

Introduction

Analysing oratory in Conservative Party politics

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Introduction

The history of the Conservative Party has more often than not been framed around its leaders. The recent chronicle of the party by Robin Harris (2011), for example, proceeds through a series of chapters – ‘Peel’s Party’, ‘Disraeli’s Party’, ‘Salisbury’s Party’ and so on – where there is no doubt what, or rather who, had come to define Conservative politics in any particular era. Only very occasionally is this narrative punctured by an event so cataclysmic or profound in its consequences that it is deemed worthy of a chapter in its own right, for example ‘Suez’, ‘1922’ or ‘Appeasement’ (Harris, 2011). In adopting this approach Harris is not out of step with the rich tradition of Conservative historiography (Hayton, 2012a: 6–9), nor indeed with much of the political science literature which has also had a lot to say about the party’s leading figures, epitomised perhaps by the title of Tim Bale’s (2010) work, *The Conservative Party from Thatcher to Cameron*. Political scientists have also had a great deal to say about the leadership election and ejection procedures operated by the party, not least due to the Conservatives’ reputation in recent decades for ruthlessly despatching failed or fading leaders. Even in relation to the most profound and widely discussed ideological shift on the right in recent decades, namely the rise and transformative effect of Thatcherism, much of the debate (and perhaps also the very essence of Thatcherism itself) is concerned with the role of one foremost individual.

In short, and in contrast to Labour which has its origins in an external mass movement, the Conservative Party has always been a top-down, elitist one. In the modern era the leader has always been the central figure in the party, and the ‘statecraft’ pursued by Conservative leaders has been seen as key to the party’s successes and failures (Bulpitt, 1986). Given this, and given the importance of communication to political leadership, it is perhaps surprising that this is the first volume to seek explicitly to analyse oratory and rhetoric in Conservative Party politics. Prominent Conservative orators, whose words have had resonance in British politics and society more widely, soon spring to mind – Churchill, Powell and Thatcher to name just three. Some scholars concerned with the characteristics of effective leadership have noted the importance of communication skills, without necessarily exploring the

nature of these systematically. For example, Theakston (2007) and Heppell (2012) have both applied the Greenstein model of leadership, previously utilised to evaluate the individual attributes of American presidential officeholders, to the British case. More generally as discussed below, the academic study of political communication (particularly in relation to rhetoric) is an area which has seen a notable upsurge in scholarly interest in recent years (see for example and for a wider discussion, Atkins *et al.*, 2014). Directly in relation to Conservative politics, Hayton and McEnhill (2014) have recently analysed the rhetoric of Coalition government ministers in relation to one specific policy area, welfare. A clear gap in the literature therefore exists for this book, which sits alongside a sister volume (Crines and Hayton, 2014) on Labour oratory.

This book consequently examines the use and impact of oratory in Conservative Party politics through the use of twelve individual case studies, each focused on a leading figure in the party in the post-war era. Each of these has been selected because of the prominence of the individual in the party's history, and/or because of their reputation as a speaker. A majority of the chosen figures are consequently individuals who have held the office of party leader (Stanley Baldwin, Winston Churchill, Harold Macmillan, Margaret Thatcher, John Major, William Hague and David Cameron). The others (Iain Macleod, Enoch Powell, Keith Joseph, Michael Heseltine and Boris Johnson) have all played a significant role in shaping debates about contemporary conservatism, or earned a reputation as charismatic communicators of the Conservative message.

As with the companion volume on oratory in Labour politics, each chapter reflects on how the figure under examination deployed their oratorical skills in relation to three key audiences: (i) the Parliamentary Party; (ii) the wider party membership; and (iii) the electorate. These audiences relate to three important oratorical arenas, namely (i) Parliament; (ii) party conference; (iii) public and media engagement (the electoral arena). The book argues that powerful oratory and persuasive rhetoric have been key features of Conservative politics in the modern era, and vital to the political success of many of the party's leading politicians.

Conservative Party politics and leadership in historical context

As noted above, the British Conservative Party has been the subject of a rich historiography, with defining works by the likes of John Ramsden (1978; 1995; 1996; 1998), Richard Shannon (1992; 1996), Robert Blake (1970; 1998) and Stuart Ball (1998; 2013).¹ One criticism that has been levelled against some of this work (notably Ramsden's) is that it pays insufficient attention to the role of ideology in the party (Addison, 1999; Garnett, 2013). In part this reflects the tendency to write the history of the party as a chronicle of the actions of its leadership elite. A corrective to this emerged in a revitalised political science literature that accompanied the arrival of Margaret Thatcher in Downing Street, with defining works on Thatcherism by

the likes of Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (1983), and Andrew Gamble (1988). Inspired as it was by Gramscian Marxism, this work represented a shift 'towards more structurally inclined modes of explanation, in contrast to the agency-focused historical narratives that preceded them' (Hayton, 2012a: 10). Yet the story of the Conservative Party is not one, in Addison's phrase, that should be told as one 'of doctrine or men' (1999: 289). Rather it is one of ideology, women and men, with the interplay between ideas and agency being at the crux of most of the defining moments in the party's past. Oratory and rhetoric mark an interesting analytical juncture as it is so often how a particular agenda or ideas are communicated that is crucial to their eventual success or failure.

The figures in this book span the history of the modern Conservative Party, which can be effectively dated from the famous Carlton Club meeting of 1922 (Clark, 1998). The first of the orators featured in this volume, Stanley Baldwin, was one of the leading Cabinet rebels who spoke against the continuation of the Coalition with Prime Minister David Lloyd George's Liberals, bringing about the end of that government and Austen Chamberlain's party leadership. While Ball plausibly argues that 'the impact of Baldwin's speech, well-worded though it was, has been overstated due to his later prominence' (2013: 475) the episode does stand as an illustration of the fact that verbal communication, and the ability to win over an audience, are essential elements of a successful political career. The speeches at the Carlton Club did not determine the eventual outcome, but 'reinforced the existing flow of opinion' (Ball, 2013). The speakers in favour of maintenance of the status quo 'were ineffective, and at best – as in Balfour's case – listened to with polite impatience' (Ball, 2013). Bonar Law's speech, in contrast, 'was crucial in offering an alternative direction under a credible leader' (Ball, 2013). Following the collapse of Lloyd George's government Bonar Law was subsequently invited to become prime minister, but when he was soon after struck down with ill health it would be Baldwin who would go on to articulate a new vision of conservatism. As Andrew Taylor has argued:

New Conservatism was used to reposition the Conservative party on the class dimension and the result was the Conservative landslide of 1924, which structured British politics for the next fifty years. Baldwin institutionalized a class-based two-party system and thereby secured Conservative hegemony. (Taylor, 2005: 463)

In the post-war era, Conservative Party politics was dominated by the One Nation tradition. This combined the language of patriotism so successfully employed by Baldwin to build an electoral base drawing on elements of working class (as well as middle and upper class) support, with acceptance of the main tenets of the post-war settlement laid down by the Attlee government. While Churchill's influence on the trajectory of post-war conservatism was limited, his reputation as the supreme British orator of the twentieth century had already been secured during his leadership of the nation in the Second World War. The ageing hero did, however, lead his party back to power in 1951, which marked the commencement of another period

of electoral dominance for the party. The thirteen years in office that followed saw four Conservative leaders hold the office of prime minister, but it was the premiership of Harold Macmillan that came to epitomise the One Nation era.² In an era of increasing affluence, the Conservative Party was able to harness popular capitalism and patriotism, steering (to borrow the title of a 1938 pamphlet Macmillan had penned) a 'Middle Way' between socialism and untrammelled free markets. Keynesian economic management and state planning were utilised to address collective problems such as a shortage of adequate housing, while the long post-war boom gave credence to Macmillan's 1957 boast that 'most of our people have never had it so good' (quoted in Blake, 1985: 281).

Rising prosperity throughout the Macmillan era helped mask some of the more deep-rooted underlying problems with the UK economy, which would reach crisis point in the 1970s. Two more of the orators featured in this volume, Iain Macleod and Enoch Powell, would be associated with opposing sides of the debate in the party about how to respond to these economic challenges. They were, however, as one in their refusal to serve under Macmillan's chosen successor, Lord Home, who was parachuted into the Commons as plain Sir Alec Douglas-Home. In a withering article in the *Spectator*, Macleod noted that: 'We are now proposing to admit that after twelve years of Tory Government no one amongst the 363 members of the party in the House of Commons was acceptable as Prime Minister' (quoted in Harris, 2011: 450). The episode would act as a 'catalyst' for the democratisation of the leadership selection process, through the introduction of parliamentary ballots (Heppell, 2008a: 14).

Following the narrow general election defeat of 1964 and the resignation of Douglas-Home the following year, the first beneficiary of the new rules for electing the party leader would be Edward Heath. In securing victory over the initial favourite, Reginald Maudling, Heath would be the first in what would become a notable trend of candidates who came from behind to defeat the initial frontrunner in Conservative leadership elections. Heath was a modernising leader, who 'would have to manage the conflict between progressives in the one-nation mould who believed that the Conservatives should remain situated in the centre ground and those on the right who wanted to pursue a more free market strategy' (Heppell, 2014: 39). Ultimately he failed to devise an effective statecraft strategy, as he vacillated between these two alternative visions. At first his government promised and pursued a radical strategy. Blake noted that:

It had come in on a programme of libertarianism, lower direct taxation, reduction of trade union power, support for law and order, selectivity in social services and minimal state intervention in industry ... This can be seen in retrospect as a highly 'Thatcherite' strategy. (Blake, 1985: 312)

Bale similarly stresses the government's initial ambition, but notes that within two years it 'had buckled in the face of strike action' (2012: 152). The conventional

narrative of the Heath premiership – that it was ‘proto-Thatcherite’ but then abandoned this approach ‘when the going got tough from 1971 onwards’ – is contested by Richard Wade (2013: 105). He argues that ‘the macroeconomic ideas which influenced Conservative policy making remained remarkably consistent’ in the Heath era, and that these were essentially neo-Keynesian (2013). However, the rapidly changing economic context necessitated ‘drastic changes in policy’ to try and realise these ideas (Wade, 2013). Nonetheless there is no doubt that the perception of failed policy U-turns was important for the likes of Keith Joseph (Chapter 6) in advocating a free market monetarist alternative, and for clearing the ground in the party for Thatcherism. As Wade notes, the subsequent ‘collapse of neo-Keynesianism in the Conservative Party was total’ (2013: 104).

The remarkable and enduring transformative effect of the Thatcher era is one (as noted above) that has been widely documented, so need not detain us overly here. However, for the purposes of this volume it is worth briefly highlighting how Thatcher came to redefine the way that leadership in the Conservative Party, and indeed more widely, is understood and assessed. Each of Thatcher’s successors as party leader came to be judged against her, largely unfavourably. Thatcher’s tenure in Downing Street was also pivotal in the emergence of the ‘presidentialisation’ of the premiership thesis in Britain (Foley, 2000). Although the extent to which the British prime ministership has truly become presidentialised remains the subject of extensive academic debate (Webb and Poguntke, 2013) it is clear that over the past four decades the office of prime minister has become a more powerful one (Dowding, 2013).

In spite of her evident unpopularity with the public by the time of her removal from office in 1990, presiding as she was at that time over a government increasingly split over the European issue (which prompted the resignation of Cabinet heavyweights Nigel Lawson and Geoffrey Howe), the fact that Mrs Thatcher never suffered a general election defeat helped ensure her legend within the party. As Heppell noted:

Thatcherism had created misplaced expectations among some Conservatives. Their guilt over the manner of her removal contributed towards a revisionist account of the Thatcher years. They began to mythologize Thatcherism ... [which] was viewed by them as coherent and the golden age of Conservative politics. (Heppell, 2014: 95)

This inevitably created difficulties for her immediate successor, John Major. Thatcher’s success in curbing the power of the trade unions and in pursuing a wider programme of economic liberalisation had settled intraparty debate in favour of an essentially neo-liberal view of the appropriate role of the state. This fault line was replaced, however, by a widening rift over the issue of European integration, which would erupt into parliamentary warfare in the early 1990s. Major played an important personal role in negotiating the Maastricht Treaty (Bale, 2012: 279–80) and the traumatic passage of the treaty’s ratification bill served to brutally expose the deep divisions in the Conservative Party (Baker *et al.*, 1994). When combined with the calamitous exit of pound sterling from the Exchange Rate Mechanism in

September 1992 (also a policy in which Major had invested much personal political capital), the issue of Europe came to symbolise the collapse of Conservative statecraft and the loss of a reputation for governing competence.

The inescapable election defeat that followed brought to an end the longest period of single-party government in twentieth-century British history. What followed for the Conservatives was the lengthiest period of opposition they had endured since the Carlton Club meeting of 1922. This period has been analysed by amongst others Bale (2010), Dorey *et al.* (2011) and Hayton (2012a). The Conservative leaders that followed Major – William Hague, Iain Duncan Smith, Michael Howard and David Cameron – each faced essentially the same challenge, namely how to construct and expound a post-Thatcherite narrative with resonance beyond the bounds of the party's core support. Through the rhetoric of modernisation Cameron found a partial answer, but it proved insufficient to propel his party to outright victory at the 2010 general election. The Conservative leader was, however, able to successfully negotiate a Coalition agreement with the Liberal Democrats and return his party to power, and through effective statecraft dominate the government's agenda (Hayton, 2014). Whether Cameron can bring about a longer term reassertion of his party's electoral dominance of British politics remains to be seen, and key questions about the nature and viability of post-Thatcherite conservatism remain unanswered. Yet the Conservatives today remain a leader-focused party, so it will be up to Cameron or his successors to devise and articulate the party's strategy to meet these challenges.

The study of oratory and rhetoric in British politics

The art of oratory is a relatively under-scrutinised element of political communication within the existing body of academic literature. This is rather surprising given the clear importance of effective speechmaking in understanding political leadership and the broader advancement of ideological positions. However, the study of rhetoric has benefitted from something of an upsurge of interest amongst a relatively small but dedicated group of analysts of British politics in recent years. These significant contributions stem primarily from Richard Toye (2011; 2013), Alan Finlayson (2003; 2004; 2007), James Martin (2013; 2014), Judi Atkins (2011), Jonathan Charteris-Black (2011) and Max Atkinson (1984; 2004). As this section briefly reviews, collectively these have shed new light upon the nature of political rhetoric and how it is used by leading actors in British party politics.

Toye's (2013a) concise summation of the value of rhetoric emphasises the enduring relevance of classical approaches for better understanding how contemporary politicians communicate. He first reminds the reader that rhetoric needs 'to be taken seriously, not least as the progenitors of a very modern notion: that the art of communication can be taught and that it is a marketable skill' (2013a: 7). Toye continues by drawing attention to the longevity of the study of rhetoric and reminding the reader that it was classically developed by the Sophists – Protagoras, Gorgias,

Prodicus, Hippias, and Thrasymachus (2013a). It was these early philosophers who first conceptualised rhetoric as an influential technique. In terms of how conservative speakers have historically employed the rhetorical art, Toye notes ‘Conservatives, for their part, turned to history and familial metaphors to justify royal authority’ (2013a: 26). More broadly they ‘succeeded in wresting the discourse of patriotism from the radicals and reformers who had previously wielded it as a weapon against governmental corruption’ (2013a: 27). For Toye, the art of conservative oratory is a patriotic defence of national institutions such as the monarchy in opposition to radical reformers, both historical and contemporary.

Toye also rightly notes that successful persuasion requires, as Aristotle discerned, the use of three modes of rhetoric. ‘The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself’ (Aristotle, 2004b). For analytical purposes these are condensed into *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* (appeals to character, emotion and logic). These valuable devices enable analysts to deconstruct how an orator is communicating with their respective audience, and for Toye they represent a remarkable means of dealing ‘systematically with the problem of rhetoric, and the categorisation [Aristotle] devised was to have a long influence’ in the continuing study of communication (2013a: 14). Of course how an orator employs these devices in their delivery may prove more influential with one audience than another. Indeed, expectations shift between supporters, opponents and the public. Also Toye is correct in arguing that the political and social context is significant. This is because ‘rhetoric is a social phenomenon, and its reception depends on the norms in operation in the society in which it is delivered’ (2013a: 109). It must also be noted that ‘however good the effect on the immediate listeners, it is impossible to tell how a speech will travel’ (2013a). This note of caution rightly suggests that a written speech can, and often is, reinterpreted after its initial delivery, thereby producing changes of emphasis in the political message.

It is also worth noting that in the United States the study of rhetoric is considerably more advanced than in the British academy. In part this is because the presidential personalisation of politics in the United States led to a greater analytical emphasis upon the communication skills of individuals. Indeed, ‘the emphasis, in reality and in political science, on acutely personalised leadership itself (from Franklin D. Roosevelt onwards) as an agency of political change’ (Gaffney and Lahel, 2013: 484) has driven the American study of rhetoric. Thus, scholars such as Toye have embraced both the classical approaches and gained inspiration from the more developed study in the United States.

Finlayson (2006) uses the study of rhetoric to draw attention to its creative power in persuading an audience of an argument. He astutely argues that ‘rhetoric is a creative activity in which a political actor seeks to develop arguments and put them to an audience in a way that they will be encouraged to pursue a particular course of action’ (Finlayson, 2006: 544). This also connects with the linguistic creation of reality in

constructing ideological messages that a particular audience may find persuasive (Atkins and Finlayson, 2013). Moreover, Finlayson and Martin rightly argue that ‘political rhetoric offers a rich seam for those seeking both to interpret and explain the interplay of tradition, innovation, ideology, action, performance, strategy and rationality in British politics’ (2008: 446). Thus distinctive interpretations of political rhetoric, tied to the advancement of various ideological perspectives, can emerge within the analytical discourses. Finlayson also rightly notes that ‘ideologies provide actors with a series of locally established “commonplace” arguments which must be adapted to the demands of the situation’ (2012: 758). This is particularly important given that the expectations of the audience, the particular ideological values of the orator, and a broader appreciation of what is politically expedient are significant issues which a political actor needs to consider when texturing their arguments.

Furthermore the orator may employ metaphors and anecdotes as devices that communicate short narratives to their audience. These draw the experiences of members of the public into the political discourse. Such ‘witnesses’, as noted by Aristotle, are designed to elicit credibility for the message an orator is striving to convey. Given a broader shift in audience expectations towards narratives, these experiences can be used to emotionalise a particular argument. Indeed, Atkins and Finlayson note that the use ‘of anecdote[s] in political speech has recently become more extensive’ within British politics (2013: 161). For example when outlining his vision of the ‘Big Society’ in 2010, Cameron used witnesses in a speech to Conservative supporters. He argued:

I went to a brilliant social enterprise in Liverpool called ‘Home By Mersey Strides’. It gets former prisoners, the homeless and the long-term unemployed to repair and assemble damaged flat-pack furniture and then sells it to students and the local community. Started in November it already employs forty people. But at the moment, the amazing work of this enterprise in Liverpool is confined to just one location. This is exactly the sort of thing we need to spread across the country. (Cameron, 2010)

This enables the orator to use more pathos-driven arguments to justify a particular political agenda, thereby avoiding the complexities of more empirical or logoi-driven argument. This shift towards a greater use of ‘witnesses’ is attributed by Atkins and Finlayson to ‘a populist shift in the “rhetorical culture” of contemporary British politics’ (2013: 162). This enables an orator to claim a greater degree of authority as the narrative carries ‘force because of its presumed reality: the source confers authority, and the actuality of the events enables a conclusion about reality to be drawn’ (2012: 164). Indeed, as Leader of the Opposition William Hague invited his audience to ‘Come with me to the Rother Valley, to the heart of South Yorkshire. Come and meet the people I grew up with ... who had no choice but to live from one week’s pay packet to the next’ (Hague, 2000b). Through this kind of rhetorical technique, the orator is hoping to enhance their ethos by the implicit virtue of their appreciation of the linguistically constructed ‘real world’.

For Charteris-Black such metaphorical devices are a key element of effective speechmaking because of their importance in persuading an audience of their argument. He argues that ‘voters make decisions based on their judgements of the honesty, morality, and integrity of politicians’ (2011: 1). Rhetoric is the means through which audiences gauge the values of the speaker, and therefore acts as a positive and informing force that elites use to drive forward their case. The consequence of this is the tone of the argument used by an orator will affect how the political process functions, the overall quality of the democratic process, and how it is perceived by the audience/electorate. To that end ‘rhetoricians such as Aristotle and Quintilian recognised that different contexts required different methods of persuasion: influencing political decisions would not require the same methods as arguing legal cases or commemorating fallen heroes’ (2011: 7). For Charteris-Black ‘metaphors are very effective’ in that process ‘because they provide cognitively accessible ways of communicating politics through drawing on ways of thinking by analogy’ (2011: 321). The use of metaphors is an important weapon in the oratorical armoury because they help a speaker to communicate complex ideas in a way that allows the audience to engage with the argument, thereby gaining and securing their attention. This is a vital element of successful oration given that, as Max Atkinson argues, ‘the speaker who proves himself to be incapable of holding the attention of live audiences stands little chance of winning their approval’ (Atkinson, 1984: 9). Atkinson also rightly suggests that an orator can use other techniques to measure the immediate success or otherwise of their speech. Indeed, ‘depending on whether they are greeted by frequent bursts of applause, heckling or complete silence, they will be deemed to have had a rapturous, hostile or indifferent reception’ (1984: 13). Succinctly, silence descends when an orator fails to communicate effectively.

A successful orator may also have the ability to draw out specific audience reactions to particular arguments. Atkinson (1984) argues that techniques such as the ‘claptrap’ can be used to elicit support through careful timing and phraseology. ‘Claptraps’ are delicately crafted sentences to which the audience is expected to respond with applause. As Atkinson contends, an orator:

has to communicate with his audience in much the same way as a conductor communicates with an orchestra or choir. A single movement of the hand, arm, head, lips or eyes is unlikely to be enough to get musicians to come in on time ... but if he waves his baton, nods his head, and mouths the word ‘now’, synchronizing them all to occur at the same time, the chances of everyone spotting at least one of them are greatly increased. In the same way an effective claptrap must provide audience members with a number of signals which make it quite clear both that they should applaud and when they should start doing so. (1984: 48)

For the Conservative orator these can be patriotic reminders, highlighting economic success, celebrating the outcome of military action, or condemning the social democratic ideologies of their opponents. To ensure their greater success an orator can

also emphasise specific words or phrases using carefully crafted delivery in order to draw out the intended reaction from the audience.

Finally Dennis Glover highlights the value of such rhetorical techniques by arguing that 'the best orators are those who understand the needs of their audience and employ the right combination of logic, character, and emotion to convince, charm and sway' (2011: 56). Knowing one's audience is, for Glover, vital before attempting to employ a rhetorical device. This is particularly damaging if a particular speech is given to the wrong audience: 'the sudden disappearance of a forum can spell the end for a faltering politician. Like the sand rushing through an hourglass, an audience making for the exits usually signals that a leader's time is up' (2011: 63). Ineffective speeches can be highly costly, particularly if, as happened to the former Conservative leader Iain Duncan Smith, the 'quiet man' is never afforded the opportunity to turn up the volume due to an unexpected *coup d'état* (Hayton, 2012b). Glover argues such an unfortunate outcome can be avoided by correctly using the classical devices outlined earlier. Success can be garnered by those who 'combined the rules of rhetorical style – ethos, pathos, and logos' (2011: 74). Such devices are used interdependently by successful orators; however, for the purposes of analysis they can be distinguished from each other.

Moreover, Glover is in agreement with Atkinson that words and phrases can be changed in their delivery, which the classical philosophers differentiated into *tropes* (changes to an accepted meaning of a word) and *schemes* (rearranging the delivery of words to make them more appealing) (2011: 91). Their contemporary relevance can be appreciated in their continued use by political elites. As an example, the electorate may witness politicians using *tropes* and *schemes* 'every day when we watch the evening news: using the same word with double meaning; employing overstatement and understatement; asking a question and sometimes answering it; balancing a statement with its opposite; using the same words but in a different order; and repeating words, clauses and sounds' (2011: 95). These classical rhetorical devices remain central to modern political speech. Indeed, 'watch a good or even moderate speaker in a political meeting or on television and you will notice that the applause tends to follow the use of these rhetorical devices' (2011). The personal, political and delivery style of the speaker informs their method of communication and broader relationship with the audience, thereby suggesting that an examination of their oratory, which is connected to growing field of rhetorical investigation, is of equally significant importance.

Structure of the book

The twelve chapters that follow this introduction are individual case studies of leading Conservative orators in the post-1922 party, namely Stanley Baldwin, Winston Churchill, Harold Macmillan, Iain Macleod, Enoch Powell, Keith Joseph, Margaret Thatcher, Michael Heseltine, John Major, William Hague, Boris Johnson and David

Cameron. As noted earlier, seven of these figures reached the apex of the party to hold the office of leader, while the others all played a notable part in debates about the Conservatives' policies, ideology and strategic direction. Indeed, the five featured orators who did not go on to head the party were all at various times spoken of as possible future party leaders. At the time of writing one of them, Boris Johnson, is still widely expected to contest the post at some future date. Powell (in 1965) and Heseltine (in 1990) were both candidates in leadership elections, and but for his premature passing Macleod may well have been a serious contender in 1975 (Chapter 4). Joseph's prospects at that election were 'spectacularly destroyed' (Harris, 2011: 479) before the contest officially began by a deeply misguided speech that led him to be 'denounced by social commentators as a mad eugenicist' (Heppell, 2008a: 58). Thatcher consequently decided to enter the leadership race, illustrating how a single speech can occasionally have profound and unforeseen political consequences.

In Chapter 1, Andrew Taylor argues that Stanley Baldwin used his considerable talents as an orator to give voice to a new conservatism which would resonate with the electorate in the democratic era. Baldwin devised a rhetorical strategy based on the sophisticated use of commonplaces to structure his appeal and reach across geographical and class boundaries. After the Second World War, the Conservatives needed to rediscover a broad-based appeal sufficient to challenge Attlee's Labour Party. The wartime oratory of Winston Churchill has been widely discussed and analysed elsewhere (for example Toye, 2013b) but in the second chapter of this volume Kevin Theakston considers the rhetoric of Winston Churchill in the post-war period, particularly in relation to domestic and party issues. Chapter 3, by Brendan Evans, considers how Harold Macmillan was able to use his oratory to cultivate an ethos which appealed to a mass electorate, embodying the notion of One Nation conservatism. In Chapter 4, Mark Garnett profiles another One Nation Tory who was lauded and remembered for his oratorical skills, Iain Macleod. He argues that his subject was able to exploit ethos, pathos and logos to great effect, winning him plaudits from, amongst others, the subject of the following chapter, Enoch Powell.

As political contemporaries Macleod and Powell worked alongside each other as young men in the Conservative Research Department. As Philip Norton discusses in Chapter 5, however, their politics developed in very different directions. As probably the most powerful Conservative orator of the post-war era, Powell gained notoriety for his inflammatory rhetoric about immigration, leading to his exclusion from the party elite and his eventual departure from the party completely. Norton argues that the force of Powell's words came not as is commonly assumed primarily from appeals to the emotions of his audience, but was founded on ethos and logos.

The subject of the following chapter, Keith Joseph, shared some of Powell's politics, and both figures were recognised by Thatcher as key intellectual influences

on her thinking. In terms of oratorical effect, however, the contrast could hardly be greater. As Mark Garnett demonstrates in Chapter 6, Joseph was the weakest orator featured in this collection by some measure, so is a curious case study of a figure with significant political influence in spite of (rather than because of) his aptitude as a communicator. Margaret Thatcher, discussed by Peter Dorey in Chapter 7, was also not a natural orator but developed into a skilful and commanding one. She combined her ethos as 'the grocer's daughter' with populist emotional appeals, which were also underpinned by a formidable capacity for rational argument.

Perhaps surprisingly given the loyalty of the party membership to Thatcher, Michael Heseltine's status as one of her leading critics did not prevent him establishing his status as darling of the Conservative Party conference. As Mark Bennister explores in Chapter 8, Heseltine's flamboyant oratory from the conference platform could greatly enthuse his audience, and helped mask the ideological and policy differences he had with the Thatcherites. It could not, however, secure him the leadership when Thatcher fell, which passed instead to John Major, who is analysed by Timothy Heppell and Thomas McMeeking in Chapter 9. They suggest that Major's 'most notable oratorical flourishes' occurred in relation to the intraparty disputes that dogged his premiership, particularly over the European issue, reinforcing the image of the Conservatives as deeply divided.

Major's successor as party leader, William Hague, proved incapable of reversing the Conservatives' fortunes following the landslide election defeat in 1997, taking his party to a second landslide loss in 2001. In spite of this ignominious record, Hague retained popular standing within Conservative Party ranks, not least because of his oratorical skill. As Judi Atkins discusses in Chapter 10, however, his considerable talent as a debater, regularly exhibited in the Commons, had limited relevance to the wider electorate with whom he struggled to establish a fruitful connection. By contrast Boris Johnson, reviewed by Katharine Dommett in Chapter 11, has cultivated a reputation as something of a political outsider and used this, along with considerable humour, to appeal directly to the mass electorate. Finally in Chapter 12, Tim Bale appraises the oratorical skills of the first Conservative prime minister of the twenty-first century, David Cameron. As Bale notes, Cameron's proficiency as a communicator was undoubtedly of considerable importance in his ascent to the party leadership, and he has demonstrably exploited these skills with considerable effect in pursuit of his political objectives.

Conclusion

The role of political agency is of course central to the history of all political parties. Nonetheless in the case of the Conservative Party the prime role played by the leading elite is especially dominant. In analysing the oratory and rhetoric of twelve leading individuals from twentieth-century Conservative politics this book aims to contribute a new perspective on the party's history. In addition, and in conjunction

with the volume on oratory in Labour politics, we hope that it will also help raise the profile of this area of academic enquiry, and add a new dimension to the burgeoning literature on rhetoric in British politics through the focus on oratory.

Notes

- 1 For a broader review see Hayton (2012a: chapter 1).
- 2 Apart from Churchill (until 1955) and Macmillan (1957–63), the other officeholders were the ill-fated Anthony Eden (1955–57) brought down by the Suez Crisis, and Alec Douglas-Home (1963–64) who narrowly lost the 1964 general election.