

## Introduction: The Global Rise of Populism

*Populism returns . . . to haunt the sentient world, undeterred by the bright dawn of democracy and neo-liberalism.*

—Knight (1998, 223)

We are seemingly living in populist times. The effects of the Global Financial Crisis drag on, the Eurozone sovereign-debt crisis continues to threaten the very existence of the European Union, and more broadly, it is alleged that we are suffering from a crisis of faith in democracy, with political party membership falling dramatically and citizens finding themselves more and more disillusioned with mainstream politics. The anger, fury and disgust targeted at members of ‘the elite’—whether the bankers of Wall Street, the bureaucrats of Brussels, the politicians of leading parties or the cultural warriors of the op-ed pages—is palpable, with calls for layoffs, imprisonment or even all-out revolution to change the status quo. The time is ripe for canny political actors who can speak effectively in the name of ‘the people’ to make great political gains.

And gain they have. Over the past two decades—but particularly in the last decade or so—populists across the world have made headlines by setting ‘the people’ against ‘the elite’ in the name of popular sovereignty and ‘defending democracy’. Europe has experienced a groundswell of populism in the form of leaders like Silvio Berlusconi, Geert Wilders, Jörg Haider and Marine Le Pen, and populist parties throughout the Continent have enjoyed significant and prolonged political success. Latin America has seen influential left-wing populist leaders change the region irrevocably, with Hugo Chávez, Nicolás Maduro, Evo Morales and Rafael Correa all gaining the highest office in their respective countries. In the United States, the Tea Party ostensibly caused the 2013 government shutdown, and figures like Sarah Palin, Ted Cruz and Donald Trump have shaped the new face of American conservatism. In the Asia-Pacific, populists like Thaksin Shinawatra, Joseph ‘Erap’ Estrada, Pauline Hanson and Winston Peters have left indelible marks on their respective countries, while Africa has experienced its own share of heavy-handed populist leaders, witnessing

the presidencies of Yoweri Museveni, Michael Sata and Jacob Zuma. In other words, populism is back—and it is back with a vengeance. What was once seen as a fringe phenomenon relegated to another era or only certain parts of the world is now a mainstay of contemporary politics across the globe. In order to account for this situation, some scholars have spoken of a “populist Zeitgeist” (Mudde 2004, 542), “populist wave” (Krastev 2007, 57) and “populist revival” (Roberts 2007, 3) in different regions of the world in recent years.

Indeed, the academy has paid close attention to such developments, with the academic literature on populism having its own ‘populist revival’ of sorts over the same period. Although populism has a relatively long—if disjointed and staggered—record in the annals of political science, the concept was given a new lease of life in the mid-1990s by authors who sought to make sense of the emergence of ‘new populism’ in Europe and ‘neopopulism’ in Latin America (Betz 1993, 1994; Roberts 1995; Taggart 1995, 1996). This led to a veritable explosion of empirical work on populism in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Populism has also been at the centre of recent debates within political theory, with key figures like Laclau (2005b, 2005c), Mouffe (2005a), Rancière (2006) and Žižek (2006a, 2006b) having engaged with the concept, tackling populism’s sometimes paradoxical relationship with democracy. Taken together, these trends have seen populism move from a relatively fringe topic in political studies towards it becoming one of the discipline’s most contentious and widely discussed concepts (Canovan 2004; Comroff 2011).

Yet this newfound interest in populism is not confined to the ivory towers of academia. Politicians and journalists have also pounced on the concept in recent years, with populism being portrayed as an imminent danger for democracy: the *New York Times* frets about “Europe’s populist backlash” and the *New Statesman* has called populism “a real threat to mainstream democracy under stress”. Former Italian prime minister Enrico Letta has similarly labelled populism as a “threat to stability in Europe”, and former Mexican foreign minister Jorge Castañeda has called populism “disastrous for Latin America”. Yet elsewhere populism is painted as a panacea for our broken democratic systems: the *Atlantic* argues that populism is the only way that the liberal narrative can be fixed, while the *Huffington Post* called 2014 “the year of economic populism”.

Despite this widespread interest in populism, we still do not understand a number of aspects of the phenomenon all that well. Questions still abound: why has populism seemingly spread so rapidly across the globe? What do these different manifestations of populism have in common? Does populism really

represent a threat to democracy? And perhaps the most basic question of all—what are we actually talking about when we use the term ‘populism’ today?

The central argument of this book is that in order to answer these questions, we need to *rethink contemporary populism*. This is because populism today has changed and developed from its earlier iterations, embedded as it is within a rapidly shifting political and media communications landscape. While still based around the classic divide between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’, populism’s reliance on new media technologies, its relationship to shifting modes of political representation and identification, and its increasing ubiquity have seen the phenomenon transform in nuanced ways that need explaining. In this light, the book contends that we need to move from seeing populism as a particular ‘thing’ or entity towards viewing it as a *political style* that is performed, embodied and enacted across a variety of political and cultural contexts. This shift allows us to make sense of populism in a time when media touches upon all aspects of political life, where a sense of crisis is endemic, and when populism appears in many disparate manifestations and contexts.

In making this argument, this book has three central aims that all work towards providing the reader with a more comprehensive, nuanced and time- and context-sensitive understanding of contemporary populism. The first aim is to locate populism within the shifting global media landscape. This is an era in which ‘communicative abundance’ reigns supreme, and where the increasing ubiquity and affordability of communication technologies, together with the exponential increase in the speed and scope of communication and information networks, have led to a situation in which “all spheres of life, from the most intimate everyday milieux through to large-scale global organisations, operate within heavily mediated settings in which the meaning of messages is constantly changing and often at odds with the intentions of their creators” (Keane 2013, 23). In this global environment, idealised views of populism as an unmediated or direct phenomenon that exists between the leader and ‘the people’ must be abandoned, and its intensely mediated nature needs to be addressed and explored. We are no longer dealing with the romantic notion of the populist speaking directly to ‘the people’ from the soapbox, but witness a new breed of savvy populist leaders who know how to utilise new media technologies to their advantage. How has the increased mediatization of the political helped populism? How do populist actors relate to, or use, different aspects of the media to reach ‘the people’? And how has the rise of the Internet and social networking changed contemporary populism?

The second aim of this book is to move beyond purely regional conceptions of populism, and instead build an understanding of populism as a *global phenomenon*. Although this is gradually changing, the literature on populism is still marked by an academic ghettoisation, whereby regionally specific studies of the phenomenon (each with its own traditions, definitions and archetypal case studies) tend to remain quite isolated from one another. Research that pushes beyond these regional boundaries remains rare;<sup>1</sup> as Rovira Kaltwasser (2012, 185) notes: “Virtually all studies that have investigated populism so far have focused their empirical and theoretical analyses on one specific region”—and these regions have usually been Western Europe, Latin America or North America. This book pushes beyond these regions by also taking into account figures who are not the ‘usual suspects’ of the literature—particularly Asia-Pacific and African examples—and comparing populism across regions and countries. Developing a genuinely comparative approach to populism allows us to consider what might link leaders as diverse as Beppe Grillo, Sarah Palin, Rafael Correa and Thaksin Shinawatra. In other words, what really makes these disparate actors all allegedly ‘populist’?

In line with developing a genuinely global and media-centred understanding of contemporary populism, the third aim of the book is to develop and put forward a new framework for conceptualising contemporary populism: populism as a political style. While a number of other authors have used the term ‘political style’ in the populist literature (Canovan 1999; de la Torre 2010; Knight 1998; Taguieff 1995), it has remained relatively underdeveloped, often being treated synonymously with rhetoric, communicative strategies or discourse. This book builds on these authors’ influential work to develop a clearer and more thorough concept of political style by moving beyond its purely communicative and rhetorical elements, and emphasising the performative, aesthetic and relational elements of contemporary populism. As Fieschi (2004a, 115) notes, in the past it has appeared that treating populism as a political style “does not seem to do it justice, as the notion of style implies something frivolous or at the very least inessential or superficial. Nothing could be further from the truth as the power of the appeal to people—however ambiguous—should never be underestimated”. The book seeks to make clear that political style is in no way “inessential or superficial”, but is in fact vital to understanding populism’s position in the contemporary political landscape, as well as its malleable and versatile nature. The book clearly unfolds the different constituent parts of populism as thought of as a performative political style by providing a theo-

retical framework where the leader is seen as *the performer*, ‘the people’ as *the audience*, and crisis and media as *the stage* on which populism plays out upon. This new vocabulary speaks to the inherent theatricality of modern populism, as well as helping us focus on the mechanisms of representation and performance that underlie its central appeal to ‘the people’.

Given that the book has such an ambitious and wide perspective, how does it actually go about rethinking populism and constructing this framework? Working from an interpretivist and interdisciplinary standpoint,<sup>2</sup> the book adopts a three-step approach that seeks to link a number of regional and disciplinary literatures (including area studies, comparative politics, political theory and political communications) on populism together to develop insights into the nature of contemporary populism across the globe. The first step is conceptual, asking *what is populism?* In order to answer this question, the book undertakes a critical review of the extant literature on contemporary populism, locating the key issues and tensions among the four central approaches to populism identified within the contemporary literature (from 1990 onwards). These approaches see populism as an ideology, strategy, discourse or political logic, respectively.

Second, in order to overcome some of the key problems with these approaches, the book develops the concept of *political style*. It does this by examining the term’s usage in the literature on populism, before synthesising insights from the fields of rhetoric, political philosophy and political sociology on political style to build a new understanding of the concept. In doing so, it stresses embodied, symbolically mediated performance as a central element for understanding and analysing contemporary political phenomena.

Third, it uses the concept of political style to discern inductively the features of *populism as a political style*. This is done by examining twenty-eight cases of leaders from across the globe who are generally accepted as populists (that is, labelled as populist by at least six authors within the literature on populism), and identifying what links them in terms of political style. This list of populists can be found in the Appendix, and covers populists from not only the usually examined regions of Europe, Latin America and North America but also Africa and the Asia-Pacific over the past twenty years. While using a higher number of cases than usual obviously means a higher level of abstraction (Landman 2008), this trade-off is necessary if we want to examine contemporary populism across the globe in a broad and meaningful way. Our concern here is not to gain in-depth knowledge of any particular case of populism—for that,

we have many books and articles that have already been written—but rather to gain knowledge about contemporary populism as a general phenomenon. The cases are thus *instrumental* rather than *intrinsic* (Stake 1995), helping us to “identify patterns and themes” (Grandy 2001, 474) within contemporary populism across the globe, and aiming for “high levels of conceptual validity” and “conceptual refinement” (George and Bennett 2005, 19) without getting bogged down by the details of the specific cases. In other words, the approach used in this book helps us see the ‘bigger picture’ of what is going on with contemporary populism across the globe.

To gain this wider perspective, the book predominantly relies on secondary sources—and these sources generally take the form of expert analyses of single and comparative cases of populism. While there are certainly pitfalls involved in relying on secondary literature, in this case it has the benefit of providing reputable (and often peer-reviewed) information on the range of cases at hand that simply would have been impossible to cover otherwise, given the regional and linguistic breadth the cases span (Yin 2009). Relatedly, one limitation of the material drawn upon that must be acknowledged is that it is composed of sources or translations available only in English—a result of the author’s monolingualism—which means that a number of important sources in other languages have not been considered. Nonetheless, given that the English-language literature on populism has matured and grown exponentially over the past two decades, it is a literature that is indeed worthy of close scrutiny and analysis. Finally, given that a number of these cases are very recent, with the academic literature yet to ‘catch up’ with empirical developments, this expert analysis is also supplemented with more up-to-date primary and secondary data including biographies, interviews, audio-visual materials, policy documents, newspaper reports and blogs, amongst other sources throughout the book.

As can be seen, the approach of the book is a little different from the usual book-length treatments of populism, which tend either to focus in-depth on a single case of populism, or to undertake a small number of comparative case studies, with each case usually having its own distinct chapter. The book is instead organised around the key themes and topics that are pertinent to contemporary populism—leadership, media, ‘the people’, crisis and democracy—and uses the cases to explore and illustrate the arguments made about these broader themes. The kinds of theories about populism developed in this book are thus very much of the *middle-range* sociological variety (Merton 1968), with numer-

ous real-world empirical cases working alongside theory to develop broader insights about the phenomenon of populism.<sup>3</sup>

## Book Outline

The argument of this book is set out over nine chapters. The next two chapters give background on the currently existing literature on populism and develop the notion of populism as a political style, while the remaining chapters unpack and examine the constituent parts of the performative relationships at play within populism, examining the key actors, stages and audiences of contemporary populism. These are outlined in detail below.

Chapter 2 provides a critical overview of contemporary debates around populism. These conceptual debates can be difficult for outsiders or newcomers to the literature to navigate and decipher, so the chapter seeks to trace the development of the term and lay out the coordinates of the basic positions in the debate for readers. It firstly contextualises the literature by briefly tracing the development of the concept prior to the 1990s, before turning to contemporary debates around the term. It identifies the four central approaches to populism in the contemporary literature—populism as ideology, strategy, discourse and political logic—and outlines the key authors, central arguments and key features of each approach. In doing so, it balances the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches, overall showing that while the *features* of populism that each approach identifies may be valid—for example, nearly all agree on the centrality of ‘the people’ versus ‘the elite’ or some Other—there are problems with the social science *categories* they use to describe the phenomenon.

In an attempt to address these categorical issues, and bring the literature up to date to account for the mediatised character of contemporary populism, Chapter 3 develops the concept of political style as a new way of thinking about populism. Synthesising the work of Ankersmit (1996, 2002), Hariman (1995) and Pels (2003) in the fields of rhetoric, political philosophy and political sociology, respectively, it defines political style as *the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performance made to audiences that are used to create and navigate the fields of power that comprise the political, stretching from the domain of government through to everyday life*. It argues that this concept helps us move beyond outdated modes of categorising political phenomena by stressing the performative dimension of contemporary politics. It then uses this concept to understand populism. This is done inductively, by examining the cases of a

ing chapters use these concepts to map out a picture of how populism is 'done' as a performed political style across the globe today.

### Conclusion

In the famous 1969 Ionescu and Gellner collection on populism, Worsley (1969, 245) argued that populism needs to be understood as an "emphasis, a dimension of political culture in general, not simply a particular kind of over-all ideological system or type of organization". The same still holds, but this ✓ 'emphasis' is best expressed in the idea of political style, the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performance made to audiences that are used to create and navigate the fields of power that comprise the political. While the term 'political style' has been used somewhat haphazardly in the existing literature, it has been the aim of this chapter to give the term substance, to make it less slippery and more useful for political analysis—both in the empirical study of populist leaders, and in the development of theory around populism.

✓ This chapter has made clear that the concept of populism as a political style is sensitive to the contours of the contemporary politics, as politics becomes increasingly more 'stylised', mediated and spectacular. In this context, it is little wonder that populism has established itself as a permanent feature of the political landscape over the past twenty years or so. The concept of political style allows us to rethink populism by placing its performative dimensions at front and centre, and gives us a chance to reflect on the complex relationship between style and content. For all these reasons, thinking about populism as a political style opens up a timely and important new dimension from which to explore the phenomenon.

## 4

### The Performer: Populism and the Leader

*I AM the people—the mob—the crowd—the mass.*

*Do you know that all the great work of the world is done through me?*

*I am the workingman, the inventor, the maker of the world's food and clothes.*

*I am the audience that witnesses history. The Napoleons come from me  
and the Lincolns. They die. And then I send forth more Napoleons and  
Lincolns.*

"I Am the People, the Mob"—Carl Sandburg (1970, 71)

*I am not an individual, I am the people.*

—Chávez in AFP (2010)

A set of important questions begin to emerge when we view populism as a political style: who actually 'performs' populism? What do these performances look like? Who are these performances aimed towards? And where do these performances take place? In order to answer these questions, the next four chapters of the book seek to unpick the constituent parts of the performative relationships at the heart of contemporary populism: the performers, the audiences, the mise-en-scène and the stages that these relationships play out upon. Examining each of these elements of contemporary populism helps to provide an understanding of how populism operates in the contemporary mediated political landscape. The following chapters each follow a similar structure, introducing the particular aspect of populism to be examined, outlining how it is presented in the contemporary literature on populism (as per the approaches identified in Chapter 2), and explaining what the political style approach adds to our knowledge of the phenomenon of populism today. Weaving together conceptual insights with empirical illustrative examples, they give a fuller and richer picture of the shape of contemporary populism.

This chapter focuses on the first element of this relationship: the leader as the *performer* of populism. While those who study populism are often split on what agent to focus upon—leaders, parties or movements—this chapter makes the argument that in these mediated times, it is the leader that should be our ✓

✓ main focus when studying the phenomenon, given that they are the figures that ultimately 'do' populism. The reasons for doing this are numerous: the leader is the figure that performs and renders-present 'the people' within populism; the leader is the central figure of affective focus from populist followers *as well as* the central target of derision or hatred from opponents; and because populist leaders' links to political parties and movements vary widely across regional contexts. More broadly, it is clear that for audiences beyond the ivory towers of academia, it is the leader that is generally the focus when it comes to populism: ✓ Geert Wilders, Thaksin Shinawatra and Hugo Chávez are the household names, not necessarily the parties attached to them.

✓ In making this argument, the chapter examines how populist leaders must strike a balance between appearing as both ordinary and extraordinary to appeal to 'the people'. In doing so, they must ostensibly be of 'the people' *as well as* simultaneously beyond 'the people'. They attempt to achieve this balance in a number of central ways. The chapter outlines how populists appear as ordinary by utilising 'bad manners' to distance themselves from other political actors in terms of legitimacy and authenticity, often breaking the unwritten rules about how politicians are 'supposed' to conduct themselves. On the other hand, it demonstrates how populist leaders appear as extraordinary by positioning themselves as the embodiment of 'the people', and examines how this can take a more literal form in terms of how the leader's performance of health, strength, sexuality and strong corporeal presence links with notions of a strong 'people'. The chapter demonstrates that the tightrope walk between ordinari-ness and extraordinariness can be a difficult balancing act, with the populist performance often at risk of being disrupted.

### The Role of the Populist Leader

✓ But let us get down to basics: what does the leader actually *do* when it comes to populism? While there is a general consensus in the populist literature that the leader is *important* to populism, current approaches to understanding populism differ in regards as to what they see as the actual role of the leader: are they 'organisers' of populist followers, 'articulators' of populist discourse or ideology or just representative figureheads who happen to lead populist parties or movements? Should we even focus on leaders, or are parties and movements more important when it comes to populism?

A number of authors place the leader at the centre of their analysis of pop-

ulism, seeing the leader as vital to the phenomenon in that they are responsible for bringing 'the people' together. However, they tend to differ in regards to *how* they think 'the people' are brought together by the leader. Those who subscribe to the view of populism as a strategy often view the leader as *literally* bringing 'the people' together, acting as the figure who unites an unorganised mass of followers through noninstitutional means. For example, Weyland's (2001, 14) influential definition of populism portrays the leader as the key figure responsible for mobilizing the masses, while Roberts has argued that "personalistic ✓ and paternalistic . . . leadership" (1995, 88) is a core feature of populism, and has developed four subtypes of populism based on the mode of linkage between the populist leader and followers (2006).

Others take a less literal approach, viewing the leader as the central figure in populism in that they bring 'the people' together on a *symbolic* level. For Laclau (2005b, 100), who sees populism as a political logic, 'the people' simply cannot emerge without a leader, as "the symbolic unification of the group around an ✓ individuality—and here I agree with Freud—is inherent to the formation of a 'people'". According to Laclau's account, under populism, the name of the leader begins to act as an empty signifier in which 'the people' can lay their various demands and complaints about the system. Because of their shared opposition to the system, these demands become linked in what Laclau calls an 'equivalential chain' under the name of the leader, and thus it is through the leader that disparate identities become symbolically linked together as a new ✓ political subject—'the people'.

However, not all authors who write on populism are as certain about the role of the leader, particularly those who see populism as an ideology or discourse. Although at times the authors working within the ideological approach depict the leader as the articulator (Stanley 2008, 103) or "main protagonist" (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2011, 6) of populism, in that the leader is the figure that delivers the 'content' of the populist ideology, they also tend to focus at least as much (if not more) on populist parties (for example, Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008; de Lange and Art 2011; Mudde 2007). A similar ambivalence marks the literature on populism as a discourse. While a number of authors within this tradition see the leader as the key articulator of populist discourse (Barros 2005; Hawkins 2010), others place their focus on the party as their key unit of analysis, focusing on party literature or manifestoes (Pauwels 2011; Rooduijn and Pauwels 2010).

What is clear across each of these approaches is that the choice of whether

one decides to focus on the leader, party or movement when it comes to studying populism is heavily influenced by the case or region that one is writing about. Those who place central focus on the leader have tended to be situated within the literature on Latin American, African or Asian-Pacific populism, whereas those who focus on parties have tended to study European populism. In many ways, this makes sense, with numerous Latin American populist leaders (including Hugo Chávez, Alberto Fujimori and Fernando Collor), African populist leaders (including Michael Sata and Raila Odinga) and Asian-Pacific populist leaders (including Thaksin Shinawatra and Pauline Hanson) cycling through different party affiliations and organisations, while European populist parties have arguably been more stable and long lasting. This trend also reflects a broader divide between the predominantly presidential systems of Latin America and the predominantly parliamentary systems of Europe, whereby leaders are more prominent and powerful in the former case (see the chapters in Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012b). However, this divide creates some problems when it comes to cross-regional comparisons: how do you compare a leader with a party if you want to study populism? This tension can be seen in the work of Mudde, whose earlier work on European populism (Mudde 2007, 36–38) noted the methodological pitfalls involved in focusing on populist leaders rather than political parties, but whose recent comparative work on European and Latin American populism with Rovira Kaltwasser has focused on both leaders *and* parties, claiming that “the two are deeply interlinked, which often makes it difficult to differentiate between the ideas of the former and the latter” (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013a, 156). While understandable, this is not the most convincing argument for a comparativist to make, given that identifying a common unit of analysis across cases is a basic requirement of comparative research (Lijphart 1971).

With these tensions in mind, there are a number of important reasons for choosing to focus on the leader as the key actor or ‘performer’ of contemporary populism. First, individual leaders are undoubtedly the most visible and prominent symbols of populism today, with much academic and popular discussion of populism hinging on their personalities and performances. The devotion of followers—and indeed, the hatred of detractors—similarly hangs on the leader in many cases rather than the party. Second, a significant number of populist parties function as little more than ‘personal parties’<sup>1</sup> (McDonnell 2013) that prop up the political careers of the leader, and a number of prominent populist figures—Berlusconi, Hanson, Thaksin, Chávez and Wilders—have shifted

through a number of party affiliations to suit their personal political ambitions and needs, suggesting that the leader is more pertinent than the party in populism. Third, and perhaps most important, leadership is relatively constant across a number of regional contexts when it comes to contemporary populism, whereas party or movement forms are not.<sup>2</sup>

None of this is to say, however, that contemporary populist movements must always *begin* with a leader, and nor should we assume that populist movements must always develop and coalesce into formal political parties with a distinct leader. The US Tea Party arguably does not fulfil either of these criteria. It is fair to say, however, that populist movements almost always *end up* with a clear leader, as do populist parties. Given the populist combination of the desire for quick action and distaste for complexity, it makes sense that the demands or messages of a populist movement will find unification, representation and voice in a strong figure.<sup>3</sup> This process can also work in the opposite way, in which a leader with an appealing political message or style can emerge and rally enough followers who identify with their characterisation of ‘the people’ to attempt to develop a movement around them. In either process, it is the leader that ultimately ‘performs’ populism, and should thus be seen as the key actor of populism. To put it simply: while we can imagine populism without a party (such as the Tea Party), or populism without a movement (that is, a politician who claims to speak in the name of ‘the people’ but without a popular base behind them), it is rather difficult to imagine contemporary populism *without leadership at all*.<sup>4</sup>

### Balancing Extraordinariness and Ordinarity

Yet the populist leader is stuck with a difficult dilemma in being the central performer of populism: how can you be of ‘the people’ as well as transcend ‘the people’ at the same time? How can a leader be “exactly like you are”, as Chávez (in Zúquete 2008, 100) once claimed, yet also be special or talented enough to rise above ‘the people’ as their leader and representative? In order to do this effectively, populist leaders must negotiate the precarious balance between appearing as ordinary on one hand, and extraordinary on the other. This combination between extraordinariness and ordinariness is not easy to achieve.

On one hand, the perceived extraordinariness and remarkability of populist leaders are most evident in the way that they are often raised to a celebrity or even messiah-like status in the eyes of their audiences. This perceived central-

ity and special nature of the leaders within populism is clear in the title of many populist parties that bear the leaders' name—examples include Pauline Hanson's One Nation, Pauline's United Australian Party, Lijst Pim Fortuyn and Groep Wilders—as well as the different forms of populism that are stamped with their name—Berlusconismo, Chavismo, Grillismo, Hansonism and Thak-sinomics, among others. Populism in this regard is inextricably tied to the personalities of the 'extraordinary leaders' who are seen as able to channel 'the people's' will and desires, rising above them as their representative.

Positioning the leader as the singular redemptive or extraordinary figure who rises above 'the people' is obviously not a new phenomenon: there are historical precedents in totalitarianism, in which the leader functions as the embodiment of a unified society (Arendt 2004 [1951]), as well as in *caudillismo*, which Krauze (2011, 289–90, emphasis in original) describes as "the concentration of power into the hands of a single man. . . . When the *caudillo* takes over, the strictly *personal* passions of a leader (traumas, obsessions, whims) are transferred to the history of the nation, converting history into a kind of 'biography of power'". Some commentators have noted the links between these forms of politics and populism, with a number of authors seeing populism as a kind of 'proto-totalitarianism' (Abts and Rummens 2007; Panizza 2005a), while others have investigated the parallels between *caudillismo* and populism (de la Torre 2010; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2014).

Yet the perception of the extraordinariness of contemporary populist leaders has been served by two distinctly modern trends—the increasing 'presidentialisation' and 'celebritisation' of contemporary politics. The presidentialisation literature (for example, Helms 2005; Maddens and Fiers 2004; Mughan 2000) describes a situation in which leaders have become as important as—if not *more* important than—policies and platforms in influencing how people vote. Authors point to trends like the increasing concentration of power within the hands of single leaders, the increasing autonomy of leaders and the personalisation of electoral processes as some of the key markers of this process.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the celebritisation literature (for example, Corner and Pels 2003b; Couldry and Markham 2007; Marsh, 't Hart, and Tindall 2010; van Zoonen 2005; Wheeler 2011) has tracked an increased focus on singular, attention-grabbing politicians and their personal lives, relationships and passions in contemporary politics. Taken together, these two modern trends mean that a particular aura is granted to those leaders who can perform successfully for 'the people' by combining strong leadership with interesting, 'accessible' and

entertaining personas—in other words, the recipe for so-called extraordinary populist leaders. ✓

Yet unlike its historical precedents, in which the extraordinary nature of the leader need not have any limits, when it comes to populism, this extraordinariness must be tempered with ordinariness. After all, populism is ultimately about 'the people', so populist leaders must be able to present themselves as possessing outstanding leadership qualities—that is, extraordinary—as well as being of 'the people'—that is, ordinary. In describing the rise of "the ultimate celebrity politician" in the twenty-first century, van Zoonen (2005, 84) unwittingly hits on this contradictory performance required by populist leaders: "He or she projects a persona that has inside experience with politics but is still an outsider; his (or in some cases, her) performance builds on a unique mixture of ordinariness and exceptionality". In other words, populists must have one foot in and one foot out at all times—they must 'know' politics while remaining an 'outsider', and must be 'salt of the earth' while rising above those they represent. ✓

### Performing Ordinariness: 'Bad Manners'

What forms do these performances of ordinariness take? While most leaders in the contemporary political setting have to play the game of making themselves seem regular or ordinary to some extent—witness Barack Obama's professed love of beer, basketball and hip-hop (McDonald and King 2012), or former Australian prime minister John Howard's much-publicised love of cricket (Hutchins 2005)—populists can take this role to an extreme. Examples of these performances abound: Sarah Palin (2008) has gone to great lengths to prove her ordinary nature, calling herself "just your average hockey mom" and a "mama grizzly" to prove her maternal credentials, and has displayed her 'regular' family at every possible moment to back up these claims. Chávez (2005) presented himself as a "farm kid . . . from a very poor family", and used a folksy and common language on his television show, *Aló Presidente*, to display his ordinary roots. ✓ and... Zambia's Michael Sata often played up his lack of education and mocked his central opponent, a former accountant, as a 'calculator boy' to demonstrate the difference between them (Resnick 2010), while South Africa's Jacob Zuma used a similar tactic against his rival, Thabo Mbeki (Vincent 2011). Meanwhile, Pauline Hanson (2007, 59–60) has made much of her regular nature as an owner of a takeaway fast food shop in suburban Queensland, claiming that "the fish and chip shop put me directly in touch with the average Australian". Fash-



ion and aesthetic self-presentation can also be another important resource in signifying one's ordinariness: Evo Morales's *chompa* (an alpaca wool sweater) signifies a tie to rural areas and the land, as does Yoweri Museveni's ever-present broad-brimmed hat, which associates him with the farming sector of Uganda (Muth 2011).

These performances of ordinariness seek to distance populist leaders from other politicians, who are portrayed as being removed from the experience of everyday citizens, and consequently not 'in touch' with 'the people'. The performances thus seek to bolster the 'outsider' credentials of populist leaders. However, whether they are *actually* 'outsiders' or not does not seem to matter too much if the performance is suitably convincing. Indeed, many populist leaders are objectively *not* outsiders when it comes to occupying the halls of power: to name but a few examples, Geert Wilders had been in politics for twenty years before launching his own party, beginning his career as a parliamentary assistant; Hugo Chávez had a long and storied career in the military before his political success; Thaksin Shinawatra was a millionaire and member of the business elite before joining politics; Silvio Berlusconi owned a media empire; and Ross Perot was a billionaire businessman. Yet these figures have all been able to present themselves as 'outsiders', even if in some cases this has taken some creative rewriting of personal biographies. Populist leaders' status as 'outsiders' is thus a matter of their rhetorical or aesthetic 'location' and perceived distance from mainstream politics (Barr 2009), rather their actual experience as or with 'the elite'. The further that they can dissociate themselves from the technocratic style of 'politics as usual', the better.

Yet claiming to be ordinary goes only so far. Any politician can 'talk the talk', but 'walking the walk' and actually demonstrating that you are not a 'regular politician' is more valuable in proving your populist credentials. The most pertinent way that populist leaders do this is through using 'bad manners'. This concept refers to populist leaders' apparent disregard for 'appropriate' ways of acting in the political realm, and the deliberate flouting of such expectations and practices. The looseness of the term is deliberate, given that these performances of 'bad manners' may manifest in a number of different ways, including self-presentation, use of slang, political incorrectness, fashion or other displays of contempt for 'usual' practices of 'respectable' politics. The term also reflects the fact that considerations of what constitutes appropriate behaviour are themselves culturally specific—bad manners in one political arena may not be considered bad manners in another.

The notion of 'bad manners' is based on the innovative work of Pierre Ostiguy (2009b). Ostiguy outlines the distinction between the 'high' and 'low' in politics, which relate to ways of acting (or in our terms, performing) in politics.<sup>6</sup> As he notes:

High and low have to do with ways of relating to people; as such, they go beyond "discourses" as mere words, and they include issues of accents, level of language, body language, gestures, ways of dressing, etc. As a way of relating to people, they also encompass the way of making decisions. (Ostiguy 2009b, 5)

This high-low axis runs orthogonal to the left-right axis, and as such is not tied to traditional ideological distinctions. Dividing the high-low axis into two subdimensions (social-cultural and political-cultural), Ostiguy presents his distinction between high and low as noted in Table 4.1.

The attributes of the social-cultural 'low' of Ostiguy's axis partly make up the 'bad manners' that can be ascribed to populist leaders. Indeed, Ostiguy claims that his high-low distinction mirrors the distinction between antipopulism and populism. This is of course correct, but the key difference between Ostiguy's position and the one put forward in this book is that Ostiguy does not stress the binary between 'the people' and 'the elite' as strongly or explicitly as put forward in the previous chapter—a binary that is acknowledged throughout the majority of the literature on populism. More so, while Ostiguy correctly argues that populists often resort to 'coarse' and culturally vulgar appeals, this is not *always* the case—see here the cases of Geert Wilders or Ross Perot, who are relatively 'slick' and can come off as aloof or even border on 'snobby' at times.

TABLE 4.1: Ostiguy's High-Low Spectrum

|      | Social-cultural                                                                           | Political-cultural                                                                                                |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| High | Well behaved<br>Well mannered<br>Composed<br>Rationalist<br>Ethical<br>Stiff/rigid/boring | Impersonal<br>Procedure-driven<br>Formal, impersonal<br>Legalistic/rational<br>Institution-mediated<br>Restrained |
| Low  | Slang/swearing<br>Demonstrative<br>Raw/popular tastes<br>More colourful                   | Personalistic<br>Strong leadership<br>Closer to 'the people'<br>Decisive action<br>Immediate                      |

(Adapted from Ostiguy 2009b: 7)

Instead, populists like these can often simply seek to distance themselves from other political actors by acting quite *differently* to them; drawing on Arditì's (2007a, 78) metaphor of populism being the 'drunken dinner guest' of contemporary democratic politics, we might simply say that populists disregard the appropriate social cues and 'table manners' in the usually "gentrified domain of political performances". The different methods of upsetting this "gentrified domain" are outlined in more detail below under the rubric of 'bad manners'. Nonetheless, what Ostiguy does offer is a novel consideration of what is appealing about the way that populist leaders *act* as opposed to other kinds of leaders, and how political and sociocultural ways of performing are linked. More so, Ostiguy's high-low distinction adds credence to the position that the divide between populism and its 'opposite'—whether technocracy or antipopulism—is a *gradational* divide, rather than a strict binary. As he notes, the high-low distinction is a "spectrum" (2009, 7) or a "scale" (2009, 24) on which a broad range of political actors can be plotted.

Let us look at a few concrete examples of how 'bad manners' are performed by populist leaders. One way is by lowering the level of political discourse through swearing, taunts or over-the-top claims. For example, Hugo Chávez would often make crude and overly offensive remarks about his opponents; Marine Le Pen has accused political rivals of being paedophiles (Warren 2011); while Beppe Grillo held 'V-Day' rallies against Italian politicians and the mass media—the V standing for *Vaffancullo*, an Italian expletive. Zambian populist Michael Sata was so well known for his venomous attacks on the opposition and his enemies that he was nicknamed 'King Cobra'. Another way is through the *type* of language that is used. Sarah Palin has employed so many non sequiturs and malapropisms—from claims about nonexistent "death panels" (Nyhan 2010) to made-up words such as "refudiate" (Weaver 2010)—that her garbled sayings have earned their own label, 'Palinisms', while Pauline Hanson became similarly well known for her misuse of the English language.

More broadly, 'bad manners' can simply mean acting or presenting oneself in more 'colourful' ways than we usually expect from politicians or representatives: Chávez would sing and dance on his television show *Aló Presidente*; Raila Odinga has sung parodic songs and improvised riddles to mock the opposition in Kenya (Resnick 2010); Pauline Hanson has appeared as a contestant on numerous Australian reality television shows; and Herman Cain released a series of bizarre campaign videos in 2012 showing a rabbit being shot after being catapulted in the air, a goldfish being killed and a man being pecked to death

by chickens to apparently characterise the problems of small business in the United States (Cain 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). Needless to say, none of these examples represent 'traditional' behaviour—the social-cultural 'high' of Ostiguy's spectrum, which we associate with typical 'mainstream' party politics—and therein may lay their appeal, or at very least their attention-grabbing qualities.

Populist leaders' 'bad manners' can also take the form of political incorrectness. Often presenting political correctness as a project of elites, populists tend to 'mention the unmentionable', and merely claim to be presenting 'what everyone thinks'—hence the constant references to 'common sense' or 'the silent majority'. This political incorrectness frequently takes the form of claims of favouritism or slurs against minority groups. For example, Hanson continuously rallied against Asian immigrants and Aboriginal rights, and more recently claimed that she would not sell her house to a Muslim (Hirst 2010). Wilders compares the Koran to *Mein Kampf*, and has called the prophet Muhammad a paedophile (Wilders 2010b), while Uganda's Yoweri Museveni has consistently targeted homosexuals, accusing them of "recruiting normal people" and being "mercenaries" and "prostitutes" (in Monitor 2014). Chávez constantly taunted his rivals as *pitiyanquis* ('little Yankees') (Romero 2008), and declared disgraced Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi a "martyr" (in Romo 2011). Sarah Palin (in Smith 2009) summed up the populist approach: "Screw the political correctness". Whether such statements are sincere does not matter. Instead, the aim is to get a reaction—often negative—which allows populist leaders to receive media coverage, and further position themselves as being outside 'the elite' or the establishment, who would not dare to utter such things.

The central point is that it is populists' performances—not *just* their policies, ideology, discourse or so-called content of their populism—that are disruptive to 'mainstream' politics. In these technocratic times we usually expect our political representatives, if not necessarily acting honourably, to make at least an effort to appear on the social-cultural 'high' of Ostiguy's schema. We assume that they should be polished, professional, composed and 'play the game' correctly. In short, we expect them to have 'good manners'. As such, the unpolished, seemingly off-the-cuff 'bad manners' of populist leaders can appeal in an era when political performances often seem homogenous, circumscribed, stage-managed and predictable across the political spectrum.

The notion of 'bad manners' can act as a supplement to a concept that is often used and abused in the literature on populism in explaining populist leaders' appeal: charisma. Charisma has long held a privileged position in the

literature on populist leadership (Conniff 1999; Taggart 2000; Weyland 2001), but it has a number of problems. Conceptualised by Weber (1978, 241) as “a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities”, charisma has often been attributed to populist leaders in order to explain the seemingly mystical grip that they have on their followers. However, there are two central challenges in using the concept, and the notion of ‘bad manners’ may prove useful in addressing these challenges.

The first challenge is simple: some populists are not ‘charismatic’ leaders in the traditional sense of the term. Alberto Fujimori, Preston Manning and Pauline Hanson are good examples in this regard. They do not demonstrate particularly impressive oratorical skills, they hold themselves stiffly in the public domain, and they are not generally considered to display inspiring leadership skills overall. Equally, charisma is not just the domain of populists—many ‘nonpopulist’ leaders throughout history have been considered charismatic. As such, charisma may be useful for attracting popular support for populists—Hawkins (2010, 42, emphasis in original) calls it “an important *facilitator* of populist movements”—but it is not a necessary characteristic of populism.

The second challenge is methodological: charisma is incredibly difficult to operationalise, and authors too often overlook its inherently relational nature. As Mudde (2007, 262) argues, many authors use charisma in an absolute rather than a relative sense, forgetting that the concept is actually reliant on the *perception* of followers (that is, the leader being *seen as* charismatic), rather than any intrinsic personal qualities that the leader may hold (that is, being *inherently* charismatic). Perceptions of charisma thus rely heavily on political culture—and some political cultures are less susceptible to charisma than others. Lending credence to this position is Mizuno and Phongpaichit’s (2009, 10) claim that the concept of charisma “never translated well into the Asian environment” because of the political culture of the region. Nevertheless, numerous populist leaders have done well in Asia, indicating that something other than charisma may be at play when it comes to populist success. Beyond this, the term is so poorly defined in the literature that claims about charismatic leadership are difficult to falsify, making the concept particularly problematic for empirical research (van der Brug and Mughan 2007).

The concept of ‘bad manners’ offers a way to partly overcome these issues by operationalising what is inherent in many theories of charisma—the *appeal* of

the populist leader. So while we may not be able to understand all populist leaders’ appeal by way of charisma because of certain political cultures’ aversion to it, we can at least understand how the flouting of ‘appropriate’ behaviour can appeal in very different contexts. All political cultures have certain rules about what constitutes appropriate behaviour or decorum, and what populists share is an ability and willingness to flout those rules. ‘Bad manners’, in this light, are easily operationalisable, can travel across a number of political and cultural contexts, and are applicable to a wide number of cases. More so, the concept of ‘bad manners’ helps us avoid guesswork about either the leader’s ‘inherent’ qualities or how devoted their followers ‘really’ are—two elements that are often invoked in talk of populist charisma—and instead, we can simply analyse the perceived ‘appropriateness’ of the populist performance. By focusing on the *stylistic methods* that populists use to perform—the allure of ‘bad manners’, appealing to the social-cultural low, and ‘pulling the rug’ on mainstream politics are all key here—we can better explain how populist leaders set themselves apart from other types of political actors.

### Performing Extraordinariness:

#### The Leader’s Body and the Body Politic

Yet it is not enough just to be ordinary and one of ‘the people’ by flaunting one’s ‘bad manners’. To truly rise above and represent ‘the people’, populists must also prove their extraordinariness. Populist leaders use a number of techniques to do this, including presenting themselves as the singular figure who can fix ‘the people’s’ problems, as in the case of Thaksin (in Phongpaichit and Baker 2009a, 282), who claimed in 2006: “I am the major force in government and everyone else is just my helper”. Sometimes this goes so far as presenting oneself in a divine light: Berlusconi (in BBC News 2006) declared in the same year: “I am the Jesus Christ of politics. I am a patient victim, I put up with everyone, I sacrifice myself for everyone”, while Hugo Chávez presented himself as the reincarnation of Simón Bolívar and claimed that Jesus Christ was his “commander-in-chief” (quoted in Zúquete 2008, 109). Indeed, this presentation of the populist leader as the figure of salvation has led Zúquete (2007, 2013) to see a number of cases of populism in Latin America and Western Europe as examples of ‘missionary politics’, which combine populist leadership with a salvationist appeal, ritualisation, mythology and millennial visions.

Populist leaders ultimately present themselves as the voice of ‘the people’.

Such leaders are extraordinary in that they are able to understand what 'the people' think and ultimately articulate their needs and desires. Yet the leader's extraordinary symbolic function goes beyond mere articulation—in populism, the leader does not simply represent 'the people' but is actually seen as *embodying* 'the people'. This embodiment has been significantly undertheorised in the literature, which is problematic, given that populism needs to be understood as something that is performed and 'done', rather than just as a set of ideas or way of organising followers. In 'doing' populism, populist leaders attempt to present themselves as strong, virile and healthy in order to present 'the people' as strong and unified. This is because within populism, 'the people' are a homogenous and united collective body who ultimately find their voice through the populist leader, as "the leader perceives himself not as an ordinary politician elected in a succession of temporarily elected officials. He rather sees himself as the incarnation of the people" (de la Torre 2013a, 19). This incarnation of 'the people' extends to 'the people' being present in the leader's physical body.

The link between the body of the leader and the unified political subject is not new—metaphors of the body politic and its literal interpretation within the bodies of actual living leaders have a relatively long history in political thought (de Baecque 1997; Kantorowicz 1957; Protevi 2001). However, talk of the body politic has largely disappeared from our political vocabulary following the rise of liberal democratic politics (Neoclaus 2003). While under monarchy, the king had 'two bodies' that were inseparable from each other (Kantorowicz 1957)—the 'body natural', which was his physical body, and the 'body politic', which was the invisible and divine body that symbolised the unity of the people; under democracy, the body politic is ostensibly 'disembodied', as democracy is conceptualised as an 'empty place' of power. As Critchley (1993, 80), following Lefort (1986), puts it: "In democracy power is not occupied by a king, a party leader, an egocrat or a *Führer*, rather it is ultimately empty; no one holds the place of power. Democracy entails a disincorporation of the body politic, which begins with a literal or metaphorical act of decapitation". Populism, then, can be read as attempt to 're-embody' the body politic, to suture the head back on the corpse, and provide unity in the name of 'the people' through the leader. Such metaphors certainly fit with the general characterisation of the extraordinary and singular leader spoken about throughout this chapter.

Indeed, Lefort saw totalitarianism in the same light—an attempt to fill the empty place of power with the materialisation of the "People-as-one"—usually in the body of the Great Leader. Keane (2009a) has pointed to the embalming

and display of Lenin's corpse, as well as the construction of the Memorial Hall in Tiananmen Square in memory of Mao, as material evidence of such tendencies.<sup>7</sup> Here, even in death, the great leader remains present and pure, as a testament to 'the people's' unity. While populism is obviously not the same as totalitarianism, they share a tendency in this regard. In both, the leader is the figure that represents 'the people', bringing together and uniting them against enemies. The health of their bodies then is symbolically linked to the health of the body politic—a sagging, ill body is not a sign of a tough, united people. A strong one, however, is. In this light, what are the different ways that populist leaders use their bodies to prove the link between themselves and 'the people'?

Congruent with the previously explained concept of 'bad manners' as a central feature of populism, populist leaders are often keen to draw attention to their bodies to prove or demonstrate their potency and strength through crude banter, politically incorrect statements or boasts. Indeed, while Ostiguy (2009b, 38) has noted that one of the appeals of populist leaders is that they metaphorically 'have balls'—that is, they are tough, daring and decisive—some populist leaders seem to take this in a literal sense, with former Ecuadorian president Abdalá Bucaram claiming to have 'big balls' and poking fun at the 'watery sperm' of his key opponent, while using "an effeminate tone of voice and gestures" when referring to other 'oligarchical' politicians (de la Torre 1997, 16) to cast doubt on their sexuality and masculinity. The well-publicised bedroom antics of Silvio Berlusconi also speak to this obsession with proving the virility of the leader's body: Berlusconi has boasted of having sex with up to eight women a night (Squires 2011) and has been embroiled in a number of scandals involving 'bunga bunga' parties with prostitutes. This obsession with sex was underlined when Berlusconi made suggestions to change the name of his party, Forza Italia to Forza Gnocca (Kington 2011)—that is, from 'Go Italy' to a crude term for female genitalia. As Mancini (2011, 26) has argued in his study of Berlusconi's 'lifestyle politics', this intermingling of sexual performance and politics has meant that "the very body of Berlusconi has become a site of political, as well as erotic, power"—the two types of power intimately connected to each other.

Although the examples of Bucaram and Berlusconi might seem extreme, they are not outliers. There are numerous examples of populist leaders keen to prove their virility and masculinity. When on trial for rape charges, South African president Jacob Zuma asserted that he knew that his accuser was "clearly aroused" from the dress that she was wearing and the way that she sat, and

claimed that it was his duty as a Zulu warrior to have sex with her: "In the Zulu culture, you cannot leave a woman if she is ready. . . . To deny her sex, that would be tantamount to rape" (in Vincent 2009, 216). Hugo Chávez highlighted his sexual potency on numerous occasions, telling his wife on live television on Valentine's Day eve, "Marisabel, tomorrow I'm giving you yours" (in Guiller-moprieto 2005). He also made crude sexual jokes about former US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice, suggesting that she had erotic dreams about him, and claiming that "I can invite her on a date with me to see what happens to her with me" (in *Washington Times* 2005). Elsewhere, Norocel (2011, 2012) and Azzarello (2011) have outlined the links between populism and demonstrations of masculinity and heteronormativity in Romania, Sweden and Italy. Even if sexual prowess is not stressed, it is often the case that the leader's strength and machismo are highlighted, as in the case of former Philippines president (and current mayor of Manila) Joseph 'Erap' Estrada, whose image as a former action film star has been central to his political appeal and success (Hedman 2001; Rocamora 2009), or Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa, whose tough-guy antics included brandishing a belt while campaigning (ostensibly to whip opponents with) and aggressively ripping open his shirt and daring rioters to kill him while trying to quell a police uprising (Conaghan and de la Torre 2008; de la Torre 2012).

As such, it would seem that Weyland's (2010, viii) claim that "populist leaders deliberately project a very masculine image" rings true. In these cases, extraordinariness is related to displays of machismo, linking the populist's bodily strength or virility with the strength of 'the people'. However, the obvious rebuttal to this remark is—what about female populists? While female populist leaders like Pauline Hanson and Sarah Palin have stressed their toughness and strength, they have typically combined these allegedly 'masculine' traits with attributes traditionally associated with femininity, including caring, empathy and maternalism—a phenomenon that has also been noted in the female leadership of populist parties in Scandinavia (Meret 2015; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2015). Mason (2010, 190) argues that these can be understood as performances of "frontier femininity", claiming that Hanson and Palin "both portrayed an alluring physicality as working mothers, and used their sexual appeal to reinforce an image of themselves as vessels of national renewal". This sexual appeal—Hanson appearing in a swimsuit while washing cars on the reality television show *Celebrity Apprentice*, Palin coquettishly winking during speeches—was balanced with constant reference to their roles as mothers: Hanson went so far

as to claim that "I care so passionately about this country, it's like I'm its mother. Australia is my home and the Australian people are my children" (in Saunders and McConnel 2002, 232). Indeed, it seems that this combination of sexuality and maternalism worked to some extent: Hanson's former media advisor, John Pasquarelli (1998, 281–82), claimed that Hanson received many gifts, letters, photographs and even marriage proposals from ardent male admirers, writing that "these Sir Galahads saw Pauline as a classical damsel in distress—feisty and strong, yet vulnerable and almost girlish as she stood alone against her assorted foes". However, it has often been the case that the sexual appeal of these female populists has not necessarily been performed by them, but has been forced in an exploitative manner upon them. For example, footage of Palin in a swimsuit from a 1984 Miss Alaska has been uploaded on YouTube and received more than 4 million views; a series of pornographic films have been produced by Hustler Videos titled *Who's Nailin' Paylin* that feature a Palin impersonator as the main protagonist; and in 2009 there was a 'leak' of fake nude photos in the Australian press purporting to be of Hanson. However, other female populist leaders (such as Marine Le Pen) have managed to avoid such sexualisation, meaning that this is not an iron rule for all female populists across the board.

Performances of strength and health to prove the leader's extraordinariness can go beyond concerns about sex, machismo and virility. They can simply take the form of attempting to deny the weaknesses of an aging body and the natural pitfalls that affect all of us at some point in our lives—to use Kantorowicz's (1957) term, the denial of the 'body natural'. These denials are perhaps most aptly illustrated in the figures of Silvio Berlusconi and Hugo Chávez. Berlusconi has undergone numerous rounds of hair transplants and plastic surgery in an attempt to preserve his dwindling youth, which together with the sexual exploits noted earlier, indicate a certain denial of the reality of his aging (Mancini 2011). Chávez attempted to deny the mortality of the natural body in a different way. Before his death, Chávez speculated that the United States may have developed a secret weapon to cause leftist Latin American leaders to get cancer, including himself (Phillips 2011), a claim that was reiterated by his successor, Nicolás Maduro, who blamed "historical enemies" (Lopez and Watts 2013) for Chávez's death. The same paranoia about foreign enemies was mirrored in Chávez's obsession with trying to prove that his hero, Simon Bolívar, had died not of tuberculosis—a rather common disease of the time—but of poisoning from the Colombian 'oligarchy' (Halvorssen 2010). This obsession went as far as ordering, by presidential decree, all television stations in the country to show

the live exhumation of Bolívar's remains in mid-2010. In these examples, it is as if the actual frailty of the physical body and the mortality of the populist leader are too problematic to deal with given what they represent (the dissolution of 'the people'), so the illness is blamed on external enemies—not pathological viruses, *but actual physical enemies*.

Indeed, the threat or fantasy of death via the hands of the enemy is a common trope amongst populist leaders. Examples of this tendency are numerous. Wilders lives under constant security protection after a number of attempts on his life, and as a result is moved to a new location every evening (Wilders 2012), while Hanson filmed a much-ridiculed 'death video'—after receiving threats on her life—in which she claimed, "If you are seeing me now, it means I have been murdered. . . . You must fight on" (Hanson 2004). The point here is not to trivialise the very real threats that populist leaders can face—the assassination of Pim Fortuyn looms large here—but rather to highlight the importance of the leader's body, and to stress that *external threats* are treated as the real danger rather than anything natural or as mundane as aging. Paradoxically, while populist leaders must appear to be of 'the people', they must also transcend 'the people' by being immune to disease or physical frailty. In a strange case of doubling, the threat to 'the people' and the leader are thus one and the same—the foreign or pathological enemy—tying the body politic and the leader's body together in an existential bond. Overall, the contemporary populist leader is stuck with a modern, secularised version of Kantorowicz's (1957) characterisation of the king's two bodies. Following the perceived dissolution of the unified body politic and the loss of God-given sovereignty, the populist leader's 'natural body' takes on a far more substantial role in legitimising the leader's position as the figure that embodies the vox populi: 'the people' as unified, strong, tough and long-living.

## Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the populist leader should be seen as the key 'performer' of populism. While populist parties and movements are undoubtedly important and worthy of our attention, it is the populist leader who inspires hope in followers, anxiety and panic in detractors, and who attracts the attention of the all-important media through which they broadcast their appeal to 'the people'. More than this, it is the performances of the populist leader that seek to bring together and render-present 'the people' under populism. As can

be seen, these performances involve a great deal of skill—the balance between presenting oneself as both ordinary and extraordinary takes much work, as does maintaining the illusion of health, strength and virility in order to reflect and embody a strong 'people'. Similarly, the line between using 'bad manners' to appeal to 'the people' and not going so far as to lose credibility with 'the people' can be quite a thin one.

Yet populist leaders are particularly well positioned in the contemporary political landscape, which in the midst of presidentialisation and celebritisation tends to focus on remarkable and entertaining personalities. In this context, it becomes clear that in order to understand contemporary populist leadership, we must move from a focus on just the 'content' of populist party platforms, organisational strategies or ideologies towards the performative repertoires that populist leaders use to represent 'the people'. The notion of populism as a political style allows us to do this, tracking the balance between extraordinariness and ordinariness that populist leaders negotiate to appeal to this nebulous political subject.

However, it is important to realise that these performances are not *just* the product of singular leaders. Although the limelight is shone on the unique and remarkable leader as way of creating the most affective (and effective) bonds between leaders and 'the people', populist leaders' performances are often actually the result of careful planning, staging and scripting reliant on a team of professionals and an array of media resources: presenting oneself as ordinary and extraordinary does not occur in a vacuum. How do populists perform on the 'stage' of the contemporary media landscape? Who is involved in these performances? How do they use different forms of media, and how have changes in the media landscape affected contemporary populism? The next chapter turns to such questions, as it continues to unfold the relationships at the heart of contemporary populism.