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The Discourse of Aggression: Trudeau in Parliament

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The Discourse of Aggression: Trudeau in Parliament

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Abstract

Pierre Elliott Trudeau’s political personality is explored through psychoanalysis and discourse analysis. Employing material from his biography, Trudeau is identified as an aggressive or ‘ideal-hungry’ narcissist. Having defined narcissism and established key facets of Trudeau’s personality, the analysis then turns to an empirical reference: a discourse analysis of his spontaneous utterances in parliamentary Question Period. Key traits of narcissism are operationalized in order that they can be assessed on the basis of Trudeau’s recorded speech acts. Particular attention is paid to the employment of satire, invective and rhetoric. The empirical analysis of Trudeau’s spontaneous utterances both confirms and enriches the profile that has been established earlier in the paper.

Introduction

In the Weberian sense of being touched by some ‘extraordinary quality’ in a leader (Weber 1946: 295), millions have experienced the Trudeau charisma. Richard Gwyn clearly understood the charm of this mystical chemistry in his portrayal of Trudeau in The Northern Magus (Gwyn 1980). In an appropriately evocative phrase, Clarkson and McCall say of Trudeau that he ‘haunts us still’ (Clarkson and McCall 1991: 9). Despite the fact that he is no longer among us, Trudeau’s persona resonates through our political and cultural experience and he still matters: we are always wondering what he will think and whether he would approve.

In 1968, Trudeau was proclaimed Canada’s Kennedy: the urbane liberal intellectual, the daring individualist, whose impeccable elite status gave him full ‘idiosyncrasy credit’ (Hollander 1958) to thumb his nose at small-minded convention. From his comfortable life as a dilettante and roving bachelor, unattached to person or party, Trudeau entered politics reluctantly, convinced only by the promise of a position sufficiently high to implement his grand schemes for a rational and just polity. Consistent in his disdain for petty protocol, intolerant of the meddles, rude and nasty to those who disagreed with him, and
impatient with the inefficiency of democratic consultation, Trudeau seemed
destined for a short and unsuccessful political career. His longevity is attribut-
able to some good fortune, to small and fitful doses of reluctant compromise
on his part, but most importantly, to the charisma. Even among those who re-
garded him as insufferably arrogant or who detested his policies, there was an
admiration for the man; an acknowledgement of Trudeau as an authority and a
grudging respect for his consistency.

In this article, I undertake an exploration of Trudeau’s political personality. I
have found the psychoanalytic and clinical concept of “narcissism” most useful
as a heuristic device to map what has been recorded of Trudeau’s personality.
Following Heinz Kohut (Kohut 1978; Kohut and Wolf 1990; Steinberg 1996),
I identify Trudeau as an “ideal-hungry” narcissist, whose principal traits accent-
uate arrogance, coldness, intellectual aloofness, boastful exhibitionism and
aggression. My central thesis is that these traits substantially define Trudeau’s
political personality.

The methodology adopted in this paper is in the political psychology tradition
of “psychological assessment at a distance”. Assessment at a distance is both
a necessity and a virtue. Appreciating the personalities of important leaders
is critical to an understanding of their political actions. Access is, of course,
impossible if they are no longer living and it is also often highly restricted
to those still living. The political psychologist is obliged to work with traces
of the leader’s life including biographical data, transcripts of speeches, video
material and interviews with acquaintances. Lack of access to leaders is not,
however, entirely negative. A distanced approach promotes objectivity and, if
employed properly, uncovers and accentuates those traces of an individual’s
life that are most revealing and least guarded.

The article consists of four sections. In the first, the concept of narcissism, and
its relevance to Trudeau, is explained. In the second section, I utilize a series
of well-known accounts of Trudeau in order further to specify and support my
contention of Trudeau’s narcissism. In the third section, I briefly introduce
parliamentary Question Period in Canada as a valuable record of the verbatim
comments of political leaders and therefore as a site in which to assess claims
made about the political personality of Trudeau. In illustrating my discourse
analysis of Trudeau’s comments in Question Period, in the final section, I lend
empirical support to my thesis.
Narcissism

It is probably not an exaggeration to state that if individuals with significant narcissistic characteristics were stripped from the ranks of public figures, the ranks would be perilously thinned, for the upper levels of government and industry are filled with “successful narcissists" Jerrold M. Post (1993: 99).

The psychiatric employment of the term narcissism has its origins in the work of Sigmund Freud (1955, 1957). Like the character in Greek mythology, a narcissist appears to fall in love with his own reflection. According to Freud, each of us goes through a phase of ‘primary narcissism’ in early childhood in which our elementary confusions about the origins of desires and objects of their satisfaction result in the conceit that we are the source of all that is good. Those who remain narcissistic into their adult years tend not to develop positive anaclitic, that is, ‘other-oriented’, relationships. They emerge instead as highly self-absorbed, individually self-reliant, inaccessible, arrogant and vain persons who experience difficulties in sustaining long-term relationships because they are unable to open themselves to others and lack much curiosity about them (Freud 1955: 350, 389, 422–24, 429, 430–32; Freud 1957: 108–121). For most people a more or less successful transition to the world of mutual social relations begins with a resolution of the Oedipal crisis in which children come to terms with the fact that they cannot possess their parent of the opposite sex and that desire and its satisfaction inhere in self and other. Freud (1957: 116) writes of the narcissist:

That which he projects ahead of him as his ideal is merely his substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood—the time when he was his own ideal.

Building upon Freud’s early work, narcissism has become one of the most highly developed and tested syndromes in contemporary psychiatry. Summarizing the essential characteristics of the syndrome, Post (1993:100) writes:

The essential features are a grandiose sense of self importance or uniqueness and preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success and power; hypersensitivity to criticism; and a lack of empathy. Self esteem, while outwardly appearing high, is actually quite fragile, with a need for constant attention and admiration. Close relationships invariably suffer, because of the lack of empathy, a sense of
entitlement manifested by unreasonable expectations of continuously "special" treatment, and interpersonal exploitativeness.

As Post (1993: 100) points out, differences between significant narcissistic personality features and an extreme version of the character disorder are matters of degree. Trudeau did not exhibit pathological narcissistic tendencies, even if he did exhibit significant levels and, under stress, acted in ways that manifested a narcissistic personality. Freud reminds us that: "...in order to arrive at what is normal...we shall have to study the pathological with its distortions and exaggerations" (Freud 1957: 108). While Trudeau was essentially a normal personality type, an appreciation of his narcissistic traits serves to elucidate many of his most vital political characteristics.

In setting out the fundamental personality characteristics of narcissism, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)* begins with the following words: "The essential feature of the Narcissistic Personality Disorder is a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration, and a lack of empathy that begins by early adulthood and is present in a variety of contexts" (American Psychiatric Association 1995: 676). Alice Miller (1990: 38–39) suggests a further explanation of grandiosity:

The person who is "grandiose" is admired everywhere and needs this admiration; indeed, he cannot live without it. He must excel brilliantly in everything he undertakes, which he surely is capable of doing (otherwise he just does not attempt it). He, too, admires himself—for his qualities: his beauty, cleverness, talents—and for his success and achievements....The "grandiose" person's partners (including sexual partners) are also narcissistically cathexed. Others are there to admire him, and he himself is constantly occupied, body and soul, with gaining that admiration.

**Trudeau the Aggressor**


The early circumstances of Trudeau's life provided the basis for his subsequent behaviour as an adult in political life. Trudeau's childhood experiences engendered in him a fierce and combative independence. Trudeau's mother, Grace, was a refined, distanced, and detached individual, who could be charming and engaging, but emitted the kind of contingent affection characteristic of Scottish Presbyterianism (Clarkson and McCall 1991: 26–27). Gwyn points out that while Trudeau admired Grace and was steadfast in his support for her, he was never "close" (Gwyn 1980: 23–24). When asked about his mother in an interview with Radwanski (1978: 43), Trudeau was somewhat lost for words, but said: "Well, a mother is a mother. She was a good mother, spent a lot of time with us..." Steinberg (1996: 16) reminds us that a cold and demanding mother often generates a narcissistic adult. While the child might be granted a special status and find himself admired and adored, everything is rigidly contingent on performance and the child who fails finds himself bereft of love and affection. Narcissistic children are often driven to achieve great things in order to sustain the continuation of maternal love. While Grace Trudeau did not represent an extreme instance of the cold and demanding mother, she evidently exhibited elements of this syndrome.

As with many male narcissists, Trudeau's primary relationship was with his father, Charlie. While he rarely saw Charlie, who was a gregarious and somewhat coarse businessman, the times they spent together were of critical importance in Trudeau's development. Charlie made it his business to be with his children for at least an hour per day, and to give them his undivided attention during that time (Gwyn 1980: 22). As a tough, vigorous, self-assured and independent role model, Charlie pushed Trudeau toward personal independence (Radwanski 1978: 39). According to Radwanski (1978: 41), "Trudeau grew up adoring his father, and being a little dazzled by him". As a child, Trudeau was small, frail and frequently ill. His illness engendered in him a deep insecurity and feeling of vulnerability (Clarkson and McCall 1991: 30; Radwanski 1978: 25, 28). Trudeau told Radwanski (1978: 28): "...at a very early age I was very dependent on outside criticisms or outside support, because it caused deep
emotions in me". Constantly seeking to overcome his fragility, Trudeau, from the earliest age, set himself tasks designed to overcome his disadvantages. He exercised compulsively, and tested his physical fitness and strength against himself and others. Trudeau developed a stubborn competitive streak that caused him to be relentless in his pursuit of achievement, as well as a propensity for quick and violent retaliation if challenged or offended (Clarkson and McCall 1991: 36–37; Radwanski 1978: 31–32, 48).

When Trudeau was 15, his father died. Trudeau's love of his father was profound and his loss was almost unbearable (Clarkson and McCall 1194: 31; Gwyn 1980: 22). Trudeau's combative, competitive and aggressive characteristics congealed around this event and helps us to explain the odd combination of adolescent rebelliousness alternating with responsible maturity which came to characterize his adult life. Trudeau (in Radwanski 1978: 33) suggested: "Probably I lost the object of my revolt in the family and didn't have to fight my father, so I went out and fought other people like my teachers, or the church, or politicians, or whatever happened to be established". Trudeau's self-analysis conveys the rebelliousness, but not the fragile, desperate anger and grief which also characterized his reaction. Such feelings are captured effectively by Clarkson and McCall (1991: 36):

> It was as though he was emulating Charlie Trudeau's exaggerated machismo and at the same time acting out an inner rage at his father for having abandoned him forever by dying, the kind of anger that is often associated with the early stages of grief but that he would never be able to outgrow fully.

Trudeau's inner child exhibited another prominent trait associated with this background and frequently mentioned by Trudeau himself and by those who knew him: a profound, genuine and moving love of children, the weak, the innocent, the disabled and those in need of protection. In the company of such people, Trudeau manifested a deep compassion and affection (Coultis 1998: 151; Trudeau 1998: 15, 29–30). These insights help us to appreciate the apparent paradox of a man who could be so gentle, loving and sensitive on the one hand, and yet so enraged, hostile and combative on the other. If Trudeau's aggression complemented a tough business-liberal approach to economic competitiveness and individual reliance as well as a conservative support for law and order, his compassion underpinned an ideological support for facets of left-wing welfare liberalism, such as measures to ameliorate the socio-economic conditions of disadvantaged persons.
Trudeau’s narcissism was “ideal-hungry”. Unable to establish authentic relations with others, the ideal-hungry narcissist carefully selects and seduces others who reflect his own brilliance. Other lesser beings are ignored and, if the star quality of one of the chosen few begins to dwindle, they are unceremoniously ignored, forgotten and no longer retain their position in the constellation. In a telling comment, Jim Coutts (1998: 147) says: “On many occasions, Trudeau simply walked away from a person who bored him or to whom he had nothing to say”. The ideal-hungry narcissist dazzles those he wishes to impress with his brilliance, charisma, qualifications and achievements and basks in the reflected glory of association with them (Kohut and Wolf 1990: 378). Those ideal-hungry characteristics of Trudeau’s personality that most frequently manifested themselves throughout his political life were: lack of empathy; devaluation of the contributions of others; the insistence upon being recognized as superior and unique; insistence upon associating only with those equally gifted or perfect; a lack of sensitivity to the needs and wants of others; an unwitting or even a conscious exploitation of others; a lack of empathy with others and a contempt for those who talk about their own problems, needs and concerns; a propensity to regard the expressed needs, desires and feelings of others as signs of weakness; arrogant, haughty behaviour and the propensity toward snobbish, disdainful or patronizing attitudes; poor interpersonal relations owing to coldness and lack of sensitivity; a fearful inner emptiness and dread of loss which results in a fundamental mistrust of others and a propensity toward aggression and hostility in dealings with them (American Psychiatric Association 1995: 676–680; Moore et al. 1990: 124–125; Wolman 1977: 435–439). Each of these traits characterized Trudeau to a substantial extent.

As an adult, Trudeau’s relationship with the media effectively illustrates the impact of his narcissism. Craving the attention of the cameras, Trudeau was happy to show off his dancing with attractive women and powerful Saudi princes. Trudeau describes certain media antics in the early years of his prime ministership as an attempt at a resolution to the problem of how to be ‘a politician’. In a piece of self analysis, Trudeau characterizes his telegenic public persona as a crude, if necessary, device to succeed in politics; one which he employed at the time with little compunction, even if with discomfort and embarrassment in retrospect (Trudeau 1994). He slid down bannisters, mugged goofy smiles, and pirouetted behind Queen Elizabeth (Gwyn 1980: 23). The media loved Trudeau’s telegenic attractiveness and the sense of excitement surrounding his public appearances. However, the media and many others remained unaware of the degree of planning and artistry that went into Trudeau’s apparently spontaneous gestures (Mulhallen 1998: 100). Trudeau meant them to exert an impact. Contrary to his own versions of events, the exhibitionist
episodes are likely to have generated narcissistic pleasure for Trudeau and were therefore more than merely necessary political expedients. As with many narcissists, Trudeau could be charming and a delight to be with (Post 1993: 103). But the love was unrequited.

Trudeau spoke disparagingly of the media and treated most journalists with contempt (Radwanski 1978: 204–208). Trudeau had little interest in the media and did not read newspapers or watch television (Radwanski 1978: 205–206). He restricted access on the campaign trail and often exhibited a hostile indifference to journalistic questions. When he was feeling combative, he would deconstruct a journalist’s questions in order to challenge and mock their seemingly illogical premises and untenable assumptions. Far from answering the questions, Trudeau would berate the journalist at length as he elaborated the ludicrous consequences of some trivial contradiction (Radwanski 1978: 208). Unwilling to co-operate with the requirements of television, Trudeau engaged in no small talk and refused to do anything that seemed to him to be “staged” (Gossage 1986: 215). Trudeau, of course, was not against staging pirouettes or sliding down banisters when it suited his purposes. The key element was, therefore, not the staginess, but the subject of control: Trudeau had to be in command.

Media contempt grew into outright hostility as the media began to criticize and attack Trudeau throughout the 1970s. Trudeau did not like criticism and his characteristic response was to lash out at the critics. One of the clearest illustrations of this propensity occurred during the FLQ crisis in October, 1970. While he was a resolute civil libertarian, with a disdain for authority and a contempt for authoritarians, Trudeau did not hesitate to invoke the War Measures Act and to suspend civil liberties. The apparent contradiction between Trudeau’s convictions and his actions finds a resolution in this well-known interchange with reporter Tim Ralfe in October, 1970, the culmination of a hostile ten-minute interview on the steps of the Parliament building (Trudeau 1972: 90):

Trudeau: Yes, well there are a lot of bleeding hearts around who just don’t like to see people with helmets and guns. All I can say is, go on and bleed, but it is more important to keep law and order in the society than to be worried about weak-kneed people who don’t like the looks of...

Ralfe: At any cost? How far would you go with that? How far would you extend that?
While the primary discourse concerns the reasonable claim that even a strong liberal Prime Minister must be prepared to defend the state and the polity with force if necessary, Trudeau’s language and deportment expresses a narcissistic rage. Trudeau is facing humiliation at the hands of a small band of terrorists, aided and abetted—from Trudeau’s perspective—by a weak and vacillating political and intellectual leadership in Quebec. Just as when he stood stoically to attention on the public platform in Montreal at the St. Jean Baptiste Day parade in 1968—long after others had run away to avoid the shower of bottles and stones thrown from the crowd—Trudeau’s response to the FLQ is coldly defiant (Zolf 1984: 5). His very manhood seems to be in question. His response is to summon the force of his rage and to direct it at his enemies. Those who attempt to stand in his way are at best an annoying irrelevance and their counsel will be ignored. Tim Ralfe himself is sideswiped by Trudeau throughout the interview. Gwyn remarks on the manner in which Trudeau interrogates, pushes and mocks Ralfe throughout the interchange leading up to ‘just watch me’. While most of us do not like to lose an argument or a fight, narcissists cannot bear such defeat. They experience the profoundest depths of shame and humiliation and often strike back with a relentless and focused rage (Steinberg 1996: 23; Post 1993: 103).

Trudeau’s relationship with his wife, Margaret, illustrates key aspects of his narcissism. Characteristic of the narcissist, Trudeau was married late to a woman whose physical perfection and glittering style reflected his own persona as well as his high standards. As Post (1993: 103) says of the narcissist: “...others are seen as extensions of the self, who are there only to supply admiration and gratification...” Despite his best intentions, his attempts to accommodate to Margaret’s needs and his profound attachment to his children, the relationship with Margaret did not survive the 1970s. Trudeau’s narcissism rendered him unable to empathize or communicate with Margaret; made him perplexed and hurt by her need to become more than a reflection of him; and found him rigid in his beliefs and his habits and determined to remain in control (Clarkson and McCull 1991: 24, 131, 175–176). As an ‘ideal-hungry’ narcissist, Trudeau was accustomed to erecting barriers between himself and others. His highly developed sense of intellectual rigour created in him an intolerance for the trivia of interpersonal relations. He dazzled people, but had little more to offer. He had no small talk and little time for ‘small minds’. Reasonable and fair as he was, the more he attempted to regulate Margaret’s life according to his own cold expectations, the more she rebelled. One of Trudeau’s favourite aphorisms, ‘Reason over Passion’, is reputed to have hung embroidered in Sussex Drive.
The coldness of this one-sided maxim is reflective of the challenge of anaclitic relationships for Trudeau. Psychoanalysis is the systematic study of those essential, often obscure psychic forces that shape a personality and result in particular patterns of behaviour. Overt surface behaviours are often complex and only indirectly related to psychic drives and a superficial reading may not say a great deal of fundamental importance about the individual. Trudeau could appear warm and charming and was genuinely empathetic toward children. However, despite these appearances Trudeau's narcissistic defensiveness prompted a deep emotional reserve on his part and prevented him from investing more of himself in others than was minimally required.

**Question Period, Discursive Style and the Assessment of Political Personality**

The personality profile of Trudeau developed in the last section depends for its persuasiveness on a combination of the reflections of biographical scholars and the strength of psychoanalysis. In order to provide an empirical reference to these largely deductive methods, I have found it useful to locate, measure and assess some record of observable behaviour. My chosen site is the House of Commons and the data consist of Trudeau's spontaneous utterances in parliamentary Question Period.

For those in Canada who pay attention to party politics, the Canadian House of Commons offers a rare treasure: the opportunity to witness pure and unmediated political debate as the principal political actors confront each other in Question Period. Even more than its British counterpart, Canadian Question Period is a highly unpredictable and dangerous occasion (Crimmings and Nesbitt-Larking 1996). While questions and responses may be presented in writing, most questions are delivered orally and without prior warning. Those who must answer such spontaneous questions and supplementary questions operate under conditions of risk. The greatest risk attends the Prime Minister, who is routinely the object of the most challenging political questions and who is not merely under the scrutiny of the opposition parties, but is also in the glare of mass-mediated publicity. The record of how members react toward each other is kept in Hansard and while there is limited opportunity for post facto corrections to the record and editorial discretion, Hansard constitutes a faithful and a comprehensive account of who said what. Removed from the opportunity to reflect, the counsel of their staffs or the glosses of their spin doctors, Prime Ministers in Question Period are obliged to be themselves both in what they have to say and the manner in which they speak. The utterances of Prime Ministers in Question Period therefore provide a valuable indicator of their
political personalities. In Trudeau's case, there is evidence that he disfavoured speechwriters and preferred to speak in his own words and on his own terms (Coates 1998: 147). A perusal of Question Period in Hansard reveals two categories of prime-ministerial response: first, the normal and formal anticipated direct response to questions and supplementary questions; second, a range of other interjections which, while contributing to the partisan fray, are irrelevant to the immediate context of the set question. These interjections constitute an ongoing record of the most spontaneous and revealing discourse in the life of a Canadian Prime Minister. These utterances constitute a prime site for this exploration of political personality at a distance.

Turning to technical matters of observation and measurement, the site of the assessment of Trudeau's political personality are those days in the House on which he is recorded as making at least one 'interjection'. An interjection in Question Period is defined here as an utterance that is not directly related to the question that was asked. An interjection may be: a request for clarification, a partisan jibe, an insult, an interruption, an aside or any one of a broad range of other utterances. Days on which there was at least one interjection are recorded in Table 1, column 3.²

Once identified, each interjection was recorded verbatim for use in the empirical analysis of political personality. Before discussing the classification scheme, I will briefly consider two reservations about the adopted approach. Firstly, it might be contended that Question Period is theatre and that Prime Ministers are simply playing parts and speaking their lines according to scripts and roles. However, even where they are acting, the manner in which Prime Ministers choose to play their parts is itself revealing of their underlying predispositions and, moreover, if there is any occasion on which the mask is at risk of slipping it is Question Period. The second reservation concerns employment of methods of numerical analysis in the exploration of the political character of Prime Ministers. In brief, counting and classifying utterances is a limited methodology given the very unequal impact of those utterances both in the minds of the senders and in the receptions of the receivers. For instance, many people recall the infamous 'fiddle duddle' incident (28.3, 25.2.71) in which Trudeau mouthed an obscenity at opposition members. For many commentators, it epitomized Trudeau's contempt for the House of Commons. As is evident in Table 3, Trudeau used terms of abuse and insult on 35 other occasions between 1968 and 1983. Few people will recall 'bellowing backbenchers' (32.1, 13.5.82) or 'I remind the honourable blockhead from St. John's West' (32.1, 18.7.80). Despite the fact that the impact of words spoken is uneven, counting such responses provides us with a useful and reliable
In order to assess facets of Trudeau’s narcissism in his spontaneous parliamentary discourse, I have selected three broad areas of manifestation: ‘object of address’, ‘sarcatical style’, and ‘rhetorical technique’.

‘Object of address’ is a measure of the person or persons being addressed by the Prime Minister in his interjection. Who or what is at the receiving end of the Prime Minister’s interjection? There are three categories: ‘individual’, ‘opposition party’ or ‘other’. While much depends upon the particular context of the exchange in Question Period, it seems plausible that Trudeau, as an aggressive narcissist with a strong streak of competitive individualism, would manifest a propensity to address/confront individuals.
A dominant discursive style of interjections in Question Period is satire. Garnett (in Partridge 1976: 274) defines satirical intention as "...the expression in adequate terms of the sense of amusement or disgust excited by the ridiculous or unseemly..." A satirical voice is a useful and routinely employed tool for any politician. Moreover, it is particularly useful to the politician who is eager to please as well as to distance himself from the core of his hostility. An aggressive politician, such as Trudeau, has less need of satire, and is comparatively willing to be blunt and direct in his location. It will be interesting to see how far Trudeau employs satire. A further literary distinction is employed between "Horatian" and "Juvenalian" satire (Holman 1981: 399):

Horatian satire is gentle, urbane, smiling; it aims to correct by gentle and broadly sympathetic laughter; Juvenalian satire is biting, bitter, angry; it points with contempt and moral indignation to the corruption and evil of human beings and institutions.

Given his propensity toward aggression, it is highly probable that Trudeau's characteristic satirical style is substantially more Juvenalian than Horatian.

Rhetorical technique covers a broad range of technical devices employed in the cut and thrust of competitive discourse. I have identified 22 categories of rhetorical technique, listed in full in Table 3. While there may be overlaps, these rhetorical techniques are analytically distinct from the categories of satire just described. The broad categories of satire represent the overall 'tone' or 'resonance' of the interjection, while the rhetorical categories are narrower and more technical debating devices.

Discussion

With respect to the object of address, Table 2 shows us that fully 73 per cent of Trudeau's 660 interjections were directed at individuals rather than parties.

In terms of his satirical style, Trudeau is indeed likely to avoid satire altogether. Nearly 63 per cent of Trudeau's interjections are direct and to the point. Once non-satirical interjections are excluded, fully 73.4 per cent of Trudeau's interjections are Juvenalian, and only 26.6 per cent are Horatian. Illustrative of Trudeau's Juvenalian style are the following:

I think we should encourage members of the opposition to leave. Every time they do, the I.Q. of this House rises considerably... When they get home, when they get out of Parliament, when they
are 50 yards from Parliament Hill, they are no longer Honourable Members—they are just nobodies, Mr. Speaker. (28.1, 25.7.69)

A man over there is talking about his brain being washed, Madam Speaker. I don’t know, there may not be that much to wash. (32.1, 8.10.80)

The Honourable Member for Saskatoon-Biggar [Ramon Hnatyshyn] says nobody is perfect. Every time we hear him talk we realize it is a fact. (30.2, 17.5.77)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Object of address</th>
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<tr>
<td>Individual member</td>
<td>482</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opposition parties/parties</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>25.6</td>
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<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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**Satirical style:**

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horatian</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenalian</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-satirical interjection</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>62.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>660</td>
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**Satirical style (excluding non-satirical interjections):**

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horatian</td>
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<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenalian</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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**TABLE 2: Trudeau—interjections by object of address and satirical style, 1968–1983**

Table 3 provides data on the 22 rhetorical techniques. Trudeau loved political rhetoric. Bob Rae (1998: 286) comments: “Lucid, unequivocal, brilliant, acerbic, he revelled in the tricks and excesses of rhetorical debate”. Table 3 differs from Table 2 in the total number of cases. In Table 2, Trudeau has 660 classifiable utterances derived from the 427 sitting days on which he produced at least one utterance. In Table 3 there are 1169 recorded instances of rhetorical technique. The difference is explicable in light of the fact that any given utterance can be classified into more than one rhetorical technique. To give an example of a multiple classification, the comment “tell us about the monkeys in Gabon” (32.1, 24.3.82) made by Trudeau to John Crosbie fits into
four distinct rhetorical categories: (1) It is a juxtaposition in that it connects
the theme established by Crosbie with a subversive notion planted earlier by
Trudeau; (2) it is sarcastic—Trudeau has no real interest in the topic; (3) it is
rude—Trudeau is playing on the idea that Crosbie’s understanding of foreign
countries is impoverished and stereotyped as well as making the sly allusion
to the possibility that Crosbie himself is a monkey; (4) Trudeau has changed
the subject and, therefore, the utterance falls into the ‘flippancy...’ classifica-
tion as well. Following from this interchange and a series of other connected
interchanges, Trudeau later employs a combination of rudeness, sarcasm and
absurdist twists of information supplied by Crosbie in other contexts when he
says (32.1, 30.4.82):

Now we have the hon. member for Calgula who wants to par-
ticipate....His interest for native people is well known since he
commented on the Minister of Finance’s return from Gabon and
described that as a country of monkeys.

In terms of aggression, given in the first ten categories in Table 3, fully 69.1
per cent of observations for Trudeau fall into this category. Examples of Tru-
dean’s aggressive and combative comments are: “Yes, what is your problem?”
(30.1, 18.3.75) and “...I ask the Honourable Member to check Hansard if his
brains are not currently in the area that he suggested somebody else’s nose is”
(32.1, 23.10.80) (rudeness); “Come over here and make me sit” (30.3, 16.6.78)
and “You are going to have to answer...” (33.1, 13.9.85) (taunts and threats);
“Sure. You know where to put it too” (30.2, 2.3.77) and “Shut up, my friend,
shut up a minute” (32.1, 8.7.81) (abuse); “It [the Opposition] has a leader who
has his tongue in his cheek and his foot in his mouth, and he feels muzzled by
himself” (30.4, 1.2.79) and “Who is going to head the non-force, Mr. Speaker?
A non-head” (28.3, 8.9.71) (absurdist diversions).

Trudeau very rarely employs horatian or gentle rhetoric. Interestingly, one of
the few occasions on which Trudeau employs blamey is in one of his earliest
interchanges with Mulroney, himself the master of the genre. Among other
things, Trudeau says: “...I missed this old place and I was thinking of him
often when I was...” (32.1, 4.10.83). Trudeau is not prone to hyperbole, but
caracteristically uses it—as in the infamous “just nobodies” intervention—as
a rhetorical device further to enhance his abusive or rude assaults. Trudeau
is a frequent critic of the poor decorum and juvenile behaviour of members
in Question Period. His distaste for such behaviour is also occasionally com-
bined with hyperbole, as in: “I had begun to answer that question earlier when
the opposition howled with anguish”. (32.1, 21.1.81) Trudeau is occasionally
prone to take offence and to express righteous indignation. When Thomas Barnett compares federal Liberal Party aboriginal policy to the white Rhodesian regime, Trudeau says: “Not only is that not in order; it is very low”. (28.1, 4.7.69) When accused of lying by Ed Broadbent, Trudeau responds: “I really find that offensive”. (32.1, 6.11.80) While it is not prominent in his discourse, Trudeau periodically employs bravado and boastful behaviour. One of his favourite retorts is: “ah-ha” (28.3, 10.6.71) employed with an air of superiority. Trudeau is occasionally boastful about the Liberal Party, as in: “…when I feel my support in the Liberal Party has sunk as low as it has for the Tory leader in his party, I will consider [resigning]”. (32.1, 18.2.82)

Looking at the final eight categories in Table 3, Trudeau is likely to be flip-pan, to deliberately distort, introduce red herrings and invert meanings. While this category is different from the ‘absurdist diversions’ category in that the comments have at least an internal coherence, it is possible that these rhetorical techniques are also characteristic of the aggressively narcissistic leader. Typical of this approach is Trudeau’s: “I am surprised the Honourable member calls British Columbia a strange land. It is a very beautiful land and a very integral part of Canada” (32.1, 1.5.80) and, in response to the claim “What goes up must come down”, “Not necessarily, because if it is synchronized with the turning of the earth, it can stay up there forever”. Much the same might be said of the ‘juxtaposition’ category. This category assesses the extent to which comments reference other ideas or notions. A good example of juxtaposition occurs in this retort by Trudeau: “The leader of the Opposition talks about leadership and the courage to face voters. Why will he not face a leadership convention?” (32.1, 26.3.81) Sometimes the juxtaposition is established in a sequence of the individual’s own interjections and sometimes the interjection includes a retort.

As the data show, Trudeau also employs a range of other rhetorical techniques, including puns, metaphors, metonymic devices and innuendo. Trudeau does not make use of set jokes as such, although he occasionally borrows words and phrases from familiar jokes to employ them in his own assemblage. Among his better puns is this one aimed at Joe Clark, who has expressed concern at the state of the nation’s finances: “He should be concerned with another type of bankruptcy, that is the moral bankruptcy he has shown in this house”. (32.1, 18.6.81)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhetorical technique</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rudeness, ridicule, insult, patronising comment, put-down, mockery, defamation</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarcasm</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taunt, threat, good, challenge, aggressive confrontation</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints about poor decorum/behaviour in the House, claims that opposition not listening</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse, attack, diatribe, invective, swear-word, name-calling</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absurdist diversions, verbal games, twisted logic, redundant repetition of words, buffoonery, disarming nonsense</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Order, directive, command, imperative</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusation of telling lies</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other substantive accusation</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blunt assertion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total ‘Aggressive’:</strong></td>
<td><strong>808</strong></td>
<td><strong>69.1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blamey, periphrasis (verbose way of expressing little), circumlocution, pompous and extravagant expression</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperbole, exaggeration</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Righteous/unaltruism indignation, offence taken, condemnation</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bravado, gloating, boasting</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flippancy, distortion, changing the subject, glibness, red herrings, deliberate inversion of meaning, deliberate ‘misunderstanding’</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juxtaposition—adopting an idea, notion, term or phrase and adding to it, sometimes in retort</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pun, double-entendre, verbal ambiguity</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repartee, banter, set joke</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simile, metaphor</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metonymy/synecdoche (technique of indicating something or implying something through the use of a symbol which stands in for other ‘absent’ phenomena)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innuendo—mostly sexual</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other unclassified utterances</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Utterances</strong></td>
<td><strong>1169</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 3: Trudeau—Interjections by category of rhetorical technique, 1968–1983**
Conclusion

These results provide some empirical reference to the study of the political psychology of leadership in general and the political personality of Trudeau in particular. While mindful of the range of purposes and the variable quality of existing literature on Trudeau, it has been possible to extract a consensus around the core of his psyche. Moreover, I have been able to ground this profile meaningfully in a psychoanalytic framework. Characterizations of Trudeau as an aggressive, ‘ideal-hungry’ narcissist not only fit existing conjectures and insights about his personality predispositions, but are now also supported with empirical data gathered over years of verbatim records of frank and spontaneous interjections. The empirical data do more than merely support the psychoanalytic profile, they further refine and nuance our understandings of Trudeau’s aggression through showing how he employs rhetorical techniques and styles in attack and defence.

So what impact does personality exert on politics? According to Greenstein (1967), more than most political scientists have supposed. What was the impact of Trudeau’s political personality on the political life of Canada? We shall, of course, be debating this for some time. For those who admire him, Trudeau’s triumph inhered in the tenacity of his vision, his personal courage and the iron will that underpinned his determination to realize the just society. To his detractors, these very characteristics were the cause of many of our current problems. Guy Pratte (1998: 358) argues:

Trudeau’s failure was to confuse his personal convictions with the ultimate needs of the country and to refuse to adjust his official views, notwithstanding the mounting evidence that his political beliefs were not producing the desired unifying effects.

It is clear that there is much more to Trudeau and Canada’s experience of him over 16 years than can be explained within the context of a single personality dynamic, such as narcissism. No political individual or situation is explicable in such a unicausal and deterministic manner. The story of Trudeau is not merely an account of the psychodynamics; it is also, relationally, a political cultural, political economic and political institutional story. Narcissism or any other psychological characteristic can only explain so much. However, taken in all its partiality as a generative model of personal dispositions, it prompts us to rethink and revisit his political life and times: his choices, his challenges, his inhibitions, his struggles, his wisdom, his poor judgement and his triumphs.
Endnotes

1 I gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance of Huron University College in the preparation of this paper and the research assistance of Caroline Jimdar. I further acknowledge the guidance and advice of my colleagues Neil Brooks, Jim Crimmins and Corinne Davies. An earlier version of aspects of this paper was presented at the London Conference for Canadian Studies meeting in Southampton, UK, 30 November, 2001.

2 It can be seen that the number of such days ranges from 4 to 181 per session. Given the spontaneity and incautiousness of interjections, those days on which they occurred constitute a most promising nonrandom sample of utterances that may be used to assess political personality. It is apparent from Table 1, column 3, that 427 days between 1968 and 1983 have been identified as occasions on which Trudeau uttered at least one interjection. The techniques of undertaking the formidable task of identifying and recording these utterances requires some further explanation: To begin with, each Question Period was scanned to identify those days on which the Prime Minister contributed any utterance. These days are recorded in column 1 of Table 1 and an adjusted version of these data is presented in column 2. In scanning these days upon which there was a prime-ministerial intervention in Question Period, care was taken to identify all “interjections” or utterances not directly related to the questions under discussion. Those days on which there was at least one interjection are recorded in Table 1 column 3. Simply scanning each intervention permitted coders to classify interjections according to their substance. In addition to this, interjections were often readily identifiable through a range of other clues: the shortness of the utterance; indications (with a dash in Hansard) that the utterance was an interruption or was interrupted by others; the appearance of the utterance in isolation of others by the Prime Minister on that day; and indications that the utterance was disruptive to the flow of normal discourse—comments including “Oh, oh!” “hear, heart” and “Order please!” being such indicators. While confident that the data are highly reliable, it is probable that a few interjections have been missed. There is simply a great deal of material in each Question Period and, on his busier days, Trudeau is recorded as having contributed as many as 40 to 60 times, including both straightforward responses and other utterances not related to the matter at hand. Trudeau occasionally injected comments in the context of straightforward responses to questions. Wherever this occurred on days where there was no obvious interjection, such comments occasionally might have been missed. (I wish to express my gratitude to research assistant, Caroline Jimdar, whose pain-
taking replication of my entire search for interjections produced a few gems I had missed. More challenging than this is the possibility that interjections might have been missed (or even sincere answers accidentally included) owing to the fact that much of the rhetorical force of Question Period is lost in transcription. In order to minimize this possibility, I paid much attention to the political and the interpersonal context of interjections made in Question Period and any oblique material was excluded from further analysis. On a methodological level the manner in which I have classified utterances, dependent as it is upon a deep understanding of the political and institutional context of the speech acts, explains why this study is a discourse analysis and not a "content" analysis. The data I present in Tables 2 and 3 are as accurate as my interpretations will allow. They should not be read, however, as coded 'manifest content' whose results could be largely reproduced by any generalist trained in coding techniques.

3 This quotation and each subsequent one used in the paper from House of Commons Debates are to be referenced by the session followed by the date (day, month, year) of the particular Question Period.

4 This measure is somewhat "contaminated" by the fact that Rules of Order in the House already create an artificial distance between the questioner and respondent, since all members must address comments to the Speaker. (I am grateful to my colleague, Neil Brooks, for reminding me of this point). This provision allows sufficient time for each member to reflect upon the appropriateness and the wisdom of engaging in angry personal exchanges with others.

5 The origin of my classification of many of these rhetorical techniques is Freud's Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious (Freud 1938). As with certain dreams, mental lapses and slips of the tongue, the use of wit serves the psychodynamic process of releasing inhibitions in the unconscious. According to Freud (1938: 634), wit is "playful judgement" and "...affords us the means of surmounting restrictions and of opening up otherwise inaccessible pleasure sources" (Freud 1938: 698). The playfulness is symbolic and consists of the juxtaposition and manipulation of signifiers, notably words, in such a way as to facilitate a forbidden release on the part of the audience. I have complemented Freud's techniques of wit with a range of rhetorical techniques described in A Handbook to Literature (Holman: 1981). Additionally, I have included a number of techniques that do not always incorporate wit. Most importantly in this respect are the categories 'rudeness, ridicule, insult, patronizing comment, put-down, mockery, derision', 'taunt, threat, good, challenge, aggressive confrontation', and 'abuse, attack, diatribe, invective, swear-word, name-calling'.
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