View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk
brought to you by CORE
provided by Lancaster E-Prints

For Peer Review

'No More Heroes': Critical Perspectives on Leadership Romanticism

Journal:	*Organization Studies*
Manuscript ID	OS-16-0408.R1
Manuscript Type:	Article
Keywords:	Leadership < Topics, leadership romanticism, leader attribution, natural leaders, expressive collectives, romanticising followership, critical leadership studies

Abstract: This paper revisits Meindl et al's (1985) 'romance of leadership' thesis and extends these ideas in a number of inter-related ways. First, it argues that the thesis has sometimes been neglected and/or misinterpreted in subsequent studies. Second, the paper suggests that romanticism is a much broader and more historically rich term with wider implications for leadership studies than originally proposed. Arguing that romanticism stretches beyond leader attribution, we connect leadership theory to a more enduring and naturalistic tradition of romantic thought that has survived and evolved since the mid-18th century. Third, the paper demonstrates the contemporary relevance of the romanticism critique. It reveals how the study of leadership continues to be characterised by romanticising tendencies in many of its most influential theories, illustrating this argument with reference to spiritual and authentic leadership theories, which only recognise positive engagement with leaders. Equally, the paper suggests that romanticism can shape conceptions not only of leaders, but also of followers, their agency, and their (potential for) resistance. We conclude by discussing future possible research directions for the romanticism critique that extend well beyond its original focus on leader attribution to inform a broader critical approach to leadership studies.

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/orgstudies

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

'No More Heroes'[1]: Critical Perspectives on Leadership Romanticism

Abstract:

This paper revisits Meindl et al's (1985) 'romance of leadership' thesis and extends these ideas in a number of inter-related ways. First, it argues that the thesis has sometimes been neglected and/or misinterpreted in subsequent studies. Second, the paper suggests that romanticism is a much broader and more historically rich term with wider implications for leadership studies than originally proposed. Arguing that romanticism stretches beyond leader attribution, we connect leadership theory to a more enduring and naturalistic tradition of romantic thought that has survived and evolved since the mid-18th century. Third, the paper demonstrates the contemporary relevance of the romanticism critique. It reveals how the study of leadership continues to be characterised by romanticising tendencies in many of its most influential theories, illustrating this argument with reference to spiritual and authentic leadership theories, which only recognise positive engagement with leaders. Equally, the paper suggests that romanticism can shape conceptions not only of leaders, but also of followers, their agency, and their (potential for) resistance. We conclude by discussing future possible research directions for the romanticism critique that extend well beyond its original focus on leader attribution to inform a broader critical approach to leadership studies.

Keywords: leadership romanticism, leader attribution, natural leaders, expressive collectives, romanticising followership, critical leadership studies

er Review

[1] This title is inspired by the 1977 classic UK punk rock anthem of the same name by 'The Stranglers'.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Introduction

It is now over 30 years since Meindl, Ehrlich and Dukerich (1985) published their classic article critically examining the widespread tendency for leadership scholars, practitioners, the media and societies as a whole to attribute undue influence and responsibility to leaders for organizational successes and failures. Meindl et al's critique helped to facilitate the emergence of important new post-heroic ideas about distributed, shared and situated leadership and followership. In recent years, however, important insights from this critique have either been forgotten or have tended to be misinterpreted in ways that dilute or neutralize Meindl et al's critical insights. Partly prompted by this misunderstanding, our paper revisits the romanticism thesis to re-state its continued relevance for leadership studies. It also seeks to build on and extend Meindl et al's original ideas in a number of ways.

First, we re-examine the leadership romanticism thesis and question the way it has sometimes been interpreted in contemporary accounts. Second, the paper examines the aesthetic and historical dimensions of romanticism and considers their wider implications for leadership studies. The paper connects leadership theory to a more enduring and naturalistic tradition of romantic thought that has survived and evolved since the mid-18th century. Meindl's notion of the romance of leadership is largely restricted to leader attribution and does not explore romanticism as a concept or discourse with its own history. By revisiting the concept, we seek to show how romanticism can be approached as a mode of thinking that is ubiquitous and holds relevance beyond leader attribution. Third and relatedly, the paper is concerned to demonstrate the contemporary significance of the romanticism critique of leadership research and practice. It demonstrates how various currently influential leadership theories, both leader-centred and post-heroic, continue to romanticise leaders. We also suggest that

For Peer Review

romanticism can shape conceptions not only of leaders, but also of followers and their practices.

The paper highlights the usefulness of applying a historically-situated critical aesthetic analysis to contemporary organizational concepts. Doing so, we suggest, can enhance understanding of the genesis and persistence of certain discourses. More specifically, we seek to identify and foreground the notion of romanticised discourse as influential in our organizational times. The paper makes the case that romanticising leadership is informed by certain key characteristics that can be traced back to dimensions of romantic thought and philosophy. Romanticising leadership naturalises the privileged status of leaders, portraying them as possessing the imaginative and heroic capabilities to access transcendent natural truths.

Romanticism is not restricted to accounts of individual leaders, however, but also stretches to collective constructions of both leadership and followership. We theorise such 'post-heroic' constructions as 'expressive collectives', accounts of leadership and followership that emphasise 'collective individuality' (Murphy and Roberts, 2004: 45), a perspective that offers primacy to freedom of self-expression. It is also a discourse in which concerns relating to power tend to disappear from view, replaced by a focus on the language of natural harmony and conciliation. In re-examining leadership romanticism, we draw on Benjamin's (1996) critique of Romantic thought, which he claimed risked overlooking the role of criticism in identifying and amplifying points of rupture and negativity in works of art. Informed by Benjamin's arguments and our own analysis of contemporary theories and practices, we conclude the paper by discussing future possible directions for more critical, de-romanticised approaches to leadership theory and practice.

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

The Romance of Leadership

The concept of leadership romanticism has its origins in the 1985 paper by Meindl, Ehrlich and Dukerich. Drawing on detailed empirical analysis, the authors highlight 'the prominence of the concept of leadership in our collective consciousness' (1985: 78). Examining the attribution of performance outcomes to leaders' abilities, they question the widespread tendency in both academic research and popular thinking to exaggerate leaders' contributions and to treat leadership as a causal and explanatory category. Meindl et al refer to this tendency as 'the romance of leadership'. They contend that such accounts tend either to excessively credit leaders for high organizational performance or, conversely, to hold them overly responsible for workplace failures.

Meindl et al suggest that in complex contexts of indeterminate and unpredictable events, 'the romance of leadership' provides a reassuring, but overly simplified way to understand multifaceted organizational and economic processes, and to construct causal connections. They argue that in practice individual leaders' contributions to a collective enterprise are likely to be much more constrained and closely tied to external factors outside a leader's control. Echoing Smircich and Morgan's (1982) argument, Meindl et al contend that leadership should be understood as intimately entangled in organizational symbolism and, by extension, wider social symbolism. The manipulation of language and other organizationally significant symbols allows leaders to manage the political and social processes that maintain organized activity, generating a sense of 'efficacy and control', and thereby emphasising that leaders 'do make a difference' (ibid: 97). In this sense-making process, leadership has assumed a status of 'mystery and near mysticism' (ibid: 78).

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

It may be that this mysterious and elusive status makes leadership particularly amenable to the kind of romanticised causal attributions problematized by Meindl et al. It is certainly the case that leadership scholars have often conceptualised leadership as 'something' that escapes and goes beyond the regular boundaries of rational organizational reasoning. Leadership has been approached as offering an appeal over and above the more mundane but also, perhaps, the more accountable concept of management (O'Reilly and Reed, 2011). Leadership appears to stretch beyond the boundaries of rational and directly knowable language, scattering a mysticism that includes, but also exceeds individual leaders. Perhaps it is this vagueness and ambiguity, combined with aggrandising language, which provides important clues as to its 'romantic' appeal, an appeal which has led to a collectively 'enamoured' population of scholars, policymakers, developers and practitioners (Ford and Harding, 2007: 476).

For Peer Review

Presenting a damning critique of many mainstream studies, Meindl et al's romance of leadership thesis has been highly influential and widely cited (see for example, Bligh and Schyns, 2007; Shamir et al, 2007). It has also been instrumental in the emergence of post-heroic theories that emphasise the social, situational, relational and collective nature of leadership dynamics. Post-heroic perspectives focus on distributed (Gronn, 2002), shared (Pearce and Conger, 2003), servant (Hale and Fields, 2007), quiet (Collins, 2001), collaborative (Jameson, 2007) as well as community leadership (Ricketts and Ladewig, 2008) and co-leadership (Alvarez and Svejenova, 2005). They also ascribe greater importance to both context (Fairhurst, 2009, Jepson, 2009) and followership (Bligh, 2011; Chaleff, 2015; Kellerman, 2007; Riggio et al., 2008; Uhl-Bien et al, 2014). Yet, despite its influence on leadership studies, the critical and questioning edge of the romance of leadership thesis has often been neglected or downplayed in subsequent research. Many perspectives that have

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

emerged since 1985 have largely ignored Meindl et al's central critique, reproducing romanticised assumptions that fixate on leaders – or collectives - in heroic terms.

In recent times, the critical dimension of leadership romanticism has tended to be diluted. Indeed, vigorous critiques of leadership and management writing generally are few and far between (c.f., Rosenzweig (2014), whose demolition of many sacred managerial cows is exemplary). Within leadership studies, Kempster and Carroll (2016) seek to reframe romanticism and leadership in more ethical terms, advocating 'a new romanticism' (p.8), which they refer to as 'The Romance of Responsible Leadership'. Here, romanticism is acknowledged, but is re-interpreted in less critical ways. Drawing on the imagery of the Romantic poets, the editors re-define romanticism as a focus on 'hope' (p. 2) and 'imagination' (p. 9), and as 'the free and imaginative expression of the feelings of the artist' (Kempster and Carroll, 2016: 9). In place of Meindl et al's *critique*, the authors *value* romanticism and refer to themselves as '*the new romantics of responsible leadership*' (Kempster and Carroll, 2016: 9).

For Peer Review

What is surprising about the contributions in this edited collection is their lack of engagement with Meindl et al's (1985) original thesis and its critical implications. Of the 11 chapters, only two cite Meindl et al's seminal article (Blakely, 2016; Lee and Higgs, 2016). Two others (Kempster and Carroll, 2016; Parry and Jackson, 2016) cite Meindl's (1995) chapter published ten years later, which adopts a more explicitly follower-centred perspective.[2] The introductory chapter defines leadership romanticism as 'the follower tendency to attribute responsibility for company performance to organizational leaders', a thesis the editors assert was 'developed by Meindl (1995)'. There is no mention of the classic Meindl et al paper

[2] As we discuss later, Meindl's single-authored 1995 chapter takes a different perspective to the co-authored 1985 paper, where the romanticizing impulse is more broadly conceived and attributed.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

published ten years earlier. Concerned to 'embrace' romanticism as a positive discourse, rather than use it to advance critique of contemporary leadership theories and practices, the editors seek to:

> reintroduce the romanticised rhetoric to situate it within current leadership discourses regarding authentic, distributed, and ethical leadership where the societal, economic, and environmental challenges do require us to collectively take the lead in moving forward towards doing good and growing well. (Kempster and Carroll, 2016: 3)

This rather uncritical statement takes for granted that concepts such as 'ethical leadership', 'doing good' and 'growing well' are self-evident and have universally accepted meanings. More critical approaches recognise that these are essentially contested terms that can be defined in multiple ways according to various political agendas. The editors' intention to 'reintroduce' and 'embrace' romanticism significantly redefines the term's meaning, limiting its original critical intent. In effect, their argument tends to romanticise leadership romanticism.

Rather than 'romanticise romanticism', we seek to build on and extend Meindl et al's more questioning insights. For them, the romance of leadership thesis is not concerned with promoting hope or imagination. Rather, it questions the widespread tendency to attribute excessive and causal power and influence to leaders. We see the romance of leadership thesis as an important precursor and starting point for the critical analysis of leadership theory and practice. In seeking to develop our argument that romanticism stretches beyond leader attribution, the paper begins by connecting leadership theory to a more enduring and naturalistic tradition of romantic thought that has survived and evolved since the mid-18th century.

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

The Old Romantics and their Problematic Legacy

Romanticism is typically understood as an artistic, intellectual, literary and even social-political movement that sought to recapture a sense of proportion with regard to humanity's relationship to nature (Ferber, 2010). Applied retrospectively to a collection of late 18th century writers, poets, artists and musicians, Romanticism originally developed as a reaction to the Enlightenment. Indeed, it is impossible to understand Romanticism (late 18thC – middle 19thC) without first understanding the context from which it arose, namely the modernising impulses of the Enlightenment that prioritized rationality, logic, production, objectivity and control (early 17thC to late 18thC).

For Peer Review

By the late 18th century, although great strides had been made in understanding the world and human beings' place within it, these breakthroughs had come at the expense of a sense of alienation, a feeling that 'avidly rationalist philosophy ignored the sensuous qualities of particular things, while a short-sighted empiricism was unable to peer beyond particular bits and pieces of the world to any total picture which they might compose' (Eagleton, 1983: 21-22). Reacting against industrialisation and the factory system, Romanticism emphasised that which was being lost: human subjectivity, emotions and imagination, human embeddedness in nature and the romantic idyll of rural communities. In this sense Romanticism was utopian, fundamentally shaped by idealism, nostalgia and a sense of loss (Lowy and Sayre, 2001).

The Romantic movement was never united in its cultural reaction to the Enlightenment. Indeed, the Enlightenment itself was built upon difference. Certainly the Enlightenment had a French timbre – as exemplified by the *Encyclopédie* of Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert published between 1751 and 1772. It embodied common assumptions about

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

abandoning traditional forms of authority (especially political and religious) and seeking out possibilities for applying the logic and scientific rationality of the Age of Reason to address humanity's problems and create a universally better society (Fitzpatrick, 1999), or to liberate the mind from wanton ignorance (Porter, 2001): at least until the French Revolution.

The Romantic rebuttal to the Enlightenment was rooted in the assumption that human intuition and emotion were better arbiters of civilization than science, especially the French version that had 'inevitably' led to revolution, when Britain's political stability allegedly demonstrated the superiority of evolution and accommodation. However, the meaning attributed by the Romantics to the idea of romanticism was more diverse and contested than the interpretation of 'romance' utilised by Meindl et al. Whilst the latter were critical of the excessive attribution of power and influence to leaders, the elevating tendency of individuals was but one aspect of the richer fabric of thought of the Romantics. In relation to leadership studies we suggest that much value can be gained by extending the conception of romanticism beyond leader attribution and by approaching romanticism as a concept and movement with a more generally salient legacy.

For Peer Review

Benjamin's critique of Romantic criticism

In approaching romanticism as a problematic concept, as a movement with particular historical and aesthetic roots, and as a means of stretching the thesis of Meindl et al, we are influenced by Walter Benjamin's (1996) interpretation of Romantic criticism. Benjamin was, on the one hand, appreciative of Romantic theories of criticism, which he connected to a particular approach to reflection, where critique helps unfold the possibilities of a work of art, drawing attention to the work's internal possibilities. For Benjamin, this was to be welcomed, as such a focus on the immanence of art injected a much-needed challenge to (crude)

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Enlightenment adherence to the known and knowable. He was alert, on the other hand, to the possibility of Romantic criticism perpetuating the construction of an uncritical and unitarist interpretation of art, a point we hold as significant for certain predominant approaches to leadership studies that tend to valorise leaders and processes of leadership, offering them a position beyond the realms of criticism.

The Romantics, in Benjamin's view, conceived of an 'absolute' (1996: 144) in nature that was accessible via art and its criticism. For Benjamin, the Romantic account of criticism was interpreted as problematic because it asked that 'every critical understanding of an artistic entity [should be interpreted] as reflection in the entity, nothing other than a higher, self-actively originated degree of this entity's consciousness' and that 'such intensification of consciousness is in principle infinite' (ibid: 152). Observers and critics are asked by romanticism to appreciate art in and of itself, with the work of art offering an increasing sense of 'intensification' as the spectator becomes more attuned to some higher connection to its truth, accessible directly through the work of art. The critic is thus 'transformed into that infinitude' (ibid) of nature that the artist seeks to convey.

Benjamin argued that such an approach was problematic because it informed a logic of criticism that did not countenance points of rupture. Thus, just as Marx argued that commodities were fetishized in capitalism and operated to mystify the world of exploitation (and generated alienation – a romantic term in itself) so romanticised art, for Benjamin, replaced a disharmonious social reality with a harmonious collective myth (Jeffries, 2016: 178). Criticism and art become locked into an internal relationship of ever greater appreciation of an absolute, rather than of critique. From the perspective of romanticised criticism, any object that can be deemed an object of appreciative and immanent criticism is

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

also regarded as art, and anything that cannot, is simply pushed aside as not art. Good criticism, for Benjamin, involves a 'moment of self-annihilation, the possible negation in reflection' (p.152). This means that the critic is able to negate both the self and the work of art, to highlight points of 'rupture' (p.347) in the form of the work of art: points that do not seem to fit or that undermine its wholeness, and therefore undermine our own sense of wholeness.

Our argument about leadership romanticism echoes that of Benjamin's critique and runs through the central themes of this paper: romanticised leadership invites only positive engagement from readers, scholars and practitioners from within the particular concept of leadership offered. It asks that one consumes and relates to leadership in a way that assumes a positive and natural absolute: the status to be attained is simply leadership, rather than there being such a thing as good and bad leadership practice. Romanticised leadership posits a representation of universal truth within the particularities of its symbolic manifestations, the various positive theories of leadership. Romanticized accounts of leadership naturalise power asymmetries and solidify the identities of individual leaders as privileged actors, asking that critique is substituted with expressive contributions to the absolute.

For Peer Review

We can see something of these romanticised dynamics in the rise of Donald Trump: during the US election campaigns of 2016, Democratic Party attempts to highlight the irrationality of Trump's pronouncements, or his predilection for casting 'the other' (in its various embodiments – journalists, women, gays, Mexicans, Muslims etc.,), proved irrelevant to his popularity; indeed, the wilder his statements, the greater his popularity. Here, writ large, is the 'bearer of truth', the leader destined to save the USA from itself. We do not have to be avid readers of Plato, de Tocqueville, Burke or even Weber to recognize the dangers of the

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

mob: this is the other side of the same romantic assumption about the 'wisdom of crowds' (Surowiecki, 2005; C.f. Tammet) and about collaborative leadership (Kagan, 2016).

Informed by Benjamin's critique, but seeking to go beyond it, we now extend Meindl et al's thesis by exploring three further ways that romanticism can characterize contemporary leadership theories, namely: (1) that leaders are a 'natural' (and therefore beyond criticism), rather than a socially-constructed phenomena, (2) that one consequence of this is that leadership is, in its purest form, manifest in 'expressive harmonious collectives' – unitary groups that are regularly required to regurgitate the 'faith', and (3), that another consequence is a perspective on followers that, ironically, romanticises them too, so the ambiguity of 'followers' is permanently displaced into the 'wisdom of the crowd'.

'Natural' Leaders

We begin by outlining how romanticised assumptions of a 'natural' leader often inform many influential contemporary theories. These assumptions, we suggest, can be traced back to Romanticism's preoccupation with rediscovering a primal natural world and with elevating the creative human imagination to a position from which it was thought possible to access nature's mystical but ultimately unknowable secrets. Furthermore, we argue that interpreting contemporary critiques of individualist leadership theory through a critical analysis of Romanticism can deepen understanding of the genesis and rootedness of such discourses of leadership: specifically, that they privilege and mystify the individual imagination and 'natural' context for leadership without allowing a basis for their critique. Romanticism asks us to accept and judge leadership without rupture.

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Romanticism: Privileging Nature and the Human Imagination

Romanticism rejected what it saw as the Enlightenment's scientific pretensions of explaining, and thus controlling nature. It did so by projecting a conceptualisation of nature as something greater than the human potential to capture and fully understand it because the whole was greater than the sum of the parts. Romantics viewed nature as 'the primary fact and force, and that human consciousness is nature's product, not its creator' (Ferber, 2010: 57). Inherent in such thinking is the notion that the Enlightenment had crossed an important line of hubris, and had assumed that the human being could know, dominate or rationalise away nature. Such a cornerstone of Romantic thinking has often led to the misconception that the Romantics were somehow opposed to science. On the contrary, they were fascinated by science, viewing the latest discoveries as windows into the secrets of nature (Holmes, 2009). Nature was not to be controlled or rationalised away but glimpsed at via the arts, politics or science.

For Peer Review

Bridging nature and the human being, for the Romantics, was the notion of an idealised human imagination: this was 'Romanticism's answer to the analytic powers of reason' (Murphy and Roberts, 2004: 4). Viewed historically, one can interpret Romantic investment in the power of the imagination as 'an image of non-alienated creation' (Eagleton, 1983: 19). Investment in the imagination was a way for people of the time to free themselves from the increasingly impersonal structures of organizational and social life arising from the Enlightenment. Human beings were viewed as created from and attached to the most meaningful force of them all, nature, and it was only via artistic practices of the human imagination that such a connection was possible (Berlin, 1965/2000: 98). The Romantics inserted into public discourse the notion that motives and ideals, discovered and explored via

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60

imaginative activity and struggle, were more important than measurable outcomes (Blanning, 2010).

Carlyle – the author of the Great Man theory of leadership - was especially enamoured of the German reaction to the French Enlightenment. He corresponded with Goethe – the archetypal Romantic novelist – and also translated into English the work of individuals such as Richeter. Indeed, Carlyle's (1841/1993) assaults even upon the acceptable face of the Enlightenment - utilitarianism - perfectly capture his antipathy for the 'mechanical mind' and his preference for the 'dynamic' nature of heroes, who alone, he argued, turn the wheel of history. Such a stance was well aligned with a 'Romantic [notion of] nature viewed aesthetically, and romantic art [as] the product of nature in the subject (the genius)' (Murphy and Roberts, 2004: 20). Yet it was this very synecdoche (imagination standing in as a part of nature) that was troubling for Benjamin, with such a posited relationship holding the potential for a diminution of the power of critique.

For Peer Review

Romanticised Leaders: Transcendent Nature in the Subject

This notion of a transcendent 'nature in the subject', we argue, continues to permeate much of the contemporary leadership literature, resulting in the routine diminution of critique, whereby leaders are held as beyond the realms of criticism by virtue of attaining leader-status. Little space is provided for considering the tensions and ruptures in such theorising of leadership in the influential perspectives we examine, although we also recognise the important contribution of some scholars to exposing the 'dark side' of populist and academic infatuation with leadership (e.g. Gabriel, 2012; Tourish, 2013; Vince and Mazen, 2014). To illustrate our position, we draw in particular on spiritual leadership (SL) as an exemplar of

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

romanticised theorising, whilst also suggesting that similar romanticised perspectives frequently characterise other contemporary theories such as transformational, authentic and servant leadership.

In recent years studies of SL have become increasingly common. Spirituality in relation to the organization is defined by Weinberg and Locander (2014: 391) as ‘a psychological characteristic encompassing meaningful life, wholeness, and interconnectedness with others’. SL is a theory, then, with grand, even total ambition and is a good example, in Benjamin’s terms, of the ‘intensification’ of imaginative appreciation without the rupture of critique, promising meaning above and beyond seemingly restrictive and rational organizational language. Indeed, Whittington et al (2005: 755-757) claim that spiritual leaders ought to offer a ‘pure motive’ for their actions and decisions, in addition to ‘influence without asserting authority’. This claim ascribes a status for leadership beyond the mundanity of everyday concerns of organizational power, instrumentalism and transactionalism – and a position (of purity) beyond critique. Transcendence is indeed a common theme within SL, with, for example, Weinberg and Locander (2014: 391) discussing ‘meaning and purpose through the transcendental experience of work’.

From a more critical perspective, Tourish and Tourish (2010: 218) argue that SL promotes a view of leadership as embodied in a leader, a view of ‘subjectivity which enables powerful elites to promote sectional interests while claiming that they embody universal truths and principles’. Tourish (2013) notes the tendency of SL studies to promote the intrusion and colonisation of people’s private lives via mystical language that claims a privileged status. He also argues that SL offers an exalted status to the individual leader-figure, who is said to hold

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

the 'ability to "enable" the worker's inner life, sense of meaningful work, and community' (ibid: 66). This in turn, Tourish argues, promotes a unitarist notion of purpose and work.

We seek to take this critique a step further by advancing the proposition that SL, in common with other theories of leadership that exalt the individual leader and promote a unitarist view of organization, can be more richly understood as a concept with deep romanticizing tendencies. These tendencies stretch beyond leader-attribution and into commitments that idealise organizational and social relations, claiming a position for itself beyond critique. Most obviously, SL, in addition to similar leadership theories, such as authentic and servant leadership, separate themselves from the purely religious and are instead expressed in largely non-theistic, albeit mystical terms. This is a commitment to a natural realm unknowable through conventional science, philosophy or theory development. Such a romanticised commitment, we hold, manifests in three dominant ways.

First, SL is concerned with a meaning that 'calls' leaders and followers to a greater purpose (Fry et al, 2005). This 'sense of calling' (Fry, 2003: 711) is a dominant signifier in SL, imprecisely defined other than as something that speaks to subjects from beyond, much in the same way as the Romantics hailed nature as the immanent force that invited artists to free themselves from the shackles of Enlightenment science. Transcendence appears as vital to the discourse, suggesting a purpose above and beyond enjoying one's job. Just as the Romantic painters and writers believed that anyone was able to tap into the transcendent powers of nature via an unleashing of the human imagination, access to the powers of spirituality are deemed open for anyone in organizational life – leaders and followers. Guidance is required, however, for the aspiring spiritual leader and follower: hence a recent emphasis on the importance of 'close and personal' mentoring in the cultivation of workplace spirituality,

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

with a leader-figure deemed important to guide followers, providing 'the requisite identity-building support necessary to nurture and sustain individual spirituality over time' (Weinberg and Locander, 2014: 392; Cf., Brinkmann, 2017).

A second manifestation of romanticised thinking in SL is its proclamations of faith. If one is to step beyond the rational confines of organizational systems, it appears that an additional investment needs to be made in a *faith* that cancels out more managerial notions of accountability or scientific burdens of evidence. Faith, and by extension SL, is posited as something that does not require validation in an external referent (science, the political, or even aesthetic criticism): 'Faith is exactly the thing that renders [its] strict proof unnecessary' (Mitroff and Denton, 1999: 89). SL writers particularly introduce faith in relation to an organization or leader's vision and the motivation of followers to abide by such a vision. An exemplar of such thinking, Fry (2003) and Fry et al (2005) instrumentalise faith as that supplement which ties workers in an irrational sense to their work and, crucially, improves productivity, driving them to 'do what it takes' in the service of SL:

> Doing what it takes through faith in a clear, compelling vision produces a sense of calling—that part of spiritual survival that gives one a sense of making a difference and therefore that one's life has meaning. Vision, hope/faith adds belief, conviction, trust, and action for performance of the work to achieve the vision…People who have hope/faith in the organization's vision and who experience calling and membership will do what it takes in pursuit of the vision to continuously improve and be more productive (Fry et al, 2005: 839).

For Peer Review

One might interpret such passages as a somewhat knowing and even cynical act of romanticising: the content, the 'meaning' of the spiritual object is less significant than its form, its 'sense', and the role that form plays in acquiring outcomes of hard work towards meeting organizational objectives.

Third, and most importantly, SL offers a closed, self-referential system, akin to the totalistic and autonomous conception of nature within Romanticism. We are informed that a 'growing chorus of scholarly voices is arguing that spirituality is necessary in organizations' (Benefiel, 2005: 724), implying an inevitable momentum for SL that is beyond the control of any individual or scientific logic: SL is *necessary*. Nowhere is such necessity more advanced in SL than in the notion of unitary, ideologically neutral and permanent values. Fry (2003: 712) posits 'patience, kindness, lack of envy, forgiveness, humility, selflessness, self-control, trust, loyalty, and truthfulness' as key values for the practice of SL. The author encapsulates these values in the form of 'altruistic love', which he defines as 'a sense of wholeness, harmony, and well-being produced through care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others' (ibid: 714); or, in the words of Chen et al (2012: 893), 'complete, harmonious, and happy feelings through care and appreciation for self and others'. Altruistic love and the other values of SL are constructed as all-encompassing ('whole', 'complete'), external to power relations ('harmonious', 'happy') or even in fact beyond any specific philosophical, political or scientific anchor. One may speculate or interpret such values as belonging to Christianity, new-age spirituality (Swan, 2010) or capitalist ideology, but we are invited by the authors to view them as a-historical and transcendent: as connected via the human imagination to a permanent, ultimately unknowable and autonomous nature. Such ideas and practices, in Benjamin's (1996) terms, are problematically positioned beyond critique, as the only

For Peer Review

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60

qualification for 'good' SL is simply surrendering oneself to an intensification of the transcendent.

A sense of immanence and the closing down of the potential for critique through appeal to a universal and transcendent truth is a dominant feature of several other influential leadership theories. 'Servant leaders' are presented as possessing 'moral authority…They follow truth. They follow natural law. They follow principles. They follow a common, agreed-upon vision. They share values. They grow to trust one another. Moral authority is mutually developed and shared' (Greenleaf, 2002: 5). Ethics are hereby reduced to a timeless, yet mystical sense of purpose possessed by certain privileged leaders. Greenleaf thus subverts the 'common-sense understanding of the word [servant], as someone who works in a menial position keeping the home of someone else clean, tidy and well-functioning', instead positing a view of servant leaders as the 'superior, exalted few from which those who serve (what is argued to be) the [vague] common good are drawn' (Ford and Harding, 2015: 17).

A similar sense of universality and immanent closure is offered in authentic leadership theory. Ethics seem central to the positioning of authentic leadership, yet what researchers in this area constitute as the ethical remains unspecified. Smolović Jones and Grint (2013) have argued that, in place of specific ethical postulations, one finds a series of vague affirmations that leaders ought to display a 'high' (Gardner et al, 2009; Walumbwa et al, 2008) or 'positive' (Walumbwa et al. 2008) standard of ethics. Avolio et al (2004: 805), for example, refer to 'honesty' and 'integrity' as constituting the 'high' moral principles possessed by authentic leaders. Meanwhile, May et al (2003) offer 'courage' as an important value and behavioural trait. Again, such values are posited as immanent and universal, the suggestion being that they lie beyond the scope of philosophical or political critique.

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

This discussion has illustrated how romanticism is frequently reproduced in contemporary leadership studies through a focus on 'natural leaders' whose status cannot be criticised from within its positive, transcendental boundaries. But it is not only contemporary leader-centred leadership theories that reproduce romanticism. Currently influential post-heroic theories, often characterised by more collective approaches, can also succumb to similar romanticising tendencies.

Expressive Harmonious Collectives

This section begins by exploring the Romantic notion of expression and its location in harmonious collectives. We then apply these insights to contemporary accounts of collective leadership, arguing that such constructions seem to be under-written by two romanticised commitments:

- Harmonious leadership over divisive power: a view of leadership that seeks to neutralize rupturing power in favour of collective work, portrayed as seeking harmonious dialogue and consensus.
- 'Expressive leadering': we posit expressive leadering as constituting a central commitment to self-expression within notions of collective leadership. Such expressive leadering, we argue, 'positivises' leadership as object and practice to the extent that it excludes the possibility for critical engagement, and privileges immanent intensification (Benjamin, 1996). It can also act as a cosmetic concealment that draws on the alluring language of leadership to present the unwanted, the mundane and the unpleasant in emancipatory terms.

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

The tendency within both commitments, we argue, is to approach collective leadership as of value beyond critique.

Expressive Collectivism in Romanticism

One of the chief curiosities of the Romantics is that the commitment to accessing nature via the human imagination could be interpreted as a particularly individualistic pursuit and yet perhaps more than most intellectual and artistic movements, the Romantics displayed an unusually strong affinity for comradeship and solidarity. There was a sense within Romanticism of 'democratizing the creative spirit' (Ferber, 2010: 39). We explore this tendency to romanticise collectives as *expressive*. A Romantic notion of expressive collectives is closely linked to the kind of intense 'collective individuality' (Murphy and Roberts, 2004: 45) that was a hallmark of artistic communities and the political philosophy of the era. Romantics tended to find common bonds of solidarity around the notion of an 'intuitive feeling of kinship with the natural world' and the sense of shared commitment to allowing the human imagination free reign (Ferber, 2010: 55). This was no superficial, hedonistic comradeship, however, but a collective bond based on the commitment that artists would support other artists in attaining and pursuing their individual ideals (Hay, 2011).

For Peer Review

The Romantics inserted into public discourse the notion that motives and ideals, discovered and explored via imaginative activity and struggle, were more important than outcomes (Riasanovsky, 1995). Crucial for the Romantics was idealism, of discovering a meaning greater than the human self, 'the necessity of fighting for your beliefs to the last breath of your body' (Berlin, 1965/2000: 8). This is the image savoured by the Romantics of the Antigone-like subject prepared to sacrifice all in the name of an ideal. As nature itself was

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

ultimately approached by Romantics as incapable of final capture, so also the human ideal could only strive towards a satisfaction that could never be fulfilled, a 'view of human life as incessant striving towards an unattainable ideal' (Riasanovsky, 1995: 82).

For Murphy and Roberts (2004: 43), Romanticism witnessed the birth of the 'expressive subject', a subject that evolved through to modernity and post-modernity. The Enlightenment contributed to the notion of a knowable and manipulable subject of science (Foucault, 1991). Romanticism preferred a conceptualisation of the subject 'not defined in terms of rational control but in terms of the capacity for self-articulation. This places a premium on individuation, authenticity and originality, in the double sense of reconnection with the living source and uniqueness' (Murphy and Roberts, 2004: 44). One sees in Romanticism early traces of the self-development and therapeutic cultures movements (Cederström and Spicer, 2015; Smolović Jones et al, 2015; Swan, 2010). Such an emphasis places value on individual wellbeing, on finding physical and emotional health through both private and professional work, blurring the distinctions between workplace, private realm and indeed an ultimately unknowable but ubiquitous 'nature'.

For Peer Review

Collectivism, then, can be individualised via recourse to a natural and universal harmony and synchronicity, only accessible via free self-expression. It is this notion of expressive collectivism, we argue, that is particularly prominent as a discourse within collective accounts of leadership but is deemed problematic as its romanticising tendencies tend to close down avenues for critique in favour of intense expressions of harmony (Benjamin, 1996). Barker (2002: 87), for example, highlights the limitations of what he refers to as 'the industrial paradigm of leadership' (i.e. Enlightenment-informed trait or behavioural theories). Barker's critique is rooted in a view of social goals as inherently complex (see also Grint,

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

2005; Heifetz, 1994). For Barker, conventional approaches to leadership work when the goals are more clear-cut: increased profit, market share, return on investment etc. If the goal is more contested or amorphous, concerned, for example, with social development, education, freedom or some other end-value, success is no longer as straightforward to capture. Knowing and measuring is here framed as 'industrial', whereas a collective sense of leadership is viewed as less certain. If collective leadership is beyond the 'industrial', then perhaps it should be interpreted as closer to a more natural, expressive sense of the human and collective humanity?

'Harmonious Leadership' over 'Divisive Power'

This section argues that a key dimension of the romanticising of collective leadership is the prioritization of consensus and harmony over power and conflict. More specifically, we highlight the tendency within collective accounts of leadership to emphasise individual expression within collective boundaries (organizations or smaller groups), and the 'natural' synergies that are made possible when expressive individuals engage in open dialogue free from conflict, self-interest and bad faith. Key in such a romanticised account, we suggest, is the vague, even mystical portrayal of leadership. This very vagueness, combined with an affiliation with 'positive' emotions and states (Collinson, 2012), such as 'synergy', 'consensus' and 'hope', offers a view of leadership as immanently accessible, harmonious and universal, leaving little space for the 'rupture' of criticism (Benjamin, 1996).

Chrislip and Larson's (1994) 'collaborative leadership' is a good example of expressive collectivism at work. Focusing explicitly on complex problems facing communities, the authors offer a comprehensive framework for collaboration. Yet the text is replete with the

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

expressive collectivism that we suggest is a defining feature of romanticised leadership. The authors describe their 'collaborative premise' as 'a belief that if you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information, they will create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the organization or community' (p.14). Underlying this statement is a(n)(extra-rational) 'belief' that collaboration represents a kind of natural state of organization, a 'ground zero', whereby the simple act of bringing people together with 'good' information is sufficient to unleash 'authenticity' (undefined). Chrislip and Larson argue that, if one commits wholeheartedly to processes of collaboration, then new and unforeseen possibilities will emerge.

For Chrislip and Larson, inclusivity (p.75), credibility and openness (pp.79-80), trust (p.83), empowerment and inspiration (p.117) within a collaborative process will yield desired results for a community. Some of these characteristics are more tangible than others: it is not always clear what is meant by 'empowerment' or 'inspiration' beyond a subjective feeling that most of us know them when we experience them. Nevertheless, a language of inevitability lingers in the text, as if through collaborating, people are part of a natural and immanent force. The process of collaboration is thus portrayed as organic, as 'natural', as what people do when unnatural obstacles and interests are removed. Throughout the text, however, the status of leadership is unclear. Leadership seems to equate to participating, albeit with an added sense of 'hope', 'inspiration' and 'authenticity'. As in the case of individual-focused theories, leadership appears to serve the function of mystifying or sugar-coating a process that the authors acknowledge can be somewhat gruelling.

The status of leadership seems equally vague in other influential theories of collective leadership. Pearce and Conger's (2003: 1) 'shared leadership' is defined as 'a dynamic,

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

interactive process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organization goals or both.' While Pearce and Sims (2000) provide detailed propositions concerning antecedents to shared leadership, the substantive content of leadership remains vague. Pearce and Conger (2003) sketch a picture of leadership as concerned with influencing 'vertically' and 'horizontally', 'more than just downward influence on subordinates' (p.1). They later amalgamate influence with knowledge and decision-making. Leadership is characterised as something exercised by people who may know more than the 'formal leader' (p.2) and will therefore be better at making decisions within this sphere of knowledge, provided, of course, they can influence those around them. Detail is lacking, however: leadership seems to enjoy the status of an assumed but vague good, with the right to leadership expression gained via the gateways of knowledge and influence.

Notions of power (either as productive or regressive) are largely absent from accounts of collective leadership. Rather than speak in terms of power, authors prefer to emphasise the role of dialogue and communication as transcendent of power. The work of Drath and colleagues on 'connected leadership' (Drath, 2003) and the DAC (direction, alignment and commitment) framework of collective leadership (Drath et al, 2008) exemplifies this conceptual absence of power. These ideas are rooted in a notion that complex problems require alternative approaches to leadership. Yet power and asymmetry are absent in both accounts. In its place, Drath (2003) speaks of 'shared sense-making', 'connection' and 'navigation' (pp.6-7). The task of leadership is thus framed as sensitivity to the emergence of processes, issues and relationships, with an emphasis on dialogue.

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Drath's later work (Drath et al, 2008) is more explicit in offering 'belief' in the absence of alternative signifiers, such as 'power', 'position', 'conflict' etc., 'such as the belief that a shared goal is essential to team effectiveness'; 'beliefs about the characteristics and behaviours of individuals that enhance or hinder the production of DAC'; and 'beliefs about the practices that produce DAC, such as the belief that it is a duty to obey the legal commands of a superior officer, the belief that decisions affecting everyone should be made by consensus, or the belief that strategy should be set by top managers' (p.644). In the absence of an engagement with power and inequity, DAC asks for 'personal commitment that survives disagreement, conflict, and confusion' (p.648). Such romantic support for 'the party line' would not look out of place in Orwell's *1984* or totalitarian societies.

Returning to Chrislip and Larson's (1994) account of collaborative leadership, one finds that these authors emphasise 'inclusive' and 'consensual' leadership, a 'shift from hostility to civility, from advocacy to engagement, from confrontation to conversation, from debate to dialogue, and from separation to community' (p.4). Issues of power and conflict are thereby relegated to an undesirable contradistinction to a range of alternative, more expressive and harmonious signifiers. Power and conflict are to be *overcome* through intensive engagement, rather than identified and reflected upon, through individual acts of expression within a collective.

The foregoing romanticised accounts primarily emphasise harmony in collective leadership. No levers are offered through which one might critically engage with romanticised accounts of collective leadership outside the appreciative limits offered. Exploitative, prejudicial or oppressive practices are not accounted for within the romanticised category of 'leadership': such behaviour is simply regarded as not-leadership.

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Expressive Leadering

The premium placed upon critique-free expression within collective accounts of leadership perhaps reaches an apex in the tendency of such studies to marginalise, or even entirely eradicate, the figure of the follower. We refer to the process of transferring heroic properties previously associated with individual leaders to the collective as one of 'expressive leadering': the collective of individuals becomes the unit of leadership agency to such an extent that the category of 'follower' becomes redundant. The ability to express oneself, held as the organizational ideal within romanticised perspectives, seems to require a category more prestigious than 'follower', with its associations of subservience (Ford and Harding, 2015).

Gronn (2002) argues that distributed leadership should 'dispense with the category of followership' (p.427) and think of leadership as 'evident in the interaction of many leaders' (p.420). He attempts to circumnavigate power imbalances by emphasising 'conjoint agency' (p.431) between leaders. For Gronn, the potential value of distributed leadership lies in the force offered to 'concertive action', where the collective effect of the relationships between leaders are held as more powerful than the sum of their individual expertise. Ford and Harding (2015) argue that this is a utopian account of collective leadership that fails to recognise the necessity of followers in any configuration of leadership: i.e. one cannot lead if no one will follow. Abolishing the category of followers within distributed leadership means, according to Ford and Harding, that a climate of uncritical positivity is allowed to dominate, and the tendency for research in this area to focus on top teams might also help to explain this (Chreim, 2015).

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Expressive leadering also manifests as a transference of individualised, heroic qualities onto collective processes. The role of processes within a romanticised view of collective leadership is to provide an appropriate forum where people can express themselves freely. Chrislip and Larson (1994)'s collaborative leadership does not challenge the underlying, expressive assumption of transformational leadership, arguing instead that participants in collaborative leadership are required to demonstrate 'transforming leadership' through a preoccupation with process (p.146). There is little room for followers in such a system.

Rather than privileging leaders over followers (or vice versa), Raelin's notion of 'leaderful' practice, or leadership-as-practice (L-A-P) (2003; 2011; 2014, 2016) seeks to transcend the issue by 'reframing' (2014: 2) the unit of analysis of leadership as emergent and continuous collaborative practice between people, 'the activity of all those who are engaged' (Raelin, 2014: 4). Consequently, 'follower' becomes a problematic category because organizational participants think of being a follower in subaltern terms. Instead, L-A-P is conceptualised as something abiding by 'the norms of the democratic tradition' (Raelin, 2011: 198). By 'democratic tradition', Raelin means participatory and deliberative practices. His emphasis is thus on establishing the conditions necessary for free expression, for 'mutual control' (2011: 200), 'mutual adjustment, shared sense-making, dialogue, and collaborative learning' (2011: 202). Agency, for Raelin, thus resides in 'intersubjective collaborative process' (2011: 199).

Raelin offers a normative view of how leadership ought to be enacted, rather than a means for researching specific relationships and practices. Thus, leadership holds an inherently positive connotation associated with certain democratic norms of equality and freedom to participate. Practice that strays outside these boundaries of freedom to participate is not to be thought of as leadership at all. This, of course, assumes that democracy is itself free of political

For Peer Review

1
2
3 inequalities; the other side of the leadership coin, which insists that only (undefined) 'moral' or 'ethical' leadership is 'real leadership'; hence the infamous Hitler Problem (see Ciulla, 2004). From this perspective leadership comprises only leaders (i.e. it is 'leaderful').

Raelin presents a view of leadership as associated with more egalitarian practices and relationships. He also specifies certain tests to determine what does or does not qualify as leadership. This is problematic because leaderful practice does not allow for the possibility of leadership manifesting in paradoxical, conflictual or contradictory terms. It is also a perspective where process is sovereign. This view of leadership seems to romanticise process above other valid considerations and concerns. Missing from leaderful practice and L-A-P is the possibility of critical rupture, a consideration that leaders, or followers, might distort or co-opt 'leaderful' language or practice in order to strengthen their material positioning within an organization; make unpleasant or oppressive practices seem more palatable; or as a means of manipulating the emotions of others concerning work. Leadership as communities of free self-expression are held as an ultimate good. In this sense the collective community replaces the individual leader, the spirit-realm or nature, as the site of romantic elevation. But, as Leonard's (2010) empirical study of senior public sector managers demonstrates, even collectives charged with leading change in their own organizations have a tendency to displace responsibility elsewhere. When asked to 'share leadership', collectives can struggle to reach a consensus that facilitates effective decision making.

Romanticising Followers

Some writers have observed that leadership romanticism reinforces the 'subordination of followership' (Uhl-Bien and Pillai, 2007: 187). Alternatively, as the foregoing section

For Peer Review

argued, collective leadership theories often propose the complete eradication of the notion of followership based on romanticised conceptions of collective leadership. In this final section we suggest that the concept of followership remains important, but we also highlight how conceptions of followers, their agency and oppositional practices can equally be characterised by romanticising tendencies: a theme neglected in Meindl et al's (1985) paper. [3]

In his later work Meindl (1995) (and we recognise that Meindl and colleagues wrote a number of papers on leadership that have not been discussed here) seeks to escape the confines of romanticism by developing a framework for studying leadership from the perspective of followers. He proposes that researchers should no longer be concerned at all with leaders, and should concentrate on followers' views of leaders, at both an individual and group level. Such processes in Meindl's model inform a construction of what good leadership ought to look like, against which leaders are judged and follower responses to leaders are shaped.

In doing so, however, Meindl seems to fall into his own trap of romanticism. If leadership should be approached as a matter of follower attribution, then is one romance simply being replaced with another case of romantic infatuation? By eschewing *any* consideration of leaders in favour of an exclusive focus on followers, Meindl seems to invert, and then reproduce, a dichotomy between leaders and followers. In addition, although Meindl claims to be subverting the dominant focus of leadership studies, the individual leader remains at the core of Meindl's (1995) followership model. It is leaders who are supposed to preoccupy the thinking of Meindl's followers: the latter remain enamoured by their (ideal) leaders. Little scope is allowed for a conception of leadership that challenges these boundaries and so we

[3] It is also important to recall that Romanticism as a movement was fundamentally about protest and resistance, concerned to critique that which had been lost in the Enlightenment (Lowy and Sayre 2001).

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

remain trapped within the walls of leader-centrism. Equally neglected in Meindl's paper is any detailed consideration of follower agency and dissent.

Research in organization studies demonstrates that (followers'/employees') oppositional practices can take numerous forms (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999), including strikes, 'working to rule', output restriction, 'working the system', 'whistleblowing' and sabotage (Edwards et al., 1995). In exceptional cases, subordinates may even (seek to) depose leaders (Mole, 2004), and social anthropologists have long noted the ability of subordinates to organize 'reverse dominance hierarchies' to discipline or displace unpopular leaders (Boehm, 1993). Through oppositional practices followers can try to change and improve their situation. They can express discontent, exercise a degree of control over work processes and/or construct alternative, more positive identities to those prescribed by organizations. In leadership studies it is only relatively recently that the analytical significance of resistance has been acknowledged (Banks, 2008; Zoller and Fairhurst 2007). Whilst it is important to recognise the importance of opposition and dissent in organizational leadership dynamics, we also argue that such conceptualisations of resistance need to avoid romanticised thinking.

One of the ways that romanticism can characterize the study of resistance is in under-estimating the barriers to follower dissent. For example, Chaleff (2009, 2015) advocates that 'courageous' followers need to voice 'intelligent disobedience' and constructive criticism, particularly when they believe that leaders are not acting in the best interests of the organization. Yet, such recommendations tend to underestimate the costs and overestimate the possibilities of explicit dissent in organizations. For example, studies of whistle blowing suggest that followers who express their concerns in precisely the way advocated by Chaleff need to recognise that their actions might be career-damaging and may even result in being

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

fired (Barron, Crawley, & Paulina, 2003; Miceli & Near, 2002). For many employees, the prospect of being disciplined for expressing dissent and of having to find another job can be daunting. The ensuing material (salary) and symbolic (erosion of autonomy and self-respect) insecurities can significantly limit overt dissent. By underestimating the hierarchical nature of power asymmetries, post-heroic perspectives may replace the privileging of leaders with the romanticism of 'heroic followers'.

Resistance romanticism can also occur in cases where radical researchers automatically attribute subversive or even revolutionary motives or outcomes to follower/employee dissent, for example when referring to workers as 'class warriors' (e.g. Beynon, 1980, Nichols and Beynon, 1977). A small number of writers have questioned this tendency to romanticise resistance. Kondo (1990, p. 224) cautions against any tendency automatically to impute a subversive or emancipatory motive or outcome to resistance. She contends that there is no such thing as an entirely 'authentic' or 'pristine space of resistance' or of a 'true resister': a position Benjamin would hold as distinctly unromantic. Observing that people simultaneously 'consent, cope, and resist at different levels of consciousness at a single point in time', Kondo questions the idealisation of the term 'resistance'.

For Peer Review

Other researchers have sought to de-romanticise resistance by pointing to its potentially paradoxical processes and outcomes (e.g. Ashcraft, 2005 Fleming and Spicer, 2003). They suggest that apparently oppositional practices may unintentionally reinforce the very conditions of power and control that stimulated resistance in the first place. Their focus on the consequences of employee resistance helps to avoid overly romanticised interpretations

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

that celebrate, rather than critically examine, follower opposition.[4] These studies also reveal how opposition can itself embody elements of domination. For example, Cockburn (1983) showed how the oppositional practices of male-dominated trade unions in the UK printing industry excluded women and/or segregated them into subordinated work. Hence, in this case male workers' organized resistance to management had the effect of reinforcing women's subordination.

In sum, we propose that the leadership romanticism thesis needs to be extended to recognise how follower agency and resistance can also be subject to romanticised interpretations. This is not to dismiss the theoretical and empirical importance of resistance in organizational leadership dynamics, but rather to recognise that romanticised thinking can constrain the analysis of follower agency and opposition, just as it can in the case of individual and collective leadership theories.

For Peer Review

Conclusion

This paper has sought to re-assert the critical value of the romance of leadership thesis, and to extend its framework for contemporary leadership studies. In so doing it has also been concerned to contribute to more critical readings of leadership dynamics (e.g. Alvesson and Spicer, 2012, Tourish, 2013). Arguing that romanticism stretches beyond leader attribution, the paper has suggested that the implications of romanticised thinking continue to have considerable significance for contemporary theorising on leadership and followership. In the post-Meindl era, many scholars remain fixated by a romanticised view of leadership, ignoring

[4] These arguments in turn raise important questions about the meaning of resistance, about who resists, how, why and when they do so, what strategies inform their practices, and what outcomes ensue.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

the challenge of the romanticism critique or side-stepping its critical emphasis in ways that, ironically, seem to romanticise romanticism. As a result, leadership research continues to be characterised by romanticising tendencies in relation, not only to leaders, but also to followers and their potential for resistance. Like leadership, followership is an important area where romanticism can emerge and thus a significant theme where the original thesis can be extended.

We therefore propose that the romance of leadership thesis has more far-reaching implications for contemporary leadership studies than is often recognised. Romanticised leadership can be thought of as a tendency and discourse of deeper significance than that previously related to a particular view of leader attribution. While leader attribution foregrounds some of the snares of romanticised thinking, it does not explore the deeper aesthetic, philosophical and historical roots of such thinking. We have made the case that leader attribution can be connected to a stream of romantic thought that 'naturalises': an all-powerful nature is made accessible via a privileged human imagination. Romanticised leadership stretches further, however, into accounts of collective leadership that place a premium on freedom of individual expression, on harmony over power and on the process of expressive leadering, whereby all that is deemed positive in organizations is labelled leadership and all that is bad is excluded as irrelevant. Informed by the insights of Benjamin (1996) into Romantic criticism, our discussion has revealed how contemporary leadership theories in both their individual and collective forms often stay faithful to an immanent and intense form of appreciation, reproducing romanticising themes and bypassing critique.

Meindl et al (1985) were concerned to highlight 'the prominence of the concept of leadership in our collective consciousness'. We have sought to extend this analysis to explore the

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

prominence of *Romanticism* in a much larger number of perspectives within leadership studies, as well as within the work of Meindl himself. Although our focus here has been on the history of romantic discourse and its applicability to leadership scholarship, we might pause to reflect on *why* such romanticism is equally at play in contemporary leadership writing as it was in the work of 18th century poets, artists and writers. Although an exhaustive analysis is beyond the remit of this paper, we might reflect that the forms of alienation felt by the Romantics to the perceived coldness of Enlightenment reason could be said to have become yet more pronounced in contemporary societies.

As voting publics express anger towards what they view as distant, impersonal, technocratic and corrupt power ruling over them (in the European Union, in the USA, and other transnational institutions, international trade deals, and so on), they are turning to politicians and parties of the extreme right, who promise a return to mythical golden eras (Ford and Goodwin, 2014; Frank, 2012; McGowan, 2013). In this turbulent climate it is perhaps to be expected that some leadership scholars, employed in increasingly instrumentally-focused institutions, themselves search beyond the mundane of more conventional organizational theory into the more mystical edges of leadership. Many scholars seem so invested in unfolding the possibilities of leadership, that they neglect or avoid the ruptures, tensions and contradictions in the practices and theories of leadership. In some cases, we note the material investment many scholars hold in the concept of leadership, particularly in relation to their consultancy and leadership development activities. Adopting the identity and practices of the critic, as Benjamin was only too aware, may not prove to be as materially lucrative. Nevertheless, we argue that, rather than reproducing these romanticising tendencies in leadership research and writing, there is a pressing need for scholars to revisit and embrace the critical roots and implications of the romanticism thesis.

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Bearing in mind the continuing allure of romantic thinking in leadership theory and practice, our broader interpretation of romanticism carries the potential, we argue, to open up valuable new directions for leadership studies. This requires leadership scholars to adopt the stance of the aesthetic and cultural critic, approaching the task of leadership criticism by opening up and addressing points of rupture, tension, paradox and contradiction. This more critical stance therefore involves embracing the generative possibilities inherent in the rupturing of leadership romanticism. We conclude by providing various possible directions for such de-romanticised critical engagement.

There is now a growing literature on leadership hubris and its relationship to the enactment of power (Claxton et al, 2015). Building on this work, further research could examine the processes through which power and identity are socially constructed and manufactured, for example, through self- romanticism and self-mythologizing. The narcissistic dynamics of self-romanticism would seem to be highly relevant to the study of both leadership and followership. Critical research could also explore how the language and discourses of leadership may reflect and reinforce romanticism. Further research could ask what happens in the post-romantic phase, when followers become disenchanted with the leaders they previously placed on a pedestal. What are the conditions, processes and consequences of follower disillusionment? Future research could also examine the gendered dynamics through which men may be especially prone to elevate other men as leaders, and to try to reinforce male leaders' power and authority, whilst securing themselves through forms of masculine 'prestige by association'.

Finally, and underpinning many of the foregoing questions, is the under-explored relationship between romanticism and the search for heroes. The notion of the hero has a long *his*-tory

For Peer Review

(sic) in human thought (e.g. Hook, 1943). It has had an enduring influence in leadership theory and practice, particularly through the so-called 'great man' theory (Carlyle, 1841/1993, Spector, 2016), and it continues to be influential in popular leadership publications (e.g. Cohen, 2010; Sebag Montefiore, 2009, 2012). Interest in leaders as heroes is particularly extensive in the US (e.g. Allison and Goethals, 2011, Allison, Goethals and Kramer 2017), where this way of thinking resonates strongly with the dominant culture of individualism. We argue that more research from a critical perspective on the relationship between romanticism and heroism could raise important issues, for example, about gender and masculinity (Boon, 2005), as well as race and ethnicity (Liu and Baker, 2016). It could also surface important questions about romanticism and death, with recent research suggesting that followers' ascriptions of charisma tend to increase after a leader dies (Steffens et al, 2016). In sum, further research could critically examine the seductive image of the hero and its various inter-relationships with the continued allure of romanticism in leadership studies.

It is our case that romanticising leadership can be equal parts bewitching, disingenuous and harmful. Romanticising leadership is bewitching because it offers a lexical account of leadership drenched with imprecise mystique. It can be disingenuous and harmful by offering a self-fulfilling account of leadership where critique is excluded from its logic. Romanticising leadership asks that we engage with leadership as an exceptional case, a privileged unit of thought that seeks to hold a transcendent position above the fray of political or historical critique. Engagement is only possible in the here-and-now of the theory, in its 'natural' state. But this is just a romanticised mirror image of an ideology that promises salvation in the next world – providing we comply in this one. In the leadership romance, salvation is promised either by an individual hero or a collective hero in this world, – but it is still a hero and we

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

should not look beyond this world just in case we recognise that we have been here, waiting for, and failed by, heroes, in the past. When are we going to stop looking for heroes and recognize that, in the words of the Hopi Indians, 'we are the ones we have been waiting for', warts and all?

References

Allison, S. and Goethals, G (2011) *Heroes: What they do and why we need them.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Allison S, Goethals G and Kramer R (eds) (2017) *Handbook of heroism and heroic leadership*. New York: Routledge.

Alvesson M and Spicer A (2012) Critical leadership studies: the case for critical performativity. *Human Relations* 65 (3): 367-390.

Ashcraft K (2005) Resistance through consent? Occupational identity, organizational form, and the maintenance of masculinity among commercial airline pilots. *Management Communications Quarterly*, 19(1): 67-91.

Avolio B, Gardner W, Walumbwa F, Luthans F and May D (2004) Unlocking the mask: a look at the process by which authentic leaders impact follower attitudes and behaviours. *The Leadership Quarterly* 15(6): 801-823.

Barker R (2002) *On the nature of leadership.* Lanham, Maryland: University of America Press.

Benefiel M (2005) The second half of the journey: spiritual leadership for organizational transformation. *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (5): 723-747.

Benjamin W (1996) *Selected writings volume 1, 1913-1926*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Berlin I (1965/2000) *The roots of romanticism*. London: Random House.

Beynon, H. (1980) *Working for Ford.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Blanning T (2010) *The romantic revolution*. London: Phoenix.
Boehm, C. (1993) 'Egalitarian Behaviour and Reverse Dominance Hierarchy' *Current Anthropology* 34 (3): 227-254.

Boon, K (2005) Heroes, metanarratives, and the paradox of masculinity in contemporary western culture. *The Journal of Men's studies,* 13(3): 301-312.

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Bligh M and Schyns B (2007) The romance lives on: Contemporary issues surrounding the romance of leadership. *Leadership* 3(3): 343-360.

Brinkmann, S. (2017) *Stand Firm: Resisting the Self-Improvement Craze* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Carlyle T (1841/1993) *On heroes, hero-worship and the heroic in history.* Oxford: University of California Press.

Cederström C and Spicer A (2015) *The wellness syndrome. Cambridge: Polity Press*.

Chaleff, I (2015) *Intelligent disobedience.* Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Chaleff, I (2009) *The courageous follower, 3rd ed.* Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Chen C and Li C (2012) Assessing the spiritual leadership effectiveness: the contribution of follower's self-concept and preliminary tests for moderation of culture and managerial position. *The Leadership Quarterly* 24 (1): 240-255.

Chen C, Yang C and Li C (2012) Spiritual leadership, follower mediators and organizational outcomes: evidence from three industries across two major Chinese societies. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 42 (4): 890-938.

Chreim, S. (2015) 'The (non)distribution of leadership roles: Considering leadership practices and configurations' *Human Relations* 68: 517-43.

Chrislip D and Larson C (1994) *Collaborative leadership: how citizens and civic leaders can make a difference*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Claxton, G, Owen D and Sadler-Smith, E (2015) Hubris in leadership: A peril of unbridled intuition? *Leadership* 11 (1): 57-78.

Collinson D (2012) Prozac leadership and the limits of positive thinking. *Leadership* 8 (2): 87-107.

Cohen, W. (2010) Heroic Leadership: Leading with Integrity and Honour, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ciulla, J. (2004) *Ethics: The Heart of Leadership* (Westport, CT: Praeger Press)

Drath W (2003) Leading together: complex challenges require a new approach. *Leadership in Action* 23 (1): 3-7.

Drath W, McCauley C, Palus C, Van Velsor E, O'Connor P and McGuire J (2008) Direction, alignment, commitment: toward a more integrative ontology of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly* 19 (6): 635-653.

Eagleton T (1983) *Literary theory: an introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.

For Peer Review

Fairhurst G (2009) Considering context in discursive leadership research. *Human Relations,* 62(11): 1607-1633.

Ferber M (2010) *Romanticism: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fitzpatrick M (1999) Enlightenment. In McCalman I (ed) *An Oxford companion to the romantic age*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fleming P & Spicer A (2003) Working at a cynical distance: Implications for power, subjectivity and resistance. *Organization*, 10(1): 157-179.

Ford J and Harding N (2007) Move over management: we are all leaders now? *Management Learning* 38(5):475-493.

Ford J and Harding N (2015) Followers in leadership theory: fiction, fantasy and illusion. *Leadership* online first: 1-22.

Ford R and Goodwin M (2014) *Revolt on the right: Explaining support for the radical right in Britain*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Foucault M (1991) What is Enlightenment? In Rabinow P (ed) *The Foucault reader*: 32-50. New York: Pantheon.

Frank T (2012) *Pity the billionaire: The unlikely comeback of the American right*. London: Vintage.

Fry L (2003) Toward a theory of spiritual leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly* 14 (6): 693-727.

Fry L, Vitucci S and Cedillo M (2005) Spiritual leadership and army transformation: theory, measurement and establishing a baseline. *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (5): 835-862.

Gabriel Y (2012) Organizations in a state of darkness: Towards a theory of organizational miasma. *Organization Studies* 33 (9): 1137-1152.

Gagnon S and Collinson D (2014) Rethinking global leadership development programmes: the interrelated significance of context and identity. *Organization Studies* 35(5):645-670.

Gardner W, Fischer D and Hunt J (2009) Emotional labor and leadership: a threat to authenticity? *The Leadership Quarterly* 20 (3): 466-482.

Giacalone R and Jurkiewicz C (2003) The science of workplace spirituality. In Giacalone R and Jurkiewicz C (eds) *Handbook of workplace spirituality and organizational performance*. Armonk, New York: ME Sharpe.

Greenleaf R (1977) *Servant leadership*. New Jersey: Paulist Press.

Grint K (2005) Problems, problems, problems: the social construction of ‘leadership’. *Human Relations* 58(11):1467-1494.

For Peer Review

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Gronn P (2002) Distributed leadership as a unit of analysis. *The Leadership Quarterly* 13 (4): 423-451.

Hay D (2010) *Young romantics: the Shelleys, Byron and other tangled lives*. London: Bloomsbury.

Heifetz R (1994) Leadership without easy answers. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Herder, J.G. (1791) *Ideas for a philosophy of the history of mankind* (translated by Barnard, F.M. in *J.G. Herder* on *Social and political culture* (1969) Cambridge University Press.

Hibbert C (1982) *The French revolution*. London: Penguin.

Holmes R (2009) *the Age of wonder: How the romantic generation discovered the beauty and terror of science*. London: Harper Press.

Hook, S. (1943) *The Hero in history.* London: Secker & Warburg.

Jeffries S (2016) *Grand Hotel Abyss: The Lives of the Frankfurt School*. London: Verso.

Jepson D (2009) Studying leadership at cross-country level. *Leadership* 5(1): 61-80.

Kagan, R. (2016) This is how fascism comes to America. *Washington Post* 17 May.

Kempster S and Carroll B (eds) (2016) *Responsible leadership: realism and romanticism.* London: Routledge.

Leonard, P. (2010) 'Leading without authority' (unpublished PhD, Lancaster University).

Lowy, M. and Sayre, R. (2001) *Romanticism against the tide of modernity.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Liu H and Baker C (2016) White knights: leadership as the heroicisation of whiteness. *Leadership* 12(4): 420-448.

McGowan T (2013) *Enjoying what we don't have: The political project of psychoanalysis*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

May D, Chan A, Hodges T and Avolio B (2003) Developing the moral component of authentic leadership. *Organizational dynamics*, 32(3): 247-260.

Meindl J (1995) The romance of leadership as a follower-centric theory: a social constructionist approach. *Leadership Quarterly* Vol. 6 (3): 329-341.

Meindl J, Ehrlich S and Dukerich J (1985) The romance of leadership. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 30: 78-102.

Mitroff I and Denton E (1999) A study of spirituality in the workplace. *Sloan Management Review*, summer edition.

For Peer Review

Murphy P and Roberts D (2004) *Dialectic of romanticism*. London: Continuum.

Nichols T and Beynon H (1977) *Living with capitalism.* London: Routledge Kegan Paul

O'Reilly D and Reed M (2011) The grit in the oyster: professionalism, managerialism and leaderism as discourses of UK public services modernization. *Organization Studies* 32 (8): 1079-1101.

Pearce C and Conger J (2003) *Shared leadership: Reframing the hows & whys of leadership*. London: Sage.

Pearce C and Sims H (2000) Shared leadership: toward a multi-level theory of leadership. *Team Development* 7: 115-139.

Rancière J (2012) *The politics of aesthetics*. London: Continuum.

Raelin J (2011) From leadership-as-practice to leaderful practice. *Leadership* 7(2):195-211.

Raelin J (2014) Imagine there are no leaders: reframing leadership as collaborative agency. *Leadership* online first: 1-28.

Riasanovsky N (1995) *The emergence of romanticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rosenzweig, P. (2014) *The Halo Effect* New York: Free Press.

Sebag Montefiore S (2009) *Heroes: History's greatest men and women.* London: Quercus.

Sebag Montefiore S (2012) *Titans of history.* London: Quercus.

Shamir B, Pillai R, Bligh M and Uhl-Bien M (2007) *Follower-centred perspectives on leadership: A tribute to the memory of James R. Meindl.* Greenwich, Ct: Information Age.

Smircich L and Morgan G (1982) Leadership: the management of meaning. *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science* 18 (3): 257-273.

Smolović Jones O and Grint (2013) Authentic leadership and history. In Ladkin D and Spiller C (eds) *Authentic leadership: clashes, convergences and coalescences*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Smolović Jones O, Grint K and Cammock C (2015) Public leadership development facilitation and the crossroads blues. *Management Learning* 46(4):391-411.

Spector B (2016) Carlyle, Freud and the great man theory more fully considered. *Leadership* 12(2): 250-260.

Steffens N, Peters K, Haslam A and van Dick R (2016) Dying for charisma: Leaders' inspirational appeal increases post-mortem. *Leadership Quarterly* published online 9th September.

For Peer Review

Storey A (2004) The problem of distributed leadership in schools. *School Leadership & Management*, 24(3): 249-265.

Surowiecki, J. (2005) *The wisdom of crowds: Why the many are smarter than the few.* New York: Random House.

Swan E (2010) *Worked up selves: personal development workers, self-work and therapeutic cultures*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tammet, D. (2009) *Embracing the Wide Sky: A tour across the horizons of the mind.* London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Tourish D (2013) *The dark side of transformational leadership*. Hove, East Sussex: Routledge.

Tourish D and, Tourish N (2010) Spirituality at work, and its implications for leadership and followership: a post-structuralist perspective. *Leadership* 6 (2): 207-224.

Uhl-Bien M, Riggio R, Lowe K & Carsten M (2014) Followership theory: A review and research agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly,* 25(1): 83-104.

Uhl-Bien M and Pillai R (2007) The romance of leadership and the social construction of followership. In Shamir B, Pillai R, Bligh M and Uhl-Bien M (eds) *Follower-Centred Perspectives on Leadership.* Greenwick, Ct: Information Age, 187-209.

Vince R and Mazen A (2014) Violent innocence: a contradiction at the heart of leadership. *Organization Studies* 35(2):189-207.

Walumbwa F, Avolio B, Gardner W, Wernsing T and Peterson S (2008) Authentic leadership: development and validation of a theory-based measure. *Journal of Management* 34(1), 89-126.

Weinberg F and Locander W (2014) Advancing workplace spiritual development: a dyadic mentoring approach. *The Leadership Quarterly* 25 (2): 391-408.

Whittington J, Pitts T, Kageler W and Goodwin V (2005) legacy leadership: The leadership wisdom of the Apostle Paul. *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (5): 749-770.

Zoller H and Fairhurst G (2007) Resistance leadership: the overlooked potential in critical organization and leadership studies. *Human Relations* 60 (9): 1331-1360.

For Peer Review