

Famous Last Words - A Comparative Focus on Resignation Speeches to Trace Contemporary European Instability: The Cases of David Cameron and Matteo Renzi.

ABSTRACT

In 2016, the governing coalitions of two European countries each held a public referendum which resulted in the resignation of their celebrity leader. The British Prime Minister David Cameron quit after the “Leave” campaign won the Brexit vote in June. A few months later, in December, the Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi resigned as well, following the negative outcome of the Italian Constitutional referendum. Several media platforms broadcast their speeches in real time, marking the political fall of both leaders, precipitating a transition in power in their respective democracies and threatening the stability of the European Union.

In the light of the growing interest about the rise and impact of celebrity politicians, [see e.g. Street, 2004; Wheeler, 2013], this article provides a comparative insight into both Cameron and Renzi’s resignation ceremonies as key moments of tracing their downfall under the media spotlight - from high office to civilian life once more. Combining speech-writing and screenwriting tools in conjunction with celebrity studies, this paper investigates the ways in which a resignation ceremony marks the exact fall of an institutional representative; what words and communication strategy are used to preserve political stability and, finally, what celebrity politicians’ resignation speeches can tell us about the future of European leadership.

Keywords; celebrity politics; resignation speeches; Brexit, Renzi, Cameron

1. Introduction

In 2016, the governing coalitions of two European countries each held a public referendum which ended with a surprising result and the subsequent resignation of their celebrity leader. The British Prime Minister David Cameron quit after the Leave campaign won the Brexit vote in June.¹ A few months later, in December, the Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi resigned as well, following the negative outcome of the Italian Constitutional referendum.² Only a few hours after the results were made public, several TV and media platforms broadcast their resignation speeches in real time. There are three reasons these moments were crucial: (i) they marked the fall of both celebrity political leaders, (ii) they decreed a transition in power in their respective democracies and, finally, (iii) they contributed to threatening the stability of the European Union.

This article provides a comparative insight into both Cameron and Renzi's resignation ceremonies as key moments of tracing their downfall under media spotlight, from high office to civilian life once more. Combining speech-writing and screenwriting tools in conjunction with celebrity studies, the following key questions are investigated: (i) in which ways does a resignation speech mark the exact moment of the fall of an institutional representative? (ii) What is the significance of speechwriting in the contemporary mediascape to preserve political stability? And

¹ The United Kingdom European Union Referendum, also known as the "Brexit referendum" was held on June 23rd 2016 in the United Kingdom and the British Oversea Territory of Gibraltar. The citizens were required to choose whether the UK would confirm or withdraw its membership of the European Union. The "Leave" won with the 51.89% of preferences against the 48.11% of the "Remain". For further reference see Whyman, P. B. and Petrescu, A. I. (2017) *The Economics of Brexit - A Cost Benefit Analysis of the UK's Economic Relationship with the EU*, London: Palgrave MacMillan and Ridge-Neuman, A., Leòn-Solis, F. and O'Donnell, H. (2018). *Reporting the Road To Brexit - International Media and the EU Referendum 2016*, London: Palgrave MacMillan.

² The Italian Constitutional Referendum (2016) was held on December 4th, 2016. Citizens were required to approve or reject a constitutional law aiming to amend part of the Italian Constitution in order to (i) reform the composition and powers of the Parliament; (ii) the division of powers between the State, the regions and other administrative entities. The "approve" side received 40.89% of preferences against the 59.11% of preferences for rejecting the new law. For extended readings see Albanesi E. et al. (2016) *Referendum Costituzionale: Uno sguardo d'insieme sulla riforma Renzi-Boschi* [tr. Constitutional Referendum - A comprehensive view on the Renzi-Boschi Reform], Rome: Utet Giuridica.

finally, (iii) what can resignation speeches tell us about the future of European leadership?

In order to answer these questions, this article is structured as follows: in the first section I introduce and discuss the contemporary relevance of celebrity politics and demonstrate why this discourse applies specifically to Matteo Renzi and David Cameron. The second section is dedicated to an evaluation of both leaders' resignation speeches and ceremonies in order to trace the fall of these two celebrity politicians. Finally, the third section explores the impact of their resignation ceremony and draws a comprehensive evaluation of their resignation within the wider European landscape.

2. Theoretical Framework

When it comes to identifying how contemporary Western democracies function (or dysfunction), several scholars agree with a progressive celebritisation of the public sphere. Among others, Olivier Driessens has recently advanced a multi-dimensional model defining "celebritization" as "the group of societal and cultural changes implied by celebrity" [2013, 643]. In simpler terms, this means that many contemporary societies are predominantly structured around the dynamics of celebrity culture, making pervasive use of mass and social media platforms to communicate and therefore turning these technologies into the privileged space where public discourse is exercised.

This preliminary consideration is connected to the political sphere. In 1994, Joshua Gamson was one of the first scholars to discuss the impact of the American star system on 20th Century national politics, concluding that:

“Celebrity is a world in which organizational and professional conflicts resolve in simulation, performance, mimicry, blurring: a world in which authenticity is deferred and superficial fragments circulate. Therein lie its dangers, but also its promise: to keep alive the conflict-ridden questions of power, role playing, equality and authority, to dwell in a cultural conversation that is elsewhere distorted or given up, indeed to protect it through its superficiality and triviality .”

[Gamson, 1994:196]

Since then, more and more publications have evaluated the consistency and impact of celebrity politics on Western societies by recognising that “the boundaries between celebrity and politics are becoming increasingly blurred” [Coen: 2015, 372], especially in the 21st Century. John Street investigated the core characteristics underpinning the essence of contemporary celebrity politicians, and identified at least two transformational groups. He defined the first type of celebrity politician, or “CP1”, as a “traditional politician [...] who engages with the world of popular culture in order to enhance or advance their pre-established political functions and goals” [Street, 2004:437]. A CP1 is a candidate elected due to their political skills and who has progressively gained their popularity by engaging with their electorate on a large scale. The second type of celebrity politician, or “CP2”, is on the other hand, an “entertainer who pronounces on politics and claims the right to represent peoples and causes”. [Street, 2004:438]. In simpler terms, CP2s were already famous in business or showbusiness long before they took office. They successfully convert their fans into voters. While this second kind of profile might well apply to contemporary and past leaders such as Donald Trump or Ronald Reagan, both the former Prime Ministers who are the very centre of this investigation - David Cameron and Matteo Renzi - firmly belong in the first category.

3. David Cameron and Matteo Renzi: The Making of Celebrity Politicians

Both David Cameron and Matteo Renzi have been involved in politics since a young age. Cameron collaborated with the Conservative Research Department from 1988, whilst Renzi became junior secretary of the Italian Popular Party in 1995. They were both 22 at the time. Since then - and despite holding different political views - both leaders share a few similarities in their rise and consolidation as celebrity politicians.³

Firstly, *age*. In the years immediately preceding their election, Cameron and Renzi were much younger than their political opponents. As Leader of the Opposition, between late 2005 and mid-2010, Cameron (b.1966) was respectively fifteen and seventeen years younger than the Prime Ministers in office: Tony Blair (b.1953) and Gordon Brown (b.1951). Therefore, he was confronting two mature and solid leaders in their fifties for half a decade. He was 43 when he was first elected in 2010, making him the youngest prime minister in almost 200 years [Hough, 2010]. The same is true of Renzi, who consolidated his political growth in his early thirties by being president of the Province of Florence, then mayor of Florence and then Secretary of the Democratic Party. At 39 years old when he was elected in 2013, he was the youngest Prime Minister in Italian history and of the European Union at that time. [Il Messaggero, 2014 and McKenna, 2014].

Secondly, *technology*. One of the indicators to measure popularity in the contemporary political landscape is the leader's ability to make use of major social media platforms. [see e.g. Ekman and Widholm, 2014; Skogerbø and Krumsvik, 2015]. Mark Wheeler (2013) has demonstrated that celebrity politicians not only

³ For extended reading on both Cameron and Renzi's early career see Ashcroft, M. and Oakeshott, I. (2015). *Call Me Dave: The Unauthorised Biography of David Cameron*, London: Biteback Publishing and Matteo Renzi's official website available at: www.matteorenzi.it [Last access: 11/11/2018].

communicate with vast audiences using these technologies, but they also use mass and social media to orchestrate their 'affective capacity' within the public sphere.

If we consider the use of social media, for instance, David Cameron quickly understood the importance of these platforms in his political life. With a range of 1.2-1.87 million followers in late 2018, his most successful profiles available are, respectively, Facebook and Twitter - the latter joined in January 2010 and with an average of over 300 tweets per year: almost one per day. Meanwhile, Renzi has 1.1 million followers on Facebook, and three times as much on Twitter, joined one year earlier than Cameron and boasting over 3.36 million followers.⁴ With more than 6500 tweets, his tweet rate hits 1.9 per day, with Italian as the language used in the overwhelmingly majority of his posts. If these numbers look relatively small compared to other international leaders such as Donald Trump in the USA (counting 23 million followers on FB and 55.6 million on Twitter by November 2018), let us compare them with Cameron's successor and current British Prime Minister, Theresa May. Despite the fact that she has been negotiating the terms of Brexit for over two years, at November 2018, her accounts are almost half as followed as Cameron's ones, with 669,000 followers on Twitter and less than 491,000 on Facebook.⁵ In Italy, the new Secretary of the Democratic Party and leader of the opposition, Maurizio Martina - who resigned on October 30th 2018, only a few days before this article was finalised,

⁴ See David Cameron's official social media profile. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DavidCameronOfficial/> [Last Access: 11/11/2018], Twitter: https://twitter.com/david_cameron and Matteo Renzi's official social media profile. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/matteorenziufficiale/> [Last Access: 11/11/2018], Twitter: <https://twitter.com/matteorenzi>

⁵ See Donald' Trump official social media profiles. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DonaldTrump/> [Last access 11/11/2018] and Twitter: <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump> [Last access 11/11/2018]. See also Theresa May's official social media profiles. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TheresaMayOfficial/> [Last access 11/11/2018] and Twitter: https://twitter.com/theresa_may [Last access 11/11/2018]

is even less influential: his accounts show 219,000 followers on Twitter, and only slightly over 85,880 on Facebook.⁶

Thirdly, *famous friends and TV appearances*. Another key component of Cameron's celebrification is his familiarity with celebrities. Receiving public support from a recognised member of the star system appears to have a certain cachet in the UK political scene. The Financial Times has defined this phenomenon as the "battle of the celebrity endorsement" (Ram, 2015). Among the plethora of stars who have endorsed Cameron in public or attended his glamorous celebrity parties hosted in the Foreign Office, are Take That singer Gary Barlow (Ram, 2015), former American President Barack Obama (Holehouse, 2015) and even now-disgraced American producer Harvey Weinstein (Mason, 2014). Another important step of celebrification is to reduce the distance between the formality of institutional patronage and the more relatable features of everyday life. In this sense, mainstream TV programmes are the perfect place where politicians can look "just like us" and build consensus [see Wood, Corbett and Flinders, 2016]. Matteo Renzi has often appeared on national talk and talent shows as a special guest since a young age. Beyond competing in the popular quiz show "La Ruota Della Fortuna" back in 1994 (itafilmsubs, 2014), in recent years, he has made a marked effort to reach younger audiences. We see him dismissing his formal attitude in the 2011 interview for the MTV docu-series "Il Testimone" and then in his 2014 appearance in the popular teenage talent show, "Amici" (Amabile Stifano, 2014), where he wears a 1950's Fonzie-style leather jacket. In Britain, Cameron's IMDB page lists over 90 credits in TV appearances and over 60 in archive footage since he was first elected in 2010.⁷

⁶ More information available at Maurizio Martina's official social media pages. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/maumartina/> [Last access 11/11/2018] and Twitter: <https://twitter.com/maumartina> [Last access 11/11/2018].

⁷ For a comprehensive list of David's Cameron's TV appearances see his IMDB page available at: <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm2090098/> [Last access 11/11/2018]

4. Falling (Political) Stars: Dissecting Cameron and Renzi's Resignation Speeches

After evaluating the reasons why David Cameron and Matteo Renzi relate to the phenomenon of celebrity politicians, let us now focus on the moment of their fall: their resignation speeches. Cameron's was on June 24th, 2016, immediately after the outcome of the Brexit vote. Renzi's was given on December 5th, 2016, following the result of the Italian constitutional referendum. Some might consider these moments as simply a duty of protocol, but resignation speeches are actually complex events which follow multimodal communication strategies, "guided partly by visually salient and partly by semantically relevant aspects" (Holšánová, 2012:252). This is why, in order to better outline the relevance of this moment in the field of contemporary celebrity studies, I am going to apply a comparative approach by concomitantly focusing on the following aspects: the visual portrayal of the broadcast event in order to investigate the mass media behaviour; and the rhetoric of the speech itself in order to identify the precise moment marking the fall of the celebrity politician.

In terms of methodology, I mainly refer to rhetoric studies and particularly to what James Martin suggests in *Situating Speech: A Rhetorical Approach to Political Strategy* (2015) by focusing on (i) the rhetorical context, (ii) the rhetorical argument and (iii) the rhetorical effects. This approach allows us to understand what kind of strategy the falling leader is employing through his resignation speech in order to "orient audiences" [Martin: 2015; 34] and therefore possibly preserve their celebrity status beyond their institutional role. In addition to this, I am employing visual analysis of the event in order to investigate if national TV broadcasters portray

the falling leader as “likeable, funny or ridiculous”. These options align with the approach suggested by Katharina Lobinger and Cornelia Brantner in *Likable, funny or ridiculous? A Q-sort study on audience perceptions of visual portrayals of politicians* (2015). As case studies, I chose to analyse the type of videos produced by the two main national broadcasters: BBC and RAI. The reasoning behind this choice is two-fold: on the one hand, they are useful to understand what kind of media image national broadcasters decide to employ for institutional communications, and especially in such a critical moment for political stability. Additionally, both videos are also available on their official Youtube channel, providing us with a deeper insight into the online circulation of these videos beyond traditional television broadcast.⁸

4.1 The Rhetorical Context

Let us now go deeper into considering the *rhetorical context* of Cameron and Renzi’s resignation speeches. The event is an official statement from the Prime Minister in charge, acknowledging the defeat of the party they are representing. It is, therefore, an institutional occasion, a solo performance decreeing a ritual passage for national democracy: if the Prime Minister resigns, the entire country will experience a void in stability. As both leaders were responsible for proposing the referendum and campaigning for the opposite result (or at least this was what Cameron was doing in the final stage of the referendum campaign) great expectation was put on potential snap general elections after this announcement.⁹

⁸ Matteo Renzi’s resignation speech video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qT9C5ALe6Q> [Last access: 11/11/2018]

Cameron’s resignation speech video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXNV3Ad0gQ0> [Last access: 11/11/2018]

⁹ On David Cameron campaigning to remain see Stewart H., Syal R. and Mason R., (2016). ‘David Cameron makes final plea for Britain to vote to remain in the EU’, in *The Guardian*, 22nd June.

Available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/22/david-cameron-makes-final-plea-for-britain-to-vote-to-remain-in-the-eu> [Last access 19/11/2018]

David Cameron announced his resignation with a 7-minute speech compared to Matteo Renzi's 10-minute statement. Cameron's setting is outdoors, directly outside the Cabinet's office in 10 Downing Street, London. In contrast, Matteo Renzi's setting is indoors, in the conference room of Palazzo Chigi, Rome. They are both institutional places, often employed by the Prime Minister for delivering institutional communications. Both leaders are dressed formally in a dark-blue suit and tie, with Cameron opting for an azure shirt compared to the white one that Renzi wears. Both BBC and RAI tend to maintain an apparent neutral tone. Both speeches are delivered from official spaces and the broadcast features minimal camera movement.

It has been proven that the "depicted nonverbal behavior of a politician [such as] the activity, posture, gesture, facial expression and dress of the depicted person are of particular interest" [Lobinger and Brantner, 2015:18] to preserve or build consensus. In particular, studies have shown that audiences tend to "dislike" big gestures and "uncontrolled facial expressions" and "lack of dominance", such as when the politician is not put at the centre of the image and their face is "hidden or partly hidden" [Lobinger and Brantner, 2015:24]. As evidence of this, both leaders are shown in an ideal space, where light is well distributed on both their bodies and perfectly shaved faces and the camera movements are reduced to a minimum. The two maintain a generally calm and steady appearance while being filmed with predominantly medium-frontal-shots for most of the time. This means that both leaders are kept at the centre of the image, with Cameron being shown in the long distance only on a couple of occasions to include the image of the first lady standing next to him, and the plethora of journalists who he faces. By shifting the attention from Cameron's words to visual elements for a few seconds, the broadcast enhances

his likeability with a slightly “below-eye-level camera angle” of the Prime Minister [Lobinger and Brantner 2015:20]. This is predominantly maintained throughout the whole speech. Finally, both broadcasters choose to show their speeches as if the leaders are talking to the camera, directly orienting them “towards interaction” [Lobinger and Brantner 2015:18] with the audience. This reinforces once more the idea that national TV channels were not entirely neutral during this institutional fall. Instead, they tended to depict the leaders as empathetic and respectable instead of dislikable. Given these considerations as the main visual elements of the rhetorical context, let us now focus on the rhetorical strategy of the resignation.

4.2 The Rhetorical Strategy

In terms of structure, both Cameron and Renzi’s speeches are tripartite, which means in simpler terms that they are composed of an introduction, the main body and a conclusion. The choice of using a tripartite structure is not new to the art of storytelling: it is familiar to novels [see e.g. Tyson, 2016], theatre [see e.g. Aristotle, c. 335 BC], screenwriting [see e.g. Field, 2003] and even classical music with its sonata form [see e.g. Hepokoski and Darcy, 2006]. When it comes to effective speech writing in official events, Thomas Neale has outlined how “an arresting introduction should lead to an empathetic statement of the main theme or themes. The argument that follows seeks to elaborate and develop the theme convincingly and effectively - that is without too much detail. The central theme is restated in the closing proportion” [Neale, 2007:16]. This official guideline well reflects the strategy adopted by both Prime Ministers who begin their speech with an introduction of the purpose of the referendum and its outcomes, proceed by outlining the list of effective norms passed and adopted by their government, and finally conclude with their resignation and an indication of the need for further talks with

other institutional representatives in order to make this passage official in the following days.

A functional structure is not, however, the only key element of effective communication. This is why it is important to focus on the ways that empathy and clarity are delivered through the choice of words and figures of speech. I will thus focus on three main aspects: (i) the number of collective terms used to show how the Prime Minister interacts with the whole nation, (ii) the way the resignation is announced in order to trace the exact moment of the leaders' fall, and finally, (iii) the number of times Cameron and Renzi refer to themselves in the first person, in order to understand the dichotomy between the institutional role and their celebrity personality.

4.2.1 Collective Terms and Nationalism

Several scholars have explored the effect of using collective terms in order to engage with the audience they represent [see e.g Gray, 2010 or Proctor and I-Wen Su, 2011]. In particular, Michael Billing has outlined the effectiveness of collective terms to reinforce a sense of “banal nationalism” in the audience, intended as the set of “ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced” [Billing, 1995: p.6]. This technique is of great importance during the resignations, as it intends to prevent the electorate from distrusting the institutions, in particular the party which is governing the country and whose leader is officially resigning. The following table summarises how many times Cameron and Renzi have explicitly mentioned the name of their country or their nationality during their speech and for what purposes.

	Country (UK-Britain/Italy)	Nationality (British/Italian)	Europe (EU/European)	Tot
Renzi	11	5	2	17
Cameron	6	4	9	19

Table 1. Number of times the Prime Ministers refer to the country they represent and its people

Overall, Matteo Renzi refers to Italy and Italians 16 times. In a quarter of these, the name Italy is used to celebrate the country and draws cheers from the audience. For instance, he says “Viva l’Italia!”. All other times, the word “Italy” is used to indicate Italian politics/politicians and democracy (see e.g. “politica italiana”; “democrazia italiana”; “politici che abbiamo in Italia”; “guida dell’Italia” eng. “Italian politics”, “Italian democracy”, “Italian politicians”, “Italian guide”) or the interaction with Renzi’s government and the outcome on the population (e.g. “lasciamo l’Italia” eng. “We leave Italy”). By contrast, references to the European Union are generally used in a positive way, mentioning current politics (e.g. “in questa stagione politica europea” eng. “in this European political season”) and the upcoming 60th anniversary from the Rome Treaty, of which Italy was one of the co-founders: “In Europa a marzo con l’appuntamento per i sessant’anni dell’Unione” eng. “we will celebrate the Union’s 60th anniversary in March”.

On the other hand, David Cameron employs national and collective terms on ten occasions. Two of them are used for economic reassurance, with expressions such as “Britain’s economy is fundamentally strong...” or “Britain’s economic strength”. Other references to the country and its people show their direct relationship with the European Union. Cameron highlights the upcoming challenge of

Brexit nine times in his speech, specifically referring to its broad impact on the social, political and economic life of the next years. He uses sentences like: “The British people have voted to leave the European Union”; “Britons living in European countries and European citizens living here” along with “we must prepare for a negotiation with the European Union”; “Britain’s position in the European Union” and “Britain is stronger, safer and better off inside the European Union” etc. In both speeches, the majority of collective terms is predominantly used in the first half of the ceremony, before officially announcing their resignations.

4.2.2 Resignation: Type of metaphor used to communicate they are quitting.

Once more, both leaders use the same rhetorical strategy to pre-announce their resignation, particularly in relation to the use of metaphors and metonymies. Scholars such as Beard (2000) and Cox (2012) have shown the correlation between the mastering of these figures of speech and the ability of the leader to engage with the audience to increase their popularity, especially in moments of crisis. In particular, metaphors serve not only to create “an effect of surprise” (Franke, 2000:145) to reinforce the leader’s rhetoric but most importantly to explain complex events through popular imagery. In relation to this, Cameron and Renzi are not exceptions.

Cameron introduces the topic of his resignation by talking about “fresh leadership”, an adjective which has multiple layers of meaning. The Oxford dictionary lists the word “fresh” to indicate a context which is “not previously known or used; new or different”, a person “full of energy and vigour”, a weather which “rather

cold and windy” and a type of water which is “not salty”.¹⁰ Cameron corroborates his resignation using maritime terms and metaphors, which suits well the insular conformation of the country. He extends this metaphor across five self-references and mentions the British people and its territory three times.

“But the British people have made a very clear decision to take a different path and as such I think the country requires **fresh leadership** to take it in this direction. I will do everything I can as Prime Minister to steady the **ship** over the coming weeks and months but I do not think it would be right for me to try to be the **captain** that steers our country to its next destination.”¹¹

On the other hand, Renzi uses the metaphor of the “exploding chair” to refer to his own resignation:

“Volevo cancellare le troppe poltrone della politica: il Senato, le Province, il Cnel. Non ce l’ho fatta e **allora la poltrona che salta è la mia**. Domani pomeriggio riunirò il Consiglio dei ministri, ringrazierò i miei colleghi per la straordinaria avventura, una squadra **coesa, forte e compatta**, e salirò al Quirinale dove al presidente della Repubblica consegnerò le mie dimissioni. Tutto il Paese sa di poter contare su una guida **autorevole e salda** quale quella del Presidente Mattarella.”¹²

“I wanted to eliminate the excessive chairs of our politics: the Senate, the Provinces and the Cnel. I could not make it and therefore **the chair that will explode is my own**. Tomorrow afternoon I will call for a meeting with all the

¹⁰ See definition of “fresh” in Oxford Dictionary, available at: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fresh> [Last access 19/11/18]

¹¹ See Cameron’s full resignation speech transcript here: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/24/david-cameron-announces-his-resignation---full-statement/> [Last access 19/11/18]

¹² Renzi’s resignation speech transcript available here: <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/testo-integrale-discorso-dimissioni-matteo-renzi-1339010.html>

ministers of this government, I will thank my colleagues for this extraordinary adventure: they are a **strong, solid and cohesive** team. Then, I will resign in front of the President of the Republic, at the Quirinale. All the nation knows they can count on the **steady and authoritative** guidance of President Mattarella”.

Despite using terms that call for institutional destruction, this key passage also serves as reassurance for the institutional strength of the democracy and his party. The use of terms such as “cohesive”, “strong”, “solid”, “authoritative” and “steady” for the role of the President of the Republic support this point. As well as Renzi, Cameron seems to show a faith in the democratic process too, concluding his speech with a direct reference to the Cabinet, the Governor of the Bank of England and the Queen.

The **Cabinet** will meet on Monday, the **Governor of the Bank of England** is making a statement about the steps that the **Bank and the Treasury** are taking to reassure financial markets. We will also continue taking forward the important legislation that we set before Parliament in the Queen's Speech. And I have spoken to **Her Majesty the Queen** this morning to advise her of the steps that I am taking.

4.2.3 Self-reference: number of time politicians are talking about themselves

Beyond the reassurances to their nations that their resignations would not impact on institutional stability, these two speeches feature a key aspect of celebrity politics: the insistent use of first person and self-references. James Martin suggests that effective rhetoric happens with the use of “expressive conceptions of ideas” which allow celebrity politicians to take a “strategic re-appropriation of a situation”,

putting “a greater focus on actors than institutions” (Martin, 2015:26). Despite using collective terms 13 (Renzi) and ten times (Cameron), both resignation speeches show evidence of celebrity traits, reflecting the the spotlight which is upon them, much more so than on any broader institution. To give an example, the focus of Renzi’s speech is on a very *personal defeat*, rather than a party defeat. This is remarked four times: “I have lost” (3) and a “I didn’t make it”. He never says “The Democratic Party has lost” or “The government has lost the referendum”. Also, Renzi uses the pronoun “I” 25 times: 5 explicitly and 20 implicitly, as well as the adjective “my” 7 times, including “my government”; “my successor”. This indicates a total of 32 self-references - three a minute - compared to the 17 uses of collective terms. On the other hand, Cameron uses “I” 26 times and possessive adjectives such as “my” and “myself” 6 times (totalling 32 occasions - one every 14 seconds), compared to the 19 occasions when he uses collective terms.

4.3 The Rhetorical Effects

The previous sections have discussed how the resignation speeches affected the institutional role of both Renzi and Cameron - or at least their immediate futures. At a personal level, a resignation speech is where the institutional role of the leader ends. Paraphrasing Kantorowicz’ *The King’s Two Bodies* (1957), a resignation speech is an ending ceremony for a democratic cycle; it is the moment when the *body politic* of the Prime Minister ends their leadership and gets separated from their *body natural* and the politicians goes back to their normal life.

But what happens when the politician is a celebrity? The resignation speeches of both leaders marked their (temporary) fall from the olympus of celebrity. Not only did both leaders lose their positions of government leadership, but their

entire parties have since suffered a reduction of power, showing how celebrity politicians might be the talismen of their parties. After Cameron's resignation, Theresa May was called to lead the Conservative Party in the UK, but lost 13 seats in the 2017 snap elections. This forced the new government to form a coalition with the Irish Democratic Union Party (DUP) in the midst of the ongoing Brexit negotiations [See Cowley and Kavanagh, 2018]. It was a similar story for the Democratic Party in Italy. Despite losing the referendum, Renzi had been able to convince around 40% of the electorate support the government led by his Democratic Party. After his resignation, the results of the 2018 elections showed that only 19% of the electorate voted for the Democratic party, a net loss of over half of their previous supporters (see *The Guardian*, 2018).

In addition, although both Cameron and Renzi attempted to reassure their public that the economy would be stable, both countries appeared to foresee adverse consequences in the near future. A recent leak of information has suggested an apocalyptic scenario in the case of a no-deal outcome between the UK and the EU in which "the port of Dover will collapse on day one. The supermarkets of Cornwall and Scotland will run out of food within a couple of days, and hospitals will run out of medicines within two weeks" (Stewart, 2018). Meanwhile, Italy may soon face disciplinary action from the EU as the 2019 Budget Act drafted by the new governing and eurosceptic coalition - Lega North and Five Star Movement - could increase public debt (see BBC, 2018).

The resignations of Cameron and Renzi not only impacted their personal careers, but also destabilised the future of their party and their countries' economy. Their resignations also had a profound impact on the European Union. The EU is the main institution suffering from the resignation of these two celebrity politicians: the

British withdrawal marks a historic defeat in the history of the Union, directly impacting the lives of EU nationals living in the UK and British nationals residing in EU member states - over 4.5 million people in total - and indirectly affecting both present and future generations in terms of free movement and trades. At the same time, the new Italian government is actively challenging the values of the Union by criminalising boat migration and threatening to leave the monetary zone and to deport Roma communities, leading to an unexpected domino effect in other member states (Kirchgaessner, 2018).

5. Conclusion

This article has explored the correlation between celebrity politicians and resignation speeches. Through the key examples of David Cameron and Matteo Renzi, I have shown how national broadcasters have actively supported the respectability of their leaders. In addition, the words chosen by both leaders have highlighted the predominant use of self-reference over the choice of collective terms which is in contrast to their formal support for other governing institutions. In addition, whilst both leaders made reassuring comments about the political and economic stability of their countries, the consequences of their resignations did not play out so smoothly, as shown by the ongoing Brexit negotiations and the volatile politics of the new Italian government.

A final consideration is that November 2019 will see the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Though it is not possible to draw a clear conclusion from the fallout of Cameron and Renzi's resignations, this act of remembrance will cast light upon the significance of the European identity: firstly, as the EU will celebrate 30

years as a Union without walls dividing its citizens; secondly, as for the first time 2019 Brexit Britain will redesign the EU's geopolitical shape.

Bibliography

- Albanesi E. et al. (2016) *Referendum Costituzionale: Uno sguardo d'insieme sulla riforma Renzi-Boschi* [tr. Constitutional Referendum - A comprehensive view on the Renzi-Boschi Reform], Rome: Utet Giuridica
- Amabile Stifano (2014). Matteo Renzi da Amici di maria de Filippi alla fiducia in Parlamento (tv talk). [Online video]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1qsSxLP87g> [Last access: 11/11/2018]
- Ashcroft, M. and Oakeshott, I. (2015). *Call Me Dave: The Unauthorised Biography of David Cameron*, London: Biteback Publishing
- BBC News (2018). 'Italy budget: Rome set to back down in EU row', 26th November. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-46343033> [Last access: 26/22/2018]
- Beard A. (2000). *The Language of Politics*. London: Routledge
- Billig M. (1995) *Banal Nationalism - Theory, Culture and Society*, London: SAGE
- Coen, S. (2014) 'The Age of Celebrity Politics', in *The Psychologist*, 28(5), pp.372-375
- Cox, J. L., (2012). 'Politics in Motion: Barack Obama's use of movement's metaphors' in *American Communication Journal*, 14(2), pp. 1-13
- Cowley P. and Cavanagh, D. (2018). *The British General Elections of 2017*, London: Palgrave MacMillan

- Driessens, O. (2013). The Celebritization of Society and Culture: Understanding the Structural Dynamics of Celebrity Culture. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 16(6), 641–657.
- Ekman, M. and Widholm, A. (2014). 'Twitter and the Celebritisation of Politics'. In *Celebrity Studies*, 5(4).
- Field, S. (2003). *The Definitive Guide to Screenwriting*, London: Ebury Press
- Franke, W. (2000). 'Metaphor and the Making of Sense: The contemporary metaphor renaissance'. In *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 33(2), 137-153
- Gamson, J. (1994). *Claims to Fame - Celebrity in Contemporary America*, Berkeley, LA, London: University of California Press
- Gray, J. (2010). *How Leaders Speak: Essential Rules for Engaging and Inspiring Others*, Toronto: Durndurn
- Halliwell, S. and Aristotle. (1998). *Aristotle's Poetics*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press
- Holšánová, J. (2012). 'New Methods for Studying Visual Communication and Multimodal Integration' in *Visual Communication* 11(3) pp. 251-257
- Hepokoski, J. and Darcy, W. (2006). *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Holehouse, M. (2015). 'Labour Slams Obama after endorsing David Cameron', in *The Telegraph*, 19 January. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/harriet-harman/11356230/Labour-slams-Obama-after-endorsing-David-Cameron.html> [Last access: 11/11/2018]
- Hough, A. (2010). David Cameron becomes youngest Prime Minister in almost 200 years, 'The Telegraph', 11 May. Available at:

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/7712545/David-Cameron-becomes-youngest-Prime-Minister-in-almost-200-years.html> [Last

access: 11/11/2018]

- Kantorowicz, E. (2016). *The King's Two Bodies - A study in Medieval Political Theology*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. First published in 1957
- Kirchgaessner, S. (2018). 'Far-right Italy minister vows 'action' to expel thousands of Roma'. In *The Guardian*, 19th June. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/19/italy-coalition-rift-roma-register-matteo-salvini> [Last access: 11/11/2018].
- Lobinger, K. and Brantner, C. (2015). 'Likable, funny or ridiculous? A Q-sort study on audience perceptions of visual portrayals of politicians'. In *Visual Communication*, 14(1), 15–40.
- Martin, J. (2015). 'Situating Speech. A Rhetorical Approach to Political Strategy', in *Political Studies*, Vol.63, pp. 25-42.
- Mason, R. (2014). 'David Cameron revisits Cool Britannia (with Michael McIntyre and Cilla Black)', in *The Guardian*, 30th June. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/jun/30/david-cameron-a-listers-cool-britannia-party> [Last access: 11/11/2018]
- 'Matteo se passa sarà il premier più giovane d'Italia e dell'Unione Europea' [ENG: If Matteo Wins he will be the youngest PM of Italian History and in the EU] in *Il Messaggero*, 13th February. Available at: https://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/politica/renzi_letta_goria_cameron-293777.html [Last Access: 11/11/2018]
- McKenna, J. (2014). 'Matteo Renzi appointed as Italy's youngest ever prime minister', in *The Telegraph*, 17th February. Available at:

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/10643606/Matteo-Renzi-appointed-as-Italys-youngest-ever-prime-minister.html> [Last Access:

11/11/2018]

- Neale, T. (2007). *Speechwriting in Perspective - A Brief Guide to Effective and Persuasive Communication*, Washington DC: Congressional Research Service
- Proctor S. and I-wen Su, L. (2011). 'The 1st Person Plural in Political Discourses - American Politicians in Interviews and in a debate', in *Journal of Pragmatics* n.43, pp.3251-3266
- Renzi, M. (2016). Il testo Integrale del discorso di dimissioni di Matteo Renzi - Matteo Renzi's full reignation speech' in *Il Giornale*, 5th December. Available at:
<http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/testo-integrale-discorso-dimissioni-matteo-renzi-1339010.html> [Last access: 19/11/18]
- Ram A. (2015). The Battle of Celebrity Endorsement, in *The Financial Times*, 31 March. Available at:
<https://www.ft.com/content/1201e35d-17ba-364e-821c-fd19ee134923> [Last access: 11/11/2018].
- Skogerbø, E. and Krumsvik A. H. (2015) 'Newspapers, Facebook and Twitter', in *Journalism Practice*, 9(3), pp.350-366.
- Stewart, H., (2018). 'Brexiters hit back at no-deal 'armageddon' warning', in *The Guardian*, 3rd June. Available at:
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jun/03/government-plays-down-brexit-armageddon-fears> [Last access 19/11/2018]

- Stewart, H., Syal R. and Mason R., (2016). 'David Cameron makes final plea for Britain to vote to remain in the EU', in *The Guardian*, 22nd June. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/22/david-cameron-makes-final-plea-for-britain-to-vote-to-remain-in-the-eu> [Last access 19/11/2018]
- Street, J. (2004). Celebrity Politicians: Popular Culture and Political Representation. In *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 6(4), 435–452.
- Telegraph Reporters (2016). 'David Cameron announces his resignation - full statement', in *The Telegraph*, 24th June. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/24/david-cameron-announces-his-resignation---full-statement/> [Last access 19/11/18]
- The Guardian (2018) *Italian Elections 2018 - Full Results*, 5th March, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2018/mar/05/italian-elections-2018-full-results-renzi-berlusconi> [Last access 19/11/18]
- Wheeler, M. (2013). *Celebrity Politics*; Malden-Cambridge: Polity Press
- Whyman, P. B. and Petrescu, A. I. (2017). *The Economics of Brexit - A Cost Benefit Analysis of the UK's Economic Relationship with the EU*, London: Palgrave MacMillan

Videos

- BBC NEWS (2016). *Brexit: David Cameron resigns as UK votes to leave - BBC News* [online video]. Available at: : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXNV3Ad0qQ0> [Last access: 11/11/2018]

- itafilmsubs (2014). Matteo Renzi Italy Prime Minister on 'Ruota della Fortuna'_Wheel of Fortune_English subs [online video]. Available at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WENbhyXSxlo> [Last access: 11/11/2018]
- RAI, (2016). *Referendum, Matteo Renzi: "Ho perso. Mi dimetto" - Porta a Porta* [online video]. Available at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qT9C5ALe6Q> [Last access: 11/11/2018]