

This article is a contribution to an emerging scholarship on the role of rhetoric, persona and celebrity, and the effects of performance on the political process. We analyse party leader Ed Miliband at the UK Labour Party Conference in Manchester in 2012. Our analysis identifies how, through performance of 'himself' and the beginnings of the deployment of an alternative party narrative centred on 'One Nation', Ed Miliband began to revise his 'received persona'. By using a range of rhetorical and other techniques, Miliband began to adapt the Labour narrative to the 'personalized political'. The article sets out the theoretical framework for the analysis and returns to the implications for the theory of leadership performance in its conclusion.

THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF RELATED STUDIES SINCE JOHN Corner's identification (2000) of three modes of leadership performance (iconic, vocal and kinetic) and John Street's 2004 article on celebrity politicians. At a developed theoretical level, this research has grown in reaction to – though, in fact, it complements – both economic and sociological approaches to the study of politics: namely, what political actors do in the political arena and how they persuade other actors and the wider public to agree or to act are crucial to how politics works and are severely under researched areas.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT: RHETORIC, PERSONA AND CELEBRITY

Alan Finlayson (2002) has analysed the self-presentation of former UK Labour prime minister Tony Blair through style, appearance and language, and the creation of an imagined intimacy between Blair and his audience. Finlayson analyses a range of party broadcasts (1994–2001) indicative of what he terms New Labour's populism, a populism displayed and mobilized through the construction of the character, Tony Blair. Images of Blair performing a shared national pastime – that is, drinking tea (from a mug and not a cup and saucer) – conveyed an image of a particular kind of person and of something shared with the audience, thus connecting obliquely with cultural meaning systems. The performance of a culturally apt activity and identification with followers was formative of Blair's 'one of us' image (Finlayson 2002) and 'regular guy' persona (see also Abrams 1997). James Martin's research uses a similar interpretivist methodology to Finlayson's. For Martin (2013), a political speech is a dynamic medium for mobilizing ideas as a form of action. Martin sets out a rhetorical approach to political strategy that analyses: (1) the rhetorical context; (2) the rhetorical argument; and (3) rhetorical effects. John Corner (2000) argues that 'political personhood' is mediated: iconically (political publicity such as photo opportunities), vocally (technological changes in recording that have allowed an increasing informality of public address) and kinetically – the political self in action and interaction (for example, the 'high politics' of the international conference, the 'low politics' of the visit to the factory), which, certainly for television, requires a choreographic attention, not least to avoid 'accidents' in performance (for example, a previous Labour leader, Neil Kinnock, stumbled back and fell during a photo opportunity on Brighton beach in 1983).

Cumulatively, the iconic, vocal and kinetic enhance the 'personal' operating within a political culture and institutions, each offering opportunities and constraints for the use of persona to have political effect. *Media and the Restyling of Politics* (Corner and Pels 2003) comprises a comprehensive range of essays on political marketing, celebrity culture and the personalization of politics. Pels points to the emotional dimensions of the restyling of politics and refers to the crucial place of notions of authenticity in citizen evaluations of televisual political figures. The central argument by John Street (2004) is that the celebrity politician is not – or is no longer – an exaggerated or exceptional form of political representation, but rather is characteristic of the nature of political representation generally. Street's later article (2012) sets out the analytical implications for taking celebrity politics seriously. Wheeler (2012) builds on the work of Street and asks to what extent celebrity politicians can 'input' aggregated forms of 'agency' to affect political outcomes. New forms of technology have altered the relationship between politicians and audiences; for example, new forms of e-activism (Hodges 2011) – Twitter, blogs, Facebook and so on – create an imagined proximity to leadership actors and alter the 'pace', and arguably the stability, of the relationship. Our analysis explores the role and performance of celebrity as a formative part of this new relationship. Research by Drake and Higgins (2012) combines political language, mediated performance and celebrity. They reconceptualize celebrity as a process or a frame, as opposed to a quality that individuals possess; a celebrity frame has both performative and interpretative rules through which media publics are configured and addressed. Their analysis of the 2010 party leaders' debates during the UK general election campaign is particularly insightful as regards the candidates' use of different performative strategies to create the impression of authenticity.¹ The growing body of research in UK politics is a critical response to the emergence of the political actor/leader as a 'celebrity', in an echo of the dramatic rise of the celebrity culture more generally. Since the emergence of celebrity politics, political leaders have become – falteringly, in many cases – part of a culturally framed star system (Dyer 1998; Gaffney and Holmes 2011). In UK politics, especially from Margaret Thatcher onwards (with the decisive influence of Gordon Reece, her political strategist), the exigencies of attention to and effects of image, look, style, rhetoric, character and comportment fostered an entourage of advisers and speechwriters. Alongside this, as the media in all its forms became more formative and, paradoxically, more 'fracturing' of persona in the political sphere, the perceived need to 'market' leadership to its audience, to control and fashion it, gave birth to the generation of directors of communication or 'spin doctors' – Peter Mandelson, Alastair Campbell and their successors.

There are, however, several audiences whom we shall refer to where appropriate: the actual audience, the media and the wider public. These interact with each other, and the demarcations between them are permeable. Then there are other audiences: adversaries, both internal and external, the international audience (of media and overseas political parties and guests), the 'casual' audience watching the party conference on television – or hearing or reading about it – political observers and academics, lobbies of different kinds

and so on. Every individual, in fact, is an audience. Over and above this, and perhaps more importantly in terms of performance and rhetorical analysis, audiences, although 'real', are also 'imagined'. For example, the British people exist, but most importantly as an imagined community with a particular character. Even the actual conference audience is imagined as the party itself, or as an idealized party beyond the party machinery. Having said this, our focus here is on the performance itself rather than on the relationship between performance and audience.

Our research here is also a part of the emergence, re-emergence if we were to take the long view, of the study of rhetoric and its role in political persuasion. Contemporary studies of rhetoric in the UK over the last 10 years or so have taken as their reference points the rich modern rhetorical studies tradition in US politics and the renewal of interest in classical rhetoric. Leadership rhetoric and its study have thrived in the US, partly because of the emphasis, in reality and in political science, on acutely personalized leadership itself (from Franklin D. Roosevelt onwards) as an agency of political change (an assumption of variable veracity). In the UK, the renewed interest in rhetoric and speechwriting is a reflection of the growing personalization and mediatization of politics, in spite of the absence of a personalized presidential system.² This brings us to three final points regarding leadership and its properties and role: those concerning institutions and culture. The first we have alluded to – namely, that institutions frame performance. They are its conditions of possibility. US political rhetoric is as it is because its frame and condition of production is the US presidency itself, which creates a president who 'performs the presidency' (see Kohrs Campbell and Hall Jamieson 2008). In less personalized institutions such as in the UK, rhetorical expectations and leadership image will be different. Second, why is there a presidency in the US and a premiership in the UK? The answer is, of course, historical, but for the purposes of analysis of political performance the reasons are cultural (Gaffney 2013). This also goes for rhetoric; the high rhetoric of the US presidency is in part the result of US history and political culture, as well as its institutions. Third, the party conference and its analysis (Kavanagh 1996; Minkin 1980) have an anthropological dimension that in part serves the purpose of symbolic ritual (Faucher 2005). As Faucher explains, the party conference is the place where the grassroots assemble, renew their allegiance and communicate with one another (see also Turner 1967). In the British political party, particularly on the left, suspicion of the leadership can be profound; for Faucher, the conference therefore acts as a crucial site where the tension between party and leadership is played out.

To recapitulate: leaders interpolate ideas, gathering them together (for example, socialism and populism), projecting them – through the performance of the political persona – into the public sphere (Finlayson 2002). Because the medium is the media, the projection is a refraction that informs and affects how they appear, what they say and what they do (Corner 2000). The projection of the persona will have emotional effects that range from hostility, through indifference to agreement, enthusiasm, even devotion (Corner and Pels

2003). The relationship between projected leadership and celebrity is now the norm (Street 2004, 2012), creating new forms of leadership persona which, in turn, offer the possibilities of change in the relationship between the leader and followers as well as in the persona within the relationship (Wheeler 2012). The relational performance of persona is best understood as taking place within a framework of conventions and a process that are formative of performance which itself is embedded in a cultural context (Drake and Higgins 2012). We can add to this our own emphasis, first on the performance itself as an act or action. A linguistic analogy is appropriate here: everything that preceded the act – context, ideas, culture, received persona and so on – is diachronic, like language; the political performance itself is synchronic, like a speech act (*parole*) that mediates and alters the conditions of performance. Second, the persona and audience/s are real, but, more than that, are ‘imagined’ – perhaps in a rather more autonomous way than communities are imagined by Anderson (1983; Gaffney 2001) – and it is here that the rhetorical scope is given to the imagining, constructing, reinforcing, changing and intensifying of the relationship between leader and audience, and this through rhetoric.

‘RECEIVED PERSONA’ AND MILIBAND’S 2012 PERFORMANCE

We shall refer briefly to three examples constitutive of Miliband’s ‘received’ image and persona before the Labour Party Conference: ‘Red Ed’, the ramifications of the leadership contest and the depiction of Ed Miliband as Wallace (from the ‘Wallace and Gromit’ series) by David Cameron and the media (from a cartoon by Peter Brookes) and the consequences of these for his persona.

First, during the 2010 Labour Party leadership election, Ed Miliband was referred to as ‘Red Ed’ by the media, the term portraying Miliband as representing the left of the party, a view reinforced by his receiving the backing of many local activists and the trade unions in his leadership campaign and election. The term offered Miliband a certain campaigning radical image as a leadership candidate, but threw his leadership image into disarray once he became leader, underlining the idea that the party had elected the ‘wrong’, the more marginal, candidate. Second, both Ed Miliband and his brother David had entered the Labour Party leadership election of 2010. A widely held view throughout the premiership of Gordon Brown (the previous leader), and prior to the internal contest, was that David Miliband was the natural heir to the Labour Party leadership (he eventually announced in March 2013 that he was leaving politics). The contest therefore had an emotional edge in which Miliband Junior beat Miliband Senior, as if usurping a crown, fratricidally. He won by only 1.3 percentage points.³ The thinness of Ed Miliband’s majority raised questions about his broader legitimacy as party leader. He was the first Labour leader to have won under the post-1980 electoral college system without gaining a majority of party members (Freedland 2010). Negative media representations of Miliband began to emerge in the immediate aftermath of the election and persisted right up until Conference 2012. Cumulative negative

characterizations all pointed to Miliband's 'inappropriateness' as leader: 'geek' (Kite 2010); 'the man who shafted his brother' (quoted in Cowley 2012); a policywonk or an out-of-touch north London intellectual; a weak leader who was unable to command political authority and lacked policy detail; 'Miliband minor' (Deedes 2012); 'Ed the outsider, the underdog' (Hasan 2012). In fact, the new leader, for several weeks after his election, was seldom seen. Third, a damaging depiction came from Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron at the beginning of 2011 when he likened Ed to the plasticine animation character, Wallace, from the 'Wallace and Gromit' series (Cameron 2011). Ed's passing resemblance to the hapless, twitty inventor whose ideas rarely go according to plan portrayed him as a leader utterly ill-equipped to command political authority and unite the Blair/Brown, now David/Ed, cleavage within the Labour Party. Miliband conceded that he was 'somebody who looks a bit like Wallace from Wallace & Gromit. If spin doctors could design a politician, I suspect he wouldn't look like me' (quoted in Watson 2012). Bringing humour to the depiction may have diffused somewhat the ongoing negative discussion about his character (but see Mitchell 2012), but confirmed his own image as the less glamorous younger brother.

Three weeks before the conference, Miliband was interviewed by the left-of-centre current affairs magazine, *New Statesman* (Cowley 2012). The interview, entitled 'He's Not for Turning', was five pages long. It began by describing the interview setting, Miliband's garden. The interviewer, Jason Cowley, romanticized the backdrop: 'it is one of those rare, luminous September mornings, the light diffuse and all the more beautiful because you know the days are inexorably shortening. The garden is overgrown, the grass damp underfoot in the early-morning sunshine.' After the oddly pastoral scene was set, Cowley notes the presence of Tom Baldwin, Miliband's media aide, who 'pulls up chairs and brings us coffee' (echoes of Blair's mug of tea). Indeed, the article itself echoed the *Hello* magazine celebrity interview that has become so pervasive in British culture; the interview that followed was highly personalized.

Miliband's use of the first-person pronoun, 'I', was widespread in the interview, and constantly drew attention to himself and the books he read on holiday, his family and children, his personal tasks ahead, self-imposed challenges, as well as reflections on policies, spending commitments and so on. The personal and what we call 'the personalized political' (that is, bringing the self in some way into responses to wider issues) are woven throughout the article. In between Miliband's responses to questions and personal insights, Cowley, Baldwin and Marc Stears (an academic and Miliband's friend) helped create a new kind of Miliband persona, in that what is portrayed is the team of advisers and listeners quietly gathered around the leader as he reflects on the future (the accompanying soft-focus photos of a pensive but casual Miliband in the north London garden were of very high quality).

The second example of pre-conference media was Alan Johnson's article (2012) in *The Guardian* (also left-of-centre) on 26 September, entitled 'Ed Miliband, Show us you Have

What it Takes to be Prime Minister'. Johnson concluded the article: 'Ed Miliband now has the chance to show that there is an alternative. But there is no use earning the right to be listened to if you have nothing to say' (we might add that it is actually the other way round that is the real issue: in order to say something you need to be listened to). The semicritical article by Johnson, a now 'fatherly' (and plain-speaking) political figure within the party, was an expression of an internal view regarding policy inaction by Miliband, but Johnson's mixing of the personal and policy-related was significant in its implication that any successful way forward depended crucially on Miliband's upcoming performance. By conflating the 'leading' and the 'saying', Johnson was signalling Miliband's conference speech as crucial to his leadership image.

Third, days before Conference 2012, Richard Behr (2012) wrote an article in *New Statesman* entitled 'Project "Ed's Charisma": The Mission to Help Miliband Loosen Up'. Appearing immediately before the conference, Behr's article, like Johnson's, signals Miliband's forthcoming performance as important. A negatively received performance at the conference would confirm the existing view that Miliband did, in fact, have a personal appeal problem; conversely, a positively received performance would alter the view held hitherto. Both articles, by insisting on the issue of character, displace attention away from party and towards the leader's upcoming 'performance'.

The fourth and ostensibly damaging example of pre-conference media was the stress put on the unpopularity of Ed Miliband in relation to David, outlined in a *Populus* opinion poll commissioned by the Conservative Party on 28 September 2012, just two days before the Labour Party Conference. The headline 'Two in Three Labour Voters Want to Ditch Leader Ed Miliband for his Brother David' (Groves and Shipman 2012) once again raised the question of Miliband Junior's legitimacy as party leader, but in a highly personalized context of a comparison with his elder brother. The article stated that '1/4 voters believe Ed is the right man to revive economy and 67% believe his party "chose the wrong brother", and only 17 per cent of voters see Mr Miliband as a natural leader and just 18 per cent consider him to be charismatic' (Groves and Shipman 2012). The poll was the front-page story in *The Independent*, and all the media covered the leadership issue prominently right up until the conference (and constantly referred to the term 'charisma'). For both supporters and critics, character and performance would be central to the conference.⁴

CONFERENCE 2012

We shall examine the following performances: arrival at the conference (29 September 2012); Conference Day One (30 September 2012), including an interview with Andrew Marr, and the lecture by Professor Michael Sandel; Conference Day Two (1 October 2012), including Miliband's presence at fringe events; Conference Day Three (2 October 2012) – keynote speech – and Conference Day Four (3 October 2012), the Q&A session.

Arrival at Conference (29 September 2012)

Ed Miliband arrived in Manchester with his family by train one day ahead of the party conference. Two images of Ed and his family were given wide coverage in the mainstream media. The first conveys the 'ordinariness' of a young family travelling on a train (and not in first class). The children are sitting on their parents' laps, with toys and story books scattered across the table. In the second, the Milibands are pictured walking up the platform at Manchester, Miliband with his eldest child on his shoulders and Justine carrying the youngest against her hip. The images of the Milibands travelling to Manchester, using economy travel, and Miliband's interaction with his children portray Ed Miliband as a 'today's' father and husband who takes his parental duties in his stride. The images were stage managed (in the first photo, the toys on the table are clearly arranged for the camera (as is the family); in the second, the Milibands depart the train with no luggage or coats and are the only people walking along the platform). Nevertheless, each photo was aiming to look 'natural', to show a party leader who appears as 'a regular guy' in the Blair mode, a 40-something father of a young family, relaxed – this will become very important – unpretentious and accessible.

Conference Day One (30 September 2012)

Interview with Andrew Marr. On Day One of the Labour Party Conference, Ed Miliband was interviewed by political commentator and journalist Andrew Marr for the BBC's weekly politics show The Andrew Marr Show. The 20-minute interview covered a range of issues: policymaking, the public and private sector, party funding, Miliband's relationship with trade union leaders, the economy, unemployment, bankers' bonuses, predistribution, the National Health Service and coalition politics; but the role of personal character in the interview, specifically Marr's questioning Miliband's image, leadership appeal and popularity was central:

ANDREW MARR:

[. . .] and your own personal ratings, they're still pretty terrible. I mean very, very large numbers of people still saying I don't see this man as a future prime minister.

ED MILIBAND:

I think it's quite a compliment actually that the Tories produced a poll yesterday about me. I think it shows I've got them worried.

[. . .]

ANDREW MARR:

But, however you regard all this stuff, it is part of the job of a modern leader to project him or herself in a way that people find appealing. [. . .] And you've struggled to do that so far. [. . .]

ED MILIBAND:

Well that's your characterization. Here's what I think. I think ideas matter in politics and I'm not embarrassed about that, right?

ANDREW MARR:

So the wonky stuff is . . . you know, it's fine. Wonk, geek, no problem with that?

ED MILIBAND:

Absolu . . . Look. No, let me be clear about this. You know I gave a speech last year at the Labour Party Conference. It was controversial. I talked about the predator companies, predatory behaviour. I don't regret that speech because it spoke to . . . and over the last year people said actually maybe he was right about that. And so, look, you know, I'm very clear about this. I'm my own person . . . (Marr 2012)

We can see from this that the references to policy and other issues were, in fact, a prelude to the central issue that would dominate the conference: the character of the leader.

On the same day as Miliband's interview with Andrew Marr, Harriet Harman, deputy leader of the Labour Party, conceded in an interview for the BBC's Sunday Politics Show that not many people knew who the leader of the opposition was and that 'this week is a very important opportunity for the public to see Ed Miliband as he is' (see Harman 2012a). It is as if Miliband's subsequent performance were being given a shape or a framework. We shall return to this point in our conclusion.

Lecture by Professor Michael Sandel. Sandel's is, of course, not Miliband's own performance, but is crucial to our understanding of it. Harvard professor Michael Sandel delivered a lecture to conference on the afternoon of Day One. The 45-minute lecture explained 'predistribution' as an economic goal, a policy term that Miliband had gestured at in his 2011 conference speech entitled 'Producers versus Predators' on responsible capitalism, and referred explicitly to in his speech to the think-tank, Policy Network, on 6 September 2012 and in his highly personalized New Statesman interview (Cowley 2012). Sandel's presence at Conference 2012 illustrated Miliband's relationship with academics and their use of academic phraseology, but oblique references to being intellectual or being connected with academia are helpful if used with care (Troy 2002). The appearance of a major public intellectual at the 2012 conference stressed the – by assertion – insightfulness of the leader in his earlier, unpopular, but – through Sandel's endorsement – accurate analyses, thus elevating Miliband's status to that of an intellectual Cassandra (the Cassandra

figure is Miliband because Sandel is echoing Miliband, not the other way round). Sandel concluded his lecture:

Democracy does not require perfect equality. But it does require that citizens share a common life. What matters is that people of different social backgrounds, different walks of life, encounter one another, bump up against one another, in the course of everyday life. Because this is how we come to negotiate and abide our differences and this is how we come to care for the common good. (Sandel 2012)

The quotation prefigures Miliband's policy focus on community, citizenship and society, the main features of his speech the following day. The role of Sandel's lecture was to justify post facto Miliband's insightfulness (of the year and month before), and prefigure – thereby reinforcing rhetorically – the themes of his keynote speech on Day Three.

Conference Day Two (1 October 2012): Miliband's Presence at Fringe Events

On the evening of Day Two of the conference, Miliband briefly attended a fringe event, the 'Friends of Europe' group, with his wife Justine (who stood to the side of the small stage in the audience) and comedian Eddie Izzard (who spoke after him). Miliband said (and this only 24 hours into the conference) that this was the fullest fringe meeting of the 30 he had attended. Miliband's attendance at fringe events alone illustrated his 'presence' during Conference 2012. It is clear that the conference was being 'inhabited' by Ed Miliband in a symbolic unmediated relationship between himself and the conference attendees. Miliband then left the stage, rejoined his wife and slowly made his way through the room to the exit, all the while talking to groups and individuals. There is a subtle blending here of, on the one hand, proximity and accessibility (taking time to come, taking a lot of time to exit slowly, accompanied by his wife), and on the other, his special leadership status.

Conference Day Three (2 October 2012): Keynote Speech⁵

In a 65-minute speech without an autocue, notes or teleprompter, through performance of 'himself', as it were, Miliband began truly to inflect his received persona.⁶ We will focus on two areas: the opening of the speech and the themes of the speech, including references or allusions to policy. As we shall demonstrate, both show the centrality of character and image within the institution of the party and the emergence of a new relationship between (the new personality of) the speaker and the actual and the 'imagined' wider audience. As we shall see later, evidence for this came as early as the next day's media coverage.

Keynote Speech: Opening. As Miliband walked out onto the low stage, he was greeted with a standing ovation. He immediately greeted a small section of the party faithful positioned on stage (who reflected youth, gender balance and diversity) then extended this to the

wider conference hall as he walked around the front of the stage, waving at the crowd while saying, 'thank you, thank you very much' several times. Miliband's opening statement was:

Thank you so much friends. It is great to be in Labour Manchester. And you know Manchester has special memories for me because two years ago I was elected the leader of this party. I'm older. I feel a lot older actually. I hope I'm a bit wiser. But I am prouder than ever to be the Leader of the Labour Party. (Miliband 2012)

The statement countered the post-2010 ideas about his status and authority as leader of the Labour Party, by positing the idea of the leader returning to the original place, now wiser and – now – legitimate. During the first twelve minutes of his extended opening to the keynote speech, Miliband asserted his status as party leader through the telling of a tale about himself, essentially through humour and a series of highly personalized insights into his family, his feelings and his education. More personalized and humorous references followed, a humour that in previous speeches had not been used. Entertaining references to his son, Daniel, and dinosaurs brought hilarious laughter; very early on in the speech, therefore, there was a kind of endorsement of Miliband by the audience, thus legitimating a highly personalized speech thereafter. There is even humour about the act of speechwriting itself:

the Leader's Speech [. . .] can be a bit of a trial. You get all kinds of advice from people. Say this, don't say that. Smile here, don't smile there. Stand there, don't stand there [. . .] And so the other day, and this is an absolutely true story, I decided that to get away from it all, the speechwriting, all of that, I'd go for a walk with my three year old son, Daniel. It was an absolutely gorgeous late summer day. So we went out, I wanted to go to the park. Here's the first thing he said to me: 'Daddy, I can help you with your speech' [. . .] and I said 'well that's a good Labour insight, you can't do it all on your own. Daniel what do you want in my speech?' He said 'I want dinosaurs! I want dinosaurs, I want flying dinosaurs! I want dinosaurs that eat people daddy!' I said, 'No Daniel. We tried predators last year.' (Miliband 2012)

Miliband devoted approximately 20 per cent of the speech to humour, mainly at the beginning. Humour was then contrasted with seriousness as Miliband offered a series of very personal insights into first his family and then his emotions, each formative of his political world view.⁷

Miliband referred to his upbringing as 'special because of the place of politics within it'. But the justification is not immediately a political one; rather, it is an emotional personal recollection that serves as a parable and founding moment. At 12 years old, he had met the anti-apartheid activist Ruth First, a friend of his mother. He then remembers his shock and anger on coming down to breakfast, finding his mother in tears, and hearing that Ruth First had been murdered by a letter bomb sent by the South African secret police. The young Miliband felt the just anger and 'a duty to leave the world a better place than we found it. I

believe we cannot shrug our shoulders at injustice, and just say that's the way the world is. And I believe that we can overcome any odds if we come together as people' (Miliband 2012). We have, therefore, in the opening minutes of the speech the telling of a story: the evocation of an ordinary childhood ('I was born in my local NHS hospital, the same hospital my two sons would later be born in. [. . .] I went to my local comprehensive'), with elements of founding moral moments (Jewish refugees, commitment to Britain, Ruth First and the struggle against apartheid). The personal and the highly emotional set the scene for the theme of 'One Nation'. We shall come back to the rhetorical significance of this in our conclusion.

In sum, the opening of Miliband's keynote speech was humorous, emotional, evoking (in a very visual way, moreover) a very ordinary British yet, in fact, very special childhood; the opening minutes bristle with insights and – tellingly – are completely focused on himself, the child as the father of the man, the formative inspirations of an adult quest.⁸

Keynote Speech: Themes and Policy. 'One Nation' was the theme of Miliband's keynote speech. One Nation is part of the tradition of Conservatism that existed arguably up until Thatcherism,⁹ a tradition informed by the ideas and the memory of figures such as Edmund Burke and Benjamin Disraeli, later Churchill, and then shared by Labour as part of the 'Butskellist' post-war settlement. Miliband introduced One Nation Labour thus:

Friends, I didn't become leader of the Labour Party to reinvent the world of Disraeli or Attlee. But I do believe in that spirit. That spirit of One Nation. One Nation: a country where everyone has a stake. One Nation: a country where prosperity is fairly shared. One Nation: where we have a shared destiny, a sense of shared endeavour and a common life that we lead together. That is my vision of One Nation. That is my vision of Britain. That is the Britain we must become. (Miliband 2012)

We can see – or hear, rather – in this peroration an emotional echo of Sandel's philosophical prescriptions of the previous day. And, from a practical point of view, the near-corporatist sounding approaches to: banking, 'a One Nation banking system'; education, 'a One Nation skills system'; 'a One Nation economy'; 'a One Nation business model' – which, it is claimed, will have decisive repercussions in vocational education, wages policy, immigration and the National Health Service – are introduced in the speech as the beginning of what we can call a 'policy narrative'. One Nation becomes both an umbrella (for future narratives) and a justification of policy initiatives as part of a wide-ranging but integrated social project; all this is 'imagined' in the unfolding speech by the leader/ speaker (without notes). The One Nation theme and its elaboration become the emotional and rhetorical framework of a mission, shared by all and led by the speaker. At the end of the speech, Miliband exited the conference hall accompanied by his wife, as the now standard, congratulatory, US-style 'golden couple' who, through the illusion of accessibility, demarcate their difference.

Conference Day Four (3 October 2012)

Press Reaction. The press reaction to Miliband's keynote speech was overwhelmingly positive. In fact, Miliband had never known such positive comment. The following examples are indicative of media opinion: 'game changer' (Beattie 2012a); 'rhetorical tour de force' (Milne 2012); 'a barnstorming conference speech without notes' (Dunn 2012); 'finally he looked like the boss . . . the moment he became leader of the Labour Party, de facto as well as de jure' (Hoggart 2012); 'Geek-tastic Ed triumphs by nicking a Tory mantra' (Treneman 2012); 'Labour leader takes leaf out of PM's book with bravura conference speech delivered without notes' (Grice 2012); 'Ed's display of style – and substance – will worry the Tories' (Richards 2012); 'He's a real showman' (Suphi 2012); 'Geek God. Ed becomes Labour legend yesterday' (Beattie 2012b); 'And now it's personal – Miliband the leader steps into the limelight' (Watt 2012); 'The Labour faithful depart from the north west confident that they have not elected a dud as their party leader' (Landale 2012). It is clear that the relaxed, confessional style and a personal-political narrative, the use of humour, emotion and a natural-seeming relationship with his audience had created a new persona, at least in the immediate term. The confidence (to speak without notes) had projected competence and the idea that he was the real 'author' (no speechwriter in evidence) of his own narrative. The overwhelmingly positive media reception of Miliband's keynote speech suggests the importance of the 'personal' in the 'political', and of performance, and therefore of the relationship between persona and political outcomes. We shall return to a discussion of these points in the conclusion. After the keynote speech, Miliband's good personal poll ratings (see Beattie 2012a) reflected his new persona.

Q&A Session. On the afternoon of Day Four of the conference, Ed Miliband led a Q&A session with approximately 3,000 party delegates and party members (and, as for the keynote speech, the six lines of queues started forming two hours before, this time stretching right outside the building). Once again, Miliband was applauded by the audience as he walked onto the stage; this time not wearing a jacket, conveying an even more relaxed and confident man. He thanked delegates and began by making reference to One Nation Labour as the party to rebuild Britain, as if his previous day's new idea was now narratively normative. Humour, introduced the previous day as a new aspect of the persona, here became the dominant feature of the next 80 minutes. He first joked that his wife had told him that their two-year-old son's first words were 'One Nation'. One of the essential sources of the humour were references to the previous day's speech (for example, on the number of times he used the term 'One Nation', and the media coverage it attained). This intertextual phenomenon – the discourse referring to previous discourse either seriously or with humour (to texts and speeches of the previous day or previous year, to Sandel's textual prefiguring, to Miliband's referring to the act of speechwriting itself) – all added a sense of sharing something with the audience (who had also been following these discourses and their media coverage). The intertextuality justified the legitimacy of the discourse overall

and the 'veracity' of the speaker. In an Austinian sense (Austin 1976), the speech act itself is the consequent event.

In the Q&A session, Miliband debated a range of policy positions with the audience. Questions on education, banks, crime and the economy were each answered with whatever he felt was the essential issue in each case; that is, he answered each question personally – party positions being barely appealed to, although nowhere contradicted. Miliband here 'invented' policy dialogue, asking delegates for policy suggestions and experiences, thus strategically distancing himself, not just from New/Old Labour, but from the party itself as a policymaking body. Policy was being fashioned (or seemed to be) in the immediacy of the encounter between the leader and the audience, while stressing Miliband's personal command of all subjects addressed. Miliband always referred to questioners by their first names (they gave their full names when asking their question). The striking feature throughout was the mixture of humour and seriousness; contributing to policy debate was both interesting and fun. He moved continually – almost continuously – from humour to seriousness and back again. Very soon, the audience were doing exactly the same.

Miliband took questions in groups of three or four, gesturing and often describing his questioner with humour. As the session continued, it became increasingly animated; delegates began to wave an accumulation of possessions such as umbrellas and coloured scarves to get the attention of the leader.¹⁰ On several occasions, women participants reminded Ed that they had met before and that he had kissed them, or they him; his slight embarrassment and references to his being a married man spread the mirth (from which he then plunged into a serious response to the question asked). Two delegates addressed him as the 'future prime minister', to much applause, in direct recognition of his post-keynote speech persona. These remarks thus added legitimacy to the performed persona of the previous day. Towards the end of the session, Miliband stated that the 'Labour Party is not me, it's you', momentarily empowering the audience via this reversal of status and implying a new and very special relationship. It is true that leaders often do this, but the intense interaction of the previous eighty minutes lent the statement emotional intensity.

Day Five was the final day of the conference. The leader had departed, and most of the delegates – and all of the media – were already heading home. At the rostrum, deputy leader Harriet Harman (2012b) made a significant closing remark: 'It's been a great week for the Labour Party and a great week for Ed Miliband.' Harman's positive reaction towards Ed Miliband's performance during Conference 2012 was like an echo of reassurance, like a response to her own more quizzical remarks at the beginning of the conference about whether Miliband was properly known – he was now; as if a true transformation had taken place.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, let us make five observations that touch on the wider theoretical issues we raised at the beginning of this article, concerning performance, institutions, culture, narrative and rhetoric.

First, the Labour Party, its internal reconfiguration and response to political, social and cultural developments have allowed the symbolism of the leader vis-a-vis the party to take on major political expression (this has been a very gradual and uneven process and dates from the premiership of Harold Wilson). Miliband, moreover, used not only his keynote speech, but the whole conference to modify his political identity as party leader, and to restore his political authority and status.¹¹ By bringing 'himself' centre stage, Ed also screened David Miliband out of the political narrative and out of contention as a potential rival, at least in the medium term.

Second, the events surrounding Manchester 2012 had an architecture, an architecture related to the construction of an exemplary persona: the gathering of Miliband's friends in the garden; the questions raised by both Alan Johnson and Harriet Harman about Ed's character/charisma at the beginning of the conference (with the implicit conflating – in anticipation – of leadership and performance); the withering remarks of Andrew Marr, and especially the Conservative Party poll on Miliband's low popularity (all these would redound to great advantage); the arrival of the family – followed by the omnipresence of Miliband at the conference until Day Five; Sandel's oblique endorsement; the masterful speech to an overflowing conference hall (where each of the three received personae – Red Ed, younger brother and Wallace – are dealt with); the very positive media response; the nearcarnavalesque bonding with the audience the following day in the Q&A; his departure before the final day; Harman's echoing at the end of the conference her words of the beginning, as if 'catching' and answering the question launched at the beginning (as if noting a 'promise' fulfilled). Both Ed and the party had indeed had a fantastic conference. At the time of writing, the authors have no indication as to the level of deliberate choreography of each of these elements,¹² but there was a discernible structure to the series of performances, formative of a renewal of leadership persona.

Third, as regards the British Labour Party, there is a paradox: since the leadership of Neil Kinnock from 1983, the party has been centrally concerned with image and performance of leadership. Yet, ideologically, leadership remains the elephant in the room, because socialism, social democracy and democratic doctrine generally posit an impersonalism: no one is indispensable; enhanced leadership posits the opposite. It therefore falls to discourse and rhetoric to (attempt to) reconcile the two drives through the complex performance of leadership persona within the matrix of a rich and textured leftist discourse, and within and on the culturally and organizationally fashioned institution of the party conference. There is a related issue here of methodological interest. If our point concerning leadership performance within a leftist institutional setting is correct, it raises the question of the significance of our approach beyond the UK case. Socialism and social democracy are

fundamentally European phenomena, so the interactions of leadership and ideology present themselves in every European country. This in turn raises the question of how historical and cultural differences modulate these interactions. A compelling contrast is that of France. Between 1971 and 1981, François Mitterrand 'adapted' French socialism to the presidential Fifth Republic. A comparative analysis of UK social democratic conferences with French Socialist Party conferences, with their more radical discourse and republican tradition within the wider national framework of a much stronger leadership tradition (Garrigues 2012), would offer great insights into the nature of the relationship between leadership and culture.

Our fourth point concerns narrative.¹³ The challenge now, following on from the work of Finlayson (2004, 2007) and Martin (2013), is to focus analysis on the construction of leadership persona, not only in terms of the 'character' of the leader, but also the connections between leadership narrative and other narratives, especially for a party leader of a social democratic type. The perpetual distinction made between 'policies' and 'personalities' is both a category mistake and a naivety, even for a party of the left with an elaborate doctrinal history. As we have seen, the 'personalized political' is quite a subtle mechanism, and we could venture here that it characterizes all Ed Miliband's leadership since 2010 – that is, a discourse that is self-referential and 'about him', but also informs the way 'he' talks about issues, policies and events.

The final observation is emotion. Crucial to the mediation of leadership through narrative is the rhetorical use of emotion. We have seen that this is one of the fundamental elements of Miliband's keynote speech, and this in two crucially linked respects: first, in terms of emotion and himself (for example, the death of Ruth First); second, in terms of the issues discussed (for example, immoral bankers and a dysfunctional system that brings misery and so on). Emotional appeal, pathos, not only drives Miliband's speech forward in terms of both himself and a Labour narrative; it links them. One of the consequences of this is that the emerging Labour narratives since 2010 themselves contain a significant emotional element, either based on the attraction of the place where leadership rhetoric wishes to take us, or in terms of the sense of injustice of the place we – or those who suffer – are in; both are 'carried' by the emotion of leadership rhetoric – felt by the leader (his rhetoric) or interpolated by the leader (the wider emerging narratives).

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NOTES

1 There is also an emerging literature on Labour Party discourse, ritual and symbolism, some of which was presented at the 2013 Political Studies Association Conference. See Jobson (2013a) on Blue Labour and nostalgia; Robinson (2013) on the rewriting of Clause IV and the value of history as a rhetorical and political tool; and Wickham-Jones (2013a) on history, memory and the social democratic project. See also Jobson and Wickham-Jones (2010) on nostalgia and the 2010 Labour Party leadership contest; Atkins (2011) on New Labour policy; Jobson (2013b) on nostalgia and Labour's Clause IV controversy, 1959–60; and Pettitt (2012) on party leaders' speeches. A range of papers were also presented at a oneday conference on 18 April 2013 on 'The Politics of One Nation Labour' at Queen Mary College, University of London. See Kenny (2013), Blond (2013), Glasman (2013), Wickham-Jones (2013b), Annesley (2013) and Bale (2013).

2 There is a growing literature on the 'presidentialization' and popularity of UK political leaders. See, inter alia, Denver and Garnett (2012), Foley (2000), Heffernan (2005), Toye (2011).

3 Ed Miliband won by 1.3 per cent after second preference votes were taken into account. David Miliband secured 37.78 per cent of first preference votes, compared to 34.33 per cent for his brother. But Ed Miliband won with 50.7 per cent of votes to David Miliband's 49.3 per cent, after the second preference votes of Diane Abbott, Andy Burnham and Ed Balls were taken into account (Mulholland 2010).

4 We should underline the fact here that, at this stage of our research, 'evidence' is of several types, some tentative: the authors' impressions at the conference (attended throughout), the reactions in the hall, the immediate polls, immediate press and media reaction (especially). In a second phase of our research, we shall directly appraise the rhetorical and the other effects through focus groups, analysis of elite and other interviews, qualitative and quantitative analysis of media output and so on.

5 Immediately before the speech, the conference hall was shown a five-minute video of Ed Miliband, entitled 'A Better Future'. This mini-bio made references to Miliband's childhood and education. After the keynote speech, however, the video was not mentioned by the mainstream media; in fact, it was almost immediately forgotten, eclipsed by Miliband's performance.

6 Unscripted political performance came to prominence during the 2005 Conservative Party leadership campaign, with David Cameron's speech against his main rival, David Davis (see Lahel 2011).

7 The use of humour is an aspect of classical Aristotelian rhetoric of persuasion (Aristotle 1991: 247). For Thomas Hobbes, humour had the function of demonstrating superiority; generally, it has also been seen as a form of seduction, of agreeing commonly held 'truths' or of creating a sense of community. For us, it is all of these things. There is a burgeoning literature on this topic in social psychology; see, for example, Lynch (2010), Provine (2000) and Strick et al. (2012).

8 One barely perceptible reference to 'David' was made at the beginning of the speech when Ed referred to their childhood: 'I believe that their experience [Miliband's parents as post-Second World War refugees in Britain] meant they brought up both David and myself differently as a result.'

9 The concept also in fact informed both Neil Kinnock and Tony Blair's leadership (before 1997). We owe this insight to Mark Wickham-Jones (2013b).

10 There were no marshals in evidence, and at times the Q&A took on a near-carnival atmosphere. In fact, one wheelchair user who tried at length but in vain to catch Miliband's eye (because he could neither stand nor brandish anything) was one of the inadvertent victims of such merriment.

11 There was a series of strong interventions at the conference by leading figures in the party such as Ed Balls, Yvette Cooper, Rachel Reeves and others, but the overwhelming presence of Miliband altered markedly the political significance of the occasion.

12 The one semi-official piece of information the authors had was that Miliband rehearsed his speech many, many times. Our primary concern here is not, however, the levels of conscious planning by close advisers such as Stewart Wood (one doubts that he could have orchestrated the Marr interview or the Tory poll). Such planning is in itself of great interest, but our focus here is to identify structure and performance in a wider anthropological sense and appraise its potential significance.

13 In a second phase of research for this Leverhulme project we shall identify, analyse and appraise the narratives that emerged in and around the Labour Party after 2010 and Miliband's election to the leadership. They will be appraised both in terms of narrative theory (Barthes, Todorov, Propp and others – that is, what story they tell in terms of their internal structure), and in terms of how they relate to, draw upon and give voice to older Labour, leftist and other narratives and how they arrange these to contemporary purpose. The 'purpose' involves their 'alignment' not only with the party and the electorate in the run-up to the general election of 2015 but also with the discursive exigencies of Miliband's leadership style.

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