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VISIONARY LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

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This paper describes the concept of visionary leadership in a new way, more suitable for strategic management. First, drawing on an account of theatre, it presents a model of visionary leadership as drama, an interaction of repetition, representation, and assistance. Second, considering the experiences of a number of visionary leaders, in terms of style, process, content, and context, the paper describes various types of visionary leadership—the creator, the proselytizer, the idealist, the bricoleur, and the diviner.

A strange process seems to occur as concepts such as culture and charisma move from practice to research. Loosely used in practice, these concepts, as they enter academia, become subjected to a concerted effort to force them to lie down and behave, to render them properly scientific. In the process they seem to lose their emotional resonance, no longer expressing the reality that practitioners originally tried to capture.

Leadership is another such concept. Somewhere along the line, as Pondy has argued, ‘we lost sight of the “deep structure”, or meaning of leadership’ (1978: 90). In attempting to deal with the observable and measurable aspects of leadership behavior, and perhaps to simplify for normative purposes, leadership research has focused on a narrow set of styles—democratic, autocratic, and *laissez-faire*, for example. We agree with Pondy that instead ‘we should be trying to document the variety of styles available’ (p. 90).

Strategy may also be such a concept. Much effort has been dedicated in strategic management to narrowing it, to pinning it down (as in the attention to ‘generic’ strategies), likewise to narrowing the process by which it forms (in the

attention to ‘planning’). Again, in attempting to dissect a living phenomenon, the skeleton may be revealed while the specimen dies.

More recently, the concepts of strategy and leadership have been combined into that of strategic vision. In academia (Bennis, 1982; Mendell and Gerjuoy, 1984) as well as practice (*Business Week*, 1984; Kiechel, 1986). This has been hailed as a key to managing increasingly complex organizations. Consultants have responded with workshops (e.g. Levinson and Rosenthal, 1984) that promise to train managers to be visionary leaders. In general, however, efforts to turn the creation of strategic vision into a manageable process, one that can be researched, taught, and adopted by managers, risk robbing it of its vitality.

Of special concern should be the tendency to subsume strategic vision under leadership in general, in other words to perceive it as just another category of leadership style (e.g. ‘transformative’; Tichy and Devanna, 1986). Most writings seem to agree that leadership vision, or ‘visioning’, as the process has sometimes been called, can be broken down into three distinct stages: (1) the envisioning of ‘an image of a desired future organizational state’ (Bass,

1987: 51) which (2) when effectively articulated and communicated to followers (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Tichy and Devanna, 1986; Gluck, 1984) serves (3) to empower those followers so that they can enact the vision (Sashkin, 1987; Srivastva, 1983; Conger and Kanungo, 1987; Robbins and Duncan, 1987). Such a view posits enormous control in the hands of the individual leader (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Meindl, Erlich and Dukerich, 1985; Gupta, 1984).

If the field of strategic management is to render the concept of strategic vision suitable for its own purposes it must deal with it in a unique way. That is what we set out to do in this paper, proceeding from three assumptions that differ from those of the traditional leadership literature. First, we assume that visionary leadership is a dynamic, interactive phenomenon, as opposed to a unidirectional process. Second, we assume that the study of strategic vision must take into consideration strategic content as well as the strategic contexts of product, market, issue, process, and organization. Third, we assume that visionary style can take on a variety of different forms.

In this paper we shall deal with each of these assumptions in turn. We build our description on a survey of biographical and autobiographical publications of a number of well-known leaders generally thought to be visionary, including Lee Iacocca of Chrysler, Jan Carlzon of SAS, Edwin Land of Polaroid, René Lévesque of the Parti Québécois, and Steven Jobs, formerly of Apple Computer.

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP AS DRAMA

As noted, visionary leadership is increasingly being defined as a process with specific steps, by and large as follows:

vision (idea) → communication (word)
→ empowerment (action)

The process, in its emphasis on active leadership and unidirectional flow, may be likened to a hypodermic needle, with the active ingredient (vision) loaded into a syringe (words) which is injected into the patient (subordinate) to effect change. Stripped to its essence, this model takes on a mechanical quality which surely robs the process of much of its evocative appeal.

An alternative image of visionary leadership might be that of a drama. Here action and communication occur simultaneously. Idea and emotion, actor and audience, are momentarily united in a rich encounter which occurs on many symbolic levels. Peter Brook (1968), the legendary director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, has suggested that the magic of the theatre lies in that moment when fiction and life somehow blend together. It may be brief, but it is the goal of playwright, director, actor, and audience, the result of 'rehearsal', the 'performance' itself, and the 'attendance' of the audience. Brook, however, finds these words too static, and prefers the French equivalents 'repetition', 'representation' and 'assistance' (p. 154), all of which, coincidentally, have special meanings in English. We wish to suggest that these words may equally be substituted to describe strategic vision, suggesting a dynamic model as follows, each stage of which we then discuss in turn.

repetition ⇔ representation ⇔ assistance
(idea) (vision) (emotion and action)

Repetition

Repetition, according to Brook, beautifully captures the endless practice in which every artist must engage. He notes that Lawrence Olivier would repeat his lines again and again until he had so trained his tongue muscles to say them that he could perform effortlessly (p. 154). Repetition is likewise the musician practising her scales until she can be consistent every time, so that while she performs she can think about the music itself rather than the individual notes.

For the strategic visionary, repetition has a similar role—to develop an intimacy with the subject at hand, to deal with strategy as 'craft', as one of us has noted elsewhere:

Craft evokes the notions of traditional skill, dedication, perfection through the mastery of detail. It is not so much thinking and reason that spring to mind as involvement, a sense of intimacy and harmony with the materials at hand, developed through long experience and commitment (Mintzberg 1987: 66).

Like the craftsman, the strategic visionary would appear to develop strategic perception as much through practice and gut-level feel for the business, product, market, and technology, as

through conscious cognition. Lee Iacocca 'grew up' in the auto industry. When he left Ford he went to Chrysler because cars were 'in his blood' (Iacocca, 1984: 141). Jan Carlzon, hailed as a visionary for his turnaround at SAS airlines, has spent his entire career (beginning in 1968) in the travel business, since 1978 in the airline industry.

Consider how Edwin Land describes his invention of the Polaroid camera:

One day when we were vacationing in Santa Fe in 1943 my daughter, Jennifer, who was then 3, asked me why she could not see the picture I had just taken of her. As I walked around that charming town, I undertook the task of solving the puzzle she had set for me. Within the hour the camera, the film and the physical chemistry became so clear that with a great sense of excitement I hurried to the place where a friend was staying to describe to him in detail a dry camera which would give a picture immediately after exposure. In my mind it was so real that I spent several hours on this description (Land, 1972a: 84).

Reading this description, it is easy to focus on the element of inspiration, of an idea seemingly springing fully blown, from nowhere. What might be forgotten is that Land had spent years in the laboratory perfecting the polarization process, schooling his scientific and inventive abilities, practising and repeating, learning his craft. His inspiration fell on fertile ground, prepared by endless repetition. As Land himself said:

It was as if all that we had done . . . had been a school and a preparation both for that first day in which I suddenly knew how to make one-step dry photographic process and for the following three years in which we made the very vivid dream into a solid reality (Wensbergh, 1987: 85).

In a sense the strategic visionary practises for the moment of vision, much as the actor practises for the moment of performance. But for strategy to become vision, craft is not enough. Repetition can become deadly, rigidifying innovation into imitation. Strategic visionaries are leaders who use their familiarity with the issues as a springboard to innovation, who are able to add value by building new perceptions on old practices.

Representation

For the actor, the performance itself is what must transform repetition into success. Brook chooses

the word 'representation' to describe this transformation. To represent means to take the past and make it live again, giving it immediacy, vitality. In a sense, representation redeems repetition, turning it from craft into art.

But what corresponds to the work of art for the strategic visionary? It is, of course, the vision itself. But not the vision as a private mental image. Rather, it is the vision articulated, the vision *represented* and communicated, in words and in actions. Just as a leader cannot exist without followers, so too strategic vision cannot exist without being so recognized by followers.

For this reason we equate visionary leadership not just with an idea *per se*, but with the communicated idea. Here we are concerned with the profoundly symbolic nature of visionary leadership. What distinguishes visionary leadership is that through words and actions, the leader gets the followers to 'see' his or her vision—to see a new way to think and act—and so to join their leader in realizing it. *How* the vision is communicated thus becomes as important as *what* is communicated. Edwin Land understood this as well. He argued that inventions have two parts: the product itself, which must be 'startling, unexpected and come to a world which is *not* prepared', and the 'gestalt' in which the product is embedded:

The second great invention for supporting the first invention is finding how to relate the invention itself to the public. It is the public's role to resist. All of us have a miscellany of ideas, most of which are not consequential. It is the duty of the inventor to build a new gestalt for the old one in the framework of society. And when he does his invention calmly and equitably becomes part of everyday life and no one can understand why it wasn't always there. But until the inventor has done both things [product and gestalt] nothing has any meaning (Land, 1975: 50).

And how is such a gestalt created? Here again, the metaphor of drama is useful. When the actor represents the play, he or she draws upon a variety of verbal and non-verbal resources. The voice, the face, the gesture, the language itself, the timing, the costume, the lighting, the staging, all combine in an intricate weave to arouse and inspire the audience to create a living gestalt. There is much to suggest that the visionary leader shares many of the actor's skills in representing his or her strategic vision.

For example, one is hard-pressed to find an example of a visionary leader who was not also adept at using language. Language has the ability to stimulate and motivate, not only through appeals to logic but also through appeals to emotion (Burke, 1950; Pfeffer, 1981; Edelman, 1964). Rhetoricians since Aristotle have carefully observed the potential of linguistic devices such as alliteration, irony, imagery, and metaphor, among other things, to provoke identification and emotional commitment among listeners. The speeches of famous visionary leaders such as Winston Churchill and Martin Luther King offer good examples of the skillful use of such rhetorical devices, which allow their listeners to 'see' the visions as if they were real. Analysis of Lee Iacocca's leadership in the Chrysler turnaround suggests that much of the power of his strategic initiatives resided in his use of metaphors to unite stakeholders behind him (Westley and Mintzberg, 1988). Likewise, Edwin Land inspired his employees not only with his inventions, but also with the evocative imagery with which he surrounded them. In a short statement on photography (Land, 1972a), Land suggested that it was a way of retaining the shifting, fleeting world of childhood and thus giving the child 'a new kind of security'. Sharing photographs was to him an act of intimacy; to show someone a photograph you took was to give them a 'deeper insight into you as well as what you discerned'. Land presented his new camera as follows:

It will help [the photographer] to focus some aspect of his life and in the process enrich his life at that moment. This happens as you focus through the view finder. It's not merely the camera you are focusing: you are focusing yourself. That's an integration of your personality, right that second. Then when you touch the button, what's inside you comes out. It's the most basic form of creativity. Part of you is now permanent (Land, 1972a: 84).

In a similar fashion, Steven Jobs decried the Macintosh as an 'insanely great' product, which will 'make a difference'. He described his co-workers as 'the people who would have been poets in the sixties and they're looking at computers as their medium of expression rather than language' (Jobs, 1984: 18). On the Apple Computer Company itself, Jobs said: 'There's something going on here . . . something that is changing the world and this is the epicenter'

(Jobs, 1984: 18). As Steve Wozniak, the co-founder with Jobs of the Apple Computer Company, tersely noted: 'he can always couch things in the right words' (Patterson, 1985).

In addition to language, the visionary leader can use a range of dramaturgical devices capable of stimulating and arousing responses. Non-verbal elements such as gesture (Hall, 1959), glance (Goffman, 1959), timing (Wrapp, 1967), movement, and props are also able to evoke similar responses. For example, Steve Jobs organized the Apple office as a circle of work areas around a central foyer. There stood a grand piano and a BMW. 'I believe people get ideas from seeing great products', Jobs claimed (Wise, 1984: 146).

In sum, the media of communication for the visionary are many and varied. By wedding perception with symbols the visionary leader creates a vision, and the vision, by evoking an emotional response, forms a bridge between leader and follower as well as between idea and action.

Assistance

Brook argues that for repetition to turn into representation requires more than practice, more than craft, more than the power of word and gesture. An audience is needed. But not a passive audience. It must be active, hence the importance of 'assistance'.

Brook tells of an ingenious experiment to show what audience assistance entails (1968: 27–29). During a lecture to a lay group he asked a volunteer to come to the front and do a reading. The audience, predicting that the volunteer would make a fool of himself, began to titter. But Brook had given the volunteer a passage from Peter Weiss' play on Auschwitz, which recounted with great clarity a description of the dead. The volunteer was too 'appalled' by what he was reading to pay much attention to the titters, and something of his attitude was communicated to the audience. It became quieter. As the volunteer was moved by what he was reading, he delivered the text with exactly the right pacing and intonations, and the audience responded with 'shocked, attentive silence' (p. 28).

Next Brook asked for a second volunteer. This time the text was a speech from Henry V listing the names of English and French dead at the

battle of Agincourt. Recognizing Shakespeare, the volunteer launched into a typically amateur rendition: false voice, stilted phrasing, etc. The audience grew restless and inattentive. At the finish Brook asked the audience why the list of the dead at Agincourt did not evoke the same response as the description of the dead at Auschwitz. A lively discussion ensued. Brook then asked the same volunteer to read again, but to stop after each name. During the short silence the audience was to try to put together the images of Auschwitz and Agincourt. The reader began. Brook recounts:

As he spoke the first name, the half silence became a dense one. Its tension caught the reader, there was an emotion in it, shared between him and them and it turned all his attention away from himself on to the subject matter he was speaking. Now the audience's concentration began to guide him: his inflections were simple, his rhythms true: this in turn increased the audience's interest and so the two-way current began to flow (p. 29).

Like a performance, a strategy is made into vision by a two-way current. It cannot happen alone, it needs assistance. Elsewhere we have argued that part of what made René Lévesque and Lee Iacocca effective as leaders was the temporal significance of their vision: they appealed powerfully to the specific needs of specific stakeholders at a specific time. Indeed, there are important instances when the 'followers' stimulate the leader, as opposed to the other way around. In most cases, however, it would appear that leader and follower participate together in creating the vision. The specific content—the original idea or perception—may come from the leader (though it need not, as in the case of Levesque), but the form which it takes, the special excitement which marks it, is co-created. As Brook put it: 'there is only a practical difference between actor and audience, not a fundamental one' (1968: 150). Recall Land's description of hurrying to tell his friend of his vision of the camera. Why was he not content to keep the idea to himself? For the same reason an actor is not content to perform before the mirror. Vision comes alive only when it is shared.

This is captured dramatically in this century's most infamous example of visionary leadership. Shortly before Adolph Hitler came to power,

Albert Speer attended one of his lectures. Arriving skeptical, Speer left a convert.

I was carried away on the wave of enthusiasm which, one could almost feel this physically, bore the speaker along from sentence to sentence. It swept away any skepticism, any reservations . . . Hitler no longer seemed to be speaking to convince; rather, *he seemed to feel that he was expressing what the audience, by now transformed into a single mass, expected of him.* It was as if it were the most natural thing in the world . . . (Speer, 1970: 18; italics added).

Thus the visionary leader not only empowers his audience; it also empowers him. On leaving Apple, Steve Jobs was described as 'its heart and soul' (Patterson, 1985) and Lévesque was seen as speaking for the little people of Quebec, the average French Canadians whom he loved.

One final word about our analogy. The early Greek and Roman rhetoricians were particularly sensitive to the need for integrity among those who used the power of word and gesture (Burke, 1950). In this sense visionary leadership is distinct from theatre. The actor can play a different person each month and still be considered a good actor. Ironically, the visionary leader who, through similar inconsistency, is labelled a good actor, risks losing credibility. Even before Steven Jobs left Apple, accusations that he was facile, inconsistent, and lacked integrity surfaced. 'He should be running Walt Disney. That way every day when he has some new idea, he can contribute to something different', one Apple manager complained (Cocks, 1983: 26). In contrast, Edwin Land's belief that other people in the organization should have the same rich, varied job as himself, the fact that he used similar symbols to describe his products, his organization, and his own life (as we shall describe in greater detail below) enabled stakeholders to trust him. They knew that the same power he used to move them moved him. It is this integrity—this sense of being truly genuine—which proves crucial to visionary leadership, and makes it impossible to translate into a general formula.

In summary, the use of the metaphor of drama has allowed us to construct an alternative model of visionary leadership, one of dynamic interaction rather than unidirectional flow, a process of craft and repetition rather than simple cognition, brought to bear in the communication of affect as well as effect. Vision as leadership

is a drama which takes place in time. As in theatre, a leader can have a 'bad house'—a passive, unresponsive organization. Only at the right time with the right leader and the right audience can strategy become vision and leadership become visionary.

VARIETIES OF VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

All that we have described so far we believe to be common to visionary leadership in general. But in other regards contexts vary, issues vary, leaders vary. If vision is a drama, then script, direction, actors, staging, and audience may all vary; many combinations can produce vivid, exciting representation.

What drives the strategic visionary? What is the nature of his or her particular attributes, his or her particular ideas?

Firstly, just as recent theories of the mind suggest there is not one but multiple kinds of intelligence (Gardner, 1983), so too the notion of vision seems to involve a variety of mental capacities, what can be called *visionary style*. In particular, vision has been equated with a capacity for 'imagination', 'inspiration', 'insight', 'foresight', and 'sagacity' (*Oxford English Dictionary*). An analysis of some of the visionary leaders we have encountered in our research suggest that individual leaders exhibit characteristic styles in which certain of these capacities are salient, while the others, though present, remain secondary.

Secondly, visionary style is expressed through *strategic process*. We identify two elements of this—its mental origin and its evolution. *Mental origin* refers to that combination of mental and social dynamics, particular to the individual, that gives rise to the vision in the first place. For example, vision may arise primarily through introspection or interaction, or through the combination of the two. *Evolution* refers to the deliberateness and pace of development of the vision. Some visions develop more deliberately, through controlled conscious thought. Others emerge through a less conscious learning process. Also, some appear suddenly (like a visitation), others build up gradually, piece by piece over time in an incremental process. We might also note the aspect of intensity, which refers to the degree to which the vision possesses the visionary

and those surrounding him/her, and durability, which refers to the persistence of the vision, ranging even beyond the career of the visionary as it infuses the behaviour of an organization for generations.

Thirdly is the *strategic content* of the vision. Vision may focus on products, services, markets, or organizations, or even ideals. This is its strategic component, the central image which drives the vision. We refer to this as the *core* of the vision. In addition to this, every vision is surrounded by a kind of halo designed to gain its acceptance. It is this component, comprising its symbolic aspects of rhetorical and metaphorical devices, which we refer to as its circumference. Often, however, unless the vision focuses on a very tangible product (such as Land's camera), the line between core and circumference is blurred. We should also note that the value added by the visionary may lie in the circumference alone, the core alone, or in the core and circumference in a gestalt combination. That is, leaders can sometimes charge rather ordinary products or markets, etc. with strategic vision, or create novel products of markets. The most exciting cases, however, inevitably involve novelty of both, integrated together.

Fourthly, and last, there are variations in *external context* that influence the visionary process. The nature of the organization itself can vary, in ownership, in structure, in size, in developmental stage, etc., for example, being public or private, developing entrepreneurial or mature turnaround. So too can the industry and the broader environment, from traditional mass production to contemporary high technology, etc.

In a previous paper (Westley and Mintzberg, 1988), we probed into the relevance especially of the contextual and stylistic factors through a comparison of the visionary leadership of Lee Iacocca and René Lévesque. Here we draw on that material and also extend the analysis to some of the other factors in considering these two visionary leaders alongside three others—Edwin Land, Steve Jobs and Jan Carlzon. Four of the people we shall discuss, Land, Jobs, Iacocca and Carlzon, are business leaders widely recognized and admired for their visionary abilities. The fifth, René Lévesque, likewise recognized for his visionary leadership, was the premier of Quebec between 1976 and 1985 who brought that province to the brink of separation from the rest of Canada. As shown in Table 1,

Table 1. Varieties of leadership style

Characteristic style	Salient capacities	Content	Process	Organization content	Product/market context	Target group
Creator (Edwin Land)	Inspiration, imagination, foresight	Product focus	Sudden, holistic; introspective, deliberate	Start-up, entrepreneurial	Invention and innovation, tangible products, niche markets	Independent consumer, scientific community
Proselytizer (Steven Jobs)	Foresight, imagination	Market focus	Emergent, shifting focus, interactive, holistic	Start-up, entrepreneurial	Tangible product, adaptation, mass market	Collective market, competitor infrastructure
Idealist (René Lévesque)	Imagination, sagacity	Ideals focus	Deliberate, deductive, introspective, incremental	Turnaround, public bureaucracy	Political concepts, zero-sum market	General population, 50% market share
Bricoleur (Lee Iacocca)	Sagacity, foresight, insight	Product/organization focus	Emergent, inductive, interactive, incremental	Revitalization, turnaround, private and public bureaucracy	Product development; segmented, oligopolistic markets	Government (in Chrysler), union, customers
Diviner (Jan Carlzon)	Insight, sagacity, inspiration	Service focus	Incremental, sudden crystallization, interactive	Revitalization, bureaucracy	Service development and innovation, mass oligopolistic market	Employees

we consider these men to have exhibited five distinct styles of visionary leadership.

The creator: Edwin Land

The creator visionary is characterized by two qualities: the originality of his or her ideas or inventions and the sudden, holistic quality of their realization. Vision for the creator occurs in moments of inspiration, which seize the leader suddenly and unexpectedly and which become, for that leader, a driving preoccupation, a single-minded focus which evokes, at least metaphorically, the notion of all eyes turned in a single direction. Such vision is often experienced as deriving from a source outside the self, as in the classic case of religious leaders who claim to be the receptacles or channels of divine inspiration.

No-one we have encountered exemplifies these creative aspects of vision better than Edwin Land, the founder of the Polaroid Corporation and the inventor of the Polaroid Camera. Earlier we recounted Land's own description of his invention of the Polaroid camera. Land was clearly inspired that day in Santa Fé when, in the space of only a few hours, he constructed a complete mental image of the product. Such inspirations often possessed him. When they occurred, Land would disappear in his laboratory for 3-day uninterrupted stretches. He described these experiences as intense and almost mystical:

I find it is very important to work intensively for long hours when I am beginning to see solutions to a problem. At such times atavistic competences seem to come welling up. You are handling so many variables at a barely conscious level that you can't afford to be interrupted. If you are, it may take a year to cover the same ground you could cover otherwise in sixty hours (Bello, 1959: 158).

Note in the above quote that Land is unclear about the sources of his own creativity. Elsewhere he suggests that such impulses are ill-understood and extremely primitive. For him the moment of inspiration had a miraculous quality of being transported to a wholly unexpected realm:

The transfer from the field of polarized light to the field of photography was for us all a miraculous experience, as if we had entered a new country with different languages and different customs only to find that we could speak the language at once (Wensbergh, 1987: 85).

Land was also characterized by a remarkable ability to construct clear and detailed mental images of phenomena which did not yet exist. Of course, that was aided by the focus of the vision on concrete products, another characteristic we believe to be associated with creator visionaries. Their visions seem to have little to do with images of 'future organizational states' (Bass, 1987).

Land's ability to 'see' his products marks him as an inventive genius; but his inventions were also prophetic: he had foresight. Land knew there was a market for the Polaroid camera. In his vision the role of industry was to understand 'the deep needs of people that they don't know they have' (*Time*, 1961: 88). That Land knew how to package his inventions in evocative images we have already seen as well. In this, Land the creator was also Land the proselytizer, the style to which we shall turn next.

Strategy, for Land, began with two simple but enduring preoccupations. From the time he was a teenager he was fascinated by the idea of polarizing light, and from his time at Harvard he wanted to build a world-class scientific laboratory (Wensbergh, 1987). Land deliberately set out to win over the scientific community by establishing and building on his relationship with scientists at Harvard and MIT. He also staged dramatic events both for the general media and the scientific magazines. These events were carefully designed for dramatic impact and often timed to coincide with science fairs and conventions (Wensbergh, 1987). This gave Polaroid and Land a well-deserved reputation for being both seriously scientific and innovative and helped attract first-class scientists to work on applications for polarization.

On the basis of these two enduring preoccupations the Polaroid group developed a wide variety of inventions, such as 3D glasses, polaroid sunglasses, and customized products for photography and automobile manufacture, with varying degrees of commercial success, none of them spectacular. With Land's invention of the instant camera, however, preoccupations suddenly found a focus, the core for his strategic vision: to develop and perfect that instant camera. In contrast to the sudden emergence of the core, however, the circumference of the vision developed more gradually.

As for context, here we have a case of classic entrepreneurial start-up based on invention and

innovation. The products were tangible, and the markets, mostly consumer, composed of niches clearly defined by the inventions. The strategies were thus ones of differentiation, and the issues were of a technological nature, requiring Land, in his proselytizing role, to target both the individual consumer and the scientific community to accept his views. All these attributes seem to fit most naturally with the concept of the visionary as creator.

The proselytizer: Steven Jobs

Superficially, Steve Jobs would appear to be a classic visionary much like Edwin Land (who was one of his heroes). As he himself admits, he was in love with products, and his leadership centred around one particular set of them: the Apple computers.

Jobs, however, did not seem to have had the kind of creativity or concrete imagination that characterized Land's leadership. His co-founder, Steve Wozniak, boldly stated that Jobs did not understand computers, and the actual design of the machine has been widely credited to Wozniak. But as Wozniak also said, 'It never crossed my mind to sell computers. It was Steve who said "Let's hold them up in the air and sell a few".' It was Jobs who insisted that the computer be 'light and trim, well designed in muted colors'. Jobs likewise pushed his engineers to 'make machines that will not frighten away a skittish clientele' (Cocks, 1983: 25).

What was visionary about Jobs' approach—where he surely added value—was his evangelical zeal to show people the future potential of the product. This is vision as foresight, and has caused Jobs to be dubbed the 'priceless proselytizer' (Uttal, 1985a) and the 'missionary of micros'. Jobs has been credited with 'selling hundreds of thousands, possibly millions of Americans on the new technology' (Cocks, 1983: 25). His visionary capacity as a promoter was also widely recognized and appreciated within the company. 'Apple isn't just the money', one programmer commented, 'it's a giant magnifying glass that takes your great stuff and broadcasts it out to everyone' (Rogers, 1984: 54). Borrowing from Land, Jobs has compared the computer to the telephone in its significance for ordinary people (Marbach, 1984). He was determined that it should be both beautiful and usable. He once purportedly had an outburst of temper when he heard that a university to

which he had donated computers was controlling access. 'We don't want the use of these machines to be controlled . . . we want people to start fooling around, to let them get stolen, to let people use them at night' (*Forbes*, 1981: 32).

Jobs was a child of the 1960s, who travelled through India in search of truth, who meditates and has been a rigid vegetarian (some stories suggest that the name 'apple' was chosen because at that point Jobs ate only fruit (Cocks, 1983)). His uncompromising and heartfelt ideas about what sort of place Apple Computer should be, as well as what sort of products it should produce, seem to have both made the company and led to his ouster from it (Uttal, 1985a,b).

Among the leaders we are describing here, Jobs is outstanding in his merging of foresight and imagination into the genius of the proselytizer. He shares with Land some of the capacity for inspiration, if not for true creativity. And he shares with René Lévesque an idealism and an attachment to his ideals which ultimately limited his leadership. Jobs was a perfectionist, and as the organization grew, many in Apple experienced this as intolerance and self-absorption. Said Steve Hawkins, an Apple employee:

He's extremely ambitious, almost to the point of megalomania! He's such a perfectionist that people can never please him, and that caused a lot of trouble with morale . . . Most people weren't good enough for him and would really be in a state of shock after encounters with Steve (Butcher, 1988: 122).

The context here may also seem similar to that of Land—a consumer product based on innovation in start-up entrepreneurship. But in an important sense it was quite different, as was the market and the issue. For whereas Land created a series of niches defined by his very inventions, Jobs set out to create and conquer one very large market (he saw it as large from early on), based more on adaptations than on inventions. In a sense Land had to convince individual consumers to buy into his ideas; Jobs, in contrast, had to create a market *per se*, had to convince people *collectively* to support a new line. Any individual can put on a new pair of sunglasses or take their own pictures in a new way. But the software and service support for the personal computer meant that the collectivity had to be convinced rather than the individual.

Perhaps that is why we find the proselytizer here, the creator in Land's context.

In addition, the proselytizer may prove less able to survive the transition from entrepreneurial to established organization than the creator. Jobs' capacities for foresight and imagination made him a genius in a competitive industry in its infancy. But as Apple grew in size and reputation, Jobs' capacities were less in demand and his weaknesses more evident. He was then preaching to the converted. Thus, people became suspicious of his persuasive powers and tired of his intensity (Butcher, 1988: 126).

Certainly, the proselytizer is the most dependent of the five visionary styles. While creators rely on others to *enact* their vision, proselytizers depend on others to *stimulate* their vision. Jobs' vision was based on the products others created and the patterns he observed in their activity. He added value at the circumference rather than at the core. He was able to use his vision to maneuver strategically in the interests of his company, but his dependency remained.

One of the potential pitfalls for proselytizers, however, is that they may come to forget this dependence. With success they may believe that, like creators, their vision is responsible for the existence of their products. This may be what happened to Steve Jobs. Certainly he appears to have ceased to rely on his powers of persuasion; during his last days at Apple he alienated many of the subordinates, the suppliers and the buyers he previously charmed (Butcher, 1988: 123). In doing so he severed himself emotionally from the sources of his vision before the organization finally rejected him. The industry waits to see whether Jobs can succeed with a new vision as well as a new competitor in Next, the company he founded when he left Apple (O'Reilly, 1988).

The idealist: René Lévesque

An idealist is someone who speculates on the ideal, who dreams intensely of perfection and minimizes or ignores the flaws and contradictions of the real. As a visionary capacity idealism must have an appeal, it must crystallize the dreams of a constituency. But, like the creator, the source of the idealist's inspiration is essentially introspective, not interactive. He or she is inspired by ideas, his or her own or those already created. Idealism in its extreme form is no more responsive

to social interaction than is the creator's inspired invention. But for the idealist this can present a problem. If the idealistic capacities characteristic of the visionary leader are overdeveloped at the expense of other more interactive capacities, the individual will not long be a leader. Thus the idealistic visionary may have to be a pragmatist, to mix considerable political sagacity with his or her idealism in order to animate the vision, and to avoid alienating stakeholders.

Of course, we are more likely to find what we are labelling the idealistic visionary in a missionary-type organization than in a conventional business corporation. René Lévesque at the head of the Parti Québécois represents that kind of visionary leader. Lévesque did not invent the notion of 'sovereignty-association', his party's guiding philosophy, but rather adapted a social ideal that had long existed in Quebec. He pursued, or more exactly sought to operationalize, that ideal into political reality. The ideal was simple, almost simplistic:

The more I thought about this project, the more it seemed logical and easy to articulate. Its main lines were beautifully simple and there was paradoxical added advantage that it was far from revolutionary. In fact, it was almost banal, for here and there, throughout the world, it had served to draw together people who, while determined to be masters in their own house, had found it worthwhile to enter into associations of various kinds with others. So association it was to be, a concept that had figured for a long time in our vocabulary and a word that would marry well with sovereignty, sovereignty-association making a euphonious pair (Lévesque, 1986: 214).

What is interesting about the above quote, in addition to illustrating the abstract, idealistic nature of Lévesque's thoughts (in contrast to the concrete nature of Land's), is its suggestion that Lévesque did in fact possess the requisite political wisdom. In the notion of sovereignty-association, as Lévesque spells it out above, is married not only ideas but also political groups. Sovereignty for the radical separatists who were tired and angered by centuries of what they felt to be political oppression at the hands of the English Canadians, and association for the majority of Québécois who remained conservative and somewhat attached to Canada.

There is much evidence that Lévesque held both ideologies, and so was a man divided to

represent a people divided. In the end, however, his sagacity and his idealism were at odds. In the effort to make his dream a reality he was unable to hold together the factions he first combined, and his idealism degenerated into maneuvering. As we have described elsewhere (Westley and Mintzberg, 1988), for Lévesque, strategy that began as visionary perspective reduced first to a portfolio of specific political positions, many in the form of legislation after the Parti Québécois became the ruling government of Quebec, and then to ploys as the Lévesque cabinet maneuvered on the intricacies of the wording of their referendum question on sovereignty–association. We would suggest that compromise generally poses a threat to the idealistic visionary leader. It represents the ‘routinization of charisma’ (Weber, 1978), which can rob vision of its unique force and appeal. Without compromise the organization cannot succeed. With compromise the idealism is diluted: the vision cannot succeed.

In a certain way strategy-making for Lévesque was both deliberate and emergent, almost independently. It was deliberate in that the idealist sought to implement his vision of sovereignty–association. Lévesque’s approach was fundamentally *deductive*—to reduce a vague vision to the practical realities of a rearranged political order. But it was emergent too, or perhaps more accurately, ‘disjointedly incremental’ (Braybrooke and Lindblom, 1963), in that power evoked processes of its own, as the determined and influential people around Lévesque each maneuvered to support their own positions. In a sense, Lévesque tried to use his vision to control that disjointedness, but his was a losing battle.

We broached the issue of context above. Lévesque clearly operated in the public sector, indeed we might add, with a vengeance, given the intensity of the political battles he had to fight, with his opponents but no less with people within his own party. But some of the concepts normally associated with private sector strategic management can be applied here too. The issue—in Lévesque’s vision at least—was one of turnaround: how to save a culture threatened by social pressures. Moreover, to effect that turnaround, Lévesque was prevented from operating in market niches, as Land could do, even well-developed segments, as in the case of Iacocca at Ford or Chrysler. In having to win his referendum, Lévesque needed to convince a

majority of the voters—in conventional strategy terms, he was engaged in a two-person zero-sum game that required a market share greater than 50 per cent.

The difficulty for the idealist, exemplified by Lévesque, is that he or she has to sell an abstract concept. While Land could promote a novel camera and Iacocca a set of tangible automobiles, even Jobs a physical machine behind his ideas, Lévesque was forced to sell an idea whose final shape was never more than a series of proposals on paper. All strategists have to manage ideas, often in the form of analysis or debates, simply because every strategy is at its roots no more than an abstract concept that has to be seen in the mind’s eye. But some strategies can at least come to life in tangible ways—for example, as products that flow off assembly lines. For others, where this is not true, strategy-making becomes that much more of a vulnerable process, as we saw in Lévesque’s eventual demise.

For idealists to implement their vision they must convince people to accept it in its entirety. They must convince them not only to execute a plan but also to accept the values which undergird that plan. This process may resemble a conversion. But when such an ‘ideal’ vision is broken into distinct parts it may not be possible to reassemble it later. In the realization of ideals, unlike the construction of cameras, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Hence, while Land was able to turn perspective into plan, for Lévesque it degenerated into ploy. And ploy is potentially dangerous to any visionary as it opens him or her to suspicions of insincerity.

The bricoleur: Lee Iacocca

The term ‘bricoleur’ refers to a common figure in France: a man who frequents junkyards and there picks up the stray bits and pieces which he then puts together to make new objects. This image, drawn from Levi-Strauss (1955), was originally intended to be a metaphor for myth-making. Here we use it to suggest both the myth-making capacity of certain visionary leaders and their capacity for building, whether that be organizations, teams, designs or ideologies. In contrast with the creator and to some extent the idealist, the bricoleur’s genius resides not in an introspective ability to invent or imagine, but rather in an interactive, social ability to ‘read’ situations and recognize the essential (insight),

to understand and deal with people (sagacity), and to project these essential understandings into the future for promotional purposes (foresight).

We believe Lee Iacocca represents the bricoleur because, despite his visionary reputation, neither at Ford nor at Chrysler did he really present the world with anything startlingly new or original. Of his most famous success, the Ford Mustang, Iacocca freely admits that the design represented a recombination of 'classic' stylistic elements, tailored to fit on existing car platforms and over existing engines. Iacocca's role here was in leading a team driven by 'a market in search of a car', and in recognizing a good design when he saw one. In contrast to Land, Iacocca never imagined the product himself. But he had the sagacity to build the team, the foresight to read the market, the insight to recognize the winning design.

As for his experiences at Chrysler, the core of what Iacocca did there amounted to a classic form of operating, not strategic, turnaround. In other words, Iacocca cut costs, reorganized, rationalized, etc., rather than conceived a new image of how to compete in the automobile business. On the political dimension, however, Iacocca did exhibit sagacity in dealing with Congress and the unions, as well as foresight in selecting arguments to present the Chrysler case. Thus his was a *political* turnaround as well as an operating one, a concept that has been missing from the literature of strategic management and, judging from the behavior of many large organizations, one that seems to be increasingly popular.

Iacocca's unique style resided not in the core vision but in his ability to create the gestalt, a powerful circumference to that core. He combined the elements he found around him—whether people, parts, processes, or operations—and then infused these combinations with intense personal affect and evocative symbolism. He was a strategist very much as Wrapp (1967) and Quinn (1980) have described, the incrementalist, but also, as Selznick (1957) characterized it, the 'institution builder'. The act of incrementally piecing together people, parts and processes resulted in the Mustang at Ford; the act of incrementally piecing together people and perceptions resulted in a powerful survival myth at Chrysler, perhaps the key to its turnaround. Such 'bricolage' represents serendipity as an art form.

It should be obvious from the above that the bricoleur is more of a learner than the other strategists so far discussed, and his or her strategies are less deliberate, more emergent. If Lévesque was the deductive strategist, then Iacocca was the *inductive* one, combining the pieces to create the whole. Both core and circumference emerged over time and crystallized into identifiable vision only, perhaps, where looked at in retrospect.

As we characterized Iacocca in our other paper, he began with strategy as process not content: the construction of a team that itself would develop the strategy. From that process the team developed a series of positions, tangible elements about specific automobiles, loan guarantees, etc. In the Chrysler case Iacocca embodied these tangible elements in a highly symbolic ground, constructing metaphors and myths which gave him emotional appeal and heroic significance. This symbolic 'circumferential' vision, supported by no shortage of more pedestrian ploys, was kept to the turnaround strategy and set it apart from other, less sensational cases.

Iacocca's context was private enterprise and largely consumer products, much like those of Land and Jobs. But the organization was quite different: in both Ford and Chrysler, large and established, dedicated to mass production in a mature industry. And Iacocca was an employee, not a substantial owner. All this perhaps explains why we see less vision at the outset, less even after all was said and done. Iacocca was not so much promoting something new as trying to improve (in the case of Ford) or turn around (in the case of Chrysler) something quite old.

Interestingly, in some respects, René Lévesque comes closest to this: his party may have been new, indeed in some sense his own, and, in the context of government, rather entrepreneurial; but that party, in order to effect its desired turnaround, had to seize the power of a very long-established and bureaucratic organization, namely the government of Quebec. Of course, in having to deal with the U.S. government in the Chrysler turnaround Iacocca faced similar political pressures. But in other ways, of course, the two contexts were very different. Iacocca headed clearly hierarchical organizations, and like Land and Jobs he had the advantage of producing tangible products through tangible processes. (Consider the advantages of strategic vision taking such tangible shape: on first looking

at a clay model of what was to become the Mustang, Iacocca was immediately attracted to it with the feeling that it 'looked like it was moving' (Iacocca, 1984: 67).

Moreover, while Levesque was trying to execute radical change in a society, Iacocca was merely trying to preserve the status quo: sustain Ford and turn around Chrysler to preserve its jobs and markets. Perhaps that is the main reason why one failed while the other succeeded, also why one was the idealist, the other the bricoleur. Different personalities are attracted to different strategic contexts, although the context certainly evokes particular behaviors in the leader.

The diviner: Jan Carlzon

The salient capacity of what we are calling the diviner is insight, which comes with great clarity in moments of inspiration. In this respect the diviner is like the creator: his insights have the quality of something new and fresh, of coming into the mind like a visitation. However, unlike the creator, the insights of our diviner visionary tend to focus on process as opposed to product, for example on how to conceive or structure the organization; in fact, in the ability to use his or her capacities to build organizations, the diviner resembles the bricoleur.

Jan Carlzon is a good example of the diviner. As president of SAS, Carlzon focused not so much on product as on process and organizational structure. True, he put a great deal of emphasis on Euroclass, SAS's version of business class. But his novel insights were into the nature of service itself and the type of organizational structure most likely to deliver it. In his autobiography, *Moments of Truth*, Carlzon (1987) spells out his organizational blueprint in great detail: it includes making the front line workers—ticket agents and stewardesses in particular—into 'managers', giving them the authority to 'respond to the needs and problems of individual customers'. Middle managers are transformed from supervisors into resources for the frontline workers. They are reprimanded for inhibiting these people's initiatives.

Like Iacocca, Carlzon obviously had the political sagacity to turn these organizational images into reality. He effected a now legendary turnaround at SAS. Unlike Iacocca, however, he seemed to orchestrate the turnaround in more than textbook fashion. The core image of service

and organization seems to have originated with Carlzon, much as the image of the camera developed with Land. Carlzon describes the process of image construction quite differently from Land, however. Instead of leaps of imagination resulting in complete designs, Carlzon suggests that his organizational blueprint resulted from a number of small insights, discrete moments of inspiration, which he pieced together, bricoleur fashion, to create the whole.

The source of such moments were interpersonal experiments. Carlzon was very attentive to his interactions with others and to the effects of his words and deeds. He learned from these experiments—they inspired him, giving him a sense of his own character and the nature of his business. Carlzon recounts how, when he first took over Vingresor, Sweden's largest tour operator, he felt frightened, lost and inexperienced. He resorted to role-playing: he acted as he thought a president should act. He made firm decisions (about things he felt unsure of), gave orders and generally acted like an autocrat. One day one of his employees walked into the office and confronted him:

'What are you doing?', he asked me. 'Why do you think you became the boss here? To be someone you aren't? No—you were made president because of who you are!'

Thanks to his courage and frankness, Christer helped me discover that my new role did not require me to change. The company was not asking me to make all the decisions on my own, only to create the right atmosphere, the right conditions for others to do their jobs better (Carlzon, 1987: 8).

Carlzon built on this moment of insight when he moved to his new job at Linjeflyg (Sweden's domestic airline). There, instead of attempting to conceal his feelings of inadequacy, he acted on them. He began by appealing to his employees to save the company: 'You are the ones who must help me, not the other way around' (p. 11). Their delighted response confirmed his perceptions: people liked a boss who gave them the authority and responsibility to act.

In the end, Carlzon's experience became a metaphor for what a service organization should be. The 'moments of truth' in service are the small encounters between employees and customers, which are inspired by a true feeling of serving, by intrapreneurial zeal. Put together, hundreds of these moments make up a winning

organization. Put together, Carlzon's personal moments of truth revealed the blueprint for an organization's design.

Our final type of visionary is again largely inductive, his or her vision—both core and circumference—largely emergent, followed by a more clearly deliberate period of vision enactment. A sharper vision appears here than in the case of Iacocca, the bricoleur, and certainly one that is more original. Carlzon too effected a turnaround, or perhaps more accurately a revitalization, but more strategic, less operating than that of Iacocca at Chrysler.

Otherwise, the Carlzon context seems to be rather much like that of Iacocca: a large, established, and hierarchical organization, operating in markets that were competitive yet also oligopolistic. It was a service rather than product business, but flying people and cargo between destinations remains rather tangible, certainly when compared with the philosophy of a political party.

Indeed, in addition to his interpersonal sensitivity, perhaps a key element in Carlzon's effectiveness was his ability to render the services of his airline so tangible, exemplified by his concepts of the 'moment of truth' in their delivery and in the intriguing notion of the manager who works for the ticket agent. Of course, while Land had to convince the individual consumer, Jobs the collective market, Lévesque the population at large, and Iacocca the government and other stakeholders (in the case of Chrysler), it was largely his own employees whom Carlzon had to convince to accept a new way of doing things. Perhaps we should add the label *ideological* turnaround (or perhaps conclude that revitalization must always involve elements of ideology) for Carlzon's actions as a diviner visionary.

CONCLUSIONS

In the above cases we have suggested that visionary leadership can vary importantly from leader to leader. The style of the leader may vary, as may the content of the leader's vision and the context in which it takes root. The core of the vision may focus on product or service, market, process, organization or ideals; its circumference involves the rhetoric and metaphor of persuasion. The envisioning process may

be ignited by introspection or interpersonal interaction. It may be experienced by the leader as deliberate or emergent, and as a sudden visitation or a series of incremental revelations. It may vary in intensity and in duration. The possibilities are enormous; other leaders may reveal other categories. Our intention has not been to present any firm typology so much as to indicate the possibilities for variations in visionary style, and to map out some important dimensions of visionary leadership.

Thus, *strategic vision* is part style, part process, part content, and part context, while *visionary leadership* involves psychological gifts, sociological dynamics and the luck of timing. True strategic visionaries are both born and made, but they are not self-made. They are the product of the historical moment.

Our research suggests that, despite their great skills, it is a mistake to treat leaders such as those discussed here as possessing superhuman qualities. They are the product of their times, of their followers, of their opportunities. As times and contexts change the visionaries of yesterday fade into obscurity, or worse, become the villains of today. Iacocca is currently in danger of losing his status as a visionary leader, Carlzon has likewise run into difficulties. Polaroid and Land eventually parted company, as did Apple and Jobs, and Lévesque lost his election and quit his party in frustration. It did not seem to be the man or his capacities that changed in these cases, so much as the needs and expectations of his followers, organizations, and markets.

We should emphasize that visionary leadership is not always synonymous with good leadership. All of our leaders had reputations for being difficult to work with in some ways. Land 'wore out and exhausted his employees' (Wensbergh, 1987: 128). Some claimed that Jobs could be tyrannical and destructive (Butcher 1987: 117–126). Leaders in many contexts can be effective without being visionary, and their organizations may be happier places.

A dramaturgical model of vision raises a number of intriguing questions for further research. What is the exact nature of the symbols and processes visionary leaders employ in their 'representations?' What kind of interactions characterize the 'assistance' that the visionary receives from his or her organization? What kind of psychological, social, or technical 'repetition' forms the different visionary styles?

Careful analysis of speeches, reports, autobiographies, and interviews using techniques of textual analysis (Kets de Vries and Miller, 1987) should reveal similarities and differences in 'representation' technique across styles. Further collection of biographical information with a larger sample of visionary leaders should be oriented toward uncovering patterns of similarities and differences in the process of repetition or rehearsal. Assistance must likely be uncovered through direct observation, or through accounts of people who worked with the visionary. We might expect to find regularities in the roles team members play in relation to the visionary, but this has yet to be established.

Overall, the study of visionary leadership and strategic vision offers the opportunity for a rewarding and revitalizing interchange between the fields of leadership studies and strategic management. Concepts of strategy introduce consideration of market forces, environmental pressures, and organizational imperatives which form the backdrop for visionary initiatives. Against these features it is to their credit that even the gifted individuals we discussed were able to have such an impact on their organizations and on history. Consideration of that impact—more attention to issues of insight and inspiration, communication and commitment—can help to humanize considerations of strategic management while restoring to leadership study itself some of the flavor that Selznick (1957) sought (largely in vain) to instill 30 years ago.

In the closing lines of his book, Brook makes an observation about the relationship between life and the theatre:

In everyday life, 'if' is a fiction, in the theatre 'if' is an experiment.
In everyday life, 'if' is an evasion, in the theatre 'if' is the truth.
When we are persuaded to believe in this truth, then the theatre and life are one.
This is a high aim. It sounds like hard work.
To play needs much more. But when we experience the work as play, then it is not work any more.
A play is play. (p. 157)

If we substitute 'organization' for 'life' and 'vision' for 'theatre', we may begin to understand why strategic vision is stimulating so much interest. The visionary leader is a transformer, cutting through complex problems that leave other strategists stranded. Visionary leadership encour-

ages innovation—fiction becomes experiment. Visionary leadership inspires the impossible—fiction becomes truth. In the book *The Soul of a New Machine*, Tracy Kidder quotes a secretary who worked for the Eagle Team under the visionary Tom West. Asked why she didn't leave when so overworked and underappreciated, she replied: 'I can't leave . . . I just have to see how it turns out. I just have to see what Tom's going to do next' (1981: 58). Visionary leadership creates drama; it turns work into play.

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