office Malcolm Fraser introduced legislation that was intended to make the Canberra Public Service more responsive to ministers. It was implemented amid a rhetoric denigrating the Public Service, who were often referred to by members of the public as ‘fat cats’. The reforms were unsuccessful as public servants became resentful, unresponsive, even obstructive (Thompson 1991: 128-9). Bureaucratic responsiveness to ministerial direction was of interest to both sides, however, and in opposition Labor under Bill Hayden and Bob Hawke prepared for long-term consolidation of the Public Service. Hawke as prime minister was equally concerned with ministerial control of the Public Service, including attaching recruitment of public servants to ministerial financial control.

A more striking case of collaborative planning from opposition were the Hawke-Keating economic reforms. The need for freeing up the Australian economy had been sensed by members of the Fraser Government, but the Prime Minister had not had the courage to undertake the risk of introducing any reform. Fraser Government ministers, such as Jim Carlton, ‘a passionate advocate for economic reform, was said to have strongly pushed for market-based and competitive policies under Fraser, but retained a reputation for his gentle-manly approach to public life’ (Wallace 2016). The Fraser Government commissioned the Campbell Report that recommended sweeping changes to the financial system, and it seems that Fraser and his then treasurer, John Howard, blamed each other for failing to act on the recommendations.

The planning for reform fell to Paul Keating, who was to become Hawke’s treasurer. He had been contemplating radical change since his first entry to the ministry under Whitlam (O’Brien 2015: 144-7). Keating is credited with a peculiar instinct for economics, which helped bring to Australia a tidal wave of economic modernisation from the mid-1980s: a floated dollar, deregulated banking system, the end of centralized wage-fixing, the privatization of the Commonwealth Bank and Qantas, and the beginnings of Reserve Bank independence (Holden 2013).

Keating’s courage, at first coupled with Hawke’s, and then in his own right as prime minister, has been accredited to his determination to expend ‘political capital’ (Mast and Barry 2013), while his economic reform, latterly characterised by critics as an exercise in neo-liberalism (see e.g. Quiggin 2001), was undertaken in support of public justice, since ‘heavy regulation and high tariffs benefited capital and hurt workers’ (Holden 2013). He convinced his biographer that Labor’s mission was ‘to establish a healthy social democracy’ (Watson 2003: 240).

For present purposes, this episode is given some emphasis, both for the far-reaching influence of the Keating reforms (whether entirely beneficial or not), and for evidence of a measure of bipartisan support. Most certainly, Jim Carlton was applauding from the Opposition benches, and the Leader of the Opposition at the time, John Howard, claimed (with Keating denying it) to have assisted the acceptance of the reform passage.

Successful Opposition

It will be evident that Marr’s assessment of the Abbott Opposition is not here held to be the true measure of success. My scope is limited to one example, but the prime candidate for successful opposition in Australian politics should be Robert G. Menzies, who created from Opposition the most successful ruling party in Australian history, the Liberal Party of Australia. His beginnings in high office were not auspicious. He had a bitter and debilitating feud with the Leader of the Country (later National) Party, Earle Page. He first served as prime minister from the leadership of the late Joe Lyons’s United Australia Party, and led Australia into the Second World War. After serving four months in Churchill’s war cabinet in London, he returned to a party that withdrew its support from him, although he continued to serve in Fadden’s short-lived ministry. After the defeat of Fadden, Menzies returned to the UAP leadership in place of the ageing W. M. Hughes.

It was in opposing John Curtin’s Labor Government that Menzies took the leading part in the formation of a new party. With others, he observed that the UAP, having been founded largely to confront the trials of the Great
Depression, and being poorly organised, had outlived its usefulness, and Menzies was exercised by the failure of Earle Page’s Country Party to honour the Coalition and support his UAP ministry. Yet undoubtedly the Labor Party was the touchstone of his actions. Labor came into being in the 1890s in support of labour organisations that had struggled to fight the system of exploitative contracts for labouring work, and had been attacked by the state governments controlled by powerful moneymaking interests. So the context of Australian politics before and during Federation embraced two versions of liberalism: free trade and protection. Its precocious success in the first decade of the twentieth century, its commitment to ‘solidarity’ and its refusal to join ministries of persuasion differing from its own, set its stamp on the new national Parliament. By 1909 the economic parties were forced into collaboration against Labor’s demands, coalescing into a ‘Fusion’ ministry which eventually became the first Liberal Party (Loveday et al. 1977: 424-49).

In 1944, Menzies called a major convention of all who feared the rising spectre of socialism, and made it explicit that a new force was needed to combat the coherence, unity of purpose and martial organisation of Labor. Menzies’s address to the conference, resonant of the times, spoke of political ‘warfare’ between two armies, one unified and disciplined, the other suffering well-publicised disunity (Starr 1980: 74-5). In all this he was careful to embrace Country Party members who would retain their identity but enter into the discipline of the unified Coalition.

The measure of Menzies’s success, though heavily defeated at the 1946 election, was that he was able to form the government of the greatest longevity in Australian federal history. Before the 1949 election, Menzies in opposition organised a strategic campaign against Ben Chifley’s intention to continue wartime controls in order to effect wartime reconstruction, and especially his plan to nationalise the financial system (Brett 1992: 36-8, 45-6). He geared his campaign towards the ‘forgotten people’, neither the rich elite nor the working class. Although he eschewed the very idea of class, he reflected in his person the ideals of middle-Australia (Brett 2003: 125-8). Menzies won easily and his party began an unbroken rule of nearly twenty-three years.

Sartori noticed this one-sided Liberal success in discussing the desirability of alternation in the two-party system and he probably had Australian federal politics in mind when he said bipartism was served even by the matched competitiveness of the rival parties. This was certainly true, since the 1961 federal elections produced a majority of votes for Labor while the idiosyncrasies of the electoral system produced a paper-thin majority in the House for Menzies. In the Australian case, Sartori’s optimism about the two-party system proved to be misplaced, since the Liberal-Country Coalition took on the robes of natural ruler, and during those long years it collectively forgot what opposition entailed; equally, while the Opposition under Gough Whitlam was probably better prepared on the policy front than any other Australian opposition, it was totally inexperienced in the complicated politics of government. This combination of circumstances produced a most anomalous situation in Australian political history – the turbulent years from 1972 to 1975.

Contestation

Contestation is here adopted for a behaviour that is neither constitutional nor ‘institutionalised’ opposition (Crick 1971: 39). One might be overdramatic in likening the Opposition in 1975 to a wrecking ball, but it is fair to say that ‘contestation’ is determined on destruction of the government of the day without a care for the stability or survival of the system. That the system has survived is more a matter of luck, and a large measure of patience (or pusillanimity?) on the affected side, than to any conscious repair-work.

First, we may set the scene by reference to a more recent example of contestation – that referred to at the very beginning of this essay. We must concede at least, with Marr, that Abbott’s term of opposition was successful in one of the functions of opposition: namely, getting his team into office – although one can scarcely say that he prepared it adequately for the task of government. Abbott first ousted Malcolm Turnbull as Leader of the Opposition on the grounds that his attitude to climate change, and his proposed policies to combat global warming, were veering too closely to the position occupied by Labor. Abbott himself was an inveterate global warming denier, and once publicly declared that climate change science was ‘crap’. In this he was joined by enough of his colleagues to unseat Turnbull in December 2009.

Abbott led the Opposition through the latter stages of the first prime ministership of Kevin Rudd, and through Julia Gillard’s entire term. His intentions were destructive. As he learnt during the anti-republic campaign, ‘you don’t need to win the argument, you just need to blow it up’ (Feik 2015: 10). And so also with an opposing government. As Feik goes on, Abbott never showed any inclination for compromise or negotiation. When you’re a fighter, everything becomes a battle, and so it is that he fought boat people, unionists, environmentalists, civil rights defenders, the national broadcaster, the law’ (ibid.) In an interesting analysis, Tony Lynch credits Abbott with success at advancing the cause of neoliberalism and, in concert with Marr, winning government. This latter opinion may have had just a touch of irony. Postulating a totalist neoliberal political context, Lynch affirms that
what Abbott did ‘was to expose the empty sentimentalism of a bleeding heart lesser evilism through a project of incessant and unremitting assaults on pretty much all that a left neoliberal government does’ (Lynch 2016: 59). Lynch is of course right to emphasise the neoliberal policy stance of the Labor side of politics, but a constitutionalist, rather than a political economy, approach might suggest to would-be Labor supporters that they have access to a history, and a powerful ideology, among the party’s buried resources. In the present context, ‘incessant and unremitting assaults’ do not conduce to productive and stable representative government.

Few people now do not execrate Abbott’s personal attacks on Prime Minister Julia Gillard. Many of his outbursts caused widespread revulsion. At the policy level, his attack on the carbon price legislation was given some credibility in that Gillard had once declared that one would not be introduced – a decision reversed when she made fellow cause with the Greens in Parliament. Perhaps Abbott had learnt the subversion of meanings from John Howard, who had stood the term ‘elite’ on its head. The ‘carbon tax’ had been introduced to lower the impact of toxic green gas emissions but Abbott turned the term ‘toxic’ against Gillard, associating her, rather than ameliorating climate change, with the ‘toxic tax’. The distortion of meanings has disrupted politics from ancient Athens to modern Abbott (Thucydides in White 1984: 59-92; cf. Uhr 2005). Yet the abuse that Abbott rained upon Gillard was unconscionable. It seemed as though he was personally offended by the choice of a woman as prime minister, yet Julia Gillard’s achievement was a significant milestone in Australian constitutional history. She deserved honour for that achievement, and criticism for her policies. Neither should entail personal abuse. Yet she was denounced by Abbott’s followers as a ‘witch’ and by a worse malediction that rhymed with the first. Abbott made no attempt to distance himself. His every effort was directed to delegitimising her position. As others in the Coalition have declared, one does ‘what it takes’. In strict terms Abbott’s outrages were not unconstitutional, but they were undoubtedly system damaging in that they effected to make a woman’s position in the prime ministership almost untenable, whereas our system of representative government requires equality before the law, even electoral law.

In that sense, Abbott’s Opposition was system undermining— ‘contestation’. Yet he was a rank amateur compared with his predecessor, Malcolm Fraser. Fraser’s latter-day conversion to a social-liberal position does not erase the stain of system disruption undertaken in the coup d’état that was the dismissal of the Whitlam Government. The details of the events have been recounted and analysed endlessly, and need not be rehearsed here. None of this analysis, however, has led to an appreciation of the damage caused to the system or the still potentially volatile situation in politics to this day. For Fraser taught that it was all right to break the rules relating to the fair conduct of government and opposition. Australia inherited a set of institutions and political understandings from imperial Britain where there was no written constitution in the American sense. Although the Australian system was codified to accommodate the relatively novel federal system of government stretching over a continental territory, the central organs of government still operated on unwritten understandings – ‘conventions’ – that had guided the Westminster Parliament into the democratic era. Fraser chose to abandon them under cover of a cloud of abuse, whether deserved or otherwise, of the Whitlam Government only half way through its second term of office. He also subverted language, calling Treasurer Bill Hayden’s final budget ‘fraudulent’, but then adopting it almost unchanged when he assumed government.

Fraser colluded with a self-obsessed cock-sparrow of a Governor General, who in turn colluded with members of the High Court of Australia and indeed, astounding, with Buckingham Palace. Jenny Hocking’s researches should have shaken this nation to its foundations, for the implications are shattering (Hocking 2016), but political expediency lets the matter pass almost without notice. Fraser goaded the Governor-General, Kerr, to assert a black letter law over areas where there was in fact no letter at all. He claimed to annul convention with his references to the written Constitution, but his terms of dismissal relied on convention: a prime minister who cannot obtain Supply in the Parliament must advise an election or resign – not in the written Constitution. He claimed to exercise his own ‘reserve powers’ – not in the Constitution – and in fact, disowned by Kerr himself in conversation with Whitlam. He contrived to deceive the Prime Minister at every turn. Many would call broken conventions ‘precedents’ but surely pirate treasure is nothing but profit from constitutional crime. This was contestation at its extreme.

Conclusion

It is hoped that adumbrating the depths to which misguided contestational opposition can sink does not undermine the democratic significance of properly conducted constitutional political opposition. Such opposition is essential to a healthy representative democracy, and a successful Leader of the Opposition takes on this constitutional role. It is against this standard that a Leader of the Opposition should be judged, for it runs far deeper.

Perhaps such hopes are idle, and that notions of citizenship have been so eroded by recent political trends (Wolin 2008) that there is no return to Dicey’s (1965: 39-85) ideal of a truly functioning democratic parliamentary
system. If such hopes are to be realised, they require the reconstruction of a resilient political culture in which an informed and independently-minded citizenry are willing to hold their governments, and their oppositions, strictly to account. These are among the things worth fighting for.

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Ghazal to the Ancestors

deep within compact bones
they debate in spongy caves.
The rhythm of your stride is them,
each reflexive clench.
Sense how they manipulate,
whispering your words.
In the negotiating silence of their time
memoranda form.
Your heart ticks delicately
each time their fingers move.

RAE DESMOND JONES,
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Leaders in International Organisations

Heads of international organisations (IOs) face serious challenges in leading these so-called member-driven organisations. This paper discusses the qualities regarded as necessary for their successful tenure, stressing the need for trust, expertise, and legitimacy. It also analyses the three roles that the leaders of IOs, to a greater or lesser extent, must play. They are diplomats dealing with state leaders and talking in international forums. They are politicians negotiating with the state representatives on a daily basis. They are managers heading an often large secretariat. How they balance these roles often determines their capacity to shape the outcomes of their organisation.

The first Secretary-General of the United Nations, Trygve Lie, offered the best description of the position of leaders of international organisations – ‘the most impossible job on this earth’ (Urquhart 2007:15). Indeed, heads of all international organisations (IOs) have an impossible job to do and an impossible role to play. They are expected to lead IOs, but are not allowed to do so unless member states give them permission. They are expected to have an overarching vision and a long-term strategy for the organisation; yet any vision and strategy are subject to careful scrutiny and often to revisions by member states. They are expected to be technical experts and also political animals whose spirit is tightly controlled by member states; and they head organisations where member states want to put their feet both on the accelerator and brake while moving forwards and backwards at the same time. The mantra, ‘a member-driven organisation’, was initially adopted at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) when it was created in 1995 but has now been endorsed in all IOs. ‘What does it mean?’ asked one senior official of the World Health Organisation (WHO) rhetorically. Most IOs have a membership of 180-190 states that jealously defend their ‘sovereignty’; would ‘member-driven’ lead to any decisions at IOs? Would anyone be able to lead such ‘member-driven’ organisations? It is thus not a surprise to hear the comment that the director general (DG) of an IO is neither a director nor a general.

Despite the inherent difficulties in leading an IO, many seasoned politicians, including former prime ministers, and talented, experienced diplomats, try very hard to obtain the position whenever there is a vacancy. Competition to lead IOs is fierce and governments back their nationals seeking such positions with political and financial promises. However, once they take office, heads of IOs represent their organisations, not their country of origin or the government that has supported them for the position. They become recognisable public figures in the world arena, speaking on behalf of the IO, promoting and protecting the interests of their IO as they see fit. They steer, and occasionally may change, the course of their IOs’ operations; they manage diverse and often dispersed international bureaucracies; and most importantly they are obliged to facilitate multilateral cooperation among member states who can hardly agree on anything. Their job has become much more difficult recently when political leaders in some countries have turned their attention inwardly on domestic issues, when private institutions provide attractive opportunities for the talented, and when resources have to be spread among an increasing number of private as well as public multilateral institutions.

To understand the paradoxes faced by leaders of IOs – an impossible job vs. pursuit of the job, need to lead vs. authority to lead, individual standing vs. collective interest – this paper discusses four issues: How do the leaders of IOs obtain their job and maintain the legitimacy? How do they facilitate multilateral cooperation among member states (as politicians)? How do they pursue the collective interests in the international arena (as diplomats)? And finally, how do they manage IOs as international bureaucracies (as managers)?

The latter three questions are about the functions that all leaders of IOs must undertake, whether they are the Secretary General of the United Nations, the president of the World Bank, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or directors-general of other IOs. These functions are mandated by their initial treaties establishing the organisations but which nonetheless do not have specific job descriptions for their leaders. Indeed, member states expect IO leaders to take on all three functions and do them well, yet each state has its own expectations on how their performance will be assessed. Flexibility provides IO leaders with opportunity to exercise their skills but within changing political environments.
Qualities of IO Leaders

In 1969, Robert Cox argued that the ‘quality of leadership may prove to be the most critical single determinant of the growth in the scope and authority of international organisations’ (1969: 205). What qualities do individuals need to have to be an effective IO leader? How are their qualities assessed and judged in the selection process to become IO leaders?

Formal treaties say little about the requisite qualities of IO leaders even though member states tend to have high expectations of the individuals they choose. The only requirement written into the original treaty of all organisations is that IO leaders ‘shall owe their duty entirely to the organisation – “to the Fund and to no other authority” as written in Article XII, Section 4c of the Articles of Agreement of the IMF, Article V, Section 5a and 5c of the Articles of Agreement of the World Bank Group, or in the Constitution of the WHO as “exclusively international in character.” Member states expect individuals to have the technical expertise in the relevant fields – for instance, all directors-general of the WHO so far were trained not only as physicians, but also with public health knowledge; nearly all managing directors of IMF either served as central bankers, finance ministers or held the top government position in charge of finance. Initially most World Bank presidents had worked in the banking sectors as bankers or investors, and all directors-general at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) were trained as lawyers.

Technical expertise helps IO leaders understand and appreciate what member states demand and what international civil servants at the secretariats do. Without it, IO leaders can subject the organisation to a range of political agendas as they see fit and then run into conflicts with both member states and international civil servants. For instance, when Paul Wolfeowitz was named as the World Bank president by George W. Bush, he placed anti-corruption at the top of his agenda. It is not that member states did not agree with him on the issue, but they ran into direct conflict with him when he decided to stop projects in countries declared as corrupt after the investment had been made. The lack of understanding that the World Bank operates as a financial institution is also the centre of conflict between Jim Kim, as its president, and the staff.

Technical expertise nonetheless is not neutral: Should the WHO focus on health systems or communicable diseases? Should WIPO protect the rights of intellectual property producers or the rights of the public whose development and even survival may depend on access to intellectual property? Where should resources be directed at the Food and Agriculture organisation: to agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry management or nutrition? Furthermore, technical expertise shapes the organisational culture of IOs – ‘lawyers ponder while physicians act’. Therefore leaders of IO without specific technical expertise and an understanding of the professional culture embedded in the organisation have often had difficulties in managing their organisations and the staff.

In addition to technical expertise, member states expect IO leaders to be politicians who are able to ‘sell’ the cause of the organisation to the public and world leaders. Gro Harlem Brundtland, a previous director-general of the WHO is praised for taking the health issues to the international community and gaining moral and financial support for the WHO and its role. Twenty years after the conclusion of the Uruguay Round trade negotiations, member states still remember how Peter Sutherland, then director general of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, later the World Trade Organization) was able to break the stalemate among a small number of states and especially to put some powerful multinational corporations in their place.

The qualities required of individuals to become IO leaders are assessed in the selection process but they are also compromised by the same process. By tradition, the president of the World Bank is always appointed by the US president. The endorsement of the Executive Board is only a formality while the selection of the managing director of the IMF is negotiated and decided among Western European countries and endorsed by their Executive Board. While the chosen candidate for the President of the World Bank does not need confirmation by the US Senate, nor is it subject to approval by all member states, partisan consideration can still intervene. Before the mid-1990s, the public paid little attention to the organisation and even in the US, few wanted the job. James Wolfensohn was the first candidate who had been prepared to lobby for the job for many years. Since then, all three World Bank presidents came and left office for political and partisan reasons. The way of selecting both the World Bank president and IMF managing director has been challenged by other countries.

The qualities, or expected qualities, of IO leaders can also be compromised when an election is required. Candidates for the position must be nominated by their governments which run the campaigns and make the deals. ‘The Japanese candidate promises us an electricity grid; what can you offer us to get our votes’, a state representative asked a candidate. Some countries are known to promote their candidates with ‘dowries’ attached and this seriously undermines the moral standing of the potential leaders. In a fierce competition for the IO leader’s position where a system of direct election – one state one vote – is used, as at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), numbers matter. Qualities become a relative consideration. Also, in an open election system, member states can be deeply divided – in the 2011 election of the FAO Director
General, members voted 92 vs. 88; while in electing the director-general at WIPO, the Coordination Committee divided with a vote of 41:40. One immediate challenge for the newly elected is to mend the divide and this often takes two or three years.

Increasingly, active participation of member states in elections has put pressure on the old procedures for selecting leaders. This tension is reflected in the debates about the geographical rotation of IO heads. Regions expect their turn. An irony often escapes the member states that while insisting candidates for the head of IOs be ‘international’, they expect geographical rotation of these IO leaders. These issues came to the fore in WHO when dissatisfaction with existing processes erupted in 2012-13. The debate there led to the change of election procedures at the WHO. Previously the Executive Board recommended a single candidate for the World Health Assembly to endorse. Now WHO member states vote to choose from a list of three candidates selected by the Executive Board. For the first time in 2017 an African candidate was selected.

Jobs of IO Leaders

‘There is no job description for this job,’ explained the former director-general of WTO, Pascal Lamy. All IO leaders must perform three categories of responsibilities. They must manage an organisation with diverse staff, sometimes scattered around the world (as managers). They have to work with member states that all claim their sovereignty (as politicians). Thirdly they have to represent the organisation in an increasingly crowded international arena and to ‘sell’ its cause and agendas to world leaders and the international community as a whole (as diplomats). Not all IO leaders are interested in all three and indeed very few leaders are good at doing all three. This is in part because while carrying out these functions, the hands of these IO leaders are tied by the nature of multilateral institutions. That is, they need to lead, but cannot command; to nudge but not push; to encourage but not to nag; and to work with all players but to focus on member states. How to walk this tightrope is the key to a successful and effective IO leader.

As managers: all treaties that established IOs consist of a provision that recognises its head as ‘chief of the operating staff’ or more specifically ‘the chief technical and administrative officer’ of the organisation, responsible for the organisation, appointment, and dismissal of the staff. IO leaders thus need to manage the organisation. Large or small, all IOs are bureaucratic organisations that have their own history, culture, expectations and self-defined appropriateness (March and Olsen 1989). These bureaucracies can enable and assist the leaders (Xu and Weller 2004, 2009, 2015), but they can also thwart and undermine through their dysfunctional bureaucratic cultures (Barnett and Finnemore 1999, 2005). The professional staff of IOs can be a great asset: dedicated, creative, experienced; or they can be a dead weight, doing a minimum as a way of defying their leader. Leaders need to know how to encourage the staff, work with them and maintain their support, both active and passive. ‘If [the DG] can’t manage the staff, then demoralisation sets in’, explained an ambassador to WTO. ‘Motivation levels go down, infighting starts, so the DG is very important in terms of staff’.

The degree of interest in management varies. One experienced executive director at the IMF argued that, ‘Lagarde was one of the few managing directors interested in how this place was managed.’ She was the first to ask questions about who was the client, what can we bring to the party, and other managerial probing questions. She appointed a deputy with similar priorities. Wolfensohn in contrast showed very little interest and patience in managing the World Bank when he became the president. It took him three years to find someone he could trust to manage its increasingly decentralised professional staff to make the Bank work. One long-serving vice president told us:

Ernie Stern used to play a role as the chief operating officer. Wolfensohn first did not hire people well until he finally let Shengman take over being the chief operating officer and Shengman made the trains run on time. He played exactly the role Jim did not want to play yet we definitely needed it, and he played very well in running this place. When we had problems, we all went to him for directions.

The previous experience of running government or an agency may or may not help IO leaders. Brundtland came to the WHO after serving as Prime Minister of Norway. She was ‘Norway’s own “iron” lady, an energetic blend of doctor, manager, politician and international activist’ (Andresen 2002: 15). She wanted a more cohesive team, but found the conditions very different when she tried to develop any concept of collective responsibility. One of the first things she did was to ask for and receive the resignations of all her assistant directors-general. To abolish the practice whereby the five permanent members of the Security Council all had their deputies at the WHO, she symbolically changed the title of Assistant DGs assistant directors-general to executive directors to break the nexus with the UN representation. Building on her experience as a prime minister in Norway, she tried to integrate her executive directors into a cabinet system, but it never seemed to work. An observer noted:

As head of government, you can exert discipline among your cabinet colleagues and your ministries.
and you can provide reasonably consistent political messages through the organisation of government. You suddenly realise this place is a loose coalition of NGOs and national interests.

In comparison with the WHO, the WTO is much smaller, centralised and coherent. It does not make management easier as the secretariat is highly qualified and professional with the protection of tenured positions. ‘This is a horribly difficult place to manage: Look, if you have a hotel that everyone checks into and doesn’t check out of, you have therefore a lot of problems handling professional development, motivation etcetera’. Lamy’s experience of government in Paris and Brussels accustomed him to a style of management that relied on his own cabinet. Requests to staff used to come through his cabinet, and particularly through his chef du cabinet. Many of his directors found it frustrating when direct discussions with the DG were rare and instructions came from his chef du cabinet. Some even became resentful as they had been used to running their departments in their own way and discussing all matters with the DG directly when needed. Lamy was made a lame duck long before finishing his second term.

IO leaders may direct staff, but that by itself can no more ensure positive support in an IO than in any national bureaucracy. IO leaders need to encourage and persuade the staff to follow rather than command them. History shows that formal powers alone are not enough to mobilise that support. There is a record of IO staff openly opposing their leaders. Country directors of the World Bank signed a petition and DC-based staff mounted a ‘blue ribbon’ campaign against Wolfowitz’s continued tenure; FAO staff walked out of an annual meeting as a response to a new director general’s reduction in their conditions; the WIPO staff association is known to have complained about its DG’s leadership to the member states. Ability to manage a diverse international staff is one of the key qualities of DGs and indeed many member states complained about its DG’s leadership to the member states. Ability to manage a diverse international staff is one of the key qualities of DGs and indeed many member states also appreciate those DGs who are able to manage the staff effectively.

As diplomats: IO leaders are expected not only to lead but also to represent the institutions. There are four distinct functions:

- To persuade national leaders of their case, as a means of getting the necessary political support. That includes attending international summits and gaining support from key states;
- To attract the attention of international communities to generate both the legitimacy needed for their cause and the financial resources to carry them out.

Increasingly the latter come from private foundations or through dedicated donor funds;
- To work with peers in other IOs and in the UN; and
- To work with broader community.

Many IO leaders are international personalities, formerly senior politicians or diplomats who do know the international leaders. They may have ready political access. Peter Sutherland, a former Irish minister, was brought to GATT to conclude the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations. When a CEO of a large American company threatened to undermine the negotiations, Sutherland rang President Clinton to deflate the criticism; Clinton returned the call. WTO director general Pascal Lamy had worked with European leaders when at the EU. World Bank President Robert Zoellick had been the Special Trade Representative for the USA. These IO leaders were not bluffing; they could contact national leaders. There is always the dilemma. One DG, when asked whether he talked to national capitals, answered: ‘Of course I do, but they [some state representatives] in Geneva hate it’.

IO leaders need to approach national leaders for political support. They can do so when attending meetings of the G8 and G20 where they have access to the world leaders and are expected to advance ‘noble’ causes that countries often support but are reluctant to fund. One of the greatest contributions Brundtland made as the WHO DG was to take health issues to the global stage, going from capital to capital, across multiple forums to convince world leaders, in private as well as in public, of the importance and urgency of financing health issues. However, the attention from national leaders, at the G20 or on the end of the phone on issues troubling an IO, is likely to be limited. National leaders sign off on declarations and make promises to push items through domestically. Their attention nonetheless is often fleeting; there are usually more pressing demands on their time and resources. Persistent persuasion without being seen as pushing is one of the core diplomatic skills IO leaders need to have.

Many IO leaders are often on the move. In part they enjoy the accolades; it is also an essential role to mingle and communicate with world leaders in order to sell their causes to larger communities. ‘Our former DG was seldom around here; he was travelling around the world to get support for what we do here’, we were told by several staff. A few occasionally shy away from these opportunities and this can frustrate officials. ‘I had tried so hard to get us invited to this year’s G20 so that our new DG could meet people from UNCTAD, World Bank, OECD, IMF, WTO, etc. and he did not want to go’, another one said in frustration.
Heads of IOs may tread the world stage with national leaders, commune with ministers and speak on behalf of their organisation and its interests. Occasionally, those connections may turn out to be crucial in shaping an agreement. It is not uncommon for member states to ask IO leaders to mediate their differences with other states over thorny issues. For the regular activities of IOs – the IMF’s surveillance, the World Bank’s projects, WIPO’s treaties, the WHO’s management in epidemics – the bulk of the work is undertaken by the staff. Effective diplomacy can strengthen any DG’s hand; it is a necessary, but not by itself a sufficient, condition for success in achieving an IO’s ambitions. Skilful and discreet diplomacy is part of the game of multilateral cooperation.

As politicians: After the glare of a global summit, IO leaders have to return to the routine interaction with the executive directors and national ambassadors. Back to the constant process of negotiation with representatives of member states, who are, within their own political systems, middle ranking diplomats but who, within the IOs, regard themselves as the master of the IO and its leaders. There are many forms of state representation in IOs. Via group representation at an Executive Board or by direct representation by ambassadors to the WTO. At most IOs though, it is through a combination of generalist diplomats attached to the local embassy responsible for activities across several IOs, and technical experts who fly in from capital cities, member states increasingly assert they are the masters of IOs. The member states may be large or small, working as individual states or in groups, and supporters or opponents of multilateral causes. They all want IOs to be ‘member-driven’, asking DGs to design a member-driven strategy (without, it seems, being conscious of the irony of such a request). They want to have close control over what IO leaders do while unable or unwilling to commit political capital to key issues IOs have to manage. The famous grimace by Ruggiero, the WTO DG, reflects this political reality:

> When I go to Paris or I go to Washington I see Prime Ministers and Presidents. When I’m in Geneva I have to ask permission to go to the toilet, and the members say, ‘Yes, but only two minutes!’ (Van Grasstek 2013: 506).

He was not alone. A senior adviser to several DGs at WTO recalled:

> Ruggiero, Lamy and Supachai all say: ‘I’m the DG of the WTO, when I travel I meet Presidents, I meet Prime Ministers. Do I have to deal with these guys?’ We used to say to them, you may not like these ambassadors, you may think they’re just playing around half the time, but these are the guys who are writing the telegrams on a daily basis back to their capitals, and whether you like it or not, the capitals will look at you through the eyes of these ambassadors so you’d better get on side with them and start kind of using the network. But they didn’t like it.

This was the same advice Wolfensohn’s deputy Shengman Zhang gave to him: ‘The [World Bank] Board may not help you accomplish anything, but it can make it impossible for you to achieve anything’ (Zhang 2006: 27).

Managing state representatives is never easy as there is always a level of suspicion. Faced with a perverse motion in the World Health Assembly, Margaret Chan burst out in frustration; ‘I have ten seat belts on me and I can’t move an inch; the bottom line is that the membership does not trust the secretariat.’ (A Brazilian delegate sang back a tune from Evita: ‘You know we have always loved you’)(Xu and Weller 2015:1). However, the tensions were clear.

Leaders of IOs are in constant negotiations with member states that officially decide what the IO will do. Yet unlike in domestic politics, the IO leader must answer to 180 or more ‘masters’ (rather than a single minister) of unequal power and size, with varying interests and commitment to multilateral cooperation, and often with very different opinions about what the IO should do. Member states may be organised into a series of blocs, sometimes with overlapping memberships. The constellations of support for IO actions may change from topic to topic. At worst it can lead to constant gridlock; at best the situation requires a skilled mediator to identify the common ground and to assist the members to reach it. In this sense the leader of an IO must be a politician, a builder of coalitions, a conciliator and a counsellor. While working in a non-hierarchical system, DGs must be able to rally members behind their policies and strategies. This requires them to have the political skills to work with those who share their ambitions and ideological beliefs as well as those with different political objectives and from different cultural backgrounds. They have to work within the existing arrangements which is often a political architecture that corresponds to an economic reality of the 1950s and 1960s rather than now.

Despite the difficulties and potential gridlocks, IO leaders can achieve a fair amount: ‘as a DG, you have to have a sense when it is my opportunity to actually do something’. ‘This is a job of influence; [the membership] sometimes lends you an authority to influence while making it clear it is on lease, not given’, commented one DG.

Conclusion

Leaders of IOs are the link between the member states, whether in IOs or back in capitals, and the secretariat who
are the IO’s continuing presence and who of necessity deliver the programs or services for which the IO is responsible. IOs cannot be regarded as a single unit, a simple cog which works on demand. It is important to understand what drives them and how they can be improved. DGs thus must be understood as a separate influence. They often personify the organisation. They, more than any individual, as Cox noted almost 50 years ago, may be ‘the most critical single determinant’ in determining that future. Understanding how they can influence, or undermine, the mission and working of any IO must be central to any analysis.

Their power and influence however are not explicitly given by treaties. Indeed, as Michael Moore, a former Prime Minister of New Zealand who became director general of WTO grumbled: ‘you’re not a director nor are you a general’ (Van Grasstek 2013:518). It is not that IO leaders cannot direct, just that there are limitations in all areas of activity.

If leaders have little formal power except over their staff, they still have a melange of mechanisms through which they can exert influence as long as they retain the trust of members and staff and a degree of legitimacy that permits them to use the levers they have. Whether it is their power through chairing meetings, their ability to apply the knowledge the secretariats can generate, their ability to mobilise networks, the capacity to negotiate, the application of expertise, these assets have a chance of working only where leaders can combine both trust and legitimacy.

There are varying degrees of independence, from WTO at one end of the spectrum to IMF at the other. That depends on the level of participation of member state representatives in the day-to-day activities and the extent to which proposals require the consent of members. The situation can change if the IOs are transformed. As the political, rather than primarily technical, imperatives have begun to dominate WHO, the director-general has less room to initiate and needs to spend more time in generating widespread support. In FAO, the gap between the application of expertise, these assets have a chance of working only where leaders can combine both trust and legitimacy.

If member states trust their leaders to work on behalf of the IO as a whole and not any single state, they may be prepared, within limits, to give them some scope for initiative; but only on lease. If that trust breaks down, stalemate tends to follow. IOs will often wallow in the doldrums when the principal members distrust the leaders yet do not have the ability or the desire to actually remove them.

As elected officials, directors-general have constituencies to nurse. More member states have sought to become active, but they are not all committed to the same vision of what the IOs should achieve. The greater the participation, the more diverse the membership, the more organised the electoral groupings, the harder the balancing acts become. Interests become more differentiated. Most IOs now espouse a public intent to be member driven. Many have tried to restrict the capacity of IO leaders to take independent action. The freedom IO leaders once had, when they could serve several terms, occurred in another century and can now be but a memory.

IO leaders need skills to maintain the diverse relationships in the modern political environment. Modern communications have ensured that everything they say is readily accessed and open to (mis)interpretation. One director-general was surprised how carefully anything he said in public was analysed, ‘because what I say doesn’t matter; ultimately it is what the member states decide.’ That is a little disingenuous. Directors general help shape the agenda, particularly in those IOs with limited oversight and a lack of senior ambassadorial interest.

The task is hard; evidence shows it is far from hopeless. It is possible to construct support for initiatives, only by understanding the complexities of the regimes they service. As one director-general reflected:

I don’t think there is any inherent power; power has to be earned. Someone in this position could come in and say whatever they like, but if they start saying that from Day 1, they are not going to have any credibility. You have to earn that trust and you have to have a power of persuasion that is credible. Then you can say you have an influence.

Julio Lacarte Moró, involved in the GATT/WTO since its foundation in 1947, drew a similar contingent conclusion in 2013. He commented:

In the real world the director general carves out his role according to his charisma, professional strengths, ability to interpret governmental trends and interests, and personal relationship with the accredited ambassadors (Van Grasstek 2013:518).

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End Notes
1. This paper is based in part on approximately 200 interviews undertaken across six international organisations over the last decade. Where quotations are included without specific references, they are drawn from these interviews that can be cited but not attributed (see Xu and Weller 2004, 2009, 2015).

In New South Wales
our fragile democracy
is embodied in weighty sandstone
so soft, so easily corroded
as though this might imprint certainty
when absolute power
glows through such plump
well filled suits

Rae Desmond Jones,
Summer Hill, NSW

Wife is a four letter word
And so is home.
And so is cash.
And so is bird.
But that is neither here nor there because it is always flying.
And so is nest.
And so is gate.
And so is shut.
And if you add an s to three letter words you get dogs and cats and kids and so is pies because you have to eat.
And so is stay.
And so is gone.
And so is stop.
And so is work.
And so is life.
And so is dead because who knows how much time we really have
And so is left.
And so is back.
And so is here.
And so is blue.
And so is shit.
And so is fuck.
And this is where it gets complicated because so is love.

Dulce Maria Menendez,
Illinois, USA
Travel Destination as a Global Cosmopolitan Site: Australians in the Japanese ski resort Niseko, Hokkaido

Atsushi Takeda

Niseko, Hokkaido, a famous ski resort that is located in the northern part of Japan, has been a popular ski destination for international tourists since 2001. Among foreign travellers to Niseko, Australians are one of the dominant groups of visitors. With the large number of Australian visitors, the area has been transformed into ‘Little Australia’ where Australian pubs and shops and English signs are becoming elements of the city’s landscape. Despite the growing media attention, academic interest in this phenomenon has been rather limited. In response, this paper will explore this phenomenon through various theoretical concepts in migration studies and sociology including mobility, contact zone, diaspora and cosmopolitanism aiming to raise the social significance of this phenomenon in the local-global context.

Australian Snow Lovers

Transnational corporeal mobility of people between Australia and Japan has been expanded and has flourished through tourism, international education, and business in the last few decades. Although scholastic attention in this aspect is limited, research has tackled this uncultivated area: for instance, the account of lifestyle migration of the Japanese to Australia (Nagatomo 2007) and the experience of Japanese marriage migrants (Hamano 2014; Ito 2012; Takeda 2012, 2013, 2014). In contrast to this growing research on the mobility of Japanese people to Australia, we are less informed about their counterparts, namely Australians coming to Japan, despite the fact that Australian are ubiquitous in Japan – Australian business expatriates, international students, and English teachers, readily seen in cosmopolitan areas of Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya. In addition to those cosmopolitan areas of Japan, recently, an Australian community has emerged in a Japanese ski resort area, Niseko. The Niseko area, encompassing five towns that include Niseko and Kutchan Town, is located in the southwestern part of the Hokkaido prefecture and is approximately 100 km from the capital city of Hokkaido, Sapporo. Niseko attracts a large number of Australian ski/snowboard tourists and extended resident stayers.

January 2009, the area received 6,216 Australian visitors (5,194 to Kutchan, and 1,022 to Niseko) (Bureau of Tourism Hokkaido Department of Economic Affairs 2009), and in the same month of 2015, this number reached 13,175 (8,158 to Kutchan, and 5,017 to Niseko) (Bureau of Tourism Hokkaido Department of Economic Affairs 2015a). These statistics demonstrate the increasing popularity of Niseko for Australians. Various reasons for this increase in Australian visitors to Niseko are submitted: the quality of powder snow, a closer location than Canada and Europe, cross-cultural experiences through Japanese food and culture, reasonable costs in comparison to other ski destinations, and the advantage of skiing during Australia’s summertime (Onizuka 2006).

In this small regional ski town, Australian snow lovers congregate and rapidly became part of the visibly changing landscape of the town. With the concentration of Australians, the town is often referred to as ‘Little Australia’ today. In Niseko, English is widely spoken, and Australian food is easily found (Hirabayashi 2008). What is more, the town no longer consists of solely Australian tourists but also includes Australian residents who work for local real estate agents, hotels and restaurants. As a result of this situation in Niseko, in 2012, an international school was opened to offer education in English for the increasing number of expatriates’ children.

Niseko has become one of the Australian diasporas spread all over the world, such as in the UK and the United States (Hugo et al. 2003). However, an Australian
diaspora in Japan is relatively unheard of, notwithstanding the fact that they are a significant part of the foreign population in Japan and play a pivotal role in building the grassroots relations between the two countries. In the context of diaspora in Japan, although there are China towns in Kobe, Nagasaki, and Yokohama and a Brazilian community in the Gunna and Aichi prefectures, this Australian diaspora is distinct. Chinatowns are a result of the foreign trade between Japan and China in the late 1800s whereas Brazilian communities, including other Latin American communities in Gunna and elsewhere in Japan, are consequences of labour migration since the late 1980s when the Japanese economy was booming (Kingsberg 2014; Tsuda 2000). In contrast to such communities or diasporas, Niseko is unique for the following reasons. First, while the former groups are involved in local tourism in everyday milieus. Australian working holiday makers in the Niseko area epitomise such mobility, which straddles between tourism and migration – temporary and permanent. Accordingly, normativity within temporal and permanent mobility is contested, calling for reconsideration of such a binary view. Another salient point within the relevant argument on mobility is the links between temporary and permanent mobility. It is claimed that short-term travel is conceived as a precursor of permanent mobility today (Hall 2005: 131). The case of Niseko reflects this point as well; trips to Niseko can possibly lead to a visit as working holiday makers and long-term visitors, which exemplifies connections between short-term mobility and long-term or permanent mobility.

Entangled Mobility: Tourism and Migration in a Global and Local context

The mobility of Australians, in regard to Niseko, is based on travel and leisure. It is argued that tourism and mobility are part of interconnected systems and produce each other; therefore, they need to be considered together (Sheller and Urry 2004: 5). Nonetheless, tourism studies have not paid much attention to exploring mobility notwithstanding its significance within tourism (Coles et al. 2004: 463-464). Mobility is discussed in migration studies yet their focus is more on permanent mobility (Hall 2005: 131) in contrast to temporary mobility that tourism research focuses on. Indeed, it has been noted that academic studies on temporary mobility and permanent mobility have developed separately (Bell and Ward 2000: 87). Due to this, a theoretical level of the integration of tourism and mobility is absent (Coles et al. 2004: 464).

One should note here that dividing mobility as temporary (tourism) and permanent (migration) is becoming more problematic. This point is raised by Williams and Hall (2000) that the distinction between tourism and migration is increasingly blurring. They note that a general definition of tourism as an activity with the intention to return home and no intention to take up employment does not allow for backpacking tourists who combine labour, leisure and discovery (Williams and Hall 2000: 6). Likewise, Nagy and Korpela (2013: 2) also state the problem of categorisation into tourism and migration by giving an example of economically motivated labour migrants who may be involved in local tourism in everyday milieus. Australian working holiday makers in the Niseko area epitomise such mobility, which straddles between tourism and migration – temporary and permanent. Accordingly, normativity within temporal and permanent mobility is contested, calling for reconsideration of such a binary view. Another salient point within the relevant argument on mobility is the links between temporary and permanent mobility. It is claimed that short-term travel is conceived as a precursor of permanent mobility today (Hall 2005: 131). The case of Niseko reflects this point as well; trips to Niseko can possibly lead to a visit as working holiday makers and long-term visitors, which exemplifies connections between short-term mobility and long-term or permanent mobility.

These observations challenge the boundary between tourism and migration studies and point to the intersections of two areas of research. In fact, this point is demonstrated in the concept of lifestyle migration, which manifests links between travel and migration (Nagy and Korpela 2013: 2). Similarly, an example is seen in the theory of transnationalism that depicts migrants’ ongoing contacts to their country of origin; contemporary migrants returning home to visit family and friends become a part of tourism mobility (Williams and Hall 2000: 16).

In regards to mobility generated through Niseko, there is an epiphenomenon; it is not simply transnational mobility between Japan and Australia, but more complex mobility involving both domestic and international flow. The proliferation of Australians in Niseko makes the city more appealing for international visitors; not only are there signs in English, other services are also offered in English for foreign visitors. This has opened up more tourism business opportunities for Niseko, attracting visitors from Asia, including Singapore and China, and other countries. Niseko’s English accessibility has created further business opportunities as a site for learning English as part of its international atmosphere. One of these businesses is summer programs in Niseko targeted for children to have intercultural experiences through interacting with native speakers, referred to as kokunai ryugaku (domestic studying abroad: studying abroad without going abroad). Businesses like this as well as others such as hotels and restaurants require bilingual speakers in Niseko to operate them, and this also generates additional mobility of people seeking bilingual positions from Sapporo (capital
This tourism mobility should not be underestimated in terms of its impact. Flows of tourism become a force to transform many societies, as Sheller and Urry (2004: 3) maintain. More Australian mobility means more contact between Australians and Japanese people, and their increasing presence forms their own community, namely an Australian diaspora. Here, Niseko as a social space is converted into a unique site with Australian flavour. In this framework, space is understood as unfixd and rather fluid, that is to say, an ongoing process of being influenced by economy, politics, culture and the flow of people, materials and ideas. Interactions between tourists as well as the locals also reconfigure ‘space’ and transform into a shifting space reflecting such interactions (see, for this concept of space, Sheller and Urry 2004: 6). English signs for hotels and restaurants and Niseko’s international atmosphere exemplify this transformation of the area. Thus, Niseko is located in Japan yet contains Australian cultural elements; in other words, Niseko has become the ‘third space’, being neither Japan nor Australia (Nelson 2014: 55).

In migration as well as ethnic studies, various concepts are applied to explore such communities of migrants, viz. diasporas. For example, the concept of contact zone, introduced by Mary Pratt (1991), along with the concept of interculturation, set a stage to look at contacts between migrants and the locals as a consequence of mobility and illuminate how cultural differences are negotiated within the power dynamic. Diaspora, despite the ambiguity of the concept itself, is often used in an effort to examine a migrant community as a whole instead of focusing on dispersed individual subjects. Finally, ‘cosmopolitanism’, which has received renewed interests in the social sciences, sheds light on a new way of looking at a place like Niseko with consideration of the local and global. In the following section, I explore this Australian mobility to Niseko as a subject for analysis, through the concepts of ‘contact zone’, ‘diaspora’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’, and consider the potential consequences of such mobility between two countries. Thus, this paper makes contributions to understanding this new phenomenon through applying suggested theories and throwing a light on the peculiarity or uniqueness of this emerging multicultural community of Australians.

Contact Zone Between Australians and Japanese

As a result of incoming Australian tourists as well as residents, a contact zone between the local Japanese and the Australians has emerged. ‘Contact zone’ is a term that was developed by Mary Pratt (1991: 34) and refers to: ... social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.

This concept of a contact zone is a useful framework to understand how two different cultures encounter and negotiate powers within a specific area. In regard to observing media reports on Niseko, having an Australian influence seems to be celebrated to some extent, and its Australianisation – the influence of a foreign culture in Niseko – appears to be positively construed in the scope of internationalisation and multiculturalism (see, for example, Lund 2015). Yet, such encounters do not simply become multicultural waltzes, with Pratt underlining complexities that are observed in encounters of two different cultures. In her work on transnational snowboarders in six different countries, including the USA, Canada, and New Zealand, Thorpe (2012: 16-17) describes the way conflicts emerge between two cultures through tourism such as Anti-social behavior by tourists, who do not follow the local rules, become an infliction for local residents. Such conflicts may be related to the case of Niseko, as the rising number of Australians may not always be positively received in the community. Indeed, it is reported that the sudden rise of international tourists, including Australians, in Niseko was cautioned against by the local authorities at first (Moffett 2008). Contact zones that are derived from tourism like in the case of Niseko are more likely to be observed today as a result of heightened mobility and may possibly lead to conflicts between international tourists and hosts (the local residents).

According to the concept of contact zones, asymmetrical relations between two cultures are underlined – in other words, the power imbalance between two cultures. Gehrmann’s study on Australians in Kuta Beach, Bali, Indonesia illustrates this point – cultural domination of one culture over the other within an asymmetrical relationship. Gehrmann (1994: 14) discovered that the local streets are filled with many Australian-style pubs, and even the Australian accent and assertive attitude are adopted by the locals. He describes this transformation of Kuta Beach as pollution of the local culture by Australians. Such domination of the local culture may be identified in the case of Niseko as well, yet the socio-historical relations between Indonesia and Australia where asymmetrical relations of power are observed is not the case between Japan and Australia. In fact, such relations are blurred in this case. This is because the clear-cut power relations between Australian tourists and Japanese residents that are delineated in the case of Kuta Beach, or, more broadly, the narratives of post-colonialism, become vague.2 In other words, who is the dominant and who is the marginal amid the local Japanese and Australians in Niseko?
Although Australians are a minority in Japan, they are not just foreigners, because being ‘white’ translates into different social locations of subjects – often privileged.\(^3\) Being white or belonging to other ethnicities in Japan shapes different experiences for social subjects (see, for example, Bailey 2006; Kelsky 2001). Let me rephrase this: despite the fact that whites and non-whites share the same status of being ‘foreigners’ [\textit{gaikokujin}] in Japan, they confront quite dissimilar experiences. Being white is a privileged status in Japan; even if whites do not take advantage of their status, they are automatically positioned into a privileged social location that allows them to exercise a greater degree of power. However, being a white minority in Japan does not simply entail the white privileges or dominant power that is found in Indonesia, whether individuals hold such intention or not. This is because foreigners’ social participation may be limited in Japan, which is accentuated in the contentious concept of \textit{Nihonjinron} – theories of Japaneseness (Manabe and Befu, 1992). Within the discourse of \textit{Nihonjinron}, Japanese society and culture prevent non-Japanese from having full access to the mainstream society. Nana Oishi’s (2012) work on highly skilled migrants in Japan mirrors this point. In her study, those migrants and their family members, including whites, despite their being economically privileged, confront difficulty in integrating into Japanese society. In a similar vein, Appleby’s (2014) study demonstrates the experiences of white Western English language teachers in Japan – being both privileged and disadvantaged; while being white native speakers of English allows them to secure teaching positions in Japan, it also renders them as outsiders at work and prevents them from advancing their careers. What these studies make clear is that integrating into Japanese society is not easily attained by foreigners, whether they are highly skilled or racially privileged with linguistic capital, despite Japan’s approach to multicultural coexistence.

**Diaspora Through Tourism – Temporality**

Diaspora, which is frequently discussed in migration studies literature, is a contested and elusive term. The term was originally employed to depict the exile and dispersion of the Jews with emphasis on their sentiments, yet today this term is applied to cover diverse types of people on the move, encompassing business expatriates, immigrants and refugees (Safran 1991: 83). Diaspora literature focuses on communities of migrants coming from the Global South in OECD countries; however, there are a significant number of expatriate communities in the Global North who come from developed countries (Hugo 2006: 181). The Australian diaspora in Niseko is conceived as a contemporary example of north-north migration. The Australian diaspora, despite its uniqueness, has been overlooked because Niseko comprises a large number of tourists and working holiday makers, who do not fall into a category of diaspora in a traditional sense.

In light of the Australian diaspora in Niseko, its temporality is a unique feature that distinguishes it from commonly recognised examples/instances. Terms like ‘seasonal diaspora’ or ‘temporal diaspora’ may illuminate its characteristics. In using these terms, I am highlighting the features of the Niseko community, which emerges and becomes more highly visible during winter season, being distinct from other static migrant diasporas. The statistics manifest this trait; there are a high number of Australian visitors in the winter season – 2,974 Australians stayed in Kutchan Town in December 2013, while only 11 Australians stayed in the same town in July of the same year (Bureau of Tourism Hokkaido Department of Economic Affairs 2014). This large gap between Australian visitors in wintertime and the rest of the year underlines the peculiar characteristics of the Australian diaspora in the Niseko area.

The temporality of the Australian diaspora is similar to the phenomenon of ‘snow birds’ who move to warmer places during winter season; for example, Americans living in the north move to Florida during winter to seek more comfortable weather (Craig 1992; Smith and House, 2007). Australian tourists, encompassing long stayers and working holiday makers, who move to Niseko in wintertime seeking winter adventure reflect the reverse of the snow bird phenomenon – perhaps ‘sun birds’? This demonstrates that what has been occurring in the phenomenon of the snow birds is taking place in the global arena, where people are not only crossing distances but also borders and cultures.

A study of seasonal retirement migration from Sweden to Spain by Gustafson (2002) offers a relevance to the Australian diaspora. Those Swedish retirees spend summer in Sweden and winter in Spain, taking advantage of both climates. Their presence in Spain during winter forms Swedish communities, which mirrors the Australian diaspora in Niseko. These Swedish migrants are well off, coming from wealthy countries; they enjoy their life in Spain, not feeling pressure to assimilate or integrate for economic reasons like traditional economic migrants. Such accounts can be found of Australians in Niseko who share similar social or cultural positions to the Swedish. Gustafson further (2002: 907) points out the ambivalent position of Swedish retirement migrants who are neither tourists or migrants, and he argues that they challenge the dominant image of migrants who are depicted as going from developing countries to Western countries. Once again, this point is also pertinent to Niseko; Australian working holiday makers are located between tourists and migrants, and Australian migrants are far from the
‘so-called ethnic migrants’ who are prevailing in migration studies scholarship.

Multiple types of mobility that are grounded in globalisation challenge the classification of being temporary and permanent, as noted earlier in this paper, and this further influences the way a contemporary diaspora is formed and sustained, as in the case of Niseko. With considerations of these unique features of Niseko, this diaspora of Australians evokes conceptual as well as theoretical challenges and further draws attention to understanding mobility, space, tourism, and migration in the whirl of globalisation.

Cosmopolitanism and Tourism

This section situates the Niseko phenomenon in the framework of cosmopolitanism. The term cosmopolitanism received renewed interest in the social sciences in the 1990s in response to scrutinising globalisation (Swain 2009: 509). Note here that ‘cosmopolitanism’ is a contested term, given that it is used trans-disciplinary (Beck and Sznaider 2010: 2) and has ‘a considerable degree of conceptual and theoretical diversity, even confusion’ as Vertovec and Cohen (2002: 20) assert. Notwithstanding the diversities and ambiguities of the term, a commonly shared understanding of cosmopolitanism is one’s open attitude toward other cultures (Skrbis and Woodward 2007: 732), and this also agrees with one of six perspectives of cosmopolitanism identified by Vertovec and Cohen – that is to say, one’s disposition toward multiplicities of cultures.

Abstract discussion on cosmopolitanism aside, when considering ways to acquire cosmopolitanism or to be cosmopolitan, tourism is conceived as such (Salazar 2010: 56). Experiences of actual contact with different cultures through travelling allows people to open their eyes to other cultures and to have a cosmopolitan outlook. Within this framework, foreign tourists are considered to embody cosmopolitanism. Taking these points into consideration, Australian tourists to Niseko readily exemplify such cosmopolitans; traveling to Japan permits Australians to understand Japanese culture and gain cultural competence. In fact, this – to experience Japanese culture – is one of the reasons for the upsurge in Australian tourists to Niseko (Onizuka 2006: 119).

Furthermore, Australian tourists – being white, native English speakers from a wealthy country – are in accord with conventional images of such cosmopolitans who are perceived to be a privileged group of people equipped with social and cultural capital.

While focusing on cosmopolitanism and tourism, all attention seems to be laid on international tourists alone. This is because the binary view of tourists as mobile subjects and local residents as immobile subjects is dominant. Put differently, within the discourse of cosmopolitanism, those who do not travel are conceived as immobile subjects, thereby, un-cosmopolitan, and vice versa. Nevertheless, I claim that people are not necessarily equipped with corporeal mobility in order to be cosmopolitan. Through interaction with foreigners and living in a multicultural environment, people gain cultural capital, which will contribute to their quality of being cosmopolitan. This is indeed related to what Vertovec and Cohen (2002: 10) have noted in their article: cosmopolitans are those who seek to explore as well as accept other cultures. With this understanding, corporal mobility is not necessarily required to be cosmopolitan.

This characteristic of being cosmopolitan without actual international mobility is addressed in the research concerning ethnic minority café owners in Dali, Yunnan in Southwest China by Notar (2008: 618-619). Notar challenges the conventional assumption of cosmopolitans – being ‘western’, ‘world travellers’, or ‘metropolitan’ – by illustrating how local ethnic minority café owners become cosmopolitan through producing cosmopolitanism for international tourists – learning different languages and experiencing diverse cuisine without travelling. Notar maintains that while becoming cosmopolitan through consumption (often and commonly travelling) is widely acknowledged or more likely to be assumed, the way production of cosmopolitanism for others enables one to transform to be cosmopolitan tends to be dismissed. This argument is also illustrated in the study by Salazar, which investigated the cosmopolitanism of local tourist guides in Indonesia and Tanzania. He describes the way guides develop cosmopolitanism through catering to as well as interacting with international tourists, which confirms that privileges and actual physical mobility are not necessary to be cosmopolitan (Salazar 2010: 63-64). These accounts underline intersections of tourism and cosmopolitanism, throwing light on the locals who are conceived to be at the backseat of the global arena, viz. un-cosmopolitan within the foregoing discourse of cosmopolitanism, while reminding us that they are indeed cosmopolitans. With reference to Niseko, signs of such cosmopolitanism are found. For instance, signs and other information in many local cafés and pubs in Niseko are written in English for international visitors. This is also seen in other businesses as well. Some of the local ski shops provide product information in English. Accordingly, signs of cosmopolitanism are seen in these local businesses through catering for international tourists.

A related point to consider here is Notar’s additional argument; a debate on whether people are automatically regarded as cosmopolitan because of their mobility. For example, business jetsetters, may, or may not, be considered to be cosmopolitan. She contends that
some of the so-called cosmopolitan travellers are simply seeking unfamiliar experiences in a familiar environment. In this vein, they are not cosmopolitan despite the fact that they are equipped with international mobility. In this sense, some Australian tourists may not necessarily be cosmopolitan if they seek to experience unfamiliarity in a familiar environment. Staying in an Australian-style condominium and dining in Aussie-style pubs in Niseko is such an example.

Conclusion

This paper sought to offer a critical evaluation of the Australian community in the Japanese ski resort of Niseko. In so doing, I attempted to look at this phenomenon considering concepts of mobility, contact zone, diaspora, and cosmopolitanism. The framework of mobility has allowed us to observe how both local (domestic) and global mobility are intertwined, generating multiple directions of mobility while underlining the power of international tourism. Then, the concept of a contact zone makes us consider potential conflicts that may occur between two different cultures despite the celebratory attitude of multiculturalism and internationalisation. This also implies that the consequences of cross-border mobility cannot simply be celebrated, and that local-global connections are occasionally complex to unwind. The diaspora illuminates the unique feature of Niseko, that is, its temporality. It expands during the winter and shrinks in the summer, as the diaspora is based on ski tourism. This presents quite a contrast from conventional diaspora and also intimates a new type of diaspora grounded in tourism. Consideration of cosmopolitanism in relation to tourism sheds light on the way the local Japanese residents may become cosmopolitan through catering for as well as interacting with Australian tourists. Yet, simultaneously questions arise as to whether or not Australian tourists themselves are cosmopolitan regardless of their international mobility. Thus, by highlighting the unique feature of Niseko through different frameworks, I point to the newness as well as the uniqueness of this Australian community in Japan and call for urgency to further investigate this social space.

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End Notes

1. Working holiday visas allow young people to holiday and work in countries including Japan and Australia where there is a visa agreement.

2. I am using this contested term ‘post-colonialism’ in a broader sense, not focusing on particular periods, nations or cultures (see, for example, Childs and Williams 1997).

3. ‘Australians’ do not consist solely of the white race, but here for the sake of this discussion, I am referring to Australians as ‘White Australians’. 

**Apology**

his body was a young man
but with an old, lined face
& innocent intelligent eyes.
He knew me
although I don’t know him.
When he spoke it was a waterfall
in sunlight,
a language I don’t understand
sweet & sour -
dark chocolate music
I was enhanced,
I missed my bus.

Rae Desmond Jones,
Summer Hill, NSW
Kramer argues passionately for the rights of any given piece of music to be able to express itself in its own language. In addition to this, imposing any given piece of music with our own cultural meaning further restricts the music from expressing itself fully. Wittgenstein’s assertion that spoken language is a form of life is expanded in The Thought of Music – music too is to be a form of life, maintaining its own right to exist without the impositions of meaning. Kramer uses the example of public street pianos as an example of how music can be its own source of life, creating communities (transforming public places into sites of pleasure, complete with impromptu audience), encouraging dormant musical talents to be revealed, and, most importantly, the elevation of classical music to a reclaimed space of pleasure without pretence. It is here that this book is at its strongest. Kramer’s theories on the delivery and reception of classical music could enliven classical music making in the twenty-first century. Using an 1804 Josef Danhauser painting of Franz Liszt at the piano while a bust of Beethoven looks on, Kramer uses the two personalities within the painting to further analyse the act of listening to classical music. One is hearing the composer, but one is also listening to the music itself and the two characters, but also of the composer's struggle with his own sexuality. Any idea we have about the music in question can, according to Kramer, be only reflected from the music to further enhance the idea. Music can exemplify, but not interrogate, any given idea. It is through our experience of listening to any given piece of music that we can address our own ideas, continue to consider them and then be transformed by them. But this comes from the listener reflecting through the music, not from the music itself.

Kramer argues in the postscript, should be considered a mere tool, a template that the performer responds to. Listening to music without imposing assumed meaning is challenging, even for a seasoned listener. But if classical music is to have any kind of public life into the future, ideas such as Kramer’s will have to be embraced by the classical music establishment to survive.

The Thought of Music is available in Australia through Footprint Books.

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Union

Breeze left of us we stroll
the rock road over the cliff
smile at the sea we’ve just left
where we swam clothing-less
and kissed the salt water from our lips.
Your fingers find me
we close hands
your gold ring between
the crook of my 2nd and 3rd fingers;
a ring that betothes you to another.
Now with me in a cliff hollow
we kiss again, nible salty tastes
from each other, nudge the flesh
of each other free.

Noel King,
Tralee, Ireland

Susan Sheridan’s *The Fiction of Thea Astley* is a worthy and comprehensive focus on one of Australia’s most astute writers of fiction. The book captures the progressiveness, intelligence and significance of Thea Astley’s fiction – its evolution and its points of difference. It was this difference that first captured my attention as a young undergraduate student watching a magnificent display of Australian literati at the local town hall in the early 1990s. *The Writers Train* had arrived in Toowoomba; among them were Astley, Janette Turner Hospital, Thomas Keneally and the then young emerging writer, Tim Winton. The following evening, full of naivety and bravado I walked into the local pub’s private dining room that held this bastion, and called on Ms Astley to honour the interview she’d promised (and understandably forgotten). With wide gesticulations and that booming Astley voice she told me to wait in the bar. I came with only one question ‘what does it take to be a writer?’ Over the next two hours she patiently and flamboyantly let me know, finishing with a fierce summation, eyes burning into mine and her hands wrapped around my face. It is with this predilection and memory that I entered into Sheridan’s book, and I wasn’t disappointed. Sheridan presents an intricate and carefully crafted guide to the history and development of Astley’s evolution as a writer and in so doing provides the unique perspective of the heart of Astley’s fiction.

Sheridan’s analysis showcases Astley’s points of difference. The text aptly compartmentalises Astley’s examination of characters in place, the communities in which they long to belong or try to escape. Sheridan’s book accomplishes a mapping of Astley’s geographical journey – the complexity of which is heightened by Astley’s refusal to ground her stories in spatial and temporal certainty. Space and time are at play in Astley’s fiction and Astley’s characters are moved relentlessly by their connection, disconnection, dispossession of and longing to belong to place. Sheridan’s mapping is accompanied by the climatic extremes so embedded into all of Astley’s fiction. As Sheridan states ‘place and people reflect one another ... in climatic extremes both geographical and emotional of Astley’s tropical Queensland and South Pacific settings.’

Sheridan never loses sight of the underlying meaning generated by Astley’s stormy motifs – ‘a fiercely compassionate portrayal of social outsiders’. As an Australian writer in a nation that, at the time, was disconnected to its sense of self, Astley was also an outsider, a literary misfit. She was a writer of her time – but also one just on the edge of it – writing from the position of those that lay outside of cultural and social constructs. Astley lacked a sense of belonging to the male dominated, colonialist literary canon still worshiped within the national cultural cringe.

Sheridan’s text (re)instates Astley’s fiction as canon worthy. It illuminates the serious crafting of Astley as a writer. Sheridan navigates the many threads and intertextual referencing of themes, narration and characterisation that wind through Astley’s fictional journey. Mirroring Astley’s ability to compress in her fiction, Sheridan has managed to gather the many metaphorical and symbolic layers of Astley’s fiction – an enormous analytical feat that Sheridan does succinctly and thoroughly. As Sheridan points out, Astley’s many works of fiction comment on each other. *The Fiction of Thea Astley* sways back and forth between Astley’s many texts with precision – locating intertextual connections that reveal the intelligence and significance of Astley’s oeuvre as a whole, a galaxy of pulls and pushes that are not accidental.

Astley’s many allusions to Western literary history are reframed to show the disjunct between people and place in the Australian literary psyche of the time – connoting geographical, cultural and social disconnect. Often this is achieved with the sardonic humour that underplays Astley’s character development. Sheridan captures Astley’s playful control of genre and its impact on characterisation – genres that fold in on themselves. In particular, Sheridan illuminates Astley’s masterful collapse of tragedy and humour that alerts the overriding themes of violence and companionship in her fiction.

Sheridan’s acute literary analysis utilises a number of theoretical lenses (Irigaray, postcolonial, feminist) as a way to fully appreciate the varying levels at work in the evolvement of Astley’s works and is an extensive collation of key critical responses to Astley’s work. In doing so Sheridan’s text also uncovers the limitations or problematics of Astley’s thematics and reveals the ‘histories’ that Astley dealt with and the reimaginings of historical moments that she bends into her fiction.

Sheridan’s *The Fiction of Thea Astley* gives recognition and reignites interest in Astley’s work, her development and importance as a writer, and captures the heart of Astley’s ethos as a writer – to see and voice the world from the perspective of the outsiders and outcasts both within and without. It captures, perfectly, the answer Astley gave to me all those years ago:

‘To be a writer’ she yelled at me in a forced whisper, ‘has nothing to do with pen and paper. To be a writer you have to have the eyes to see about you, what others don’t see, the ears to hear what’s not said. But most importantly the bloody heart to cope with the immensity of it all!’

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The Beautiful Husband

NIKE SULWAY

We were all changed after the war, all monstrous. Father had died, Mother had gone mad, Kath had become a journalist. She wore pants and smoked cigarettes. She was still married to Harvey, but when he came back from overseas he had a stump in place of his right leg. It was made from the wood of an apple tree and, if he was feeling playful – which wasn’t often – he’d pluck apples from his pockets and say they’d grown there.

Mother had said, when Harvey first signed up and Kath announced they were going to marry before he shipped out, Marry in haste, repent at leisure. Harvey wore his uniform to church, but whenever anyone asked him about the war he would change the subject or look away. Kath said he loved her like a sister, now, rather than a wife. She said only part of him had come home.

I’d been too young to marry before the war. Still in school while my sister marched against conscription, against the war her husband was fighting, that our father died in. But when I was eighteen Kath said it was time, that she couldn’t support us all much longer. So I went on dates, and stood against the walls at dances in her best dress, adjusted to fit. But I had no knack for love. The men were handsome enough. Tall. Short. Dark. Light. Their skin close-shaven, or their beards smelling of clean wax. They would ask me to dance or buy me a beer and we’d do our best to like each other. But none of them ever hooked my breath out of my body.

I met my husband in the foyer of the newspaper office. I was waiting for Kath to come down so we could race up to Quong Tart’s in King Street for tea. My husband came in to organise an In Memoriam listing for his brother. The last of his family, who had died of the influenza.

Oh, he was fine. He was slender and tall, with narrow shoulders and narrow hips. He wore a pin-striped suit and a white shirt with silver cufflinks and a silver tie-pin. He smelled of cinnamon and marshmallows. His hair was black as a raven’s wing, and swept back off his high forehead. He walked quickly and lightly. Even the way he folded his umbrella and shook off the rain was breathtaking. Every movement he made, every gesture, seemed choreographed.

Kath and I were still in the foyer, looking out at the rain, when he came to leave. He smiled at me. ‘No umbrella?’ he said.

Kath laughed. ‘I’d make a run for it,’ she said. ‘But little bird here is afraid of getting wet. Afraid of the ‘flu.’ I was afraid of nothing, but didn’t say so. This was her way: to let me know who I was by announcing my character to the world.

He held out his umbrella. It had an ivory neck, carved like a swan. The ivory was warm from the touch of his hand. ‘Here,’ he said. ‘Take mine. I’ll come back tomorrow to collect it.’

I would have protested, even if Kath would not, but as soon as he finished speaking he ducked out the door, pulled his jacket over his head, and dashed into the rain.

He came back the next day, and the next. It rained for seven days, and that was long enough for us to fall in love. It was easier than breathing, once I’d got the knack for it. When I told Kath we were going to be married she wrapped me in her arms and squashed my face against her shoulder. ‘He’s an odd one,’ she said. ‘But if you love him, it’ll all be right.’

I wonder, still, what our mother would have said.

Kath told me what to expect on our wedding night; I blushed and nodded and heard not a thing. When the time came, he turned out every light and closed the curtains. The room was black as pitch. I couldn’t see the hand before my own face. In that darkness, he undressed me in her arms and squashed my face against her shoulder. ‘He’s an odd one,’ she said. ‘But if you love him, it’ll all be right.’

A memory of his hand sliding over my hip made me blush even more.

‘Details!’ she demanded. ‘Tell me every single thing.’

I told her how he closed the curtains and doused the lights. How I would fall asleep in his arms and wake to find him up and dressed, sitting by the window.

‘You’ve never seen him naked?’

I had to think. I could picture his neck, his wrists. ‘I guess not.’

‘Is there something wrong with him?’ she said. ‘Is he … damaged?’

‘No!’

She raised one eyebrow and gave me a look that suggested otherwise. That said she could discern, without even looking, what I could not.
That night, I put out a hand to stop him from turning out the light. ‘I want to see you,’ I said. I had practised this line. Had imagined it sounding seductive.

He shook his head. ‘Are you happy?’ he said. ‘Are you … content?’

‘God, yes! I just … you’re so perfect. I want to look at you. I want us to know everything about each other.’

He would not meet my gaze. ‘I will give you everything,’ he said. I had never heard him sound so vulnerable. So afraid. ‘Share everything with you. I will love you more completely than any man has ever loved any woman. But you cannot see me. If you see … this,’ he gestured at his body; wretchedness skewed his beautiful face, ‘I will have to leave you.’

‘But why?’

He shook his head. A tear as perfect as a pearl fell to his cheek. ‘My darling,’ he said. ‘Don’t ask me.’

‘Are you injured? Like Harvey? I don’t care. I’ll love you no matter what the war did to you.’

‘I’m not injured,’ he said. ‘It wasn’t the war.’ The tear slipped from his cheek to his shirt.

I put my hand on his chest, on his skin. The urge to tear his shirt open and let him see that my love was unchanged by whatever lay beneath it was almost overwhelming.

He put his hand over mine. Held it fast. ‘Promise me,’ he said.

I would have done anything to keep him. I would have promised to eat the moon. I said the words he wanted to hear, then reached past him and turned off the light.

‘Never?!’ my sister said.

‘It’s not such a big deal.’

We were in the kitchen, making dinner. Harvey and my husband were in the lounge, listening to the radio.

‘What’s wrong with him?’ she whispered.

‘Nothing,’ I said. ‘It’s not that.’

‘What is it then?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘It could be anything!’ she said. ‘He could be hideous. Deformed.’

‘He’s not hideous.’

‘How do you know?’ She looked out into the hall, moved next to me. Whispered. ‘You could sneak a look.’

She grabbed my hand and dragged me, giggling, into our parents’ old room. She lay on the floor beside their bed and shuffled underneath it. The dust made us both sneeze. The wall behind the bedhead was shared with the bathroom. Our mother had complained about this all our lives: about how every time someone washed their hands or flushed the toilet, the water had gurgled and sloshed right beside her sleeping head. She dreamed of drowning. Of ships at sea. When my father had showered in the dark, waking before dawn to get ready for work, she would wake in a terror, certain her bed was adrift at sea.

‘Look!’ my sister said, and pulled me close. There was a hole in the bedroom wall. As round as an eye. My stomach lurched. I pictured my husband in that room, slipping his coat from his shoulders, unbuttoning his cuffs. I was glad it was dark under the bed. Glad my sister could not see me burning with unwifely desire.

I waited a year.

For six months it was enough to imagine myself on the floor beneath my parents’ bed. My husband in the bathroom. His suit jacket hung on a hook behind the door. His shoes on the floor. His shirt on a hook. His pants, too. My husband stepping into the shower. The slender gleam of his back, water slipping over his skin. But then I began to ache. My teeth ached in my jaw. My bones ached in their joints. My fingers ached. It was like hunger. Like starvation. I felt sure I would die if I couldn’t see him. And what harm would it do, I told myself. What harm, my sister said. Just a glimpse.

The floorboards were cool and hard. I had to lift myself up a little to put my eye to the hole in the wall. He came into the bathroom and closed the door, locked it. Put his hand against it, and tested the lock. I felt ashamed then, seeing how careful he was, how afraid, but it wasn’t enough to stop me.

He turned his back to me, sat on the edge of the bath to slip off his shoes and socks. He took off his jacket and hung it, just as I had dreamed he would. Then his shirt. His back was smooth and pale. There was a cluster of freckles on the back of his left shoulder. He stood and slipped off his pants. Then he turned.

I pulled back from the hole in the wall, banged my head on the underside of the bed and bit my tongue. Tasted blood. Oh God, I thought. Oh Christ. Oh God. I knew I had made a noise. I could still feel it scraping my throat. I put my eye to the hole in the wall and looked again. I stared and stared, and my husband just stood there, hands hanging by his sides, not moving. As if he knew. As if everything was lost.

When he came into our bedroom I was sitting on the end of the bed. All the lights were on, but the curtains were drawn. I didn’t know what to say. I didn’t know how to begin, so I was coarse and stupid.

‘You’re a woman,’ I said.

‘I am not,’ he said.

‘I saw you.’

‘I am not a woman,’ he said. He looked down at his shoes and frowned, as if there was a mark that he had not polished away, but could not bend to remedy. ‘You broke your promise.’

‘I did,’ I said. ‘But you...’
He looked straight at me, and the breath was hooked out of me again. Not with love, this time. Or not only with love. But because he was so very fine. His raven’s wing, his soft cheek, his cupid’s lips. And because he was no longer mine.

He said nothing, but I knew that he would leave me. As he had said he would.

I don’t know where he went. He took almost nothing, and left no trace. I cannot call the police. What would I tell them: that my husband left me because I looked at him?

At night, I close the windows; I turn out all the lights. It is black as pitch in our bedroom, black as loss. I hear the water in the pipes and close my eyes. No storms overwhelm me. No tempests flood the sheets. He has flown, my beautiful husband, my raven. I will never see him again.

END

Author
Nike Sulway is a Queensland writer. Her most recent novel is Dying in the First Person. Previous works include Rupetta, The True Green of Hope, and The Bone Flute. She teaches at the University of Southern Queensland, in Toowoomba.

Grasshopper

The grasshopper is perched upon the rim of a plate as I pluck various varieties of sunflowers; mammoth, and orange blood mexican dried up like a prickly cactus which pinch my fingers red. Pluck, pluck they go onto the clicking sound. The grasshopper is oblivious or so it seems.

The plate was bought on stamps Abuela received from her grocery bill, money she made selling Avon and babysitting. She painstakingly licked one stamp at a time, one book at a time which was the equivalent of one plate or one soup bowl or one cafe con leche cup, or one saucer.

Weeks went by, months went by, years went by until she finally had her china cabinet filled with cheap rose and gold rim plates. Neighbors walk by with their dogs. Women jog by hearing a song in their earplugs. Children ride their bicycles back and forth. Another neighbor is chipping away paint off the pillars of his front porch. You are not home.

Yet the grasshopper doesn’t budge. He understands the more seeds I throw into the plate, the more leverage. It patiently waits and when one of the seeds comes close to his hind legs, he jumps. Just like the grasshopper I wait.

Field

The rezoning plans say my father’s field would fit eight townhouses on it.

My father’s field was just a little one, gifted by his father at his deathbed.

My father’s field was his legacy. My beloved uncle, his older brother, getting the other 97.5% of the farm.

My father’s field was to have been my field, until the collateral was drawn up and as our pub went bust we lost everything;

everything is ok, in a way, but a man losing a field, like I have, is a bit too much, too much altogether.

Noel King,
Tralee, Ireland

Dulce Maria Menendez,
Illinois, USA
To understand photography and its role in society is to develop further appreciation from an aesthetic and textural perspective of other photographers’ concepts and methods. In doing so we learn something about that photographer’s technique that may inform the artist’s own practice.

The goal for these works by Kate Berry was to critically analyse and study a master photographer whose work relates or communicates in some way about issues and afflictions in the world we live. Kate Berry chose photographer and artist Nicolas Bruno to research, emulate and practice his techniques in order to understand his methodologies by recreating faithful to the style for two of his works, ‘Vertenza’ and ‘The Escape Artist Pt. II’:

I have experienced bone chilling hallucinations and extreme terror during these dreams – faceless silhouetted figures, embraces from shadow-like hands, the warping of reality around me - all the while being completely paralysed in the midst of being awake and sleeping’ (Bruno, House 2014).

Nicolas Bruno is a visual artist and photographer suffering from sleep paralysis since the age of fifteen. Sleep paralysis is a rare condition that traps people in their dream state, leaving the mind conscious and the body paralysed. The 1781 painting, ‘The Nightmare’, a famous art piece by Henry Fuseli (Paulson 2014), sparked intrigue in this form of expression and lead to Bruno’s discovery of his condition. Bruno was encouraged by his High School art teacher to make sense of his dreams, and in the process of finding an explanation for this affliction his dreams became the focus of his photographic work (Simpson 2017). The ongoing nightmares Bruno experiences when paralysed are a continual struggle for the young artist thus, creating a vocabulary of imagery through photography has helped him subdue them. Through the reconstruction and the aesthetic recreation of his terrifying nightly hallucinations, he is able to take control of his dreams and put them into tangible form.

Influenced by René Magritte’s unsettling paintings of objects in unusual places nostalgia laces his visions and imagery as dark embodiments of entrapment and being chased, secretly bespeaking a prevailing role. The hooded figures are a trademark of his work; by using a continuous shutter release Bruno can become all the figures, representing the dreams he can’t escape. Therefore, all his images are taken with only his camera, two lenses, remote and a tripod. Bruno comments:

Individuals who have experienced sleep paralysis will be able to pick up on the specific symbolism that I implement within my work, but I do not create my artwork specifically for them. I aim to give viewers, who have not experienced these night terrors, a visual taste of what lies within the in between realm of sleep and consciousness (Bruno in Hossenally 2014).

Choosing Nicolas Bruno’s work to investigate pushed Berry out of her comfort zone and resulted in an analytical approach to the production of psychosocial and symbolic imagery, which she relates to the world we live. His methodology and post-production process helped inform Berry of his methods and how to emulate through digital practice images that can communicate and express the mysterious dream disorder which can be debilitating and terrifying for those afflicted.

References
Kate Berry’s reinterpretation of Bruno’s ‘Vertenza’. Photography and digital processes.
Kate Berry’s reinterpretation of Bruno’s ‘Escape Artist Pt II’. Photography and digital processes.
Kate Berry's reinterpretation of Bruno's 'Self Portrait'. Photography and digital processes.
Kate Berry’s reinterpretation of another of Bruno’s ‘Self Portrait’. Photography and digital processes.
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