

the trends yielded in the quantitative analysis. The qualitative evidence also informs his primary argument that modern turnover is not partisan but rather policy driven.

*At the Pleasure of the Crown* is a short book—only 107 pages of text, plus notes. Compliments must be given to the University of British Columbia Press for publishing such an excellent piece of analysis: shorter than a typical monograph but far more than a single article. This allows Cooper to build his argument carefully at length and to present both his quantitative analysis and qualitative context, all in a trim package. (In a sign that perhaps a certain television show has had its day, this study of ministers and deputies in parliamentary systems does not make a single reference to *Yes, Minister*.) *At the Pleasure of the Crown* is a very grounded study that will serve as an important reference going forward for the study of public management in Canada and as a new answer to a perpetual public administration question.

**Conflicts of Interest.** Christopher A. Cooper, the author of the reviewed title, currently serves as the French-language book review editor for the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. This review was coordinated by the journal's English-language book review team without any involvement from Dr. Cooper. The author of this review, Jonathan Malloy, does not have any conflicts of interest to declare.

## Partisan Odysseys: Canada's Political Parties

Nelson Wiseman, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020, pp. 240.

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In this concise and accessible primer on party politics, Nelson Wiseman employs a “granular” historical approach—thick description—to shed light on how Canada's political parties, major and minor, have adapted over time to their changing environments, sometimes completely reinventing themselves in the process. As the “values, concerns, and interests of Canadians have changed,” Wiseman writes, so too have the various parties' stances on the key issues of the day, along with their approaches to mobilizing votes to gain power (viii).

In straightforward chronological fashion, starting with the rebellions against the colonial elites and the struggle for responsible government in British North America in the early 1800s, Wiseman explores the dominant “motifs” of each successive era of party competition. There is a certain conceptual looseness to this notion of motif, but it seems to stand in for the prevailing narratives, visions and policy prescriptions advanced by the constellation of parties at any given time in their quest for power. For example, “empire versus continent became the central motif of party politics between the 1890s and 1930s” (20), with the Conservatives advocating strong ties to Great Britain and the Liberals favouring closer relations with the United States. Motifs can also incorporate existing socio-economic conditions, however, as was the case during Pierre Trudeau's lengthy tenure in power from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, when the “irrepressible power of Québécois nationalism against a background of stagflation . . . became the motif characterizing his time as prime minister” (83). Stagflation, the coexistence of high unemployment and runaway inflation in the early 1970s, was the principal factor behind the Liberal government's imposition of wage and price controls in 1975, only a year after Pierre Trudeau had gleefully pilloried Robert Stanfield and the Conservatives for suggesting just such a freeze during the federal election campaign.

This policy reversal on wage and price controls provides a particularly arresting illustration of the programmatic flexibility of our major parties (85), considered to be one of the defining characteristics of our distinctive party system since at least the early twentieth century, when André Siegfried

described how unsettling this protean quality was to the European observer. In one of the highlights of the book, Wiseman very carefully explains how the two major parties essentially “traded places” (99) on a number of key issues over the course of the twentieth century. On free trade with the United States, for instance, Brian Mulroney’s Progressive Conservative government ultimately negotiated a comprehensive trade deal with the Americans in the late 1980s that was stridently opposed by the Liberals, essentially reversing the two parties’ positions from earlier in the century. In Wiseman’s telling, these policy reversals—which also occurred in the area of provincial rights (101–2), state enterprise (102) and, to a certain extent, the Quebec question (103)—were not so much the product of electoral opportunism as a natural outgrowth of the party elites’ efforts to reshape their competitive partisan environments. Political parties, Wiseman reminds us, are both transmission belts between state and society *and* organizations that shape the polity, economy and culture in general. In other words, the “causal arrow” between party and society “points both ways” (ix).

In his concluding chapter, Wiseman focuses on the manifold ways in which “the nimble and enterprising modern party” has reinvented itself as an institution (xiv). Here he engages directly, albeit in a rather compressed fashion, with the current social science literature on Canadian political parties as organizations, examining in turn party leadership selection mechanisms, the role of party members, party finance, the role of the media and party identification. His main takeaway is that tropes of party decline are entirely unwarranted in the Canadian case: “To be sure, there is more disillusionment with Canada’s parties today than in the past but they continue to dominate the political landscape” (158). This may well be true, but one of the shortcomings of this otherwise perceptive analysis is that the author fails to devote adequate attention to recent large-scale changes in representative democracy—not just in Canada but in most of the so-called advanced democracies—many of them enabled by social media and other new technologies of communication. Wiseman is thus not in a position to rule out more pessimistic theses about the condition of the outwardly strong parties of today, such as Peter Mair’s (2013) argument that these organizations are now ruling over a democratic void—that they have become, in effect, the main players in what is mostly a “spectator democracy.”

Wiseman aims his book at “non-specialist students of Canadian politics . . . general readers . . . politically engaged citizens, journalists, and anyone else who wants to know more about the history of Canada’s political parties” (vii–viii). This intended audience, along with specialists in the field of party politics, will find in each chapter historically rich descriptions of the different eras of partisan competition, along with occasionally surprising (or overlooked) nuggets of information, in a narrative that is written with considerable verve.

## Reference

Mair, Peter. 2013. *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy*. London: Verso.

## Doing Politics Differently? Women Premiers in Canada’s Provinces and Territories

Sylvia Bashevkin, ed., Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019, pp. 332.

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Canadian first ministers at the federal and provincial levels have much say in the direction of government, and since 1867 such leadership positions have been almost exclusively occupied by