Tesi di Laurea

Presidential and Prime-Ministerial Rhetoric: a contrastive rhetorical analysis of democratic and conservative discourse in the two major Anglophone Countries

Relatore
Ch. Prof. Daniela Cesiri

Correlatore
Ch. Prof. Geraldine Ludbrook

Laureando
Rossella Marcianò
Matricola 837888

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of my thesis is to highlight the main differences between Liberal and Conservative discourse, by comparing and contrasting the style of Barack Obama and Mitt Romney in the case of American Rhetoric, and by describing the evolution of Labour and Conservative Oratory in the case of British Rhetoric.

This descriptive-analytical investigation will scrutinize selected speeches given by the most influential speakers of both countries, examined in the light of Hallidayian Systemic Functional Grammar from critical perspective of Norman Fairclough (1989, 1995), whose model for CDA consists of three interrelated process of analyses: the object of the analysis (verbal and visual texts), the processes by which the object is produced and perceived by the audience (interpretation) and, finally, the socio-historical conditions that influence these processes (explanation).

On the basis of this theoretical framework, I shall attempt to link social practice and linguistic practice, as suggested by Fairclough, as well as the possible interrelatedness of textual properties and power relations.

Furthermore, this work attempts to reveal covert ideologies which are ‘hidden’ in texts, starting from the theoretical conceptualization of Batstone (1995: 198-99), who states that:

Critical Discourse Analysis seeks to reveal how texts are constructed so that particular (and potentially indoctrinating) perspectives can be expressed delicately and covertly; because they are covert, they are elusive of direct challenge, facilitating what Kress (1989: 57) calls the “retreat into mystification and impersonality”.

For these reasons the initial part of the first chapter will be dedicated to the description of Critical Discourse Analysis, a perspective which will represent the starting point of the analytical part of my work. An introduction including some generic definitions of CDA will then be outlined, its historical evolution and finally the most significant and influential approaches will be described,
namely those developed by Van Dijk, Wodak and Fairclough, the scholars who more than anyone contributed to the evolution of CDA.

Instead, at the ideological level, the main differences between Liberal and Conservative worldviews will be described by using George Lakoff’s theory (2002). This theory simplifies the contrast between Progressive and Conservative mind-sets by presenting them as styles of parenting. In this way Lakoff outlines two contrasting reference models: the first, called ‘Strict Father Model’, assigns highest priority to such things as moral strength, respect for authority and self-discipline and corresponds to a Conservative mind-set. The second, defined by Lakoff as ‘Nurturant Parent Model’, focuses instead on empathy for others, help for those who need help and compassion and caring. This is typical of a Progressive worldview.

After describing such models, we shall see how their contrasting priorities result, both in American and British context, in a very different way to perceive Political Discourse. Subsequently, in the first chapter of the thesis, I shall adopt an analytical approach to compare and contrast the divergent rhetorical styles adopted by the leading actors of the last Presidential election in the United States, Barack Obama, the Democratic nominee, and Mitt Romney, the Republican nominee. The analysis will introduce and describe many of the most influential figurative techniques commonly used by persuasive orators; techniques such as tricolon, anaphora, antithesis, antistrophe, alliteration, and so on. Such a description will also bring to mind Orwell and his famous essay entitled Politics and the English Language (1946), which examines the connection between political orthodoxies and the debasement of language.

At a syntactical level, a considerable part of the analysis will centre on ‘person deixis’, examining the occurrence and correlates of the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘they’, commonly used to create oppositional relationships between in-groups and out-groups, often with negativity towards the ‘others’. More specifically, the focus will be on the collective lexeme ‘we’ and its intrinsic capacity to convey a sense of unity and belonging, thus reporting on the
distancing effect achieved in political speeches by means of personal pronouns.

Regarding the interpersonal function of discourse, which embodies all uses of language to express social and personal relations (Zhuanglin, 1988), we included the analysis of Transitivity and Modality, useful to show the social relationship, scale of formality and the relationship between power and language. Therefore, modal verbs, modal adverbs, notional verbs, tense and all the parts of the speech which express the ‘modalization’, have been extensively analysed in order to show the ideological position of the speakers in discourse.

A similar analysis has been conducted with reference to the second context examined, concerning British prime-ministerial rhetoric, to offer an evolutionary analysis of the persuasive speeches delivered by the most effective British communicators of recent years, from Baldwin to Cameron in the case of the Conservative Party, and Bevan to Brown in the case of the Labour Party.

Also in this case, through the investigations of verbs, pronouns, conjunctions, metaphors and so on, we shall try to portray a complete picture of how persuasion is accomplished through specific and intentional lexico-grammatical choices. Hence, we shall see how, while the Conservatives managed to develop a more coherent language model across time, corresponding perfectly to the highest values proposed by the referential Strict Father Model; by contrast Labour politicians seem to have failed in developing their own distinctive language.

For this reason the most recurrent topic within the Labour Oratory of recent decades is about ‘Change’, as proved by Blair’s ‘Third Way’, an attempt to renew the British Labour Party by depicting it as ‘the party of change’. Furthermore, since nowadays British Oratory of both parties seems to be experiencing a certain decadency and decline, at the end of the section I added the analysis of leaders outside the main parties, whose more populist perspective seems increasingly able to reconnect people and politics.
Thus, the final two paragraphs will deal with the description of the rhetorical skills of Nick Clegg, leader of the Liberal Democrats and Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence Party. Both speakers seem more able, than Gordon Brown or David Cameron for instance, to position themselves and their political campaigns on a street level, through a more participative and populist Rhetoric which attempts to create proximity and affinity with the audience.
1. **What is Critical Discourse Analysis?**

1.1. **Some definitions**

As mentioned in the introduction, the scholars who more than anyone have contributed to the development of Critical Discourse Analysis are Teun Van Dijk, Ruth Wodak and Norman Fairclough.

First and foremost, according to Van Dijk (1998: 352), Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) can be defined as “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context”. Starting from here it can be argued that CDA is not so much a direction, school or specialization but rather an innovative perspective which aims to provide a different mode of theorizing and analysing written and spoken texts in order to reveal the discursive sources of power and bias.

In a similar way, Fairclough (1993: 135) defines CDA as:

> discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

Similarly, Wodak (2001) claims that CDA is:

> a perspective which highlights the substantively linguistic and discursive nature of social relations of power in contemporary societies. This is partly the matter of how power relations are exercised and negotiated in discourse. It is fruitful to look at both ‘power in discourse’ and ‘power over discourse’ in these dynamic terms (Wodak, 2001 as cited in Desta, 2012: 75).
In summary, it can be argued that CDA aims to observe and make transparent the relations between discourse and power, inspecting the persuasive strategies used by politicians in order to appeal to the audience.

1.2. Main tenets of CDA

Regarding the main tenets of CDA, together, Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 271-80) established 8 foundational principles which encapsulate the essence of CDA. First of all, with the first principle they both state that “CDA addresses social problems” and language is a social practice through which the world is represented. That means that CDA does not limit itself to analyse language and language use, but it also focuses on the characteristic of social and cultural processes. Thus, CDA adopts a critical approach in order to reveal the exercise of power that is often hidden in discourses, and the main goal pursued is to obtain results which are of practical relevance to the cultural, social, political and even economic contexts (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

Indeed, the second tenet of CDA argues that “power relations are discursive”. That means that language is subtly used to exercise power, domination and prejudice and, therefore, in such a context CDA aims to make explicit and to explain how social relations of power are exercised and negotiated in and through discourse (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

Instead, the third principle states that Discourse constitutes society and culture and is historical, in the sense that acquires a meaning only if situated in a specific social, ideological and cultural context. Furthermore, it also means that every instance of language use contributes to reproduce and transform society and culture.

The next principle establishes that “Discourse also does ideological work” - representing, constructing society and reproducing unequal relations of power. In other words, ideologies are often reproduced through discourse, and, in order to reveal how this is accomplished, it is not enough to analyse texts semantically, but it is necessary to consider also the
discursive practice, that is how texts are interpreted and received and what social effects they have.

Moving forward, another important principle states that “Discourse is historical” – connected to previous, contemporary and subsequent discourses. That means that a given speech can be understood only with reference to its historical context – that is to say on the social field or domain in which the discursive event takes place.

The next principle is that “relations between text and society are mediated”. CDA, thus, aims to make connections between sociocultural processes and structures on the one hand, and properties of texts on the other. Such tenet entails that the relationship between text and society is not merely deterministic; on the contrary it evokes an idea of mediation.

From this point of view, while Fairclough analyses this mediation by looking at ‘orders of discourse’ (Fairclough, 1992a, 1995a), Wodak and Van Dijk add a socio-cognitive level to their analysis.

Another important principle which deserves a mention argues that CDA is interpretative and explanatory, that is to say that CDA goes beyond textual analysis in order to interpret and explain texts. These interpretations and explanations are dynamic and open and imply a systematic methodology and an investigation of context.

To conclude, the last principle which CDA is founded upon argues that “Discourse is a form of social action”. This final tenet contains the essence and the main aim of CDA, that is to uncover opaqueness and power relationships hidden in texts, bringing about change in communicative and socio-political practices (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997).

1.3. Evolution of CDA

The linguistic and philosophical foundations on which CDA is founded upon can be connected to certain branches of social theory and interactional sociolinguistics.
First of all, on the philosophical level, some concepts of CDA are widely influenced by Marx’s critique of the process of exploitation of the working class and also by the Gramscian theory, which argues that power can be exercised not only through repressive coercion but also through the persuasive potential of discourse.

Staying on the philosophical level, also Habermas (1981) contributed to the development of CDA with the notion of ‘validity claims’, whose main function is to guarantee that the speaker could adduce supporting reasons that would convince the listener to accept the utterance. Indeed, at the heart of Jürgen Habermas’ explication of communicative rationality is the contention that all speech acts oriented to understanding raise three different kinds of validity claims simultaneously: claims to truth, truthfulness, and normative rightness.

A further contribution to the rise of CDA as a cognitive approach came from Focault (1972), who combined a structuralist view with a praxeological interpretation stating that discourse is a super-individual practice, a practice that belongs to collectives rather than individuals.

Moving toward a linguistic level, it was in the late 1970s, based on Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics, an internationally influential grammar model which viewed language primarily as a social act, that a group of linguists of the University of East Anglia developed what is known as ‘Critical Linguistics’, a new multidisciplinary approach to Political Discourse which views language as simultaneously performing three functions: ideational, interpersonal and textual functions (Sheyholislami, 2001: 1).

Mentioning Fowler (1991: 71) and Fairclough (1995: 25), while the ideational function embodies the experience of the speaker, the interpersonal function refers to the speaker’s own evaluation about the phenomena in question and provides a link between the speaker and the listener.

Lastly, the textual function is an enabling function, aiming to connect discourse to co-text and con-text and which makes speakers able
to produce texts that can be understood by listeners. The aim of this innovative approach was thus to explore the relationship among language, ideology and power.

Thus, it can be said that the starting point for a new, interdisciplinary method was Laclau and Mouffe’s social constructivism, extensively described in the work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, written in 1985.

According to this ideology the main feature on which every political discourse is founded upon is the so-called ‘Anti-essentialism’, which claims that objects and practices acquire meaning only as a part of particular discourses. That means that it is impossible to define, for instance, notions like ‘democracy’, ‘Marxism’ or ‘socialism’ “by conferring to them any cluster of positive or negative properties which remain the same in all possible political situations” (Žižek, 1989: 98).

The core of this ideology is that meanings associated to discourses are not completely fixed but should be interpreted, depending on times and places where the discourse is developed and for the purposes of communication. Consequently, referencing Fairclough (1989) it could be added that text/discourse does not exist in a vacuum. They are enacted within a social context, are determined by the social context and contribute to the way in which the social context continues to exist.

Thus, based on this ideology, Critical Linguistics was developed in order to explicate abuses of power by analyzing linguistic/semiotic details and to consider the social and political contexts in which those texts/discourses circulate.

Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that as time passed by it became clear that CL was paying little attention to social hierarchy and power; Fairclough himself started claiming that CL did not sufficiently focus on the interpretative practices of audience and assumed that the audience interprets texts the same way the analyst does. As a result, as concerns with the earlier work of CL were raised, CL has been further developed, finally evolving into what is recently known as ‘Critical Discourse

In short, the main difference between CL and CDA is that the latter also takes into consideration the role of the audience, broadening the purpose of the analysis beyond the textual. Moreover, CL seemed to be too focused on grammatical and lexical analysis while paying less attention to the inter-textual one.

Therefore, it was mostly this critique that led to the establishment of CDA, which cannot be considered as a unitary theoretical framework, but as a shared perspective involving a wide range of different approaches and focusing mostly on the ‘intertextual analysis’, defined by Fairclough (1992: 84) as “basically the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate.”

Finally, another feature CDA depends on is the socio-cultural context of the communicative event, which includes three different levels: economic, political and cultural.

### 1.4. Main directions in CDA

#### 1.4.1. Van Dijk and the dimension of Us versus Them

The main directions of CDA are provided by the scholars who more than anyone have contributed to its emergence and evolution, first and foremost Van Dijk, probably the most quoted practitioner of CDA.

The model developed by Van Dijk is the so-called *Socio-cognitive* model, based on the idea that:

Discourse is not simply an isolated textual or dialogic structure. Rather it is a complex communicative event that also embodies a social context, featuring participants (and their properties) as well as production and reception processes (Van Dijk, 1988:2).
In this manner, Van Dijk adds to the textual and structural level of media discourse the “analysis and explanations at the production and "reception" or comprehension level”. (Boyd-Barrett, 1994 as cited in Sheyholislami, 2001: 3). Moreover, according to Van Dijk (1995: 30), discourse analysis is perceived as ideology analysis and this leads to an approach constituted of three parts: social analysis, cognitive analysis, and discourse analysis.

In short, the element which differentiates Van Dijk’s approach from other approaches is the *socio-cognitive* element, defined by him as “the system of mental representations and processes of group members” (1995: 18).

Crucial, within the mental representations of individuals, influenced by shared ideologies and attitudes, is the mental representation constructed over ‘Us versus Them’ dimension, when the speaker aims to represent himself and his own group in positive terms, while describing the ‘others’ in negative terms.

1.4.2. **Wodak and the Discourse-Historical Model**

Ruth Wodak focused her analysis on what is known as ‘Discourse Sociolinguistic’, which she defines as:

>a sociolinguistics which not only is explicitly dedicated to the study of the text in context, but also accords both factors equal importance. It is an approach capable of identifying and describing the underlying mechanisms that contribute to those disorders in discourse which are embedded in a particular context - whether they be in the structure and function of the media, or in institutions such as a hospital or a school - and inevitably affect communication (Wodak, 1996: 3).

In short, for Wodak and her colleagues, the most important feature of CDA is always the context, first and foremost the historical context. In this sense Wodak states that “discourse is always historical and connected synchronically and diachronically with other communicative events which
are happening at the same time or which have happened before” (1996: 12).

In addition to this, another feature which distinguishes Wodak’s approach from Van Dijk’s is that of interpretation. Indeed, according to Wodak (1996: 13), the correct interpretation does not exist, on the contrary readers and listeners, depending on their background knowledge, information and their position, might have different interpretations of the same communicative event.

1.4.3. Fairclough and the ‘Order of Discourses’
The model developed by Wodak primarily focused on the historical context and a hermeneutic approach is very close to the model elaborated by Fairclough.

First and foremost what is worth pointing out is that Fairclough, more than anyone else, has built a useful framework for the analysis of discourse as social practice, a framework which proposes a three-dimensional model.

Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, in their book *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (2002: 66), describe this model, arguing that, for Fairclough, the concept of discourse has a triple dimension. First of all discourse refers to (1) “language use as social practice”, secondly discourse refers to (2) the “kind of language used within a specific context and field”, and thirdly discourse refers to (3) “a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective”. In this last sense the term distinguishes any discourse from other discourses on the basis of the social practice which lays behind it. This allows to distinguish, for instance, a Conservative discourse from a Liberal one, a feminist Discourse from a Marxist one and so on.

To sum up, the three functions proposed by Fairclough are: an identity function, a relational function and an ideational function, therefore, in every communicative event language has three dimensions (Jørgensen, Phillips, 2002: 79):
- It is a text (speech, writing, visual image, etc.)
- It is a discursive practice
- It is a social practice

As shown in the table above, the first dimension is that of the text. This dimension focuses on the formal features and involves linguistic analysis in terms of “vocabulary, grammar, semantics, the sound system, and cohesion-organization above the sentence level” (Fairclough, 1995b: 57).

The second function is Discourse Practice, a dimension which mediates the relationship between text and social practice and which “straddles the division between society and culture on the one hand, and discourse, language and text on the other” (1995b: 60). According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) this second dimension includes, first and foremost, the analysis of the discourses and genres which are articulated in the production and the consumption of the text (the level of discursive practice). Secondly, it implies the analysis of the linguistic structure (the level of the text); and finally it includes considerations about whether the discursive practice reproduces or, instead, restructures the existing order of discourse and about what consequences this has for the broader social practice (the level of social practice).
The third and last function, the social practice, involves three different aspects of the sociocultural context of a communicative event: economic (i.e. economy of the media), political (i.e. power and ideology of the media), and cultural (i.e. issues of values).

1.5. Political Discourse

The dimension that I shall analyse throughout my thesis is the political dimension, in the attempt to stress and make transparent the relationship between language and power.

According to Van Dijk (1998: 360), the role of every political discourse is the enactment, reproduction and legitimation of power and domination.

Similarly, for Wodak (2001), who is even more focused on politics, language on its own is not powerful; “it gains power by the use powerful people make of it” (Andreassen, 2007: 25 citing Wodak, 2001). From here, as stated by Andreassen (2007), since the discursive reproduction of dominance is the main object of CDA, the discourse delivered by powerful people, politicians for instance, becomes the most important data. To mention Wodak again:

[…] this explains why CL [i.e. CDA] often chooses the perspective of those who suffer, and critically analyses the language use of those in power, who are responsible for the existence of inequalities and who also have the means and opportunity to improve conditions […] (Wodak 2001: 10).

Starting from these assumptions, introducing Discourse Analysis within a political context it needs to be said that the study of political discourse is very ancient. Its emergence coincides with the birth of the art of discourse known as Rhetoric, which could be defined as: “An art that aims to improve the capability of speakers that attempt to inform, persuade or motivate audiences in specific situations” (Corbett, 1990: 1).
Hence, from ancient Greek times to the late 19th century, it was a central part of Western education to move audiences to action, through persuasive appeals - logos, pathos and ethos - in order to achieve specific objectives.

Yet, in more modern times, it was Orwell who first focused the attention on the political power of language, extensively debated in his famous article *Politics and the English Language* (1946). In this essay, Orwell describes exhaustively the decline of the English language, pointing the finger at politicians, who are considered the main promoters of this decline.

Therefore, according to Orwell, politicians tend to adulterate the language in order to manipulate thoughts. He himself suggests that “political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible” (Orwell, 1969: 225).

Indeed, politicians try to hide the negative aspects within their speeches such that the audience may not see the horrifying truth behind them. For this reason the aim of Discourse Analysis in a political context has always been to reveal what is hidden behind the formal functions of language; this is the intention pursued by Orwell but even by the work of other political scientists, such as Murray Edleman for instance, who deals with the symbolic manipulation of reality for the achievement of political goals.

In a more political direction, Pêcheux argues that the meanings of words became transformed in terms of who used them:

[...] Here words (and their interaction) in one formation were differently interpreted within another. Conservative or right-wing views of terms like “social benefit” and “defense spending” may differ radically from interpretations available within a socialist or left-wing discourse (Pêcheux, 1982 as cited in Schriffin et al., 2001: 401).

The idea is always that the core goal of political discourse analysis is to seek out the ways in which language choice is manipulated for specific political effect. For this reason, in this thesis I shall try to reveal the hidden
meanings of a selection of political discourses, involving all levels of linguistics, from lexis to pragmatics.

At the level of lexical choice there are studies of such things as loaded words, technical words, and euphemisms.

At the grammatical level, I shall propose an analysis of several functional systems, including the analysis of ‘modality’ and ‘tense’. There are also studies of pronouns and their distribution relative to political and other studies of more pragmatically oriented objects such as metaphors and other rhetorical devices.

Instead, at the interpretative level, I shall propose an explanation of the most common and persuasive propagandist strategies, hidden behind a certain kind of figurative language.
2. **AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC:**
   a Contrastive Critical Analysis of Obama and Romney’s
   Debating Styles

2.1. **Introduction: Aim of the Chapter**

Throughout the following section I shall analyse American Rhetoric, focusing my analysis on the differences between Liberal and Conservative discourse.

This will be achieved by analyzing the contrasting rhetoric of Obama and Romney, the stars of the last Presidential election in the United States.

Therefore, such an analysis will scrutinize selected speeches of both candidates, analysed in the light of Hallidayan Systemic Functional Grammar from critical perspective of Norman Fairclough (1995), claiming that “ideologies reside in texts” and that “it is not possible to ‘read off’ ideologies from texts” and that “texts are open to diverse interpretations.”

According to this idea I shall attempt to link social practice and linguistic practice, as well as the possible interrelatedness of textual properties and power relations. The intention is to reveal covert ideology which is ‘hidden’ in Obama and Romney’s speeches, debates and interviews, thus seeking to disclose how those speeches are constructed so that particular perspectives and concepts can be expressed delicately and covertly.

2.2. **Liberal versus Conservative Discourse**

First and foremost, to be able to decipher Obama and Romney’s discourses, we have to describe and highlight in what way Liberal discourse differentiates from Conservative discourse. Such a description is mainly founded upon George Lakoff’s metaphor of the ‘Nation as Family’, a model which simplifies and contrasts the divergent political viewpoints upon human nature held by the conservative ‘right’ and liberal ‘left’ in contemporary Western discourse.

Indeed, in terms of political ideology, the essence of all forms of Liberalism is ‘individual liberty’ (Gutmann, 2001); furthermore, as underlined by Sowell (2002), liberals tend to have an optimistic view of human nature, thinking that people should be left as free as possible. In contrast, Conservatism evokes a more pessimistic vision of human perfectibility, arguing that people are innately selfish and imperfectible; therefore, if that hold by Liberals could be defined as an ‘unconstrained vision’ according to Sowell, on the contrary conservatives hold what he calls a ‘constrained vision’, in which people need the constraints of authority, institutions and tradition to live peacefully with each other.

In terms of personalities instead, we could use the analysis conducted by McCrae (1996), who argues that Liberals are inherently more open to experience, change and novelty, whereas Conservatives show a greater preference for things that are familiar, stable and predictable (Jost, Nosek, Gosling, 2008; McCrae, 1996).

In terms of political narrative, which is the field we are more interested in, this contrast merges into different kinds of ideological narratives. As Christian Smith (2003: 64) observes, “we are animals who make stories but also animals who are made by our stories”; thus, on the basis of this idea Smith identifies a ‘liberal progressive narrative’ and a ‘social conservative narrative’. Such a distinction is founded upon Haidt and Joseph’s (2004) moral foundations theory, which states that people operate in accordance with certain implicit moral intuitions about five basic things: (a) ‘harm-care’ (hurting people is wrong; relieving suffering is good), (b) ‘fairness-
reciprocity’ (fairness and justice are good; people have certain rights that need to be upheld in social interactions), (c) ‘in-group-loyalty’ (people should be loyal to the group, therefore loyalty and patriotism are good; betrayal is bad), (d) ‘authority-respect’ (people should respect social hierarchy).

Starting from these assumptions, Haidt (2004) suggests that people react differently in response to these intuitions; specifically, whereas conservatives tend to value all five intuitions, liberals tend to focus mainly on the first two. In brief, on the basis of this contrast, one can notice that a ‘progressive narrative’ makes extensive use of the ‘harm foundation’, founded upon topics such as ‘suffering’, ‘oppression’, ‘misery’, and the ‘fairness foundation’, which relies on concepts like ‘unjust’ and ‘inequality’.

In contrast, the second narrative dimension, held by conservatives, is saturated with themes such as ‘patriotism’, with conservatives expressing strong feelings for ‘authority’, ‘group alliance’ and ‘purity’.

Like Haidt and Joseph (2004), Lakoff also analyses the moral dimension of political thought, but he does this by locating moral meaning in family metaphors. Indeed, as earlier anticipated, Lakoff distinguishes two different reference models: the ‘Strict father model’ and the ‘Nurturant parent model’. The first model rests upon a conservative worldview and, according to Lakoff (2002: 33), posits a traditional nuclear family, with the father having primary responsibility for supporting and protecting the family as well as the authority to set overall policy and to set strict rules for the behavior of children. Indeed, children must be obedient to the moral authority of the father, thus, self-discipline, self-reliance, and respect for legitimate authority are the crucial things that children must learn. According to this model, behaving morally leads to prosperity and self-interest is a moral quality, since when each citizen pursues his/her individual interest, the interest of all is maximized.

In contrast, the Liberal worldview centers on a very different ideal of family life, the ‘Nurturant Parent model’, a gender-neutral model rooted on the values of love, empathy and mutual responsibility. Here the parents’ role is to nurture their children so they will become nurturers of others, making
the world a better place. The obedience of children comes out of their love and respect for their parents and their community, not out of the fear of punishment and the main goal pursued is for children to be fulfilled and happy (Lakoff, 2002: 33-34).

Of course, this great difference in perceiving the world results in a different set of moral priorities: ‘Strict Father’ morality assigns highest priority to such things as moral strength, respect for authority and self-discipline; while Liberals are more focused on empathy for others, helping those who need help, compassion and caring. Subsequently, these contrasting priorities result in a very different way to perceive Political Discourse.

In the field of American Rhetoric these main differences between Liberal and Conservative Discourse will be presented through a linguistic and political comparison between the main characters of the last presidential campaign, the democratic president Barack Obama and the republican candidate Mitt Romney.

2.3. An Overall Look at Obama’s Speeches

On the basis of the main features just mentioned in the paragraph above, which mark a great difference in perceiving the world and thus the language between a Democratic and a Republican worldview, our analysis can start first with a generic description of Obama’s language style.

In the first place, an overall look at Obama’s speeches would seem to suggest that Obama tends to use simple words and short sentences and that his language is very easy and colloquial (Wang, 2010). Using transitivity and modality, as well as an extremely simple language structure, Obama seeks to arouse the audience’s confidence towards the government and makes his listeners easily understand his speeches.

There are several studies which analyse Obama’s rhetoric, among them I would like to mention those conducted by Hovarth (2009), Wang (2010) and Shayegh et. al (2012), which analyse the persuasive strategies employed by Obama on the basis of Hallidayan Systemic Functional Grammar. In order to
describe them, these studies highlight the most important and recurring ideological components in Obama’s speeches, summarized into the concepts of ‘pragmatism’, ‘liberalism’, ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘acceptance of religious and ethnic diversity’.

Starting from these assumptions, the analysis of discourses will involve first and foremost the identification of transitivity and modality. Furthermore, analyzing hesitation, persuasion, religious statements, pronoun usage and rhetorical skills on the basis of Fairclough’s model, it could be concluded that Obama is a dominant character who manipulates material process mostly by means of ‘I’ and ‘we’ pronouns, religious statements, and inclusiveness.

Indeed, what Obama often does, through a process of ‘self-categorization’, is to convey a sense of ‘we-ness’, or group homogeneity, thus succeeding in constructing a collective identity which serves many symbolic, practical and normative functions such as fulfilling needs for belonging, distinctiveness, respect, unity and status (Talbot, 2008).

At the semantic level we shall see how these main topics lead Obama to repeatedly employ words such as ‘nation’, ‘new’ and ‘America’, accompanied indeed by an overall dominance of the pronoun ‘we’, typical of the sense of togetherness that Obama aims to create.

Therefore, in this study, selected speeches of US president Barak Obama are scrutinized on the basis of Hallidayan Systemic Functional Grammar from critical perspective of Norman Fairclough.

To begin with, describing some of his most peculiar oratorical skills which will emerge from the analysis, what immediately stands out is Obama’s great use of ‘transitivity’. Transitivity, according to Wang (2010), is a good choice to demonstrate what a government has achieved and to arouse the confidence toward the speaker. Starting from this assumption, Baseer et al. (2011), by examining a selection of speeches given by Obama, suggest that Obama tends to use material process of action significantly more than other process types; a choice which might be attributed to his intention to bring the people closer to him emotionally (p. 160). Still within the same context, it is also worth pointing out Obama’s frequent use of relational
process, in the attempt to create a positive self-image. Similarly, the research found out that Obama employs high modality and a low rank of high politeness in his discourses. This great use of modal verbs can be explained by quoting Wang (2010: 259), who states that “modal verbs are more easily identified and understood and then accepted because at the time of listening to the speeches, there is no time for the audience to reflect”. Hence, using modality, Obama makes his audience easily understand and accept his political speeches (Shayegh et al., 2012).

Concerning the use of personal pronouns, as previously anticipated within a wider perspective, in all the speeches given by president Obama one can notice a dominance of ‘we’ as the agent/subject of the clauses. This technique, which expresses ‘institutional identity’ (Hommerberg, 2012: 14), aims to shorten the distance between the speaker and his audience, thus allowing Obama to convey the sense of ‘belonging’ and ‘we-ness’ he wants to. Nevertheless, Obama sometimes recurs to the pronoun ‘I’, especially when he is sure about a success and wants to connect this success to himself.

Indeed, Bramley (2001: 27) suggests that ‘I’ can be used by the speaker to convey his opinion, to construct a personal narrative, as a way to show compassion with the audience and, last but not least, to reinforce the speaker’s own authority and leadership.

Instead, in terms of fluidity of speech, the research also shows that Obama does not employ a lot of hesitations throughout his speeches. This scarce presence of hesitations allows Obama to seem confident, show power and thus become more persuasive. Furthermore, it seems that Obama is very likely to use emotions, trying to build closer relationships between the audience and himself. He tries to look like a sincere person, leading people to agree with him.

Still, according to Fairclough (1989), more powerful people speak illusively because they want their sentences being interpreted in different dimensions for their own sake in situations when they were criticized. That is what Obama often does.
Moreover, one can notice that Obama often mentions God, his beliefs and religion, also telling stories from the Bible which allows him to win the sympathy of his audience.

However, in spite of everything we just said, the analytical studies we mentioned above seem to prove that Obama’s greatest ability lies in portraying, through his speeches, the vision of a renewed America, where ordinary people can do extraordinary things. His rhetoric reaffirms the American dream; according to James Darsey (2009: 89), for instance, “much of the potency of Obama’s rhetoric lies in his ability to craft a narrative in which his personal journey coincided with America’s journey as a nation, especially as that journey involves race.”

As in his famous speech *A More Perfect Union*, that I shall analyse in the next chapter, Obama tends to often stress his genetic makeup, stating that he is the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas, he continues by saying that he is married with a black American and that he has brothers, sisters, nephews, cousins of every race. In this way, Obama depicts himself as an icon of potential racial reconciliation and forges a biological connection with the audience. Simultaneously, Obama encourages groups with different backgrounds to feel part of something larger, building an ‘in-group’ where people think of themselves as ‘us’.

Starting from these assumptions, I am going to analyse, in a more detailed way, a selection of official speeches given by Obama, which will lead us from Obama’s first political campaign to the presidential campaign of 2012. At that point it will be worth comparing his strategies to Governor Romney’s persuasive and conservative strategies.

2.4. To Understand Obama’s Rhetoric: Speech Analysis of President Barack Obama

2.4.1. Methodology

Throughout the following section, selected speeches by president Obama will be critically analysed on three different levels, as established by the main
scholars of CDA: the social and historical level, the textual level and the interpretative one.

In short, a socio-historical contextualization will be followed by an analytical description of the most significant figurative and linguistic devices used by the speaker. This description will be, in turn, combined with an inter- and sub-textual interpretation, aiming to reveal the hidden meanings of the utterances which are the subjects of this study.

2.4.2. *A More Perfect Union: Speech on Racial Problems in March 2008*

2.4.2.1. Socio-Historical Background and Purpose of the Speech

On the 18\textsuperscript{th} of March, 2008, in Pennsylvania, Obama delivered a memorable speech dealing with the issue of racial tensions in the United States. The speech was given after the denouncement of Obama’s former pastor, the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, who charged the US government with crimes against people of color.

For this reason the immediate goal pursued by Obama in giving this speech is distancing himself from Wright, reassuring his voters that he did not condone the controversial comments made by the Reverend, who had said, among other things: “God damn America for its racism, and for killing innocent people” (Babington, 2008 citing Wright), thus creating more turmoil for the Obama campaign.

Nevertheless, in addition to the main intention of distancing himself from such heavy accusations, which were threatening his quest for the presidency, the speech also becomes an occasion, wisely exploited by Obama, to offer a history lesson on race and civil rights in the United States.

To sum up, throughout the speech Obama reviews the long history of racism and discrimination that was part of the experience of Black people, using this topic to introduce the themes of ‘unity’, ‘togetherness’ and ‘belonging’, which would remain consistent throughout his whole presidential campaign.
Especially because of the topic the speech deals with, *A More Perfect Union* is considered one of Obama’s most heralded speeches yet, and it contains lots of *ethos, pathos, allusions, rhetorical associations, parallelism and many other rhetorical devices* which contribute to increase its intrinsic persuasiveness. For this reason it is very interesting to scrutinize the speech in greater detail.

2.4.2.2. Textual Analysis and Interpretation

Based on Fairclough’s framework, the first level that must be analysed is the descriptive dimension of a text, which includes all figurative, grammatical and linguistic devices used by the speaker. Hence, what I shall propose below is a compendium of the most significant phrasings of the speech, analytically described and inter-textually interpreted.

In the first place, at a rhetorical level, it is possible to detect throughout the speech a large number of repetitions (1) and personal examples (2):

> This time we want to talk about how the lines in the emergency room, this time we want to talk about the shuttered mills, this time we want to talk about the men and women […] (1).

> There is one story in particular that I’d like to leave you with today - a story I told […] speaking on Dr. King's birthday at his home church […] There is a young, 23-year-old white woman named Ashley Baia who […] (2).

It can be argued that frequent repetitions help make an utterance more memorable for common people and facilitate a process of assimilation and information storage. Indeed, as stated by Jones et al. (2004: 51), parallelism and repetitions can add a sense of symmetry and rhythm, which make the speech more memorable. Such memorability is important since, to quote a diabolic but at the same time great orator like Hitler (1925: 180-81), “the receptivity of the masses is very limited; their intelligence is small, but their power of forgetting is enormous”.
Hence Toland (1976: 221) states that “all effective propaganda must harp on a few slogans until the last member of the public understands what you want him to understand by your slogan”. Therefore, it can be concluded that “repetition of structure and idea is a rule in persuasion” (Inigo-Mora, 2004: 47).

Instead, with reference to personal examples (2), these serve the purpose of making a story closer and thus more fascinating to common people. Thus, by telling his own story and illustrating his humble background, Obama describes himself as someone who can identify with the majority of Americans. Indeed, as Bennett (2012) states, identifying with voters is something that is crucial to gaining support and momentum in the electoral cycle; aware of this Obama connects both his multicultural background and his campaign with the American motto, “out of many, we are one.”

Starting from here, another method used in the speech and commonly analysed from a CDA perspective is ‘person deixis’, commonly defined as “the use of words such as that, this, them, us, here, there, used for purposes of positioning groups in a power structure” (Catalano, 2001: 12).

At a grammatical level Levinson (1983: 54-96) states that:

person deixis concerns itself with the grammatical persons involved in an utterance, (1) those directly involved (e.g. the speaker, the addressee), (2) those not directly involved (e.g. over-hearers—those who hear the utterance but who are not being directly addressed), and (3) those mentioned in the utterance.

Moving to the ideological level, according to Maitland and Wilsoll (1987: 495), politicians often exploit deictic expressions to express their own ideological views, but also their opposition to ideological views of others they disagree with. In greater detail, Maitland and Wilson (1987: 508) stated that when ‘I’ and ‘we’ are functionally contrasted, they allow the politician to present him/herself as part of a party or people, and to show solidarity with a particular ideological paradigm, while at the same time being seen as
detached or outside of the group. On the basis of such theorizations, Obama’s use of this technique can be found in the following example:

I believe deeply that we cannot solve the challenges of our time unless we solve them together - unless we perfect our union by understanding that we may have different stories, but we hold common hopes; that we may not look the same and we may not have come from the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction - towards a better future for of children and our grandchildren (3).

Deixis is further based on the ‘Us-Them’ polarization, a mental representation which, according to Van Dijk (1995), enables the speaker to represent himself and his own group in positive terms, while describing the ‘others’ in negative terms. In the field of social science the importance and effectiveness of this sort of categorization is largely explained by an approach called Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA), first made popular by Harvey Sacks in the 1960s and based upon the idea that human beings need categorization “in order to digest the massive amount of social interaction available to them and that people primarily interpret other humans not as individuals, but as members of a particular category of person” (Meadows, 2005: 3).

Therefore, if within a sociological context, identity discourse is often characterized by “issues concerning essentialising and marginalising social groups, as well as totalising and categorising individuals and groups” (Gaudelli, 2001: 60), in the field of political discourse, instead, Leudar et al. (2004: 262) identify three different methods of category manipulation:

(1) changing the predicates (characteristics, actions) attributed to a given category, (2) re-specifying the criteria for membership in a given category, (3) altering, at an over-arching level, the super-category into which the category is subsumed (Meadows, 2005: 4 citing Leudar et al., 2004: 262).

In this way, such an ‘Us/Them’ relational pair, as Meadows (2005: 6) states, can index ‘solidarity/distance’ by creating exaggerated, and often false,
dichotomies which force people to be categorized into two opposing poles (Caldas-Coulthard, 2003). Hence, the veiled aim of this technique is to create ‘antagonism’ through a stereotyping of the political enemy, Reverend Wright in this specific case, while reducing a complex situation to a very simple choice involving ‘good versus evil’, ‘right versus wrong’.

Analyzing the speech given by Obama, several examples can be found which make what has been said above clearer. The following excerpt is thus an example of a positive ‘Us’:

Out the first year of this campaign, against all predictions to the contrary, we saw how hungry the American people were for this message of unity. Despite the temptation to view my candidacy through a purely racial lens, we won commanding victories in states with some of the whitest populations in the country [...] we built a powerful coalition of African Americans and white Americans (4).

Instead, the next example displays a negative ‘Them’:

But race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now. We would be making the same mistake that Reverend Wright made in his offending sermons about America - to simplify and stereotype and amplify the negative to the point that it distorts reality (5).

At a semiotic level two techniques dominate the structure of the speech: metaphors and metonyms. Metaphors in this speech are mostly referred to the topic of change as a journey, a sort of metaphor which assumes that forward is good, backwards is bad. This idea is further conveyed through the use of verbs of motion, which contribute to show the necessity to move forward in order to progress and defeat racial prejudices:

We want to move in the same direction [...] toward a better future for our children and grandchildren (6).

Instead, metonymy is a rhetorical technique based on some kind of association connecting two concepts. Taylor (2003: 324) defines it as “a figure of speech whereby the name of one entity e¹ is used to refer to another
entity, e², which is contiguous to, or which is associated with e¹.” Still, according to Naciscione (2001: 108), “the explicit image-bearing components of the phraseological units have a metonymic function in discourse”, therefore metonymy applied in political discourse “secures sustained associative vision which enables the listener to see beyond the words”.

The whole text of the speech contains lots of allusions and famous quotes. Indeed, first and foremost one can notice that Obama introduces his utterance by quoting the preamble of the United States’ Constitution:

We the people, in order to form a more perfect union (7).

In addition to this first quote, throughout the speech Obama mentions the Declaration of Independence, the Philadelphia convention and the Constitution as well as his personal story, including himself as a character in a narrative about race. The purpose hidden in these quotes is to further legitimise the contents of the speech, linking it to admirable and exemplar reference models. In this way, using the language of the founding fathers, Obama connects History to the Present and to the goals of his own campaign, encouraging Americans “to continue the long march of those who came before us, a march for a more just, more equal, more free, more caring and more prosperous America” (8).

Besides the high number of allusions, another powerful rhetorical strategy employed by Obama throughout this speech is parallelism, which serves the purpose of making his utterances even more powerful and memorable. If, from a metrical point of view, parallelism provides balance and rhythm through a series of related words, as Linguist Katy Carlson (2001: 3) states, “parallelism is also helpful to listeners in that the second conjunct is easier to process if it is parallel to the first in some way”. In this sense the hidden purpose of parallelism used within a political speech is to make the assimilation process easier for plain folks.

Below a sample of parallelism extracted from the speech:
…we may not have come from the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction; […] embracing the burdens of our past without becoming victims of our past (9).

Obama in this speech also recurs to the technique known as ‘twoness’, which is a sense of duplicity based on two opposite prepositions, both considered true.

Hence, Robert Terrill (2009: 365) states that Obama positioned himself in the speech as an embodiment of double consciousness, i.e., as a son of a black African father and a white American mother. In these terms, Obama seems to speak along the same lines as Du Bois (1903: 16), an African American thinker who wrote:

One ever feels his twoness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two un-reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

Using this technique, Du Bois tries to explain the social divisions existing in American society, and the whole text of Obama’s speech seems to evoke such an American duplicity, especially when he says:

through protests and struggles […] on the streets and in the courts […] through civil war and civil disobedience […] I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas. […] white and black […] black and brown […] political correctness or reverse racism (10).

In this manner, by including himself in the ‘twoness’ he describes, by saying that he is the son of a black man and a white woman, and therefore meaning that he shares both black and white identity, the goal pursued by Obama on the interpretative and sub-textual level is to present himself as the reconciler of America’s racial divisions.

Furthermore, throughout the utterance Obama also uses ‘rhetoric narratives’. He begins telling the story of his grandfather who served in Patton’s army during the second World War, in the attempt to appeal to his listeners’ sense of patriotism and national pride and later continues telling the
story of a young, white, Southern campaigner—Ashley Baia—who inspires an old, black, Southern man to vote.

On the textual level, such an anecdote simply looks like an innocent story without any persuasive claim. By contrast, on the interpretative level, which is the most interesting from a CDA perspective, this narrative strategy serves the purpose to encourage pathos; hence, it can be claimed that Obama actually uses Baia’s story of inspiration to highlight the power in sharing his own story. Indeed, Hazel Rochman, a reviewer for Booklist, once wrote:

Obama argues with himself on almost every page of this lively autobiographical conversation. He gets you to agree with him, and then he brings in a counter narrative that seems just as convincing (Rochman, as cited in Romm, 2008).

2.4.2.3. Ideological Interpretation

As postulated by Fairclough (1989) and the other exponents of CDA, especially in the field of Political Discourse Analysis, the textual and manifest aspect of a political speech always hides a series of propagandist strategies which aim to covertly persuade the voters.

Summarizing what has been said until now, all the figurative, narrative and linguistic strategies employed by Obama throughout this speech, activate certain propagandist processes which can be listed and summarized as follows:

- ‘Stereotyping’: through streamlined points of view, politicians can reduce a somewhat complex situation to a very simple choice involving ‘good versus evil’, ‘right versus wrong’. The main aim of this kind of simplification is to create prejudices against the enemy. As we have just seen in the previous paragraph, Obama does this by exploiting the ‘Us- Them’ polarization.

- ‘Name calling’: this strategy is very similar to ‘stereotyping’. It consists of using words with negative connotations to describe an
enemy, thus creating ‘antagonism’ and thus splitting the political stage into two adversarial camps.

Indeed, one can notice that, throughout the speech, Obama often associates Wright’s remarks with negative values, for instance when he suggests that Wright’s views were “not only wrong but divisive [...] at a time when we need unity” (11).

- ‘Plain folk’: this is an attempt to create a sense of camaraderie. The speaker pretends to be an ordinary man who has the same views and thoughts as the people he is talking to. This is probably the most effective and recurrent strategy adopted by Obama throughout the speech. As earlier said in the previous paragraph, including his personal experience as a biracial American and portraying his humble background, Obama manages to identify himself with the majority of Americans, thus gaining more support from his voters.

- ‘Testimonials’: testimonials are famous quotes which aim to connect the speaker to a respectable person as well as the text to a positive idea or point of view. In this way, by appealing to values that are universally recognized, testimonials help to further legitimise the purposes of a political campaign. Hence, as previously said Obama begins the speech with “We the people, in order to form a more perfect union” a quote from the Constitution that becomes a recurring refrain linking the parts of the speech. What comes next is “Two hundred and twenty one years ago” an opening that places him in the tradition of Lincoln at Gettysburg and Dr. King at the Lincoln Memorial: “Five score years ago.”

- ‘Glittering generalities’: politicians are very likely to use words and phrases that allude to values that are universally accepted and recognized. These are words that evoke elusive images, which have positive connotations and aim to demand approval without thinking. Words often used in this perspective are, for instance: ‘democracy’,
‘honor’, ‘justice’, ‘freedom’, etc., words often used by Obama throughout the speech.

2.4.3. Obama 2012 DNC Speech

2.4.3.1. Socio-Historical Background and Purpose of the Speech

President Obama accepted the second Democratic Party’s nomination on the 6th of September 2012, in Charlotte, North Carolina. The speech delivered by Obama on this occasion marked a shift from his ‘Yes we can’ campaign of 2008: indeed, while his 2008’s campaign was primarily focused on the future, with a profusion of fervent promises which painted the image of an American rebirth, the second nomination, instead, demanded justifications for the errors and the missed promises of the past, simply guaranteeing that the next 4 years would have been more successful than the previous ones.

Throughout his DNC speech, Obama dealt with a wide range of topics, such as: the role of government, taxes, deficit reduction, social issues, healthcare and schools, also with a number of recurring references to Mitt Romney’s foreign policy approach.

Indeed, analyzing the speech one can notice that the main goal pursued by president Obama and hidden in the speech was about constructing ‘antagonism’ with his opponent, by portraying two different ways of perceiving the world and stressing the difference between a Conservative and a Liberal worldview. Nevertheless, ‘antagonism’ is not the only rhetorical strategy employed by Obama. It is possible to identify many other strategies which make Obama’s speech a great example of persuading rhetoric. All we have to do is take a look at the preamble of the speech, where Obama begins thanking the audience members and addressing his wife, Michelle, thus portraying the image of a happy family and using humor in order to catch the attention of his listeners. (e.g. “Malia and Sasha, we are so proud of you. And yes, you do have to go to school in the morning”) (12).

Needless to say that this enjoyable joke also made the audience feel closer to the president and allowed Obama to convey a sense of ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘togetherness’; a result achieved through a wise use of
‘person deixis’, defined in the previous chapter as “the use of words such as that, this, them, us, here, there, used to position groups within a certain power structure” (see p. 26).

For all the reasons just described, Obama’s speech at the Democratic Convention in Charlotte can be proposed as a perfect example and compendium of the president’s most used rhetorical techniques. Indeed, within this speech, Obama delivered a number of memorable lines which enable us to understand his powerful rhetorical attitude better.

Hence, in the next paragraph I am going to analyse the above-mentioned speech in greater detail. The perspective adopted is still that proposed by Fairclough (1995), which positions the analysis on three different levels: descriptive (textual analysis), interpretative and explanatory.

Therefore, similarly to the previous analysis, also the analysis of this speech will be conducted through a textual analysis combined with a sub-textual interpretation, aiming to reveal the interrelatedness of textual properties and power hidden in the speech.

2.4.3.2. Textual Analysis and Interpretation

To begin with, at a textual level it is worth listing all the figurative techniques in the speech. Thus, starting from the opening remarks, the speech begins with the following words:

I’m no longer just a candidate. I’m the president (13).

Obama begins his speech with these words in order to increase the credibility of his phrasing. In this way he suggests that he is no longer speaking as a common man, but as the president of the United States. This introduction is a very astute move since it allows Obama to gain more credibility and catch the attention of his listeners. Furthermore, Obama reminds the audience of the first time he spoke at DNC as a simple candidate, appealing to his listeners’ emotions and humanity by saying “I was a younger man” at the time.
Soon after the opening remark, Obama uses an *antithesis* (14), and gives rhythm and balance to his speech by linking together anaphora and ‘parallelism’ (15):

(I) spoke about hope – not blind optimism or wishful thinking, but hope in the face of difficulty (14).

[…] even when the odds are great; even when the road is long […] (15).

His great use of rhetorical devices continues with *tricolon*, which helps his next sentence become more memorable (16), and alliteration, equally useful in order to create emphasis (17):

[…] by the cost of war; by one of the worst economic crises in history; and by political gridlock (16).

I know that campaigns can seem small, and even silly (17).

*Tricolon* deserves more than a simple mention in our analysis, since Obama is notorious for his use of ‘the rule of three’, perhaps one of the best known of Cicero’s techniques. Leith (2011: 6), defines *tricolon* as a “set of three units of speech put in a row”, adding that “so pervasive is the *tricolon* - and so naturally and effectively does it fall on the ear- that even phrases that are not *tricola* are sometimes misremembered as if they were”.

Going on, later Obama attacks Republicans’ plans using humor:

[… ] They want your vote, but they don’t want you to know their plan. And that’s because all they have to offer is the same prescriptions they’ve had for the last 30 years. Have a surplus? Try a tax cut. Deficit too high — try another. Feel a cold coming on? Take two tax cuts, roll back some regulations, and call us in the morning […] (18).

By suggesting that Republicans’ plan to reduce budget deficit is a ‘joke’ Obama manages to simplify an extremely complex economic issue.
After a remarkable number of *tricola*, anaphora, antitheses and alliterations, Obama adds antistrophe to capture attention and captivate the audience’s sensibility:

The young woman I met at a science fair who won national recognition for her biology research while living with her family at a homeless shelter – *she gives me hope*.

The auto worker who won the lottery after his plant almost closed, but kept coming to work every day, and bought flags for his whole town and one of the cars that he built to surprise his wife – *he gives me hope*.

The family business in Warroad, Minnesota that didn’t lay off a single one of their four thousand employees during this recession, even when their competitors shut down dozens of plants, it meant the owners gave up some perks and pay – because they understood their biggest asset was the community and the workers who helped build that business – *they give me hope*.

And I think about the young sailor I met at Walter Reed hospital, still recovering from a grenade attack that would cause him to have his leg amputated above the knee. Six months ago, I would watch him walk into a White House dinner honoring those who served in Iraq, tall and twenty pounds heavier, dashing in his uniform, with a big grin on his face; sturdy on his new leg. And I remember how a few months after that I would watch him on a bicycle, racing with his fellow wounded warriors on a sparkling spring day, inspiring other heroes who had just begun the hard path he had travelled. *He gives me hope* (19).

Here, we have to add that, at a narrative level, Obama also employed the technique often defined as ‘voicing’, telling stories of common people in order to make his audience even more emotionally involved and connected with his speech. Indeed, this technique is commonly used to create proximity and credibility and also contributes to the definitions of roles so that the speaker is not the only active participant in the speech (Capone, 2010).
Later, Obama continues with *symplece* (20), obtained by linking together *anaphora* and *epistrophe*, and concludes the speech with a climax (21):

[…] And if you share that faith with me – if you share that hope with me (20).

Thank you, God bless you, and may God bless these United States (21).

Indeed, it is worth saying that using a climax is probably the best strategy to end a political speech, since it creates an atmosphere that is dramatic, solemn and, therefore, convincing.

In conclusion, it is important to highlight that in the closing sentence Obama wisely mentions God. This evokes *ethos* since many Americans have Christian beliefs, so listeners would give credit to the president as well as being touched by his faith.

### 2.4.4. Second Victory Speech, November 7, 2012

#### 2.4.4.1. Socio-historical Background and Purpose of the Speech

Barack Obama delivered his second victory speech in Chicago on the 6th of November 2012, after the decisive win against the leader of the Republican Party, Mitt Romney. This is a speech to express gratitude for every American who voted for him as well as to thank his vice-president Joe Biden, his opponent and finally his family.

Concerning the main purpose of the speech, this rests upon portraying the image of a big American family, by using all Obama’s favorite rhetorical techniques. Needless to say that this utterance is extremely powerful and persuading, especially because here Obama involves a great number of human feelings, appealing to his audience’s emotions. Indeed, the speech creates emotional involvement and participation through a clever use of rhetoric and *pathos*. 
At a semantic level, it is an utterance founded upon the extensive use of the pronoun ‘we’, in the attempt to create ‘inclusiveness’ and make people feel part of an ‘in-group’ which recognizes Obama as its undisputed leader.

Throughout this speech, Obama establishes a sense of unity and constructs cohesion between every kind of man, starting from a unique common thing: American nationality. Thanks to his powerful rhetoric, he manages to paint the image of a big American family, where the worker and the president of the United States are on exactly the same level. In this way, Obama’s rhetoric seeks to unite him with his audience, expressing a shared set of convictions and sentiments.

2.4.4.2. Textual Analysis and Interpretation

What follows is a textual analysis of Obama’s victory speech combined with an interpretative approach, useful to reveal the less manifest effects of the speech on the audience. The most remarkable sentences of the speech, listed below, will be firstly described in their textual content and then interpreted at a sub-textual level in order to reveal the real and pervasive aims of Obama’s words.

Starting our analysis, one can first notice that Obama begins his speech expressing his thanks to America, as illustrated in the following examples:

Thank you, thank you, thank you (22).

It moves forward because of you. It moves forward because you […] (23).

Indeed, in only 20 minutes, president Obama thanks his family, his friends, his opponent and his country. To do this he uses a very powerful rhetorical device, anaphora, which conveys and reinforces his message through repetitions, adding also balance, rhythm and clarity to the sentence. As highlighted earlier, in fact, repetition is the best way to convince and
persuade, since it not only promotes clarity, but encourages the acceptance of an idea.

Furthermore the musicality created by the use of repetitions makes a line more memorable. Indeed, one of the best-known examples of repetitions is Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream”; a rhetorical technique proposed again by Obama with his famous slogan ‘Yes, we can’.

Continuing with the analysis, the second strategy employed by president Obama lies in creating inclusiveness and togetherness by establishing a common mission for the country. The following utterances are indeed explanatory of that:

Tonight, more than 200 years after a former colony won the right to determine its own destiny, the task of perfecting our union moves forward […] (24).

[…] We are an American family, and we rise or fall together as one nation and as one people (25).

Semantically, this intention to establish solidarity with the audience is achieved through a clever use of deictic expressions. Thus, the predominant use of the first personal pronoun ‘we’, and all its anamorphous, seems to be a very powerful rhetorical technique here, since it allows president Obama to create unity by promoting a sense of camaraderie between he himself and the people he is appealing to. Indeed, a statistical analysis of the speech reveals that, in this 21 minute speech, Obama uses the pronouns ‘We’/Us/Our’ 110 times, thus managing to create affinity, cohesion and personal connection. In this way, by involving everyone, even the people who voted for Romney, every single elector feels part of a great American family.

The sense of togetherness we are talking about is also conveyed through the use of another rhetorical device, ‘amplification’, which lies in the repetition of a word adding more detail to it, emphasizing what might otherwise be passed over.

Furthermore, in the following sentence “Tonight, in this election, you, the American people […]” (26), by adding the adjective ‘American’ to the
pronoun ‘you’, Obama keeps on establishing solidarity with his audience by calling attention to the American family he just mentioned and making sure the reader realized the importance of being part of this great family. Still, by later mentioning the possibility of a ‘rise’ or a ‘fall’, Obama uses *antithesis* in order to create simpler relationships between ideas, which can be more easily understood by the common man.

Continuing, after having built a huge and ethnically heterogeneous in-group, the next aim pursued by the president lies in promising a better future to his electors. This idea is mainly conveyed through the following excerpt:

[...] and we know in our hearts that for the United States of America, the best is yet to come (27).

With these words Obama assures people to look into the future with tranquility.

Indeed, as Edelman (1988: 18) states “Obama evokes confident expectations of future welfare which help to legitimate more immediate proposals and policies that serve his political goals and interests.” Still according to Edelman (1988: 114) “promises of peace, prosperity and other inversions of current fears win support for actions portrayed as the avenues to this brighter future”. Indeed, generally speaking it is worth saying that all the political campaign material is laden with promises in order to sway the opinion of the electorate.

Van Dijk (1998b: 27) likewise, notes that references about the future or promises about future actions serve as “the primary predicates of the macrostructure of political discourse”, adding that “quite typical for much political discourse is the fact that references to the present tend to be negative, and those to the future positive” (1995: 17). Even Fairclough (2000a: 12) confirms this by suggesting that “political predicates are more heavily oriented toward ‘ought’ than toward ‘is’”, thus, much political discourse takes the form of a utopian future society. To further confirm this, what is worth pointing out is that the whole speech is saturated with a fervent optimism.
Indeed, Obama insists on the optimistic vision that led him to the White House for the second time and stresses many times his conviction of America’s capability to overcome crises. Rhetorically speaking, Obama further reinforces the positivity of his message by means of an ascending *tricolon*:

Our economy is recovering. A decade of war is ending. A long campaign is now over (28).

An additional clever move made by Obama with a powerful sub-textual capacity, lies in repeatedly stressing the virtue of humility and especially the need for political leaders to be humble. This self-image, that is useful to decrease the distance between himself and the public by portraying Obama as an average Joe, is mainly conveyed through the example below:

I just spoke with Governor Romney and I congratulated him and Paul Ryan on a hard-fought campaign [...] (29).

Indeed, by mentioning and especially thanking not only his rival but also his lineage of public servants, Obama displays magnanimity and humility as a leader and makes himself closer to average folks. This intention to get closer to his electors by portraying an ordinary self-image continues later, when Obama claims:

[...] And I wouldn’t be the man I am today without the woman who agreed to marry me 20 years ago. Let me say this publicly. Michelle, I have never loved you more. I have never been prouder to watch the rest of America fall in love with you too as our nation’s first lady [...] (30).

Here, showing his vulnerability and his personal feelings, Obama continues presenting himself as an ordinary man, thus managing to make people feel closer to him. In addition, at a sub-textual level it is worth saying that this public recognition to Michelle Obama is not just a silly romantic declaration.

Indeed, the sentence carries the accentuation of the important role of a nation’s first lady and thus, interpretively speaking, it hides an attempt to
captivate women’s sympathy. In addition, the sub-textual power of the sentence is further increased since it is tied to a humorous joke:

[…] But I will say that, for now, one dog’s probably enough […] (31).

Starting from here, it can be said that the use of humor generally helps to break the ice and allows people to listen to you. As Herbert Gardner (as cited in Jonas, 2004: 65) states “Once you get people laughing, they are listening and you can tell almost anything.” Therefore, with this humorous interaction Obama assured the attention of the audience and engaged his listeners for what was to come next.

Moving over the rhetorical level, it is worth stressing the huge presence throughout the speech of metamorphic rhetoric and hyperboles, exactly as in the example below:

[…] Thank you for believing all the way, to every hill, to every valley (32).

In brief, hyperbole is an exaggeration often used to create a strong impression, whilst metamorphic expressions indicate meaning of similar expressions like ‘through ups and downs, weal and woe’ in a more vivid manner, both useful to increase the rhythm and balance of the utterances.

On the sub-textual level instead, the next strategy adopted by the president lies in soliciting cooperation from the opposing cynical forces:

[…] I know that political campaigns can sometimes seem small, even silly. And that provides plenty of fodder for the cynics who tell us that politics is nothing more than a contest of egos or the domain of special interests. But if you ever get the chance to talk to folks who turned out at our rallies and crowded along a rope line in a high school gym or – or saw folks working late at a campaign office in some tiny county far away from home, you’ll discover something else (33).
In this section Obama is addressing the cynical forces which are against his position, trying to persuade them to be cooperative. This is a very astute move since Obama does not deny his vulnerability by ignoring the sceptics, but recognizes them and nullifies their idea of political campaign merely based on ‘egos and special interests’ by mentioning groups of common people which share his plans and enthusiasm. He does this using what we earlier called ‘glittering generalities’:

You’ll hear the determination in the voice of a young field organizer who’s working his way through college and wants to make sure every child has that same opportunity. You’ll hear the pride in the voice of a volunteer who’s going door to door because her brother was finally hired when the local auto plant added another shift (34).

Indeed, according to Orwell (1946), vague words, provided with positive connotations, like ‘determination’, ‘pride’, ‘patriotism’ are associated with highly-valued concepts and beliefs which can help the speaker attract general approval, thus also convincing the cynics, who cannot disagree with such universally accepted beliefs. In this sense Orwell (1946) himself states that:

the words democracy, socialism, freedom, patriotic, realistic, justice have each of them several different meanings which cannot be reconciled with one another. […] Words of this kind are often used in a consciously dishonest way. That is, the person who uses them has his own private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different.

At a rhetorical level, at this point of the speech the great presence of another powerful device, tricolon, can also be stressed:

We believe in a generous America, in a compassionate America, in a tolerant America […] (35).

Tricolon is perhaps Obama’s favorite and most used rhetorical device. As mentioned in the previous section, this is a progression of three parallel words or clauses of increasing power. The rule of three is a very powerful and mnemonic device in order to express concepts and ideas more completely,
emphasize your point and increase the memorability of what the speaker is saying.

In addition, as widely discussed with reference to *A more perfect union*, Obama tends to include himself, extraordinary or ordinary people as characters in his narrative. This technique is commonly defined as ‘voicing’ and lies in using the voice of another to further increase the credibility of the speaker’s words. Hence, Obama often quotes famous Americans but he also tells stories from everyday Americans, stories which make the audience feel more emotionally involved and connected with the speech.

Using the analysis conducted by Benjamin Lohn (2012), “too many times, speakers try to impress us with numbers and statistics but neglect the immense power of stories”. In contrast with this common aptitude, one can notice instead that Obama rarely mentions any statistic throughout his speeches. We shall see, a few chapters ahead, how such a tendency will represent a great advantage in his presidential confrontation against Romney.

An illuminating example of voicing extracted from the speech can be viewed just below:

[...] the dreams of an immigrant’s daughter who studies in our schools and pledges to our flag, to the young boy on the south side of Chicago who sees a life beyond the nearest street corner, to the furniture worker’s child in North Carolina who wants to become a doctor or a scientist, an engineer or an entrepreneur, a diplomat or even a president (36).

The extreme persuasive power of the speech is further provided by means of repetitions (37) and idiomatic expressions (38), whose examples can be found just below:

That’s the vision we share. That’s where we need to go – forward. That's where we need to go (37).

[...] As it has for more than two centuries, progress will come in fits and starts. It’s not always a straight line. It’s not always a smooth path (38).
Frequent repetitions’ main purpose, at a rhythmical level, is to provide order, balance and structure to the speech. Nevertheless, it is also worth stressing the fact that the audience is more likely to remember something that has been repeated over and over again. Therefore, fulfilling this secondary function, repetitions are somewhat useful to make a lasting impression on the listeners.

Instead, concerning the rhetorical effect of idiomatic expressions, it is worth saying that expressions like “progress will come in fits and starts” (38) are phrasal constructions or verbal expressions closely associated to a given language and, therefore, are used to extend the literal language and give extra meaning to an utterance. Thus, because of their illocutionary force and the polyphonic nature of their use, idiomatic expressions are indeed powerful tools in argumentation.

Another forceful device in argumentation used here by president Obama is antithesis. The Collins Dictionary defines it as “the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas, phrases or words so as to produce an effect of balance”, therefore, one can deduct that contrasting ideas close together help to convey a forceful argument, overwhelming rational thought. Indeed, antithesis, by reducing choices to just one or another, succeeds in imposing gravity and rhythm. Yet, what matters most is that antithesis helps to simplify and categorize the world as human beings naturally love to do.

Hence, an antithesis extracted from the speech is offered below:

This country has more wealth than any nation, but that’s not what makes us rich. We have the most powerful military in history, but that’s not what makes us strong. Our university, our culture are all the envy of the world, but that’s not what keeps the world coming to our shores […] (39).

The next persuasive device used by president Obama is ‘personification’, defined by Lakoff et. al (1980: 34) as “[…] a general category that covers a wide range of metaphors, each picking out different aspects of a person or ways at looking at a person”. In this sense personification is a colorful and simplified way to describe a complex idea, used to give vivid examples and images for the audience; thus, the audience can better understand a complex
subject. In the example extracted from the speech, Obama personifies and makes material an intangible value:

I have always believed that hope is that stubborn thing inside us that insists […] (40).

Personification as a figurative strategy is soon followed by a ‘crescendo effect’ when Obama, through consecutive repetitions, links sentences rhythmically, thus building a convincing climax. As already said, this is a strategy often employed in the final part of political speeches, as in this specific case, in order to build up emotions for the final statement and leave a lasting impression on the audience:

America, I believe we can build on the progress we’ve made and continue to fight for new jobs and new opportunities and new security for the middle class. I believe we can keep the promise of our founding, the idea that if you’re willing to work hard, it doesn’t matter who you are or where you come from or what you look like or where you love. It doesn’t matter whether you’re black or white or Hispanic or Asian or Native American or young or old or rich or poor, abled, disabled, gay or straight. You can make it here in America if you’re willing to try (41).

By contrast, in the following sentences and still at a rhetorical level, one can detect the presence of an *epistrophe*, precisely when Obama, referring to the political division between Democrats and Republicans, keeps on repeating the word ‘state’ at the end of consecutive clauses:

We are greater than the sum of our individual ambitions and we remain more than a collection of red states and blue states. We are, and forever will be, the United States of America (42).

Instead, at an interpretative level, Obama evokes here the idea of an ‘American exceptionalism’, an ideological theory that the United States is qualitatively different from other states (Lipset, 1996). Although the term, according to the political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset, does not necessarily imply superiority, several political figures, Obama included, tend
to promote its use in this sense. From here, the presence of *exceptionalist* ideas provide a fertile soil for supremacist thinking and this explains why this ideology has been widely evoked by several American presidents, such as Wilson, Reagan, Bush and Clinton. With reference to this speech, the act of evoking this ideology by reiterating the idea that the United States is the hegemon of the world, helps Obama elicit more support from the audience, also convincing his listeners that he can restore America to its greatness (Ivie & Giner, 2009):

[…] And together, with your help and God’s grace, we will continue our journey forward and remind the world just why it is that we live in the greatest nation on earth. Thank you, America. God bless you. God bless these United States (43).

Arriving at the final part of the speech, quoted above, what is worth highlighting is the conclusive intention pursued by the president, namely that of constructing ‘leadership’ and ‘legitimacy’ through the use of a very smart and convincing rhetorical device. Hence, Obama first appeals to an external power force, God in this case, in order to further legitimise his proposals.

Furthermore, the act of invoking God has another powerful effect on the audience, since it rouses the listeners’ primitive emotions and experiences. Therefore, mentioning God is useful since it creates an emotional impact, also leaving a lasting and emotionally strong impression on the listeners.

### 2.4.5. Second Inaugural Address

#### 2.4.5.1. Socio-historical Background and Purpose of the Speech

Barack Obama delivered his second inaugural address, which marked the beginning of his second term as the 44th President of the United States of America, in the Blue Room of the White House on the 20th of January, 2013.

The President started this speech by referencing America’s *Declaration of Independence* and the alienable rights which it proclaims.
Hence, in this speech as well as in the previous ones scrutinized, Obama’s main purpose is to create cohesion between American people, simply on the basis of their origins and independently from any other subjective traits. To this end, he uses an inclusive language aiming to encourage Americans to think collectively rather than as individuals.

Such proclaimed equality laid the ground for the topics Obama would deal with later in his speech, claiming for instance:

> Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law—for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well (44).

In terms of topics, Obama also talked about the immigration reform and an American wealth inequality, the need to reduce the public deficit, the healthcare’s costs and several other social and financial issues. He also referenced famous American leaders of the past, such as Martin Luther King, Abraham Lincoln and J.F. Kennedy, a really clever move in order to further legitimise his proposals. Of course, to this end, he also mentioned God, thus appealing to an external power force in order to provide credibility to his words.

Apart from these rhetorical strategies, the whole text contains lots of rhetoric, *ethos* and *pathos*, which make it memorable and convincing. I am going to analyse it semantically, also adding a more detailed rhetorical analysis.

### 2.4.5.2. Textual Analysis and Interpretation

Also this text, as those previously analysed, enumerates a high number of rhetorical devices and propagandist strategies which pursue a persuasive aim.

First and foremost one can identify throughout the speech the presence of the propagandist strategy that we earlier defined as ‘Plain Folks’, an attempt to create a sense of ‘camaraderie’ useful to shorten the distance between the speaker and his audience. Using this strategy the speaker
pretends to be a common person who fully takes part in the events that are occurring, empathizing with the listeners’ concerns, sharing the same feelings, views and opinions as the people he is appealing to. Therefore, in this speech as in the others earlier analysed, Obama seeks to portray himself as a person who had a similar experience to the listeners and this creates a sense of comfort and trust in the audience. Also the use of an ‘ordinary background’ - typical of Obama’s public image - makes the speaker closer to his listeners.

On a rhetorical level the speech is filled with a rhetorical technique which Obama is almost addicted to: syntethon, defined as “a set phrase linking two or more non synonymous words by conjunction” (Glosbe, http://glosbe.com/en/en/syntheton). Obama uses this device especially when he links together ‘effort and determination’, ‘passion and dedication’, ‘security and dignity’ and so on. Instead, on a wider level, it can be found Obama’s repeated use of anaphora, epistrophe and climax, although the main emphasis is conveyed through anadiplosis, which leads into a combined list of three and anaphora, as in the following excerpt:

Together, we determined that a modern economy requires railroads and highways to speed travel and commerce; schools and colleges to train our workers.

Together, we discovered that a free market only thrives when there are rules to ensure competition and fair play.

Together, we resolved that a great nation must care for the vulnerable, and protect its people from life’s worst hazards and misfortune (45).

Nevertheless, the most interesting aspect of this speech lies in Obama’s usage of deictic expressions, and, therefore, in his capacity to convey the metaphorical image of America as a great family. Indeed, as introduced in the previous paragraphs, an extensive use of the pronouns ‘we’, ‘our’ and ‘us’ in combination with a particular lexical register, aims to express the desired effect of unity and communion between the speaker and the audience. As shown in Cameron (2001: 132), the use of ‘we’ expresses sociable styles and
connotes a higher degree of intimacy and solidarity. Thus, with this powerful and recurrent ‘we-ness’, the president does not distance himself from the American people but, by contrast, he creates a sense of togetherness and constructs an in-group where all Americans can locate themselves.

Examples of ‘person deixis’ used to create affinity with the audience traceable throughout the speech are:

Today we continue a never-ending journey […] ; Together, we determined that a modern economy require […] ; But we have always understood that when times change, so must we, […] ; For we, the people, […] ; That is our generation’s task […] ; Let us, each of us, now embrace with […] ; Now, more than ever, we must do these things together, as one nation and one people […] (46).

To further extend such an important theme, by recalling the analysis conducted by Benjamin Loh (2012) it can be argued that great speeches generally have a lower I-U ratio because the focus is not on ‘I’ as an individual but about ‘You’ as an audience and why you should listen and what you should listen out for. For this reason, as stated by Loh (2012):

[…] it is of primary importance, during the course of any speech, to always ensure your speech is audience-centric and also, to create value and stake for the audience to listen in to what you have to say.

Starting from this assumption Loh argues that, considering this was a presidential victory speech, it is justifiable that the speech was centered on President Obama himself for some moments as the electorate needed to hear what President Obama was committed to as the leader of the nation; hence the considerable usage of ‘I’ 33 times.

Yet, it is more interesting to note how many more times he used the pronouns ‘You/You’re/Your’ and ‘We/Us/Our’ in his speech. The former pronoun classes (‘you’ and its anamorphous, used 56 times) has the effect of
creating affinity and personal connection since it gives the impression that President Obama is talking to you and no one else but yourself.

Instead, the more inclusive pronoun classes (‘we’ and its variants, used 110 times) ensures that the speech rallies and involves everyone, including President Obama himself, on the same line and towards a common endeavor.

Indeed, still according to the analysis conducted by Loh (2012), this is all the more important, considering that there was a significant crowd who voted for Romney as well, but now President Obama has the task of involving and not sidelining them.

Going on with the analysis, as earlier anticipated, on a rhetorical level the frequent presence of anaphors can be identified:

“together, together, together […]”; “We, the people”, 4 times; “Our journey is not complete until”, 5 times (47).

While, semantically speaking, this speech also shows a great presence of vague words, those that we earlier defined as ‘glittering generalities’. Indeed, quoting Orwell (1946) again, it can be argued that politicians and persuaders are very likely to use words that can be easily reinterpreted, words which evoke elusive images that have positive connotations, thus managing to demand approval without thinking. Among those words we could mention for instance ‘democracy’, ‘honor’, ‘justice’ or ‘freedom’. Therefore, throughout Obama’s inaugural speech, one can find several examples concerning this persuasive strategy. Indeed, Obama mentions “certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (48), and in addition, he states that “every citizen deserves a basic measure of security and dignity.” (49), thus running into the intentional vagueness which Orwell talks about. The use of several glittering generalities is further reinforced through the use of the rhetorical device known as syntheton, previously mentioned.

Remaining on the propagandist level, the sentence quoted above (48-49) links us to another strategy cleverly used by the president, which lies in including ‘testimonials’ within his speech, in other words quotes which try to connect the speaker to a respectable person or point of view. Furthermore, by
doing so, Obama also conveys a spirit of ‘patriotism’ and support for restoring the nation to its glory. Here, in fact, Obama mentions the Seneca Falls and Selma and Stonewall but, above all, he aligns himself with the founding fathers, referencing famous American leaders such as Lincoln, J.K. Kennedy and Martin Luther King. The latter sentences we showed above correspond to the incipit of the American Declaration of Independence.

In addition, in this speech as in the previous one, Obama evokes the idea of an American symbolic rebirth. Indeed, also in this case, promises of a better future such as: “With common effort and common purpose, with passion and dedication, let us answer the call of history and carry into an uncertain future that precious light of freedom” (50), manage to describe the emergence of a sort of Utopian society and allow Obama to assure people to look into the future with tranquility.

Beside this futuristic perspective, another among Obama’s main aims lies in seeking to obtain the sympathy of other countries or, better still, of the entire world. Indeed, with the words:

We will support democracy from Asia to Africa, from the Americas to the Middle East, because our interests and our conscience compel us to act on behalf of those who long for freedom […] (51).

Obama evokes an idea of ‘universality’ and thus makes the audience believe that he does what he does for the good of the entire world not just for the good of America. In addition, to further increase this sense of universality and gain the support of the entire world, Obama refers again to those glittering generalities we just mentioned (e.g. ‘freedom’, ‘democracy’, ‘peace’), since these are notions which should be shared by every civil country. This view, as well as all the ideological views embedded in the speech and mentioned until now, is reinforced through a sense of urgency for the cause, rhetorically built through the device known as kairos, defined by the Webster Dictionary as “a time when conditions are right for the accomplishment of a crucial action”.

This sense of urgency is omnipresent and pervades the speech, especially when Obama says things like: “For now decisions are upon us and
we cannot afford delay” (52). Indeed, by using modals like ‘must’ or ‘cannot’ Obama insinuates the necessity to change the course America is on.

In conclusion, the last ideological perspective which pervades the speech and which is typical of Obama’s narrative style is the evocation of what we defined earlier as an ‘American exceptionalism’, a rhetorical device that elicits support from the audience. Indeed, even in this speech one can find several taps into people’s needs to feel superior to others - e.g. “America will remain the anchor of strong alliances in every corner of the globe” (53) – or taps into people’s compassion for others – e.g. “And we must be a source of hope to the poor, the sick, the marginalized, the victims of prejudice – not out of mere charity […]” (54).

Additionally, adding this time a statistical analysis of frequently used words, it can be pointed out that the pronoun ‘we’ is the absolute champion in the word count - language choice which can be attributed to the sense of ‘togetherness’ Obama is seeking to convey - followed by ‘nation’ and ‘new’. Indeed, the use of the first person pronoun ‘we’ is to shorten the distance between the speaker and the audience, regardless of their disparity in age, social status, professions etc. It may include both the speaker and the listener in the same arena, and thus make the audience feel emotionally close to the speaker and his points.

2.5. Obama’s Use of Modals

On a textual level Obama’s peculiar use of modality deserves a special mention, since it is mainly through the use of modal operators that Obama conveys several emotions. Indeed, according to Wang (2010: 6) since “modality refers to a speaker’s attitudes towards or opinion about the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence”, through the speech analysis just conducted, we have discovered that Obama makes his audience understand and accept his political speeches more easily by means of modal verbs.

Halliday (2000) states that modality plays an important role in carrying out the interpersonal meta-function of clauses, showing to what degree the proposition is valid. Thompson (2000: 57) adds that “modality relates to the
speaker’s judgment about the validity of a preposition” and thus can convey a feeling of possibility, inclination or certainty. Still, according to Freeborn (1995: 163) “Modality enables us to refer not to facts, but to the possibility or impossibility of something happening, its necessity, certainty and whether the action is permitted.”

Starting from these assumptions, by analyzing given speeches we have discovered that Obama’s most used modal is ‘will’, that, as a marker of the future tense, is used to predict the future, also showing “strong wish and determination” (Ye, 2010: 148). Thus, according to Halliday (1994), who identifies different values of modal commitment, ‘will’, representing a high scale of modal commitment, signals a high degree of certainty. Consequently, Obama’s preference for this modal is indicative of Obama’s strong and convincing determination to lead America toward a better future.

Soon after ‘will’, Obama’s most used modal is ‘can’, which, corresponds instead to a low scale of modal commitment. Indeed, ‘can’ is a permissive modal which weakens the speaker’s authority and thus shortens the distance between him and the audience. Furthermore, ‘can’ is also useful to make listeners believe that they are neither forced nor commanded to obey the speaker. Simultaneously, ‘can’ encourages listeners to have confidence in their abilities.

The third modal often adopted by Obama is ‘must’, the modal which corresponds to the highest value of modal commitment, since it puts pressure on the audience by expressing a command. Hence, Obama uses this modal when he wants to affirm his authority and determination as well as to drive his listeners to take action.

Later, in the course of the comparison between Romney and Obama’s verbal style, we shall see how Obama’s preference for ‘will’, compared to Romney’s ‘would’, contributes to increase Obama’s certainty and his more active attitude. Indeed, representing a low scale of commitment, ‘would’ is a less convincing modal, since it mitigates the responsibility of truth.
2.6. To conclude: What Is Barack Obama’s Secret for Giving a Great Speech?

The analysis of selected speeches given by president Obama seems to suggest that Obama is a very skilful orator, who employs several linguistic and rhetorical strategies and devices for the efficiency of the address.

From the analysis we conducted it has emerged that, probably learning from ancient rhetoric, Obama is a master in the use of ‘didactic poetry’, a narrative style which rests upon repetition and parallelism and is very easily remembered.

Similarly, the analysis of Obama’s usage of deictic expressions has also shown that personal pronouns play an important role in creating a persuading and foregrounding effect; while Obama’s continuous biblical citations and a stress on national unity help to create an emotional atmosphere able to effectively involve the audience.

In short, to summarize what we have discovered until now, in the following paragraph I propose a schematized list of the most significant results achieved throughout the course of the analysis.

First and foremost, in terms of rhetorical devices one can deduct from the table below, which offers a schematized list of Obama’s most used rhetorical techniques, that tricolon is one of his favourite strategies. This strategy is helpful to further emphasize his points, since the cumulative effect created by lists of three has a powerful impact on the audience. Another technique often adopted by the president is anaphora, which belongs to the larger family of repetitions. Thus, anaphora, parallelism, epistroph and all of the strategies consisting of frequently repeating the same words, are effective in creating a sense of structure and power. In addition, repeating small phrases and simple concepts can ingrain an idea in the minds of the audience.

Indeed, as shown by Jones and Peccei (2004: 51) one reason why politicians use parallelism and repetitions in their speeches is “to draw attention to a particular part of their message and make it stand out from the rest of the speech”.
Another technique dear to Obama is antithesis, helpful to contribute to the construction of a polarized world based upon ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’; whereas frequent rhetorical questions help to climax his speeches, thus creating a dramatic bonding moment between speaker and audience.

To simplify and sum up, below is a schematized list of the most convincing rhetorical devices used by Obama, which have just been analysed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Effect pursued on a textual/semantic level</th>
<th>Effect pursued on an interpretative/manipulative level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repetitions</td>
<td>Repetitions of a few different refrains, words and phrases throughout a speech</td>
<td>Produce emphasis, clarity, amplification or emotional effect</td>
<td>Help the audience make connections and assimilate better the content of the speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive Language person deixis</td>
<td>Use of the pronouns “we”, “our” and “us”</td>
<td>Makes the speech audience-centric giving the idea that the speaker is talking to you and no one else but yourself</td>
<td>Creates inclusiveness and makes the speaker closer to his listeners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rule of three (Tricolon)</td>
<td>Series of three parallel words, phrases or clauses</td>
<td>Adds rhythm and emphasizes points the speaker wants to make</td>
<td>Emphasizes some points, and increase the memorability of the message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>Series of jokes that balance the seriousness of a speech</td>
<td>Emphasizes some points, makes people laugh and balances the seriousness of a speech</td>
<td>Helps speakers earn audience attention, demonstrate personality and focus on issues without sounding too forceful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions and answers</td>
<td>Statements given in question format</td>
<td>Add variety and interest to a speech and make the listeners active participants in the speech</td>
<td>Engage the audience in thinking and consider what answer they would give if they could and thus make the listener agree with the speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climax</td>
<td>Arrangement of words in increasing order of effect</td>
<td>Builds up a dramatic and, therefore, convincing sentence and increases expectation and so tension with each item in the list</td>
<td>Often used in the final sentence of an address to leave a lasting impression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antithesis</td>
<td>Counter proposition that denotes a direct contrast to the original proposition</td>
<td>Adds stylistic texture to the speech and allows to compare oneself to one’s opponent</td>
<td>Giving the audience a contrast of the thesis with an opposite point of view aims them in the direction of understanding the concept</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Chart schematizing Obama’s most used rhetorical devices

In terms of most covered strategies, traceable only on a sub-textual level, the analysis found out that Obama tends to convey through his speeches a sense of magnanimity and humility, helpful to shorten the distance with his audience. Similarly, during both the 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns, Obama tried to show the fallibility and vulnerability of himself as an individual, often mentioning his wife and daughters and depicting himself as a loving father figure.

Nevertheless, apart from the self-image Obama wants to give, the most powerful strategies he uses on a sub-textual level include the technique
defined as ‘voicing’, a very moving technique that, telling the stories of everyday Americans succeeds in involving the audience emotionally. In addition, what Obama continuously evokes throughout his speeches is what we called ‘American exceptionalism’, a very persuading theory which states that the United States is qualitatively different from other states (Lipset, 1996) and thus manages to convince listeners that the speaker is able to restore America to its greatness.

Instead, in terms of modality, from the analysis we have seen that Obama’s favourite modal is ‘will’, helpful to express his firm intention to lead America toward a better future, followed by ‘can’, useful to build proximity with the audience, and lastly ‘must’, used to affirm his authority and leadership.

Last but not least, one can say that Obama’s most remarkable persuasive ability arises mainly from his peculiar use of ‘person deixis’.

In terms of most used pronouns, from the table below (Wang, 2010: 7) it can be seen that the first person is used most. Indeed, the use of ‘we’ and its anamorphous is to shorten the distance between the speaker and the audience, pursuing the attempt to include both the speaker and the listener in the same arena, and thus make the audience feel close to the speaker and his own view.

Needless to say that, creating an intimate dialogic style, this high presence of We-ratio can persuade the audience to share the same proposal of the speaker.

Wang (2010: 7) offers a table related to Obama’s first victory and inaugural speeches in confirmation of his preference for first person pronouns. Indeed, using the numbers provided in the table, one can notice the greater presence, throughout these sample speeches, of the pronoun ‘we’ and its variants (‘we’ and ‘us’ 145 times; ‘our’ and ‘ours’ 95 times); whereas the more individualistic forms of ‘I’ are less frequent (‘I’ and ‘me’ 38 times; ‘my’ and ‘mine’ 14 times). The second person pronoun ‘you’ and its correlated forms (‘you’ 34 times; ‘your’ and ‘yours’ 9 times) rank on an intermediate level. This pronoun, according to Li (2001) has a significant role in the speech because it helps to create a dialogic style, maintaining an intimate
relationship between addresser and listeners and allowing an interaction between speaker and audience.

Table 3 This Table uses two sample speeches – Obama’s 2008 victory and inaugural speech – to show which pronouns Obama tends to use most (table adapted from Wang, 2010: 7).

2.7. An Overlook at Romney’s Rhetorical Techniques

2.7.1. Brief Introduction

After having described president Obama’s rhetoric and linguistic style, it is now time to move on to Romney. Similar to what has been done for Obama, throughout the following section an overall description of Romney’s stylistic features will be followed by a critical analysis of selected speeches. Then, a direct comparison between the two nominees will be proposed, with a careful look at the presidential debates.

The following analysis, always conducted on the basis of the main guidelines of CDA, will highlight the most remarkable rhetorical and linguistic skills of Mitt Romney, the Republican nominee.

The research will show that Romney is a careful speaker who masters the art of language; his discourse is somewhat fluid, organized and persuasive, nevertheless, we shall find out that Romney’s most significant
trait is his greater authenticity. Compared to Obama in fact, Romney rests more on statistical data and tangible facts, giving a more truthful picture of the political-economic situation of the country.

Nonetheless, the logical, coherent and well-organized arguments that Romney proposes have a whiff of managerial decision-making about them and, therefore, compared to Obama’s greater emotional approach, Romney’s arguments appear colder and trapped in a rigid statistical reality.

Indeed, Romney can be described as a deeply private person, with an aversion to revealing too much of himself to the public; on the contrary he tends to analyse everything, focusing on specifics. Such an analytical approach depends mostly on his right-handed identity and involves the risk of making him appear as a calculating man of astounding wealth, a man unable to relate to average folks.

On a linguistic level, we shall see how this incapability merges into a less wise use – compared to Obama’s – of ‘person deixis’. Indeed, as earlier anticipated, great speeches generally have a lower I-U ratio because the focus is not on ‘I’ as an individual but about ‘You’ as an audience. Thus, as we have just seen, while Obama abounds with the pronouns ‘we-us-our’, Romney seems more concentrated on himself and his economic background.

Consequently, his speeches always have a higher I-U ratio which risks making him appear distant from his audience, and thus failing in creating a sense of unity and cohesion comparable to Obama’s. This lack of ‘we-ness’ is probably the main reason why Romney failed.

2.7.2. Romney’s ‘Prebuttal’ Speech in Tampa

2.7.2.1. Socio-historical Background, Purpose and Effects of the speech

On January 25, 2012 Romney gave a ‘prebuttal’ speech to Obama’s State of the Union address in Tampa, in front of a small crowd of supporters. From this point of view, it is first important to say that Romney was the only presidential candidate to make a ‘prebuttal’ speech, a preemptive attack to get the people on his side before Obama’s State of the Union address and to force
the president to be on the defensive, however it does not seem to me that this speech had the effect Romney was aiming for.

Indeed, the speech focuses mainly on economic and financial issues and concentrates on criticizing Obama, hiding a veiled attempt to blame the president for the economic problems going on in the country.

The preamble of the speech is indicative of what we anticipated in the previous paragraph. Indeed, Romney began by saying:

Obama will give a nice speech with a lot of memorable phrases. But he won’t give you the hard numbers. Like 9.9 % – that’s the unemployment rate in this state. Or 25 percent – that’s the percentage of foreclosed homes in America that are right here in Florida. Or $15 trillion – that’s the size of our national debt […] (55).

From this inception we can already see how Romney concentrates his campaign on numbers rather than emotions, a choice which will reveal itself to be disastrous and counter-productive.

Overall, the speech was short, Romney’s delivery fluid and direct, with a wise use of several rhetorical devices. Yet, in spite of the persuasive potential of the speech, the general feeling is that Romney did not achieve the effect he was aiming for. In fact, the speech itself focuses too much on ticking off sobering statistics about the nation’s economy. In addition, as Kirk (2013: 53) states:

the dominant strategy of the speech relied too heavily on ideological opposition to taxation, a rhetorical choice which limited many other policy arguments in the speech, and ultimately evacuated the arguments of any substance.

The goal of the speech is just to make Obama look bad before he delivers his address, and with the use of several rhetorical devices Romney apparently succeeds in doing this, especially since the speech took place in a plant which closed in 2008 due to the economic downturn. Therefore, since the crowd he
was speaking to really felt the economic slump, the audience was perhaps more receptive to Romney’s words. Nonetheless, if we analyse the speech from a wider perspective, one can find many logical fallacies and ideological mistakes which make it somewhat ineffective.

2.7.2.2. Textual Analysis and Interpretation

Romney begins the speech with a direct attack against Obama, listing all the mistakes made by the president and the tolls that the country has experienced due to bad economy. More precisely, the speech begins with a ‘prediction’, aiming to prove the predictability of Obama’s arguments. In this way Romney tries to make a specific portrait of Obama, depicting him as a president who does not give the unemployed the attention they need. Therefore, the goal pursued is to reveal Obama’s ineptitude on economic issues.

After listing these tolls, rhetorically speaking Romney makes use of anaphora in order to make Obama appear as the weaker candidate:

Did he fix the economy? Did he tackle the housing crisis? Did he get Americans back to work? No (56).

In this specific case anaphora is combined with hypophora, since Romney poses a question and then immediately answers it. Later, Romney uses anaphora yet again in a more direct way. The following anaphora is further combined with antithesis, so that the next sentences appear in the form of “He did this” and “He did that”, when “we needed this” and “we needed that”. The speech itself ends with another anaphora, insomuch as the repetition of such a statement really can turn the listener into thinking that Obama is not a good candidate.

On the rhetorical level, the attack continues with antithesis, in the attempt to suggest that Obama’s agenda sounds less like “built to last” and more like “doomed to fail”. Still in the same perspective Romney combines together anaphora and synecdoche, suggesting that Obama is going to
continue with his prior ways, proponing again ‘big governments’ and ‘big price tags’.

At this point, after having torn Obama to pieces, Romney is ready to display the solution to all the problems he just listed. At a rhetorical level he does this by using anaphora again, while on a persuasive level Romney’s strategy consists of presenting himself as the possible solution. Indeed, he suggests: “I will reduce tax rates [...] I will open up new markets [...] I will streamline regulation [...]”, etc. (57).

Nevertheless, in spite of several effective rhetorical devices employed by Romney throughout the speech, it could be argued that a direct and aggressive attack against an opponent such as this runs the risk of ending up sounding like a desperate attempt to delegitimise the rival and, therefore, it could appear pathetic. Furthermore, it is worth adding that apart from the attack, Romney does not propose any solution to the problems that he lists, limiting himself to criticize Obama.

To conclude, although the extensive use of anaphora, parallelism and other rhetorical devices throughout the speech, it almost seems that the speech itself is dominated by some logical fallacies, while the general feeling is that the speech sounds just like a desperate attack on everything bad Obama had done. For all these reasons, and especially since it seems that there is no substance behind an ‘end to itself’ rhetoric, the speech turns out to be somewhat ineffective and even counter-productive.

2.7.2.3. Ideological Interpretation: the Inefficacy of ‘Political Mudslinging’

Recapitulating what is mentioned above, Romney’s ‘prebuttal’ speech can be considered an example of ‘negative campaigning’, an attempt to win an advantage by referring to negative aspects of an opponent rather than emphasizing one’s own positive attributes.

Steven Finkel and John Geer (1998: 579) contrasted positive and negative campaign appeals, stating that “positive appeals are ones that
candidates offer to promote themselves on some issue or trait. Negative appeals are attacks [or criticism] leveled at the opposition.”

Political scientists have long been studying the effects of negative campaigning on voter opinion, and mentioning some of these researchers could be useful in order to realize why Romney’s ‘prebuttal’ speech was somewhat ineffective. Indeed, although negative campaigns are widely used, especially since “negative information is more salient, more easily noticed and, therefore, more easily processed” (Reyes et al., 1980: as cited in Schulman & Rivera, 2009: 3), it has been largely proved, by several researchers, that they may also produce boomerang effects.

Therefore, first and foremost, concerning the effect of negative campaigning, we can mention the research conducted by Stephen Ansolabehere and ShantoIyenar (1995), who used a combination of laboratory-like experiments to show that negative campaigns reduce voter participation, increasing scepticism and diffidence, not only toward the targeted candidate but even toward the negative campaigner. The risk for the attacker is thus to alienate supporters or swing voters from his campaign, especially if the message is too nasty.

Indeed, as Garramone (1984: 251 as cited in King and McConnell, 2003: 845) states:

Negative political advertising may achieve its intended effects, but it may also produce boomerang effects. A strong attack on a candidate, if perceived by the audience as untruthful, undocumented, or in any way unjustified, may create more negative feelings toward the sponsor, rather than the target.

Similarly, Lau and Rovner (2009: 292) state that “negative campaign is often ineffective and that sometimes – and especially for incumbents – leads to backlash, lowering voters’ evaluations of the negative campaigner.”

To be more precise, it can be argued that the majority of researches conducted in this field show that negative campaigning is not only ineffective but sometimes even counter-productive. A literature analysis published in
2007 in the *Journal of Politics* reported that negative ads tend to be more memorable than positive ads; nonetheless they do not affect voter choice.

*Campaigns & Elections* reported that Cathy Allen (as cited in Bike, 2004), president of Campaign Connection of Seattle, indicated that:

[…] going negative might be the proper course when taking on an incumbent, when the opponent is outspending the candidate by large margins, when there is irrefutable information that the opponent has done something wrong, and when the candidate has little name recognition.

This theory explains why Romney, as the weaker candidate, employs negative ads; nonetheless other researches published in the *Journal of Advertising* also found that negative political advertising makes the body want to turn away physically.

This last finding is founded upon a research conducted by Angelini (2003), professor of communication at the University of Delaware, which used ads that aired during the 2000 presidential election.

The research by Angelini (2000) found that “negative political advertising makes the body want to turn away physically, but the mind remembers negative messages, though sometimes incorrectly”.

To conclude, it can be said that one of the biggest problems associated with negative campaigning is that people become confused about the delegates as far as what is the actual truth and what is just a lie. Indeed, As Mutz and Reeves (2005, as cited in Schulman & Rivera, 2009: 5) explain, “uncivil political debate adversely affects political trust within the public and subsequently the entire political process”. Thus, negative campaigning seems to reinforce the idea that all politicians are dishonest and, in this sense, the attack itself could simply cause diffidence toward the speaker, Romney in our case.
2.7.3. Romney’s Primaries Speech, April 2012

2.7.3.1. Socio-historical Background and Purpose of the Speech

After winning all five primaries, Mitt Romney delivered a speech from Manchester, New Hampshire, to thank his supporters and to give start to his presidential campaign, introducing all the economic themes that would underpin his battle with President Obama.

Similarly to the previous speech, also this new address concentrates on condemning Obama for false promises and weak leadership. In the same way, also in this case the speech focuses almost exclusively on the economy and the main goal pursued is to portray the other side as being out of touch with the concerns of ordinary Americans and unable to solve intractable economic issues. Thus, speaking to those frustrated by the economy, Romney said: “Hold on a little longer, a better America begins tonight” (58), making it clear that he intended to campaign vigorously against Obama. Similarly, in this speech as in the previous one, there is an emphasis on percentages and numbers, aiming to corroborate Romney’s accusations.

2.7.3.2. Textual/Rhetorical analysis

Rhetorically speaking, after thanking his supporters, Romney begins his phrasing with amplification, in order to increase the rhetorical effect of his words, when he claims: “I can say with confidence – and gratitude– that you have given me a great honor and solemn responsibility” (59).

The same rhetorical effect is also conveyed later, through what is known as Scesis Onomatot, defined by the Journal of American Rhetoric (http://www.americanrhetoric.com) as “a figure of repetition in which a set of two or more different words having the same, or nearly the same, meaning occurs within the same sentence”. This rhetorical technique can be found in the following excerpt of the speech, combined with an anaphora:

For every single mom who feels heartbroken when she has to explain to her kids that she needs to take a second job […] for grandparents who can’t
afford the gas to visit their grandchildren […] for the mom and dad who never thought they’d be on food stamps […] for the small business owner desperately cutting back just to keep the doors open one more month […] (60).

Tricolon is the next device used by Romney, precisely when he says “I want to hear what’s on your mind, hear about your concerns, and learn about your families” (61). In this specific case tricolon does not only emphasize a concept, making it memorable to the audience, but, at a rhythmical level, it also helps the sentence flow better. Later, Romney would combine a tricolon with assonance, to further increase the rhythmic effect of the sentence: “But because he has failed, he will run a campaign of diversions, distractions, and distortions” (62).

In addition to a long series of anaphors, the speech includes also a hypophora, when Romney, anticipating his listeners’ doubts, raises a question and immediately answers it:

Is it easier to make ends meet? Is it easier to sell your home or buy a new one? Have you saved what you needed for retirement? Are you making more in your job? Do you have a better chance to get a better job? Do you pay less at the pump? […] (63).

In this specific case of anaphora, there are five different and consecutive questions, thus the persuading effect of this technique is further increased.

Another rhetorical device which appears over and over again throughout the speech is parallelism, whose main goal is to add a sense of symmetry, logic and rhythm to the speech. Parallelism can also be combined with tricolon, for a more persuading effect - Eg. “Not on themselves. Not on each other. And not on America” (64). In addition, Romney also combines within the speech a symploce with an antithesis: “That meant something different to each of us but it meant something special to all of us” (65).

Besides the presence of several rhetorical devices, it is worth highlighting that the speech ends with an emphasis on the first person
pronouns ‘We/Our’, useful to convey a sense of unity and proximity by portraying the metaphorical image of an American family:

That’s our destiny. We believe in America. We believe in ourselves. Our greatest days are still ahead. We are, after all, Americans! (66).

Lastly, to conclude our textual analysis it can be argued that what caught our ears, more than the content of the speech, was a compelling sound-bite. All the classical rhetorical devices are here assembled together to appeal to our sense of balance.

2.7.4. Romney’s Convention Speech

2.7.4.1. Socio-historical Background and Purpose of the Speech

Mitt Romney accepted the Republican nomination in Tampa Bay on the 30th of August, 2012. The speech Romney delivered on this occasion was primarily based on an ‘antagonistic rhetoric’, setting up an ‘attack campaign’ in the attempt to discredit his opponent. Below is a transcript of Romney’s remarks talking about Obama:

I wish President Obama had succeeded because I want America to succeed. But his promises gave way to disappointment and division. This isn’t something we have to accept.

Many of you felt that way on Election Day four years ago. Hope and Change had a powerful appeal. But tonight I’d ask a simple question: If you felt that excitement when you voted for Barack Obama, shouldn’t you feel that way now that he’s President Obama? You know there’s something wrong with the kind of job he’s done as president when the best feeling you had was the day you voted for him. […]
The President hasn’t disappointed you because he wanted to. The President has disappointed America because he hasn’t led America in the right direction. He took office without the basic qualification that most Americans have and one that was essential to his task. He had almost no experience working in a business. Jobs to him are about government.

The president wants to heal the planet. My promise is to help you and your family.

Arising from these remarks, it can be argued that the main purpose of this speech by Romney rests on painting a humanizing portrait of himself while demonizing the political opponent. In order to accomplish this goal Romney describes Obama as a not enough qualified president, blaming him for the present economic crisis, also attempting to base the whole campaign on economic issues. And, of course, as a businessman, on this decisive issue Romney wins convincingly.

Simultaneously, Romney delivers a critique of Obama’s foreign and domestic policy, aggressively challenging him and claiming for instance that Obama “had thrown Israel under the bus” or that “the president had abandoned our friends in Poland”, and also that “every American is less secure today because he has failed to slow Iran’s nuclear threat”.

In addition to this attempt to convince the audience that Obama is not fit to be president, Romney develops a ‘humanizing’ speech in order to get closer to the people and defend himself from the rumors which defined him as a heartless cynic. Thus, the speech consists of a number of personal stories, extolling the virtues of hard-work and self-sacrifice and appealing to voters’ emotions.

After reporting his personal story, Romney presents a five-point plan, outlining the objectives he would like to accomplish, and afterwards, perhaps his wisest move is appealing to women, being aware that his polling in this demographic is significantly lower than Obama’s.
2.7.4.2. Textual Analysis and Interpretation

For all the reasons we outlined above, Governor Romney’s acceptance speech is an example of great rhetoric. Throughout this speech Romney’s main purpose was to present himself as the best choice for next president and, in order to accomplish this goal, he used several rhetorical devices.

Overall it can be said that the whole speech maintains a contrastive aspect, in the sense that it is founded upon the intention to create an advantageous polarization ‘Us-Them’.

Starting our analysis, one can point out a huge presence of Romney’s autobiographical references throughout his speech. Indeed, Romney tells the story of his life, through anecdotes of his past, depicting himself as an ordinary man and thus building affinity with his listeners.

In this way, he tries to identify himself with the audience and creates an implicit contrast with Obama, implicitly saying that Obama did not have the same experiences as him.

He attempts to humanize himself, proving to his audience that he is a person the same as them by saying:

> Four years ago, I know that many Americans felt a fresh excitement about the possibilities of a new president. That president was not the choice of our party but Americans always come together after elections. We are a good and generous people who are united by so much more than what divides us […] (71).

In order to identify himself with the audience and demonstrate humility by convincing America that his values were the same as theirs, he cleverly employed the pronoun ‘we’.

In addition to the autobiographical aspect, the speech is also pervaded by humor. Indeed, from the very beginning of his speech, Romney attempts to get closer to his listeners and catch their attention through the use of jokes:
I love the way he [Paul Ryan] lights up around his kids and how he’s not embarrassed to show the world how much he loves his mom. But Paul, I still like the playlist on my iPod better than yours (72).

The veiled intention pursued by Romney through these humorous jokes is to make the audience relax and be more likely to listen to him through the rest of the speech. Nevertheless, if we compare Romney’s and Obama’s use of humor, we must recognize how Obama’s humor is more contextualized. Indeed, in this speech, Romney’s joke does not have backbone and does not seem to be linked to any of the matters at hand.

Proposing again the theme of autobiography, it needs to be pointed out that Romney mentions his family several times throughout the speech, probably in order to appeal to listeners with a strong sense of family:

[…] if you ask Ann and I what we’d give, to break up just one more fight between the boys, or wake up in the morning and discover a pile of kids asleep in our room. Well, every mom and dad knows the answer to that […] (73).

In this way Romney does not only allow the audience to tune into his ethics but, simultaneously, by portraying himself as a loving parent, he also appeals to the hearts of all the parents in the audience. In a similar way, throughout the speech Romney mentions God over and over again in order to further legitimise his words and plans and to create a self-image as a religious man.

This is a rather clever move as well, since the evocation of religious beliefs can strengthen the speaker’s credibility. Indeed, as Episcopal Minister Frederick Stecker (2011) argues, politicians use ‘stealth’ bible imagery as a way to rouse our primitive emotions. Furthermore, by mentioning God, Romney implies that he is on God’s side and this, indeed, helps legitimise his actions.

Beside the frequent appeal to an external power force, within his speech Romney also attempts to appeal to women several times, by telling romantic stories of his past for instance, thus catching female attention. He describes how much he revered his mother and women in general, and continues by
including quotes from his mother: “Why should women have any less say than men, about the great decisions facing our nation?” (74).

In addition, he manages to catch female’s sympathy again when he demonstrates that he has put his mother’s teachings into practice by listing all the women he has hired to work with him in his administration.

To reiterate, we can argue that Romney’s main intention by telling his personal story pursues the goal to appeal to different kinds of viewers and listeners, in order to insure their support and vote. To do this he used several semantic techniques such as the use of first plural person pronoun ‘we’. As we said for Obama, Romney, as the majority of politicians, intentionally exceeds in the abuse of the person pronoun ‘we’, in order to create connection and affinity with his audience. Thanks to this technique, Romney manages to portray the image of a big American family, who he himself and his audience belong to. Thus, Romney shares the same footing as an average man and makes his listeners believe that they have suffered together during the past 4 years: “This isn’t something we have to accept. Now is the moment when we CAN do something. With your help we will do something” (75).

Beside a huge presence of first person pronouns, at a rhetorical level it can also be pointed out the recurrent use of antitheses, as in the samples below. Antitheses such as these help to create a categorization ‘Us-Them’:

And unlike the president, I have a plan to create 12 million new jobs […]; I will begin my presidency with a jobs tour. President Obama began with an apology tour […]; Unlike President Obama, I will not raise taxes on the middle class […] (76).

The contrastive aspect of the speech, founded upon the polarization ‘Us-Them’ and the demonization of the political enemy, is further conveyed through one of the last utterances of the speech. Indeed, it can be said that perhaps the most poignant moment was when Romney joked: “President Obama has promised to slow the rise of the oceans and to heal the planet”
(77), and then he looked directly into the camera and offered a stark contrast in a single breath saying “my promise is to help you and your family” (78).

2.8. **Comparison Between Obama and Romney’s Debating Styles - 2012 Presidential Debates**

2.8.1. **Methodology**

What follows is a direct comparison between Romney and Obama’s styles of debating. The comprehensive analysis of the language of Romney and Obama in the presidential debates is mainly based on the findings of Expert System (http://www.expertsystem.net/), a semantic technology company enabling the deep understanding of any type of text with speed and precision. The results of the analysis would highlight the language choices by the candidates as seen through semantic and linguistic analysis conducted using the Cogito semantic platform. The data provided by Expert System is further confirmed by the CNN polling center.

2.8.2. **First Obama-Romney Presidential Debate’s General Findings**

To begin with, it can be said that the first presidential debate is generally seen as a partial victory for Romney. In their two minutes’ opening speeches, Obama started the debate delivering policy details while Romney began introducing *pathos* and avoiding boring and intricate policy issues in his introduction.

Obama showed a more confident attitude through the extensive use of the first personal plural pronoun ‘we’ which, as a collective lexeme, connotes Obama as a Democrat and suggests that problems can be solved only through a collaborative effort. This idea is supported by Lakoff’s Theory “No one makes it without the rest of America” (Lakoff, 2002).

By contrast, Romney showed a preference for the pronoun ‘I’, thus referencing his social liberalism. This self-referential linguistic attitude
seemed to confer to Romney a greater authenticity than his opponent. Indeed, as stated by Bramley (2001), ‘I’ is mainly used by the speaker to convey his own opinion and thus it makes the speech more subjective; still, ‘I’ shows personal involvement and responsibility in the issues the speaker is dealing with (Hommerberg, 2012).

Instead, in terms of audience involvement, one can notice that Obama began his intervention by announcing his wedding anniversary and using the colloquial noun ‘sweetie’ to mention his wife. This is a clear attempt to increase audience involvement through emotional appeals and thus serves the purpose to present the speaker as an ordinary man. Indeed, as Laura Fitzpatrick (2012) states:

[…] The language of politicians is no longer developing to be pretentiously aspirational as George Orwell described it to be, but powerful politicians […], often seek to lower their register and use the colloquial language of the nation, intending, as Obama, to be viewed on a similar level.

By contrast, Romney’s attempt to involve the audience was effectively less emotional. To this end, rather than using emotional appeals, Romney recurred often to parallelism and created prosodic climax as in the following example: “Not the one we’ve been on, not the one the president describes as a top-down […] that’s not what I’m going to do” (79). Nevertheless, what really helped Romney to catch his audience’s attention was his greater use – compared to Obama’s - of negative emotions. Indeed, negative emotions are disquieting, thus when the speaker lets his listeners experience negative emotions, they will look for ways to eliminate them. Therefore, the audience will be more motivated to listen to the speaker carefully to see if his arguments give them a way to overcome their uneasiness.

Moving to a semantic level, what is worth pointing out first, concerns sentence length. From this perspective, one can notice that Romney tended to use shorter paragraphs than Obama, whose phrasings were instead more complex and somewhat academic and oratorical. Indeed, regarding the level of formality, Romney won with his simpler syntax, undoubtedly closer to the
language of the people. Nevertheless, what took Obama closer to his listeners was his tendency to deal with policy details less explicitly than his opponent. Still at a semantic level one can notice that, in terms of modality, both candidates were equally likely to use modal verbs like ‘would’, ‘can’ and ‘will’, although, looking deeper into the analysis Romney made a greater use of ‘can’ and ‘will’, while president Obama was a bit more likely to use ‘would’.

Therefore, concerning the level of modal commitment conveyed, it can be said that both candidates equally alternated high rank of commitment with low rank. Nevertheless, Obama’s faint preference for ‘would’ signaled a lower degree of certainty.

Lastly, both candidates seemed to prefer the passive form over the active, a choice which allowed them to make direct promises to the voters. This choice led to what Orwell (1946) defined as ‘Intentional vagueness’, rebuking politicians to “never use the passive voice where you can use the active”.

To schematize and confirm these findings, what I shall propose below is a statistical analysis, conducted on the basis of data found by Martin Krzywinski (available at http://mkweb.bcgsc.ca/debates2012/?debate=obama-romney-01), which enables us to describe the structure of each candidate's speech and the words and phrases that they used most.

First and foremost, as shown in the table below, Obama spoke for longer (2,570 sec) than Romney (2,312 sec) (debate timing by CNN). By contrast, Romney used more words (7,791 vs 7,280) and spoke faster (3,37 words/second vs 2,83). The result is that Romney appeared as rushed and repetitive, whereas Obama came across as strained and laborious.
Romney’s greater repetitiveness is further confirmed by the Windbag Index, a measure that studies the complexity of speech.

Starting from the assumption that a low Index is indicative of speech with low degree of repetition, what the table above tells us is that Obama’s interventions, with an overall of -31.7% Windbag Index, are less repetitive and verbose than Romney’s.
Instead, the table above suggests that Obama’s delivery is grammatically more complex and oratorical than Romney’s. Indeed, Obama’s largest sentence is pretty oratorical, with 112 words:

And everything that I’ve tried to do and everything that I’m now proposing for the next four years in terms of improving our education system, or developing American energy, or making sure that we’re closing loopholes for companies that are shipping jobs overseas and focusing on small businesses and companies that are creating jobs here in the United States, or - or closing our deficit in a responsible, balanced way that allows us to invest in our future - all those things are designed to make sure that the American people, their genius, their grit, their determination is - is channeled, and - and - and they have an opportunity to succeed (80).

By contrast, Romney’s longest sentence is composed by only 71 words:

Look, the right course for - for America’s government - we were talking about the role of government - is not to become the economic player picking winners and losers, telling people what kind of health treatment they can receive, taking over the health care system that - that has existed in this country for - for a long, long time and has produced the best health records in the world (81).
This contrast could be explained by considering their different backgrounds: Obama is an academic with a strong dialectical ability, whereas Romney is an economist, more focused on contents.

2.8.3. Second Presidential Debate’s General Findings

The second debate showed a greater similarity between the two candidates: both used more or less the same number of sentences, and the same lexical structure in terms of style and word choice (80% of the words used by both candidates are classified as usual or common language).

Nevertheless, looking deeper some differences emerge. Among the most used words spoken by Obama there is the noun ‘Romney’, a fact that seems to indicate a more combative approach toward his challenger.

Similarly, still in terms of word choice, it is worth pointing out that Obama tended to use more the pronoun ‘we’, typical of the sense of togetherness he aims to convey. By contrast, exactly as during the first debate, Romney showed a preference for the first person pronoun ‘I’, typical of his capitalist and exclusive approach but also of his greater authenticity.

To confirm this, a few linguistic experts - Michael Erard, James Pennebaker and Cindy Chung (cited in Doll, 2012) - scrutinized this second debate in detail, pinpointing the following facts: first and foremost, with reference to the use of personal pronouns, Erard noted that Romney used ‘I’ quite a lot while Obama did not answer the first couple of questions directly. In this sense the ‘authenticity award’ should be given to Romney.

Indeed, according to Pennebaker (2012), “authenticity reflects markers of self-reflection (‘I-words’), cognitive complexity, and relative low rates of negative emotion”. Therefore, although compared to the first debate both Romney and Obama were becoming more authentic; however Romney maintains a small lead (4.6 vs 4.2; compared to the first debate where Romney beat Obama by 4.4 vs 3.5)” (Pennebaker, 2012). As a result, it could be said that Obama used a more collectivistic tone, which reflects his more collectivist values, whereas Romney was more likely to use direct language,
often addressing his interlocutor with the use of the second person pronouns ‘you’ and ‘your’.

Figure 7 Data collected from www.expertsystem.net

Table 7 The table above, which refers to the use of Person Deixis, confirms the higher presence of I-U ratio in the case of Romney (‘I’ usage= 181 vs 129), while confirming Obama’s more pronounced ‘audience-centrality’ (‘we’ usage= 126 vs 91)

In terms of verb usage, what is worth pointing out is that both candidates used the verb ‘be’ and its various forms more often (Data, s.d.)\(^1\).

Obama used the verb ‘do’ more often while Romney seemed to prefer ‘have’, a choice which connotes a more active attitude in the case of Obama and a more passive one in the case of Romney.

Still in terms of most used words and connotations, the statistical analysis conducted by Erard shows that Romney preferred the word ‘people’, used 77 times against Obama’s 26 times, whereas Obama seemed to prefer the word ‘folks’. Some terms, such as for instance ‘taxes’ and ‘companies’ were favored by Obama and avoided by Romney, while Romney seemed more likely to mention specific percentages and quantitative data.

Instead, at a semantic level, the analysis reveals that Obama spoke less but used longer sentences and a more complex sentence construction than Romney. The analysis conducted by Martin Krzywinski (http://mkweb.bcgsc.ca/debates2012/?debate=obama-romney-02) confirms this, as shown in the table below:

\(^1\) Data collected from Expert System Data (http://www.expertsystem.net/products-technology/cogito-technology)
Concerning the use of modal operators, Romney often used ‘will’ and ‘can’, while Obama seemed to prefer ‘would’. In addition, talking about the volume and complexity of their respective interventions, Erard notes that Romney spoke more than Obama, interpreting this great talkativeness as the symptom of a more combative and aggressive behavior, whereas Obama was more likely to use a more sophisticated language, typical of his academic background.

In regard to the use of tenses, the analysis shows that Obama was more likely to speak in the past tense, pursuing the attempt to explain the past, whereas Romney used the future tense more. Of course this linguistic difference could be explained on the basis of their different status: Obama had already had a presidential experience, while Romney aspired to become president in the future.

Instead, in regards to the emotional content of the candidates’ respective interventions, it can be pointed out that Obama was more likely to use positive words than Romney. Furthermore, Obama also used more cognitive language than his opponent, who, on the contrary, focused more on numbers and quantitative data. Finally Obama, as a Democrat, referred to family and social relations more often than his opponent.

2.8.4. Third and Final Presidential Debate’s General Findings

Even in this final debate Romney spoke more than president Obama, using simpler and shorter sentences, whereas Obama was likely to use more
prepositions per clause. In this sense we can argue that Romney tends to be more concrete than president Obama, whereas, by contrast, Obama seems to be more theoretical and less personal, attitudes which resulted in Romney’s greater directness. Of course this reflects the candidates’ backgrounds: Romney is a businessman with a clear sense of reality and economic issues, whereas Obama is an academic. This also explains why Obama was more likely to use social words than Romney; indeed, he dealt with economic issues and difficulties only because they hurt people, while Romney, as a capitalist businessman, used economic words more often.

In terms of verb usage, the most used verbs by the candidates were the same as in the first debate: after ‘be’, the most used verbs by Romney were ‘have’, ‘get’ and ‘say’, while for Obama ‘be’ was followed by ‘do’, ‘have’ and ‘make’.

![Main Verbs](image)

Table 9 Table showing the verbs used most often by the candidates. After ‘be’, frequently used by both nominees, Romney used ‘have’, ‘get’ and ‘say’, whereas for Obama ‘do’ is in second place followed by ‘have’ and ‘make’. (Data from Expert System)

Concerning the use of modal verbs, there was a shift compared to the first debate: Romney was more likely to use ‘can’ than before, while his use of ‘will’ and ‘would’ decreased significantly. By contrast, Obama increased his use of ‘will’ while simultaneously decreasing his use of ‘can’, a choice which hides the attempt to focus more on the future and to convey a higher degree of certainty than during the previous debates.
Instead, analyzing the fluency of speech, it can be pointed out that Obama took noticeable pauses between sentences, while Romney talked fast, repeating words twice, for instance “of of” or “if if”. This difference resulted in a greater fluency in the case of Obama, who thus looked like an expert of foreign policy, which was the main topic of the final debate. By contrast, Romney’s faint dis-fluency made him appear less sure and well up on those issues.

A very smart move made by president Obama consisted of highlighting his presidential experience, saying for instance: “Here's one thing i've learned as commander in chief” (82). This tendency to recall the past obliged Romney to say things like: “I want to underscore the same point the president made” or “absolutely the right thing to do”, or “I agree [...]”. Obama replied saying: “I’m glad that Governor Romney agrees […]” (83) and he already looked like a winner.
2.9. For a Broader Perspective on Obama and Romney’s Persuasive Power:
Non-verbal Strategies Which Led to Obama’s Victory

2.9.1. Rationale
After having analysed the verbal style and strategies employed by both nominees according to the perspective established by CDA, what I shall offer in the following section is a more synthetic analysis of their most remarkable non-verbal skills which had a crucial impact on the last American presidential campaign, contributing to Obama’s victory. Thus, in this section I shall set aside the linguistic perspective for a while in order to take a more politological overall view on the candidates’ propagandist strategies.

First and foremost, it needs to be recognized the importance that nowadays social networks like Twitter have within a political context, actively contributing in reshaping the way in which politics is practiced and covered. In this sense very useful to our analysis is a 2011 study published by Yahoo Labs - conducted by Marco Pennacchiotti and Ana-Maria Popescu - which gathered keywords more likely to be used by liberals and conservatives, pointing out that Democrats, for instance, are more likely to tweet terms like ‘rights’, ‘justice’ and ‘reform’, whereas Republicans prefer ‘economy’, ‘constitution’ and ‘national pride’.

Within the same perspective computer scientist Saif Mohammed and his team at Canada’s National Research Council counted a number of 2 million tweets related only to America’s 2012 elections, a huge number which confirms the impact of social networks on politics. Still, other studies have even managed to predict the outcomes of elections through the analysis of social media. In addition, it needs to be kept in mind, to the end of our thesis, that Obama tops the list as the most followed person on Twitter.

Nevertheless, what arouses our interest most is not this huge presence on the social networks, but rather the fact that Obama’s most influential
tweets are incredibly short and simple. Indeed, the social media analytic group Klout highlights that Obama’s top tweets include the short “Yes we can” as well as an image of the president hugging his wife and saying “Four more years”, soon after the re-election.

In addition to the recognition of the influence of social networks on politics it needs to be recognized also the importance of non-verbal communication, especially in order to take a broader perspective on all the reasons which contributed to Obama’s decisive win. Indeed, non-verbal communication plays a key role in political debates, since most of the emotional content of a message is not in what is being said, but rather in how it is said and how the politicians look when they say it (Turk, 1999: 166). Indeed, US communications expert Pr. Albert Mahrebian (2009) states that the total impact of a message is a function of the following formula:

\[
\text{TOTAL IMPACT} = 7\% \text{ VERBAL} + 38\% \text{ VOCAL} + 55\% \text{ NON-VERBAL}
\]

Aware of this in the following section I shall also propose an analysis of Obama’s and Romney’s body motion, in order to take a broader perspective able to explain more thoroughly why Obama won.

2.9.1.1. Obama and Romney’s Rhetoric on Twitter

As just mentioned, recent researches on Obama’s speeches show that almost 71% of President Obama’s latest speeches are given in compact sentences, shorter than 140 characters. Thanks to this shortness, these speeches seem to be very ‘tweetable’, and this begs the question if the White House is intentionally shortening the length of presidential speeches in order to facilitate their entry into the ‘blogosphere’.

Independently from this intentionality, it can be argued that all political speeches are composed by concise but powerful statements, and
that this conciseness makes them very suitable for being reproduced on social networks.

Additionally, we can say that the fruition of social media like Twitter, can be extremely convenient nowadays for politicians in order to provide a higher political awareness, especially among young electors. Therefore, perhaps to accomplish this main goal, it seems that Obama’s speeches are likely to maintain this sort of ‘tweetability’.

Thus, at this point, it is worth asking why and how Twitter, and social networks in general, have emerged as key tools in the US-presidential campaign. First of all, it can easily be noticed that many of American’s best speeches are extremely “tweetable”. We can mention for example JFK’s *Inaugural Address*, Richard Nixon’s the *Great Silent Majority*, Martin Luther King’s *I’ve Been to the Mountaintop*, LBJ’s *We Shall Overcome* and finally Malcom X’s *Ballot or the Bullet*.

Clearly, at the time these speeches were raved, there were not Personal Computers nor Twitter but this simply proves that in order to be powerful and convincing a political speech needs to be concise and clear.

Showed below is a clear example of Obama’s concise rhetoric on Twitter:

- This happened because of you. Thank you (8:14 PM – 7 Nov 12) (84).

This tweet, after only 20 minutes, received 226,249 retweets, probably the most ever.

Indeed, as we just said, most of the political speeches on social networks are simply a brief outline of the key words of an official speech. In this case, it is possible to notice that Obama summarized his victory speech into a few words, stressing the second personal plural pronoun ‘you’, as a tool to make his electors feel even more involved in his success. Therefore, for all the aforementioned reasons, it is only two brief clauses but extremely powerful.

As a result, it can be almost affirmed that Obama’s greater presence on Twitter contributed to his final victory. Obama in fact broke every record
with his bazillion of followers and during the 2012 presidential campaign, Obama kept on pushing voters to the polls on social media while, by comparison, Romney sent only a general tweet to his voters but then stayed rather silent.

Furthermore, it can be said that also on Twitter, Romney kept on focusing on economic and financial issues while Obama’s topics were closer to the problems of common people.

It would be sufficient just to look at the number of retweets to realize that Obama’s rhetoric is more engaging than Romney’s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mitt Romney @MittRomney</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I am running for president to get us creating wealth again – not to redistribute it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 7,574 Retweet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barack Obama @BarackObama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“No family should have to set aside a college acceptance letter because they don’t have the money.” — President Obama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 23,670 Retweet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This comparison between Obama’s and Romney’s tweets in the period of the presidential campaign, shows how Obama’s language is simpler and more direct than Romney’s and does not give chance to be negatively reinterpreted. Indeed, when Romney says “not to redistribute it”, it may look like he meant he is against medical care, public schools and all those services which need redistribution.

This by Romney is not a very clever use of social networks. It is true that a message on the web should be short and concise but this conciseness should not be susceptible to re-interpretations or, even worse, misinterpretations. Thus, political messages on social networks should be as less ambiguous as possible, providing only a positive meaning.

Hence, while Romney’s tweet can easily become a source of discussion and dissent because of its equivocalness, Obama’s message, with its extreme simplicity and providing only a positive meaning, is unequivocal.
and cannot generate dissent. Furthermore, the immeasurable positivity condensed in Obama’s brief tweet makes readers almost obliged to agree with the writer, without opportunity for criticism or disapproval.

Another interesting element in this comparison rests upon Obama’s tendency to sign his tweets. The signature at the bottom of a tweet makes the tweet more personal and gives the idea that Obama writes his own tweets personally. This contributes to further increase Obama’s sense of togetherness and closeness to people.

2.9.1.2. Obama and Romney’s Body Language
After having analysed the candidates’ style of debating at a verbal level, it is now important to also recognize the importance of body motion in the formation of individual opinions about politicians.

Aware of the impact that non-verbal language has from a political perspective, New York University and the University of California have released a comprehensive computerized study of the body language of Romney and Obama during the presidential debates (the study can be viewed at http://www.gesturecloud.org/).

By examining sounds and gestures, and by focusing on every single word uttered by the candidates, the study highlights what words each candidate emphasizes through digital-motion tracking of their body language.

In this way, the study found that Obama tends to emphasize words such as ‘jobs’, ‘business’ and ‘companies’, whereas Romney is more likely to stress words such as ‘government’ more than he does other terms.

Furthermore, Obama’s gesture strength when he directly addresses Romney is proof of his more aggressive performance, while Romney is pushing back more on Obama, with gestures of emphasis when mentioning ‘president’. On the contrary, when mentioning ‘governor’ Romney, Obama does not put emphasis on it with his body movements.
Obama is more empathic also when it comes to ‘tax’, ‘American’ and ‘Medicare’, giving the idea that he cares more deeply about these issues than Romney. Overall, the research found that Obama effectively used more gestures to stress key words, while it can be noticed a lack of gesturing in the case of Romney which makes his nonverbal communication less effective.

Peggy Hackney, an analyst working with the New York University Movement Lab, has examined the body language of both nominees in greater detail. The research (available at http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/10/02/us/politics/what-romney-and-obamas-body-language-says-to-voters.html?_r=0) found that Mr. Obama used a more controlled style; he looked more comfortable and sure of himself while, nonverbally, Romney was aggressive, interrupting and speaking over the host many times.

Still, Givens, director of the Center for Nonverbal Studies in Spokane noticed that:

- Romney tends to show a sardonic smile as Obama speaks. This is practiced and intentional.

- Obama uses authoritative palm-down gestures.
- Obama compresses his lips when he disagrees.

- Romney raises his brow to emphasize words.

To simplify and recapitulate the analysis conducted by Hackney and Givens, it can be said that Obama’s most used gestures are:

- The Waving ball gesture: the president moves his forearm in an arc from the elbow with his palm open. He often uses this gesture to pass along a belief that he wants the audience to embrace.

- The Cutting gesture: the president makes a downward chopping motion to place emphasis on an action verb. He uses this gesture to sarcastically suggest something his opponent might do or to convey a task that he or the listener might undertake.

- The Pointer gesture: Obama moves his forearm in an arc from the elbow. This is an authoritative gesture and probably Obama’s most used.

In the case of Romney, his most used gestures are:
- The Pointer gesture: this is similar to Obama’s pointing. The aim is to emphasize strength of conviction.
- The Embrace gesture: Romney often seems to suggest an imminent embrace. The goal pursued is to convey the idea that what he is saying is logical.
- The Tilt and Nod gesture: in this gesture Romney uses two head movements to punctuate an idea.

In conclusion, it can be said that Obama took on, overall, a more neutral facial expression while listening; he used more hand gestures, such as pointing and listened more effectively. Indeed, Obama abounds with authoritative gestures which make him appear credible. In contrast, Romney’s continuous lips-licking, brow-raises and sardonic smirks, made him appear less professional and his nonverbal communication less effective. The overall impression, Givens says, is that governor Romney came across as aggressive, while president Obama appeared more cerebral and cool.

2.10. To Conclude: How Obama’s Words Point to Victory
To conclude this first section of the thesis, it can be argued that there are several different reasons which made Obama’s speeches more persuasive than Romney’s, thus leading him to the White House for the second time. Therefore, summarizing our previous analysis we can highlight several predominant reasons.

First and foremost, it can be concluded that Romney, who overall used fewer nouns and more verbs, provided an extra dose of optimism. A frequent use of verbs, according to University of Texas psychology professor James Pennebaker (2012) indicates indeed an ‘upbeat and optimistic’ candidate. This is further supported by many other words that Romney was more likely to use than his opponent, words such as ‘love’, ‘hope’, ‘chance’, ‘future’, etc.
Overall, in terms of deictic pronouns, it can be said that Obama’s interventions were significantly more audience-centric than Romney’s. Indeed, Obama used the first personal plural pronoun ‘we’ significantly more often than Romney, who, with an excessive presence of ‘I-U’ ratio within his interventions, seemed more focused on himself than on the people he was addressing. This difference resulted in Obama’s more collectivistic tone, which constructed ‘togetherness’ and thus managed to involve the audience more and make people feel part of a big ‘American family’. Hence, it can be added that while Romney’s individualism made him more distant from his audience, Obama’s inclusiveness suggested a stronger identification with the Nation. This is confirmed by the table below:

![I-U ratio - Obama collectivistic vs Romney direct](http://www.tomhcanderson.com/2012/10/21/text-analysis-of-2012-presidential-debates/)

In the matter of tenses, generally speaking, after the verb ‘be’, equally used by both candidates, Obama seemed to prefer the verb ‘do’ while Romney was more likely to use the verb ‘have’. Similarly it can be seen that, after the auxiliary verbs, Romney ‘s most used verb was ‘want’, which suggests a sense of desire, while Obama showed a preference for ‘make’, a choice which signals a more active attitude. All this resulted in a higher level of personal commitment in the case of Obama.

The use of modality seems to confirm this. According to Freeborn (1995:163), for instance, “Modality enables us to refer not to facts, but to
the possibility or impossibility of something happening, its necessity, certainty and whether the action is permitted.” Therefore, Obama’s preference for ‘will’, compared to Romney’s ‘would’, contributed to increase Obama’s certainty and his more active attitude. ‘Would’ is indeed a less convincing modal since, corresponding to a lower rank of modal commitment (see p. 54), it mitigates the responsibility of truth.

Overall, considering the volume and complexity of both nominees’ interventions, what is worth pointing out is that although Obama spoke for longer, Romney used more words than Obama, speaking faster. Thus, Romney came across as rushed, aggressive and repetitive while Obama seemed more articulated, laborious and measured. Similarly one can notice that Obama delivered a more complex grammar than Romney and used more unique words. Furthermore, Romney’s word clouds seem more bloated than Obama’s, a difference due to Romney’s greater repetition.

Regarding the use of exclusive words used by the two candidates, one can notice that the top verbs unique for Romney were ‘lose’ and ‘hurt’ followed by the word ‘tax’ and its plural version ‘taxes’; whereas Obama’s unique verbs were ‘created’ and ‘buy’. This choice resulted in Obama’s more positive attitude and the use of word-pairs seems to confirm this: Romney was indeed more likely to focus on ‘efficient private’ and ‘free ever’, thus appearing more interested in economic and financial issues, whereas Obama, talking about ‘middle-class families’ and ‘tax-cuts’, seemed more projected toward people.

Still, analyzing the debating style it emerged that Obama used cognitive language significantly more often than Romney, who, in his turn, was more likely to provide detailed quantitative data. Furthermore, while Obama was more likely to mention families and social relationships, Romney seemed more focused on occupational issues. All this resulted in a further affinity between Obama and the audience, while Romney’s more complex financial topics made him less understandable to average folks.
Graphic indicating that Romney was far more likely than Obama to insist on percentages, numbers and data (75% vs 65%) (Data from CNN.COM)

Going on with the analysis, examining the linguistic fluidity of the speakers it can be concluded that Obama seemed less insecure than Romney and this results evidently from the way they spoke, analyzing pauses and hesitations.

The table below, drawn by the third and final debate, proves Obama’s greater linguistic mastery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Seconds</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>False starts</th>
<th>Um</th>
<th>Uh</th>
<th>Disfluencies/min</th>
<th>Disfluencies/100 W</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romney</td>
<td>2560,5</td>
<td>8819</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>12,58</td>
<td>6,09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>2356,8</td>
<td>6842</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3,34</td>
<td>1,91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 Data from http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=4278
Graphic indicating Romney’s tendency to exhibit a rapid repetition of phrase-initial function words, often intermixed with um and uh.

It can be noticed from the table above that Obama was less likely to incorporate interjections into his speech, whereas Romney showed a greater speech dis-fluency, characterized by false starts, breaks, irregularities, fillers or non-lexical utterances (e.g. ‘uh’, ‘uhm’, ‘well’, ‘of-of’) and repaired utterances. Of course all these hesitations can be perceived as a symptom of uncertainty and thus can contribute to decreasing the trust in the speaker.

Similarly, Obama seemed more likely than Romney to use words related to ‘thinking’ such as ‘I know’ or ‘I understand’, whereas Romney was far more likely to use perceptual words such as ‘I feel’ or ‘I see’.
Perceptual words are often considered to be more subjective and related to uncertainty, while Obama’s greater use of certainty words (e.g. ‘always’, ‘definitely’, ‘sure’) could provide more convincing arguments and made Obama look like an expert.

Lastly, Obama’s body language, as proved in the previous paragraph, was more controlled and authoritative than Romney’s, whose less neutral facial expressions risked making him appear aggressive. On the contrary, Obama’s controlled style made him appear more cerebral and cool.
3. **BRITISH PRIME-MINISTERIAL RHETORIC:**

*a Journey Through the Evolution of British Political Discourse*

3.1. **Rationale**

The aim of the following chapter is to investigate the delivery of Conservative and Labour orators across recent history, and to highlight how British political rhetoric has changed and developed across time.

Indeed, since the British system is a parliamentary one, argumentation and debating skills are held in high regard. Starting from this assumption, what I shall propose is an analysis of the persuasive speeches delivered by the most effective British communicators of the latest years, from Baldwin to Cameron in the case of the Conservative Party, and Bevan to Brown in the case of the Labour Party, while proposing a deeper look at the most interesting figures: those of Churchill, Thatcher, Cameron, Blair and Brown.

The reference perspective adopted, at an ideological level, remains that proposed by cognitive linguist George Lakoff (2002), who discovers radically different models of morality between the left and the right. On the other hand, at a textual/rhetorical level the perspective adopted is that proposed by Fairclough and other leading figures of CDA.

Just as we did in the case of American rhetoric, also throughout this section the purpose is primarily to highlight the main dissimilarities between a Conservative and a Liberal mindset and, therefore, to reveal how a certain kind of ideological worldview affects language choices. Such distinction will lead us to notice, for instance, how Labour orators are more concerned with issues of ideology and group affiliation while Tories are more likely to use oratory to secure power and to demonstrate their leadership skills.

Such an evolutionary analysis will also allow for extrapolation and a more thorough description of certain types of rhetoric; Wartime oratory for instance, or Euro-sceptic rhetoric, or yet Epideictic oratory and so on.
Finally, at the end of the section we shall explore the fact that today both Conservative and Labour Oratory seem to be at a standstill, while the more populist perspective adopted by leaders outside the two main parties seem increasingly able to reconnect people and politics. Therefore, in the final paragraphs I shall offer a description of the rhetorical skills of Nick Clegg, leader of the Liberal Democrats, and Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence Party; who both, through a more participative rhetoric than that used by their colleagues Cameron and Brown, place their rhetoric on a street level, creating proximity and affinity with the audience.

3.2. Conservative Orators from Stanley Baldwin to David Cameron

3.2.1. Brief Introduction

According to George Lakoff (2002), previously mentioned, conservatives have spent decades defining their ideas and building a language fit for presenting them. Indeed, the conservative worldview corresponds to what Lakoff (2002) defines as ‘The Strict Father Model’, which assumes that the world is dangerous so there is the need to find a moral authority able to support and protect the family, teaching right from wrong. The only way to do that is through discipline and, in fact, one can notice that for the right wing the good citizens are the disciplined ones.

Thereby, in order to present the government as an undisputed authority, conservative orators appeal to motifs such as patriotism and national pride, employing words like ‘dependency’, ‘discipline’, ‘virtue’, ‘obedience’, ‘morality’ and so on. Moreover, another element which distinguishes a Conservative mindset from a liberal one rests upon a stronger link with past and tradition, an element which has important effects on language choices. Indeed, as William J. Bennett (1992: 35), one of the major conservative intellectuals, claims:
Conservatism seeks to conserve the best elements of the past. It understands the important role that traditions, institutions, habits and authority have in our social life together, and recognizes our national institutions as products of principles developed over time by custom, the lessons of experience, and consensus. Conservatism, too, is based on the belief that the social order rests upon a moral base […].

This is the image that the British orators mentioned below seek to convey throughout their speeches: from Baldwin and the birth of mass communication to David Cameron and his ‘rhetoric of Change’, to Churchill and his Wartime oratory and Margaret Thatcher’s development of an euro-sceptic discourse, the image conveyed is that of a strong leader and an ultimate moral authority who is able to defend and guide the country, exactly as the Strict Father does toward his family.

To simplify it we can say that Conservative political rhetoric is the rhetoric of establishment, attempting to justify the way things are and thus defending the status quo. As Putnam, professor at the University of Texas, states such rhetoric stresses appreciation of the existing goods; pride in the group, its history, traditions, and heroes.

Starting with these assumptions, in the course of the analysis, it could be said that almost all of the Conservative orators I mention tend to respect such categorization, with the only exception of David Cameron, promoter of a more socially inclusive, modern and compassionate Conservatism.

3.2.2. Stanley Baldwin and the Art of ‘Rhetoric Denial’
In tracing the evolution of British conservative oratory it seems opportune to begin by mentioning Stanley Baldwin, a central figure in the emergence of Conservative and British Politics, as asserted by Andrew Taylor, professor of Politics and Modern History. Indeed, Stanley Baldwin, three times Prime Minister between the two world wars, contributed to transform the Conservative party into a mass party and delivered a new type of rhetoric by
starting to exploit, for the first time, the new possibilities of mass communication.

Although Baldwin denied being a convincing orator and asserted to hate rhetoric, a huge number of his phrasings are considered to be memorable. He was conscious of the power of oratory and is considered to be the developer of a new rhetorical strategy founded upon the extensive use of *topoi* (also known as ‘commonplaces’), which are standardized statements commonly shared by the members of a same groups. This is a very clever strategy in order to appeal to voters and meet general approval; as Jasinski (2001) suggests indeed, commonplace topics provide orators with a stock of familiar material to which audiences tend to respond positively.

Furthermore, Baldwin was extremely adept at involving his audience effectively, especially through a participatory rhetoric, devised of questions addressed to his audience, as, for instance, in his leader’s speech held in Newcastle in 1924, when he begins his speech asking his listeners: “Are you ready?” (85). Similarly, he often recurred to *tricolon*, as in the following example: “If we cannot base ourselves on truth, advance our cause by its own justice, and persuade the public to reason […]” (86).

Nevertheless, in spite of a wise use of several rhetorical figures, it can be argued that Baldwin’s most powerful and manipulating ability consisted in denying use of it; he himself stated that “to tell the truth needed no art at all”.

In fact, denying his use of rhetorical device and his oratorical skills, Baldwin actually uses the oldest trick in political dialectic and manages to give the impression of being sincere and trustworthy. Similarly, saying that he is not a great speaker he implicitly suggested that if a man is a great speaker then is a man whom people cannot trust. This strategy is so old - but still effective - that it is possible to find it in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, when Mark Anthony holds a speech over Caesar’s body and delivers one of the most persuading speeches in the history of Rhetoric, although he repeatedly says: “I am no orator as Brutus is […]”.
This rhetoric device is called *synchoresis* and aims to create a sense of impartiality, fairness and honesty; here is an example of Baldwin's use of *synchronesis*, extracted from the Leader’s speech held in Brighton in 1925:

[... ] One thing I will admit. We are not experts in the art of advertisement. We are handicapped by old-fashioned modesty. We do good but we blush to proclaim it. We work better than we talk. We are not even first-class window dressers; but we do deliver the goods (87).

Such a statement serves the purpose to make Baldwin appear as a plain and ordinary Englishman who does not indulge in flights of oratory and imagination, but who simply tells the truth. Yet, being candid about his deficiencies as a speaker clearly was a highly effective strategy for Baldwin, since he was elected three times.

### 3.2.3. Winston Churchill and Wartime Oratory

#### 3.2.3.1. An Overall Description of Churchill's Main Rhetorical Skills

If Baldwin’s peculiarity was an apparent denial of rhetoric, the next conservative leader I like to mention is instead a master orator. Hence, after a brief reference to Baldwin it is now time to delve into greater detail on Winston Churchill, one of the greatest political orators ever, and one who primarily specialized in Wartime oratory. During the Second World War, as Kennedy said, “Churchill mobilized English Language and sent it to War”; indeed, his ability to motivate entire nations, by means of words and exceptional oratorical skills, was legendary and probably changed the story of the Second World War.

Anticipating some of his oratorical skills it can be said that Churchill did not only tend to recur to several rhetorical devices, but also developed a unique manner of speaking that was romantic and verbose but often enriched with a conversational tone; in addition he also excelled in *pathos*, making his speeches extremely moving and filled with emotional appeals.
Furthermore, through his descriptive ability, he built anger against Germany and, similarly, through a wise use of personal pronouns, and especially with the extensive use of ‘we’, he promoted ‘togetherness’ and encouraged solidarity. Thereby, although Churchill usually maintained his status distance of a war leader, his speeches managed to be inclusive and were designed to promote unity and belonging especially through a wise exploitation of ‘person deixis’. In this context an extremely convincing speech from February 1941, when Churchill appealed to president Roosevelt for help against Nazi-Germany, shows this abundance of ‘we’ and ‘us’:

Put your confidence in us. Give us your faith and your blessing, and under Providence, all will be well. We shall not fail or falter. We shall not weaken or tire. Neither the sudden shock of battle, nor the long-drawn trials of vigilance and exertion will wear us down. Give us the tools, and we will finish the job (88).

Churchill became Prime Minister on May 10, 1940 and soon thereafter, on May 14, he delivered a memorable speech, whose main utterances (e.g. “[…] we will fight on the beaches”; “this was their finest hour”) became clichés, showing his mastery of the sound-bite. In addition, Churchill had the habit of decorating his speech with allusions, imagery, tricola and rhetorical questions: “the climax of oratory is reached by a rapid succession of waves of sound and vivid pictures”, Churchill himself wrote.

3.2.3.2. *The Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat Speech*

After describing in short Churchill’s main oratorical skills, I would like to elaborate on, as the subject of the study among a huge archive of inspirational speeches, the *Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat* speech, delivered on May 13, 1940. With regard to the purpose of the speech, this was a call-to-arms speech given during the Battle of France, meant to inspire British to go to war against Germany.
Describing it analytically, in the first place and at a lexical level, what is worth pointing out is the exceptional formality of the utterance. Indeed, the speech shows a recurring use of solemn words deriving from Latin or French, which increase the solemnity of the speech. Again in order to contribute to formality, phrasal verbs are replaced with noun and adjective phrases.

Syntactically, it must be noted that Churchill’s rhetoric is quite different from the most modern one, mentioning Obama or Cameron for instance, who tend to use compact and easy-to-be-remembered sentences; Churchill, on the hand, was more likely to use long and elaborate sentences, as in the sample below:

> It is the evident wish and will of Parliament and the nation that this should be conceived on the broadest possible basis and that it should include all parties, both those who supported the lat Government and also the parties of the Opposition (89).

In terms of word choice the speech is filled with intensifiers -comparatives, superlatives and exaggerations – which primarily serve the purpose of emphasising the importance of the war and to appeal to wage war; furthermore such word choice conveys a sense of gravity and also gives Churchill’s message a more serious tone:

> […] we are in the preliminary stage of one of the greatest battles in history (90).
> […] we have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind (91).

Sub-textually it can be highlighted that, although the political situation at the time was extremely complicated, Churchill in this speech simplified it, going straight to the point and offering a sole simple solution: going to War.

Yet, always in order persuade Britain to enter the War, Churchill makes an extensive use of personification, often describing metaphorically Britain as a hero and Germany as a monster (Charteris-Black, 2006: 43);
similarly, he often contrasts Britain and Nazi Germany by the contrasting ideas of light and darkness (2006: 52):

[…] and to wage war against a monstrous tyranny never surpassed in the dark and lamentable catalogue of human crime (92).

In this way not only does he implement a heroic myth, which presents a difference between ‘good’ and ‘evil’, but he also creates antagonism and thus provides his people with a good cause to fight, which is to remove the evil forces of the German government. Furthermore, the use of vivid imagery also helps Churchill to paint a remarkable picture in his listeners’ minds.

The aim pursued is to present a world-view of ‘us’ versus ‘them’, a discursive and dichotomous polarization where ‘our’ positive self-representation is juxtaposed with a negative representation of ‘them’ and that, in CDA terminology, corresponds to the creation of in-groups and out-groups (Andreassen, 2007).

Still at a sub-textual level, it needs to be said that throughout the speech Churchill also includes the idea of ‘mankind’: Britain is not alone in this war against the evil Germany, this is everyone’s war or, at least, the war for everyone who believes in humanity and abhors cruelty. This is a very astute move since, this way, Churchill manages to elicit support from all mankind.

Aside from the analysis of the structure, it is worth adding all the rhetorical devices employed in the speech. First and foremost, the speech is full of anticipating questions, setting up so that the ‘correct’ answer is obvious:

You ask, what is our aim? […] (93).
You ask, what is our policy? […] (94).
Furthermore, the answers Churchill gives to these questions, respectively “I say” and “I can answer”, are indicative of the importance and the effect, in terms of ‘person deixis’ and pronouns usage, of the first person pronoun ‘I’.

As asserted till now, indeed, great speeches should have a low I-ratio since the focus is not on ‘I’ as an individual but about ‘you’ as an audience and ‘we’ as a community. Nevertheless, in this case, ‘I’ is useful to show the authority of the speaker as well as to delineate Churchill’s role as a leader and a man of action, helping him to take power. Indeed, as Kulo (2009: 13) states “first person pronoun emphasizes personal involvement and responsibility that is supposed to give credit to the speaker as a leader”.

Similarly, the speech contains a multitude of repetitions and parallelisms; above all, what is worth pointing out, is the recurrent repetition of the word ‘victory’ which, as the blanket goal, serves to motivate Britons to work together toward the same aim:

Victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival (95).

Still, referring to repetitions and parallelism, Churchill also uses several prepositional phrases to describe the war and create another parallel construction. While, in terms of rhetoric figures, tricolon, as one of the most impact rhetoric devices, is obviously present:

[…] Of our country, of our Empire, of our Allies […] (96).
[…] I say it is to wage war by land, sea, and air […] (97).

Indeed, throughout the speech Churchill uses a number of three part lists, perhaps because it makes the speech more effective and memorable. As Walker (2007: 34) argues indeed:

Three part lists are attractive to both the speaker and the listener as they are embedded in certain cultures as promoting a sense of unity and completeness. They also have a remarkable capacity for evoking responses
far beyond the audiences for whom they were originally delivered, and this is why people still remember Churchill’s speeches.

Finally, the last rhetorical figure often recurring in the speech that is worth mentioning is anaphora:

Let that be realized; no survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the urge and impulse of the ages, that mankind will move forward towards its goal (98).

Ending with an anaphora is a very astute move since it helps convey a lasting impression on the audience that is intense, forceful and dramatic; anaphora, indeed, as a figure of repetition, enhances memory and ensures that a certain idea is driven into the listener’s head.

Thus stated, from the analysis of Churchill’s oratorical skills it can be deduced that there is no substitute for forceful and persuasive oratory, especially in time of crisis. Indeed, as Churchill himself declared in 1938, “Words are the only things that last forever” and, in order to confirm such word supremacy, it is worth underlying that recently Churchill has been voted most inspirational orator of all time. Therefore, the best way to highlight and summarize the results achieved by analyzing Churchill’s rhetorical mastery, is to use his own words. Indeed, Winston Churchill once told the young Jonathan Aitken. “You see, my boy, when I got up to speak, I always knew precisely where every noun and adjective would go and how every piece of punctuation would bed into my speech”.

3.2.4. A Brief Mention of Harold MacMillan, Ian MacLeod and Enoch Powell

After having analysed Churchill’s oratory, probably the greatest ever, even a brief mention of less notable orators like Mac Millan, MacLeod and Powell could appear senseless. Nevertheless, it is important to supply a broader and more complete chronological view of British oratory.
Beginning with these, it needs to be said that the following and concise description of such leaders’ oratorical skills is required in order not to pass over a long historical period.

Having said that, starting off with Harold MacMillan it is indispensable to say that he was Prime Minister from 1957 to 1963, during a time of prosperity soon after the Second World War. In the field of oratory, which is what we care most about, he is remembered for his *The Wind of Change* speech, made addressing the South African Parliament on 3 February 1960 in Cape Town.

Although MacMillan’s oratory was not the prominent aspect of his career, this speech is historically memorable since it was a key moment in the struggle of Colonialism and marked a change in attitude towards the Apartheid regime. Analyzing it in short and from a semantic perspective, it appears that the speech was carefully written and constructed in an old-fashioned way, filled with affectations and cadences of a generation long past, which make MacMillan’s oratory almost obsolete. The tone is grandiloquent and reminds Churchill psalmody, while the whole text of the speech is an example of MacMillan’s fondness for metaphor.

Macmillan’s minister Iain Macleod is in the same way regarded as a highly effective speaker and a superb public orator. He is known for his acidic-wit, in fact his reputation as an orator began by demolishing, above all, Nye Bevan and continued with incisive attacks on all Labours.

Differently, Macleod’s friend Enoch Powell is known for his controversial speech about immigration, made on April 20, 1968. This speech is commonly referred to as *The Rivers of Blood* speech where he tries to warn his listeners of what Powell believed would be the consequences of large-scale immigration to Britain. The title of the speech comes from an allusion to Virgil’s line from the Aeneid; Powell was in fact a Classic scholar and the speech is full of allusions to ancient Roman literature, allusions which contribute to make the tone of the speech grandiloquent.
3.2.5. Margaret Thatcher and the Development of the Euro-sceptic Discourse

3.2.5.1. An Overall Description of Thatcher’s Main Rhetorical Skills

Chronologically speaking, mediocre speakers like Mac Millan, MacLeod and Powell are followed by the greatest female orator ever, Margaret Thatcher, a charismatic leader who delivered her speeches with confidence and persuasion and with a strong and declarative language, made of ‘We must’ and ‘Let us’.

Describing her most remarkable oratorical skills it can be said that, in terms of ethos, Margaret Thatcher tended to evoke her middle-class family background in order to create empathy with large sections of the British society. In this context it can be mentioned her prevalent usage of the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘our’ to establish this connection.

In terms of pathos instead, Mrs. Thatcher’s main aim was based on suggesting a sense of shared identity and values with the audience; nevertheless, her greatest ability consisted in simplifying the world reducing choices to rows of opposites, in the attempt to force a choice. We are talking about the so-called ‘false-dichotomy’, that is the extreme simplification of complex issues by considering only limited alternatives and reducing the language to a set of thought-terminating clichés. More exhaustively The 's Dictionary defines is as follows:

The false dilemma (or false dichotomy) is a fallacy of reasoning that omits consideration of all reasonable alternatives. Sometimes called the either-or fallacy, one poses what looks like a true dilemma—I must pick one or the other—when, in fact, there are other viable alternatives.

Therefore, in these terms Mrs. Thatcher often established a radical contrast, without mincing words, between ‘good/evil’, ‘individualism/collectivism’, ‘liberty/totalitarianism’, ‘wealth/poverty’ and so on, also founding her campaign on the idea that “There is no alternative”. Similarly it is worth saying that Mrs. Thatcher’s language is commonly defined as ‘the language
of negation”; in this sense it is not a surprise that her euro-sceptical “No, no, no”, given in the form of the rule of three in the House of Commons in 1990 has become a catchphrase of her oratorical style.

In addition to this, talking about figures of speech, among one of her most used devices was the so-called ‘puzzle-solution’, a rhetorical device conceived for obtaining applause and, consequently, approval. Indeed, with this device the speaker first establishes a puzzle or issue and then offers a clever solution to it. This way Puzzle-solution allows the audience to guess or anticipate the solution, paying more attention to the speech. To make it clearer excellent examples of puzzle-solution are illustrated in the extracts below, respectively from the Conservative Party conference on 10 October 1980 and from the 1987 UK general elections:

PUZZLE: To those waiting with bated breath for that favourite media catchphrase, the u-turn, I have only one thing to say:

SOLUTION: You turn if you want to.
The lady’s not for turning (99).

PUZZLE: From the Labour Party expect the iceberg manifesto.

SOLUTION:
[A] One tenth of its socialism visible.
[B] Nine tenths beneath the surface (100).

Similarly Margaret Thatcher often employed opposites to create contrast as well as statistical data, which gave her opponents no room for disagreement. In addition, in terms of rhythmic patterns, Mrs. Thatcher often constructed parallel structures especially by using the rhetorical device known as anadiplosis, in order to add balance, rhythm and cadence to her speeches, as illustrated in the extract below:

Without a healthy economy, we can’t have a healthy society. And without a healthy society, the economy won’t stay healthy for long (101).
Yet in terms of syntactic parallelisms an even more persuading example comes from a direct attack on the Labour leader Neil Kinnock:

Of course he hates choice,
Of course he hates higher standards,
Of course he hates opportunity,
He is a socialist,
A crypto-communist (102).

Furthermore, in the wake of Churchill Mrs. Thatcher also employed aggressive metaphors and personification, showing a great ability to depict her enemies as monsters and managing to portray her Conservative party and its values positively whilst portraying the Labour party in negative terms, thus constructing ‘antagonism’. Always within a vivid and imaginative language, in addition to aggressive metaphors she also used travel metaphors, health metaphors and especially religious or moral metaphors.

What is clear, though, is that Margaret Thatcher had what is known as the ‘forensic style’, that is the style often associated to the great speeches delivered by Athenians orators, based on argumentation, brevity and conciseness. However, what really made her an extremely convincing orator was her populism, a special understanding of the needs and desires of ordinary people and the consequent ability to make a connection with her potential supporters.

### 3.2.5.2. Mrs Thatcher and the Us/Them Relational Pair

Among all the famous and effective speeches delivered by Mrs. Thatcher, the 1988 *Bruges speech* is particularly interesting since it dealt with the matter of Britain’s relations with Europe, showing a sceptical attitude towards the establishment of a European supranational structure and marking thus the starting point of what is known as *Eurosceptism*. This speech, which is regarded as the seminal text for ‘euro-sceptics’, is in fact a
critique of the idea of a common European future and an attack on the founding precepts of the EEC.

What is clear, at the start of analyzing it, is that the Bruges speech contains a multitude of references to the past of the country, especially in its first part when Margaret Thatcher tries to defend and demonstrates Britain’s close involvement with Europe:

We British are as much heirs to the legacy of European culture as any other nation. Our links to the rest of Europe, the continent of Europe, have been the dominant factor in our history […] (103).

In the speech there is also a considerable use of the stigma-word ‘super-state’ to describe the EEC. Stigma words are words often used by the members of one particular community in order to present a polarized account of reality and implicate their adversaries, highlighting the differences between the in-group and the out-group. To do that in an effective way, the stigma word which describes the out-group has to be embedded in clusters on negative-values terms, accompanied with adjectives that have a negative connotation. In the case of the Bruges speech for instance, Margaret Thatcher couples the stigma word super-state with the adjectives ‘federal’, ‘corrupt’, ‘inefficient and ‘autocratic’, ‘undemocratic’, ‘socialist’, and ‘German’.

Hence, in terms of word-count, after the stigma word ‘independence’, used with reference to the main aim of her cabinet, another stigma word which is largely used by Mrs. Thatcher in this speech is dictates, instead referred to the EU, as illustrated in the extract below:

[…] the Community is not an end in itself. Nor is it an institutional device to be constantly modified according to the dictates of some abstract intellectual concept […] (104);

[…] now the dictates are issued by the European Union, the European Commission, the European Public Prosecutor or just Brussels. A dictate forces Britain to adopt the metric system. Of course, these European
dictators are not only petty but also unaccountable and unelected. The result is a bureaucratic dictatorship (105).

Yet in terms of contrastive rhetoric, also the pronoun usage serves the purpose to highlight the differences between the British in-group and the European out-group. Indeed, the Bruges speech is characterized by the significant lack of ‘We’ while talking about Europe; as Diller (1994: 93-109) noticed “We Europeans” appears only once throughout the speech whereas “We British” recurs more than 6 times.

Similarly, we note the comparison Mrs. Thatcher proposes throughout the speech between the EEC and Soviet Communism. Such a comparison is meant to build up the traditional ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy by ridiculing and discrediting the opposition. What Thatcher actually does is to compare an enemy (the EEC) with another certified enemy (Soviet Communism) to further emphasis the evilness of the former (Andreassen, 2007: 45 citing Van Dijk, 1998: 59-60).

Still in terms of dichotomous rhetoric, the same strategy is often used by Mrs. Thatcher also against the Labour party and their leader Neil Kinnock. In this sense excellent examples of positive self-representation and negative other-representation can be found in her farewell speech delivered on 28 November, 1990, where Mrs. Thatcher, after an introduction aiming to ridicule and alienate the opposition, describes the results that the Conservative party has achieved during her office.

Furthermore, as she did throughout her Bruges speech, Mrs. Thatcher continuously refers to the Labours as the defenders of the old communist regimes of Eastern Europe, equating them to the root of all evil. Similarly the dichotomy ‘strong-weak’ rhetoric is consistently used by Mrs. Thatcher to depict the two British main parties: Labour is often depicted as ‘weak’, ‘wavering’ and ‘ignorant’ whereas Conservatives are ‘strong’, ‘tough’ and ‘vigorous’.

Such contrasts are commonly analysed within a CDA perspective, since the show the ways language is used to create exaggerate dichotomies
which force human being to be categorized into one or two opposing poles (Caldas-Coulthard, 2003), and are an example of what Atkinson (1984:73) refers to as ‘contrastive pairs’.

3.2.6. John Major and the First-person Narrative

In a spirit of continuity with Thatcherism comes to the rhetoric of Sir John Major, Prime Minister from 1990 to 1997, during a period of economic recession. Indeed, in his speeches, Major, echoing some tenets of Thatcherism and some Victorian values, he always tried to create a ‘rhetorical community’ much like Margaret Thatcher.

Therefore, also Major created antagonism with the Labour Party through a kind of political denigration, describing his opponent Tony Blair as a dishonest and ‘power-thirsty’ man. In the same way Major’s communication campaigns tended to create negative association about the Labour Party, highlighting the main differences between the in-group and the out-group; a political attitude which corresponds to the CDA belief that every political elite exploits the tendency to categorize and establishes social asymmetries (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 273; Hanks 2005: 77).

In terms of rhetorical skills it is worth saying that, although John Major always tried to maintain an impression of authenticity and spontaneity, portraying himself as the antithesis of the perfect orator, his public image was the result of a fabrication which allowed him to deliver some memorable oratorical moments. Indeed, his speeches always incorporated a great number of figures of speech and catchphrases, useful to make his words more memorable while, regarding the pronoun usage, Major is one of the few leaders who used the pronoun ‘I’ not only to establish his authority and leadership, as Margaret Thatcher did with an excess of ‘populism’, but also in a confidential tone and in order to construct a narrative with whom people could identify. With his first-person narrative, which describes his personal journey from the rags of Coldharbour Lane to the riches of Downing Street, he contributed to give a more positive, collectivistic and meritocratic image of the Conservative Party. For this
reason his speeches are often extremely autobiographical, interwoven with metaphors and filled with anecdotes of his past. However, in spite of this huge incorporation of metaphors and figures of speech, leadership to Major was embedded in realism rather than oratory, as he himself said:

My politics was quiet politics. I disliked brash populism. I distrusted conflict. I was at ease with the knitting-up of conciliation. It may have been boring to some: it may have been seen as grey, but it had its points […] (Foley, 2002: 153 citing Major).

Starting from this idea, Major blamed his opponent, Tony Blair, “for his use of social piety and moral judgment as a medium of populist politics” (Foley, 2002: 152). Major and Blair indeed have always been in contrast, not only in relation to their political choices, but also in terms of language and rhetorical devices used.

Hilary Hillier, in her book Analysing Real Texts (2004), compares their language in their speeches, confirming that, overall, Major is more likely to use first person pronouns than Blair, whereas Blair uses a higher proportion of third person pronouns; Blair uses more lexical repetitions, whereas Major, more often than not, uses grammatical repetitions.

Regarding the inclusiveness of the speeches, Hillier found out that Blair tends to stress the inclusive ‘we’, whereas Major places emphasis on the individual through the use of ‘I’. Thus this study confirms the traditional view of Conservative as a party which emphasizes the individual, and Labour as a party which encourages unity and belonging.

3.2.7. Boris Johnson and the Epideictic Oratory
Although Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson is not a British prime minister, his eccentric oratory skills deserve a mention especially since their analysis allows us to introduce a new type of oratory which seems to be very persuasive nowadays. Indeed Johnson, the current Mayor of London, is representative of the epideictic oratory, the rhetoric of entertainment which
categorizes a type of suasive speech generally more frivolous than the ‘forensic’ or the ‘deliberative’ one, whose main goal is to praise, honor, blame and amuse.

Unlike what many people think, epideictic rhetoric has what it takes to make a speech hugely persuasive and convincing, since it focuses more on people rather than on the speaker and also because it can renew a sense of community. As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969: 49-55) argue in fact: “The purpose of an epideictic speech is to increase the intensity of adherence to values held in common by the audience and the speaker […]”.

Similarly McCormack (2006: 16) states that:

Epideictic discourse is a discourse which calls on the audience to reconnect with the values, the history and the hopes that bind that community together into a fellowship of humanity. Without epideictic rhetoric a community inevitably becomes alienated from itself […]

Hence, McCormack (2006) continues arguing that critical literacy is still afraid of the ritualism, sentimentality and clichés of epideictic discourse; for this reason epideictic is a kind of discourse that can only be carried off with conviction and, therefore, the best orators who seem to succeed in that are conservatives, whereas liberal education seems more likely to ostracise this sort of discourse. Starting thus, from the assumption that conservatives use epideictic rhetoric significantly better than liberals, Johnson is the politician who, more than others, recurs largely and efficiently to epideictic discourse among the conservative elite.

As argued by Dr. Crines (2013) that deployed by Johnson is indeed a ‘performance-based’ oratory, primarily designed to build upon his ethos.

This sort of discourse appeals more to emotions rather than logic and is characterized by an optimistic humor able to captivate the audience. To this end, one central element of Johnson’s rhetoric consists in replying to every question with a joke or anecdote rather than a simple answer (Flinders, 2013).
At this stage, in order to better understand the effectiveness of Johnson’s oratory we can look at the speeches delivered at the 2012 Olympics opening and closing parades. During the occasion of the Olympics launch speeches, Johnson’s hilarious and more direct speech put Cameron and his controlled oratory in the shadows. Similarly, also the speech delivered by Johnson at the closing parade was a fresh, comical and entertaining speech, filled with jokes and humor. For this occasion, indeed, Johnson put the world at ease with jokes and, through his participatory rhetoric and a category manipulation (see Leudar et al., 2004) made of ‘we’ and ‘us’ rhetoric aiming to unite Great Britain, he succeeded in establishing affinity with his audience.

To the same end he also employed a huge number of rhetorical questions, attempting to persuade his audience that these were going to be the best Olympic Games ever. A concrete example is when he asked his audience “Can we beat France?”, giving himself the answer “Yes, we can!”, thus injecting enthusiasm into his listeners. In addition, to reinforce the memorability and effectiveness of his phrasings, Johnson also adopted several repetitions and brought out laughs and cheers, for instance when he thanked the police, volunteers and helpers by saying: “We say thank you to the Armed Services and the police and, and G4S and all the people who work for them, yes” (106). Massive cheers and laughter continued also later when he said:

You routed the doubters and you scattered the gloomsters and for the first time in living memory you caused Tube train passengers to break into spontaneous conversation with their neighbours about subjects other than their trod-on toes (107).

The analysis shows that the speech was sweet, informal and entertaining, however, the real object pursued by Johnson was to get British people to realize their common identity and, to this end, he used epideictic oratory, which is very cohesive, and is undoubtedly the best choice. Therefore, still
in the attempt to renew a sense of community, Johnson also hinted at ‘the
great British spirit’ with emotive allusions of war time and evoking the
traditional values that bind British people together.
Equally emotional is the final message Johnson leaves the audience with:

[…] and above all, above all the people of London will be ready. To
welcome the world’s finest athletes to the greatest games that have
ever been held, in the greatest city on Earth (108).

Still in a context of ‘categorization’ such a conclusion corresponds to the
third method of manipulation described by Leudar et. al (see p. 27), that
consisting in “altering, at an over-arching level, the super-category into
which the category is subsumed”. For this reason the closing sentence is
unifying and cohesive since it makes British people, and Londoners in
particular, feel proud of their identity as citizens of the ‘greatest city/country
on Earth’.

Until now, the analysis conducted on Johnson’s oratory would seem to
suggest that epideictic oratory is always the best language choice within a
political context; however, besides several advantages it is worth adding that
Johnson’s oratory also has severe limitations, especially in Parliament
where he is not taken seriously. Similarly, even in greater contexts than the
parliamentary one, his performances are often perceived to be unreliable and
lack credibility.

3.2.8. David Cameron and the Rhetoric of Renewal

3.2.8.1. An overall Look at Cameron’s Oratorical Skills

If Boris Johnson’s oratory evokes the history and traditional values that bind
the British community together with constant allusions to the past, the
rhetoric of the next orator I am about to describe seems instead more
focused on the future as well as on the desire to rejuvenate the Conservative
party after a period of stagnation. On becoming leader of the party in 2005,
Cameron’s initial focus was thus about ‘decontaminating the brand’
Alderwick, 2012: 15), pursuing the attempt to distance the Labour party from the common perception that they were the “nasty party of old-fashioned prejudice, inward looking intolerance and existing at some remove from the concerns of the ordinary people” (Fielding 2009: 168).

Therefore, such a ‘decontamination’ process needed image change (Quinn, 2008: 179) and was intended to move the party away from the right of British politics and closer to the centre.

Indeed, almost all the speeches delivered by David Cameron, leader of the party since 2005 and current British PM, seem to focus mainly on a single topic, ‘massive change’, within an agenda of modernisation. According to Evans (2008: 296-297) in fact:

Cameron’s ‘project’ […] appeared to be based upon the assumption that the Conservative Party had little to gain from exploiting its own past, particularly its recent governing past, which was viewed as more of a liability than an asset, and should actually start afresh if it wanted to become a serious contender for office again […].

At a rhetorical level, Cameron’s main goal is thus about representing and incarnating the change of his party. For this reason, conducting a CDA analysis on his language style, the first feature which stands out is an abundance of words like ‘change’ and ‘new’. Cameron employs a style of discourse which seeks to “reposition the Conservatives ideologically breaking away from typical ‘Thatcherite’ ideals in favour of moving forward the centre ground of British politics by promoting a more socially inclusive and compassionate Conservatism” (Dorey, 2007 cited in Yearwood, 2013: 18). He himself, announcing his candidacy, argued that if Conservatives wanted to win the election it would be necessary to carry on a ‘fundamental change’ rather than ‘a slick rebranding exercise’ (Evans, 2008: 293-297).

Thus, in defending his intention to renew his party moving it more towards the centre, he claimed that:
At the next election, a whole generation of people will be voting who were born after Margaret Thatcher left office. So when it comes to tackling the big challenges our society faces, I won’t be the prisoner of an ideological past […] (Dorey, 2007: 143, citing Cameron).

As Evans (2008: 294-195), Bale (2008: 278) and Denham (1997: 189) state, such a renewing desire also contributes to modify the traditional rhetoric of Tory economics, whose main example is Cameron’s replacement of pronouncements like ‘not make tax cuts a priority’, instead of ‘putting economic stability first’.

Generally speaking, in addition to the theme of change, a prevalent feature of Cameron’s progressive rhetoric, several other features typical of his language style can be found. British communications researcher Max Atkinson (2005), for instance, identifies several of Cameron’s strengths: “He has a good command of all the main rhetorical techniques that trigger applause and the ability to speak without using scripts or an Autocue. He seems to be more comfortable using humor than most contemporary British politicians.” In addition, it needs to be said that his career in public relations gave Cameron useful communication skills, making him feel comfortable in a digital age.

Hence, Cameron knows how the media circus works and knows how to exploit and make the most of it. Thus, through the media, Cameron always tries to prove that he is close to British people, as shown in his winning speech, for instance, whose main goal was to form an emotional connection with his listeners. Having a quick look at this speech it can be said that, even though Cameron is a modernizer and ‘fundamental change’ was the core topic of the speech and his policy overall, he knew that he had to start by presenting himself as a traditional Conservative in order to persuade his party to support him. This speech worked, even though it is not regarded as a memorable speech. Thanks to repetitions, anaphora and the use of inclusive pronouns which manage to create connection and affinity with the audience, he succeeded indeed in conveying the idea of a shared story: “I love our character. I love our people, our history, our role in the
world. This is the only party that understands, and is proud of, what we have been and who we are” (109) Cameron said.

Nevertheless, in terms of participatory rhetoric, apart from this and a few other significant speeches, it seems that overall Cameron failed to build a strong relationship with the British audience. He can be justified for his oratorical unsuitableness, especially in comparison with his great Conservative predecessors, only because nowadays it seems that almost everyone else is worse. Among his rivals only Boris Johnson, previously mentioned, seems to know how to delight the audience, while Davis Davis, Gordon Brown and Ed Milliband are often charged with representing the start of a decline of British oratory. It is often said indeed that our 21st century oligarchy produces oratory of low quality, especially in comparison with the great political oratory of the 18th century. As Max Atkinson (2013), in his analysis of the decline of political oratory, argues:

[…] a major change in the past 25 years has been the replacement of political speeches by broadcast interviews as the main form of political communication in Britain – even though interviews hardly ever result in anything other than bad news about the politicians themselves. As a result, effective political speech-making has become a dying art, in which there appears to be a curious collaboration between the media and politicians to continue relegating the coverage of speeches in favour of the broadcast interview.

At the same time, the politicians are also doing their bit to eliminate much of the passion and liveliness that were once a normal part of political rallies – by speaking in rather strange venues to audiences with little or no interest in politics, and certainly no motivation to applaud or boo anything they might hear.

Starting from these assumptions, among the limited number of Cameron’s memorable speeches, the only speeches which seem to be worth analyzing within a CDA perspective are the speech delivered in April 2006 at the spring party forum and his long-awaited speech on Britain’s relationship
with Europe, held on the 23rd of January 2013. The first of them is useful to expand the theme of ‘change’ whereas the second will be used as a starting point for uncovering the figures of speech and rhetorical strategies that Cameron uses most.

3.2.8.2. David Cameron’s Theme of Change in his 2006 Spring Party Forum Speech

The speech performed by David Cameron at the spring party forum in 2006 is an excellent example of his rhetoric of solidarity and modernization. What is clear, from the opening section of the aforesaid performance, is the attempt to convey unity as a party and as a nation. From here, the abundance of the pronoun ‘we’- used 76 times – implies a sense of togetherness and belonging. Similarly, still in the attempt to promote a sense of togetherness, Cameron seeks to align wider public sentiment with the values of his leadership and his party (Yearwood, 2013: 26). Therefore, he describes his party in a way that makes it appear representative of the public at large, depicting it as ‘the largest party in local government’. Such a positive representation of his own group is juxtaposed with a negative representation of the ‘others’, according to the already mentioned ‘Us/Them’ dichotomy, which are described as ‘tired and weary […] muddled and dreary’.

Another feature of the speech rests upon the attempt to legitimise party change. To this end, what Cameron actually does is to attribute his success to the party’s spirit of change and optimism. Furthermore, the legitimacy of the need to change is further achieved through the creation of a narrative critical of the current government, instead depicting the Conservative party as a valid and credible alternative. In order to strengthen such a contrast Cameron discredits his opponents by defining them ‘incapable’ and reinforces his critical narrative by claiming that “Labour are implementing an ugly monument to the waste, chaos and vanity of intrusive, over-mighty government” (110).
As Yearwood (2013) states, legitimacy also comes from the ability to inspire hope and a sense of optimism. Therefore, in his closing remarks Cameron talks about the importance of “The spirit of enterprise. The ladder of opportunity. The instinct to conserve […] Changing our party. Changing our country. The fire of hope burning bright once again” (111). Interestingly Cameron too legitimised party change by depicting it as the only solution to way out of the mess of British politics:

[…] There is only one way out of this mess, and that is through massive change. I’m frustrated it’s not happening. I’m impatient to get on with it. And today I want to explain what the change needs to be (112).

3.2.8.3. David Cameron’s EU Speech

After the description of Cameron political campaign’s main themes, we take a look at the rhetorical devices hidden in his texts. To this end, an excellent material that can be used as a starting point to reveal covert ideologies is Cameron’s speech about Britain and the European Union; a speech which proposes a softer version of the so-called ‘euro-scepticism’, widely discussed in reference to Margaret Thatcher.

First and foremost, in terms of historical background, it needs to be said that Cameron delivered this long-awaited speech on January 23, 2013 at Bloomberg in London. Cameron’s speech can be seen as an appeasement policy for all those groups which had expressed a reluctance to go further with the EU integration process and thus stresses the supremacy of national interests over the hopes to build a wider European Union.

Therefore, in the opening remarks Cameron started alluding to the history of Europe underlying the British sacrifice in World War II and the centrality of his country: “Healing those wounds of our history is the central story of the European Union” (113).

Then, with the premise that peace has been achieved all over Europe, Cameron committed himself to paint a positive vision for the future. Thus, to convey this optimistic image Cameron wants, it is interesting to take a
look at all the several figures of speech and rhetorical strategies scattered throughout the text which contribute to make the speech rather persuasive.

First and foremost what can be found is an extensive use of tricolon. As said in the previous paragraph, tricolon - also known as ‘the rule of three’ - is a rhetoric device based on series of three parallel words or phrases. The cumulative effect produced by a list of three is pretty powerful, especially since it has been demonstrated that people are more likely to remember information more effectively when they are presented in form of groups of three. In confirmation of the persuasiveness of the tricolon Thomas (2003: 49) claims that “audiences and speakers seem to find linguistically grouped features and especially those in threes, aesthetically pleasing”. In his EU speech Cameron uses tricolon for instance when he says:

[…] A war which saw the streets of European cities strewn with rubble. The skies of London lit by flames night after night. And millions dead across the world in the battle for peace and liberty (114).

To reinforce its intrinsic persuasive force, tricolon is also used in combination with anaphora, for instance when Cameron asserts: “The abandoned checkpoints. The sense of excitement about the future. The knowledge that a great continent was coming together” (115).

Still in terms of rhetorical devices, what Cameron uses, too, is a figure of emphasis commonly known as ‘expletive’, consisting in a word or short phrase which interrupts the normal flow of the speech in order to emphasize the words on either side of the expletive (Harris, 2009). Typical examples of expletive include ‘in fact’, ‘of course’, ‘I think’, ‘to be sure’ whereas, in the case of Cameron’s speech, expletives can be found in the following sentence:

[…] And while we must never take this for granted, the first purpose of the European Union – to secure peace – has been achieved and we should pay tribute to all those in the EU, alongside NATO, who made that happen (116).
The next device used by Cameron is an antithesis, consisting in contrasting two different, and often opposing, ideas in consecutive sentences and whose main purpose is to provide balance and emphasis, making a line even more memorable. In this speech, Cameron reinforces the persuasive power of this rhetorical device by combining two antitheses together:

[...] But today the main, over-riding purpose of the European Union is different: not to win peace, but to secure prosperity. The challenges come not from within this continent but outside it (117).

Later in the speech a tricolon, previously defined, appears alongside of a parallelism. Like tricolon, parallelism is a figure of repetition which produces balance and is characterized by successive words or sentences with similar grammatical structures. Therefore, in order to strengthen the persuasiveness of his words, Cameron ties these two devices together by asserting:

[...] The map of global influence is changing before our eyes. And these changes are already being felt by the entrepreneur in the Netherlands, the worker in Germany, the family in Britain (118).

Interestingly, Cameron uses also a chiasmus – also known as ‘reverse parallelism’- a device defined by The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms as a figure of speech by which the order of the terms in the first of two parallel clauses is reversed in the second. In this sense, Cameron says: “We have helped to write European history, and Europe has helped write ours” (119).

Needless to say, Cameron also uses an imaginary language, including many metaphors in his speech. Metaphors, the most well-known and commonly used among all the rhetorical devices, are also used within a political context since they can stimulate the right side of the brain, creating
mental images and thus making speeches more memorable. Cameron seems to know this and cleverly uses metaphors, for instance when he says: “And in Europe’s darkest hour we helped keep the flame of liberty alight” (120).

Interestingly, Cameron also uses a hypophora, a device where the speaker asks a question and immediately answers it himself. It is an effective device since it allows politicians to answer questions the listeners may have, thus dissolving contingent doubts. In addition to this, hypophora can have several other effects: it can arouse the curiosity of the audience about the answer and, what is more, it creates the illusion of a dialogue between the speaker and his audience, increasing ‘inclusiveness’ and involvement.

However, in order to strengthen its intrinsic persuasiveness, Cameron uses hypophora tying it to an anaphora, as in the following extract: “Why raise questions about Britain’s role when support in Britain is already so thin” (121).

Still at a rhythmical level another device often used by Cameron is alliteration, the repetition of the same sounds in sequence. Alliteration’s main function is to grab the audience’s attention and make a line more memorable. In this speech we can find it when Cameron asserts: “Because with courage and conviction” (122).

The persuasiveness of the speech reaches the highest point in the closing remarks where Cameron ties together three different figures of speech by concluding: “[…] for the future of my country. For the success of the European Union. And for the prosperity of our peoples” (123).

Indeed, such a powerful statement includes one tricolon, one anaphora, one climax and, finally, one parallelism. All together these devices contribute to leave a lasting impression on the audience that is exceptionally powerful and persuasive, and which exhaustively synthesizes the whole rhetorical analysis just conducted.
3.3. Labour Orators from Aneurin Bevan to Gordon Brown

3.3.1. Brief Introduction

According to Lakoff (2002), in the field of social and political science the Conservative worldview, corresponding to the so-called ‘Strict Father Model’, is contrasted with the ‘Nurturant Parent Model’, adopted instead by progressive politics. The latter assumes that the world is basically good and is rooted in the values of ‘empathy’ and ‘responsibility’, replacing the typical competition of the conservative view with cooperation and recognition of interdependence and stressing values such as freedom, opportunity, honesty and fairness.

Starting from this worldview, in the next chapter we shall see how Labour orators tend to use a more inclusive language and are more likely than the Conservatives to talk about ‘social responsibility’, ‘free expression’, ‘human rights’, ‘equal rights’, ‘health’, ‘care’, ‘human dignity’, ‘diversity’ and ‘ecology’.

Nevertheless, it is worth saying that the most interesting feature which characterizes British Liberal Discourse in the last few decades is the tendency toward a ‘rhetoric of change’. Fairclough himself in his book New Labour, New Language? (2000) argues that Labour values of the last decades are cast as forward-looking and leading to a brighter future.

Similarly Putnam, in his essay Social Movement Rhetoric (available at Social Movement Rhetoric), claims that progressive/liberal rhetoric is the rhetoric of those who seek to change the ‘bad’ and get the ‘good’.

More precisely, Putnam states that:

[…] Progressive/Liberal rhetoric is the rhetoric of dissatisfaction for not having the “good.” But it is also the rhetoric of hopes, dreams, change, progress, and improvement. It not only attacks the existing evils, but also holds out hope for a better future […] This rhetoric encourages the self-image of being a defender of the poor, the underprivileged, the unfortunate, the victims, and the overburdened taxpayers. Within their supporters,
progressive rhetoric often suggests fears of stasis (of being stopped stalled, or thwarted) (p. 2).

That of change is thus the main idea sustained in this chapter, proved for instance by Wilson and his rhetoric of modernization or by Kinnock’s main theme of change, both following the attempt to recast the Labour party as modern and dynamic, attempt which will become the governing centre for ‘Blairism’ a few years later.

It is clear that Blair, as we shall see later, is considered to be the main person responsible for this renewal of British Labour Party, characterized as the party of change and placed within the frame of a culture of the future.

Nevertheless, in spite of such attempts of renewal, it is often said that Blair was the last great Labour speaker. Indeed, as we shall see later, in terms of rhetorical skills Gordon Brown is often said to belong to a new breed of speakers who represent a real decline of oratory. To reiterate what was previously said with reference to the Conservatives (see p. 117), Max Atkinson (2013) wrote that ‘effective political speech-making has become a dying art’. Therefore, the topic of change as well as the decline of Labour British oratory will be the main themes analysed throughout the following section.

3.3.2. Aneurin Bevan and the Style of Political Antagonism

To start with there is not a better Labour orator than Aneurin Bevan, icon of British socialism, founder of the British National Health Service and considered to be the best debater the House of Commons had ever had.

In terms of rhetorical style in fact, Bevan is famous for his aggressive oratory and his continuous attacks on the Conservative party. Memorable is indeed his vicious remark about the Tories, depicted by Bevan as “lower than vermin” (Smith, 1993: 254 citing Bevan). What is more, it contributes to increase the admiration toward Bevan’s oratorical skills the popular idea, shared by Auer (2007: 215), according to which Bevan did not prepare his
speeches in advance but, on the contrary, he used to extemporize them, though on the basis of ‘extensive rehearsal’.

In terms of prosody instead, Bevan’s voice was always high-pitched and his utterances pretty short and punctuated by frequent pauses, useful to increase *pathos*. What is more, Bevan managed speech rhythm and pausing, ability which, in Auer’s words (2007: 215) made him able to “produce swooping rhetorical sequences which often culminated in key political points”.

Phonologically speaking it can be said that Bevan brought to Parliament a style that was quite different from the norm of the time. First of all, Bevan often reverted to a vernacular language, typical of South Wales English.

Nevertheless, what is more interesting to speculate on is the significance of Bevan’s antagonistic style. Indeed, Bevan used to construct and describe as ludicrous, foolish and inconsistent personas his Tory opponents, undermining their credibility and constructing a contrast between the in-group and the out-group, grounded on us/them relational pairs such as ‘competence/incompetence’, ‘coherence/incoherence’, ‘truth/falsity’, etc. (Auer, 2007: 237). The negative portrayal of the Tories continued with words like *stupid* and *dull* as well as with charges of ‘pouring out money in propaganda’, ‘sustaining mass suggestion’ and of being nothing more than ‘fallacious seducers’. Such attempts to polarize society, led through what Benjamin (1997; cited in Davis, 2013: 273) describes as a clear separation of ‘self and non-self’, is further explored with reference to the next Labour orator analysed, Harold Wilson.

**3.3.3. Harold Wilson and the Rhetoric of Modernization**

James Harold Wilson, who served as Prime Minister from 1964 to 1970 and from 1974 to 1976, is a pretty interesting personality for our analysis of Labour rhetoric, since his oratory primarily deals with the topic of ‘change’, extensively discussed in the introduction to the chapter.
Indeed, Wilson regarded himself as a ‘man of the people’, trying to promote the image of a PM in touch with the young generation and able to meet the country’s new need for modernization. It can be said, thus, that most of Wilson’s political life has been spent rhetorically, especially since he was the promoter of a new, highly-effective rhetoric of modernization, scientific and technological change.

Such a rhetoric of modernization is the main topic of his most famous speech, delivered in 1963 in Scarborough, a progressive speech which captured science for the Labour party and which is still remembered for the phrase: “the white heat of the technological revolution […]” (124). Indeed, Wilson’s White Heat speech, in addition to being a great piece of rhetoric, was part of the party’s aim to appeal to the middle class, impressing on them that Labour members were modern and able to address their concerns. To do that it was necessary to recast the Labour party as modern and dynamic, highlighting its modernizing force. To this end, delivering such a progressive speech, Wilson used revolutionary and scientific rhetoric and employed the three most famous rhetorical devices: pathos, ethos and logos.

Firstly, in terms of pathos, instead of using humour or anger to motivate his audience, Wilson used fear. The speech is indeed filled with the fear for inaction in the attempt to highlight the opposing need for action to renew industry (Andrew, s.d.). Of course, this fear was supported by a general sense of hopefulness and optimism in the future. This confirms, on the one hand, Fairclough’s (2000) claim that Labour values of the last decades are cast as forward-looking and leading to a brighter future; on the other hand it also strengthens Putnam’s idea, according to which progressive rhetoric often suggests ‘fears of stasis’ (of being stopped stalled, or thwarted) (see p. 124).

At this stage it is worth adding that the fearful image of a possible stasis is mainly conveyed through a negative depiction of the ‘others’, the Tories in this case. Thus, the already mentioned ‘us/them’ polarization is proposed again to attack the Tories and Macmillan’s power, while
antagonism is constructed by portraying the Tories as a ‘closed’ and ‘lethargic’ society.

This portrayal of the Tories is indispensable in order to legitimise the new need for modernization, as Baudrillard (2002: 13) claims, indeed, “people believe naively that the progress of the Good, its advance in all fields (the sciences, technology, democracy, human rights), corresponds to a defeat of Evil”. From here it looks clear that, to legitimise his modernization plans, Wilson needs to identify an evil enemy. This is accomplished, therefore, by depicting the Tories as people who oppose plans of social development, and by creating a simplistic antagonism based upon the reductive distinctions ‘voices of hope’ versus ‘voices of fear’, as in the following extract:

[…]

From the above excerpt, one can extrapolate two different pieces of information, both useful for our analysis. Firstly, at the semantic level, what stands out is the extraordinary shortness of the sentences. In other words, Wilson’s utterance is characterized by a lack of verbosity, rather unusual within a political context. In this sense, it could be argued that, while most politicians fail to realize that brevity can be a political weapon, Wilson, by contrast, proves to be aware of such power, an awareness acquired before only by Abraham Lincoln. Indeed, since the goal of brevity is clarity, a concise statement can convey ideals and values that, being better understood by the average person, leave a long-lasting impression on folks.
The second feature which stands out from the speech belongs instead to the interpretative plan and concerns the fact that the emphasis lies on the persuasive contrast between an ‘obsolete Edwardian elite of privileged’ and the ‘forward-looking Labours’ (Moore-Gilber, 1992: 21-22). Such a contrast confirms what Fetzer (2012:130) describes as:

[…] an aggressive facework through which politicians intend to deconstruct the leadership qualities of their opponent, while at the same time intending to construct the leadership qualities of self.

All this deals with what we have claimed until now, a particular representation of the enemy which, assisting the construction of a dichotomous collective moral righteousness, succeeds in legitimating the destruction of the Other (Aho, 1994; cited in Cerulo 1997; Berry, 2006; Hansen, 2004).

3.3.4. A Brief Mention of Tony Benn, Neil Kinnock and Ed Milliband

Continuing chronologically, among the Labour orators of the last years, it is worth mentioning some personalities that have never been prime Ministers but have been universally recognised as great orators.

In the first place we should mention Tony Benn, an interesting personality in the field of oratory especially for his ‘rhetoric denial’, a strategy largely discussed earlier with reference to Stanley Baldwin (see p. 98) and connected to the rhetorical device called synchoresis, which aims to create a sense of impartiality, fairness and honesty.

Indeed, Tony Benn, for 50 years cabinet Minister under Harold Wilson and James Callaghan, has always declared that the essence of powerful public speech is authenticity. He did not like his technical abilities to be noticed, always denying that he was any good at public speaking.

It is just in this sense that Benn can be compared with Baldwin, since both seem to evoke the classic and most famous example of such antirhetorical attitude, an example coming from the forum speech in Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar, where Marc Anthony, after having employed
any rhetorical devices known to man, claims: “I am no orator as Brutus is, but just a plain simple man”. In a very similar way, Benn, describing the art of political rhetoric, once suggested: “always say what you mean, and mean what you say, and don’t attack people personally” (126).

Apart from Tony Benn, another great personality in the field of Labour oratory who deserves mention is Neil Kinnock, leader of the Labour Party and Leader of the Opposition from 1983 until 1992, and whose rare eloquence led him to be often compared with Aneurin Bevan.

Rhetorically speaking, Kinnock is famous for his I warn you speech, a direct and prophetic speech which conveyed a nightmarish vision of the future and captured the frustration of the Left wing when Margaret Thatcher was about to be elected PM. Also here, therefore, we find the antagonistic rhetoric put forth by Bevan and Wilson and usually attributed to opposition parties.

Regarding the most recurrent rhetorical devices, instead, the most interesting feature which can be extrapolated from the speech is the predominant usage of figures of repetition. Indeed, the speech is built upon the anaphora device, and shows a total of 17 “I warn you”. Thus, explicitly identifying the ‘enemy/other’ category, Kinnock depicts Margaret Thatcher’s possible election as the absolute evil that must be prevented if people want to avoid the advent of a dystopian society of the future. To strengthen such negative representation, the speech is supported by metaphorical and metonymic images which contribute to further dramatize the description of a future society under the control of the opponents:

If Margaret Thatcher is re-elected as prime minister on Thursday, I warn you.
I warn you that you will have pain […]
I warn you that you will have ignorance […]
I warn you that you will have poverty […]
I warn you that you must not expect work […]
I warn you not to go into the streets alone after dark or into the streets in large crowds of protest in the light […]

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I warn you that you will be quiet […]
I warn you that you will have defence of a sort […]
I warn you that you will be home-bound […]
I warn you that you will borrow less […]
If Margaret Thatcher wins on Thursday—
- I warn you not to be ordinary
- I warn you not to be young
- I warn you not to fall ill
- I warn you not to get old (127).

In addition to this speech, which has no comparisons in terms of persuasiveness, another famous and powerful speech given by Kinnock was held in Bournemouth in 1985. This speech is worth mentioning since it marked a symbolic turning point in the history of the Labour party. Indeed, the speech began with an attack on the Tory government; realized through a sequence of rhetorical questions, and conceived to create a contrast between how the Tories presented themselves and what they were actually doing.

With regard to the main theme of the speech it can be argued that it focuses mainly on the need for ‘change’, theme largely discussed in the previous paragraphs and which will become the governing centre for Blairism a few years later.

As leader of the opposition, also Miliband’s oratory tends to be pretty antagonistic, aiming at highlighting policy failures of the coalition government.

Even though Miliband, as all the other mediocre orators of the 21st century, cannot be considered a particularly skilful speaker and the general feeling is that he failed to build a connection with his audiences, there is a speech given by him which shows a clever use of several rhetorical devices.

His first speech as a Party Leader in Manchester, indeed, shows a perfect use of the ‘rule of three’ or tricolon, especially when he claims that new generation of Labour is different: “[…] Different attitudes, different ideas, different ways of doing politics […]” (123). Or when, using the same device, Milliband reaches a climaxing conclusion and leaves a long-lasting
key message in his audience: “[...] Optimistic about our country, optimistic about our World, optimistic about the power of politics [...]” (128).

Noteworthy also his use of chiasmus, for instance when he claims: “[...] you’ve elected me leader, and lead I will [...]” (129).

Such imaginative language is supported by metaphorical images which portrays progress as a journey. Journey imagery is somewhat persuasive since it applies the necessary means to explain abstract politics in a concrete and comprehensible manner (Andreassen, 2007: 93). Aware of that, Milliband states: “[...] But to achieve that we must go on our own journey [...] This country faces some tough choices. And so do we. And we need to change.” (130).

Needless to say that such a statement not only stresses the need for ‘change’ but it also constructs, implicitly, a polarized world in which the ‘progressive’ policies of the Wings are opposed to the ‘regressive’ policies of the Tories.

A further rhetorical strategy cleverly used by Milliband, detected by Unger (2013), can be found in the opening remarks of his One Nation speech, where the new Labour leader begins telling the story of his family, thus creating a personal narrative which can get him emotionally closer to his audience. Always in order to involve his audience more, Milliband also uses call-and-response tag-questions (e.g. “doesn’t it”) and, a few times, almost verged on taking a ‘panto’ style, for instance when he says: “Oh come on, I didn't hear you, do the Tories get it?” (131).

What is more, even in this speech as in the previous one, is possible to pinpoint a clear separation of ‘self’ and ‘non-self’. Therefore, Milliband criticizes the ‘rule and divide’ approach of the Tories and creates a contrast between “a race to the top” (under the Labour) and “a race to the bottom” (under the Tories) (Unger, 2013).
3.3.5. Tony Blair and the Rhetoric of ‘Change’

3.3.5.1. Blair Rhetoric of Modernization’s General Features

Tony Blair served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from May 1997 to June 2007 and is remembered especially for his position on the international stage.

Introducing Blair from a CDA perspective, what needs to be said first is that his rhetoric has been immensely successful. As McNair (2003: 149) argues indeed:

[…] Tony Blair was elected largely because of his perceived ability to look and sound good for the cameras, and to communicate, with this image, to the electorally crucial voters of southern England. Nick Jones argues that Blair was indeed the first UK party leader to have been chosen for his ability to say ‘only what he wanted to say and what he believed to be true’.

Starting from here, according to Landtsheerand Feldman, authors of Beyond Public Speech and Symbols (2002), Blair’s rhetoric tries to establish a shared identity for new Labour in order to reach two main goals: to attract people who might never have voted for the Labour Party and avoid the risk of losing existing supporters.

What is even more interesting, though, is that Tony Blair is responsible for the renewal of British Labour Party, portrayed as the party of change and placed within the frame of a culture of the future. Such Labour new way of speaking is known, indeed, as ‘The Third Way’ and aims to stress national identity and its shared values, especially by conveying a sense of ‘we-ness’ and ‘togetherness’.

Therefore, in order to highlight such transformation of the Labour party, Blair often uses a metaphorical language, full of journey metaphors (e.g. ‘journey of change, ‘journey of renewal’) which describe the change of the party associated with a more modernizing political programme. In addition to journey imagery, Blair is also very likely to use ‘reification’, defined by the Encyclopedia Britannica as “a fallacy of ambiguity, when an abstraction (abstract belief or hypothetical construct) is treated as if it were a
concrete, real event, or physical entity.” This way, Blair’s main goal lies in making abstract political issues more intelligible.

Tony Blair is also known for his ability to mix formal and informal style to speak clearly in public, as well as for his Ethical discourse based on the opposition between *good* and *evil*. To this end Blair uses an extremely personal tone as well as a conversational, and often vernacular, language which is grounded over the abundance of the first person plural ‘we’- in order to convey a sense of togetherness and belonging - and frequent cliché.

Traditional language which recalls the *vox populi* is persuasive in so far as it manages to place the speaker as a member of an in-group which includes the audience. It is just this language choice which represents the main difference with the Old Labour, which was characterized, instead, by a more arcane and technical language style.

In this sense, it is often claimed that Blair’s political success is due to his capacity to anchor the figure of the public politician to that of the middle-class person, managing to blend the vernacular language of normal people to the public language of the politician.

Moreover, especially because of his already-mentioned tendency to construct a polarized world where ‘good’ and ‘evil’ meet and collide, it is often claimed that “Blairism is just Thatcherism softened” (Ashley, 2006). Such thought seems particularly true especially in the field of War-rhetoric, where it is possible to notice a sort of Thatcher-worship in Blair style. This is further confirmed by Fairclough (2003: 21) who claims:

New Labour has built a new political discourse that has incorporated elements of the political discourse of Thatcherism and has thus transformed the field of political discourse.

All these reasons, and especially since Blair’s rhetorical style is mainly founded upon the epic battle between ‘good’ and ‘evil’, define Blair’s oratorical style as ‘Conviction rhetoric’. Generally speaking, it could be said that the contrast between ethical terms such as ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ is typical of new Labour discourse – exactly as we have asserted until now - and is
mainly conveyed through the use of conflict metaphors. Thus, his Conviction rhetoric is founded upon the struggle between positive and negative values, with terrorism embodying ‘evil’. It will be possible to extend such theme throughout the next subparagraph, which deals with Blair’s wartime rhetoric.

3.3.5.2. Blair’s Rhetoric of War

In order to extend the analysis of Blair’s War-rhetoric, perhaps the most interesting speech which is worth examining in depth is the speech addressed to the House of Commons on 18th March 2003.

To begin with, in regards to the purpose of the speech, it needs to be said that it was conceived to convince the audience - the public opinion and a pretty reluctant House of Commons - to support an immediate intervention in Iraq. Therefore, seeking to persuade such a wide audience, Blair employed several rhetorical devices and techniques.

First of all, in terms of deictic expressions, one can notice that Blair often used the first person pronoun ‘I’ when addressing the House of Commons and the plural pronoun ‘we’ when addressing the nation. In order to interpret such a choice it can be said that, while the pronoun ‘I’ is used by Blair only to indicate his personal involvement and responsibility, more interesting is the matter of ‘clusivity’, namely “the distinction between inclusive and exclusive first-person pronouns” (Horst, 2005: 1). Indeed, throughout the speech ‘we’ is used both in an inclusive and in an exclusive way.

Regarding the inclusive ‘we’, it can be said that this is used when the speaker speaks or simply pretends to speak on the addressee’s behalf, thus attempting to encourage solidarity, promote unity and belonging and persuade the audience to work together in the pursuing of the same goal.

Therefore, in the speech I am analyzing ‘we’ always comprises Blair himself, the British people, the British Government and, implicitly Britain’s friends and allies. By contrast, the exclusive ‘we’ is used “to refer to the
speaker and third parties who may or may not be present in the immediate situation” (Wales, 1966: 58) and is often exploited to share responsibility. In addition to ‘we’ and its anamorphous, Blair also used ‘you’ a few times in the attempt to increase his audience’s participation and involvement.

Nevertheless, in contrast with the pronouns which evoke inclusiveness, Blair also employed the pronoun ‘they’ several times in order to refer to Sadam Hussein and his people, thus attempting to depict a negative ‘other’.

As we have largely discussed, in political discourse ‘we’ versus ‘they’ recalls indeed the struggle between ‘positive and negative’, ‘good and evil’, contributing to create antagonism and division and thus highlighting the difference between the in-group and the out-group.

A simpler example of Blair’s dichotomous language can be extracted from the speech given on the 14th of September 2011, after the terrorist attack in the USA, when Blair proposed a very streamlined distinction between the in-group and the out-group:

> We are democratic. They are not. We have respect for human life. They do not. We hold essentially liberal values. They do not. (…) Our beliefs are the very opposite of the fanatics. We believe in reason, democracy and tolerance. These beliefs are the foundation of our civilised world (132).

As Charteris-Black (2005: 146) argues, Blair often uses the struggle between ‘good and evil’ as an ethical justification for his actions, also dehumanising the terrorists and showing their lack of human qualities. In addition, through personification, sometimes Blair compares Saddam Hussein and Iraq to Hitler and Germany, in order to reinforce his negative depiction of the ‘others’:

> Naturally should Hitler appear again in the same form, we would know what to do. But the point is that history doesn't declare the future to us so plainly. Each time is different and the present must be judged without the benefit of hindsight […] (133).
Moreover, to increase the credibility of his phrasings, Blair often uses testimonies as verification for his stances, as in the following extract:

[…] I recall a few weeks ago talking to an Iraqi exile and saying to her that I understood how grim it must be under the lash of Saddam. “But you don’t”, she replied. “You cannot. You do not know what it is like to live in perpetual fear.” And she is right (134).

Still, Blair’s speech is also filled with rhetorical questions, which add reason (logos) to his words and, creating the illusion of communication, manage to make the audience take part in the speech and agree with him:

Is it not reasonable that Saddam provides evidence of destruction of the biological and chemical agents and weapons the UN proved he had in 1999? So far he has provided none (135).

Rhetorical questions are worth mentioning in so far as are representative of Blair’s oratorical strength, which lies in his capacity to involve and guide the audience through the decisions he has already made.

Regarding the use of modality instead, it is convenient to stress the main difference between two different categories of modality before going on with the analysis.

Hence, according to Knežević et al. (in Robertson et.al, 2012: 38), modality can be divided into two headings: epistemic modality, which indicates probability or uncertainty, useful to mitigate the speaker’s responsibility, and deontic modality, which indicates obligation or desirability. Starting from these assumptions, throughout the speech it can be noticed that deontic modality occurs more often and is expressed through the modal ‘must’ [e.g. “We must stand firm […]” (136)], which contributes to increase Blair’s authority and leadership as well as to rally people into taking action.
Quantitatively, ‘must’ is followed by ‘will’, a modal which expresses sometimes volition, other times prediction, whereas the less used ‘may’ is employed by Blair to show politeness. Indeed, ‘may’ does not occur much throughout the speech since it expresses permission and its excessive use could decrease the credibility and authority of the speaker.

In terms of techniques, Blair often used repetition and parallelism in order to reinforce the key points of his speech and create an impact on the listener:

[…]

It is dangerous if such regimes disbelieve us, Dangerous if they think they can use our weakness, our hesitation even the natural urges of our democracy towards peace against us, Dangerous because one day […]

(137).

In addition, tricolon also occurs often throughout the speech to increase the memorability of the discourse and create unity, but it was sometimes replaced by two-part lists: “Saddam had used the weapons against Iran, against his own people”; “No to any ultimatum; no to any resolution” (138).

Especially because of its rhetorical richness and the serious tone employed, this speech is remembered and oft-quoted even now. Even though the speech is dated 2003, the papers were impressed by Blair’s performance at that time and continue to react positively still today. For instance, in February 2013, The Guardian recalled Blair’s speech:

A decade ago, Tony Blair was lifting his sparkling rhetoric to new heights, whipping up fears of an imminent threat, claiming to hear echoes of Munich, and encouraging dreams of a post-Saddam world where tyranny was in retreat. As the forgotten and fraudulent second dossier was being foisted on journalists, he was perfecting the lines that would soon carry a belligerent majority in the Commons […] (The Guardian, 2013).

What is more, with regard to the oratorical style, the editor further added:
Mr. Blair spoke powerfully. He was serious in tone, respectful to backbenchers, and at times he reached levels of oratory that he rarely achieves in the Commons. He seemed to sense that, though the argument has not been won, it is swinging his way (*The Guardian*, 2013).

To conclude, very interesting is the 2003 close examination of the speech conducted by *The Sun*, which places Blair on the same footing of Margaret Thatcher and Winston Churchill in terms of oratorical skills:

With passion in his voice and fire in his belly, Tony Blair won his place in history alongside Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher. In the most momentous speech of his political life he set out the pressing reasons why there must now be war on President Saddam […]

[…] The ringing tones were from Churchill, the cold logic that of Lady Thatcher … It was a stirring call to arms that was backed with precise, detailed and persuasive arguments … [that] kept a possible Labour revolt in check [and] will have convinced the nation that war is just […] (*The Sun*, March 2003).

3.3.6. Gordon Brown: Toward the Decline of British Oratory

Blair’s resignation in 2007 was followed by the rise to power of Gordon Brown, who served as Prime Minister from June 2007 to May 2010.

Introducing the personality of Brown within a CDA context, it is often said that Brown belongs to a new breed of politicians and orators, who seem to represent a real decline of oratory. In fact, most people argue that Blair was the last great speaker, whereas Gordon Brown just delivered poorly constructed speeches. Indeed, to reiterate what was said with reference to David Cameron, Ed Milliband and Davis Davis (see p. 117), it is often claimed that our 21st century oligarchy produces oratory of low quality, especially when compared with the great rhetoric of the 18th century. To propose again Atkinson’s assertion (see p. 117), based upon the idea that politicians are nowadays eliminating the passion that was once a normal part of political debates and speeches, “effective political speech-making has
become a dying art [...]”. Still, according to Atkinson (2013) such a decline is mainly due to the fact that nowadays politicians tend to speak in rather strange venues to audiences with little or no interest in politics, and certainly no motivation to applaud or boo anything they might hear.

This is particularly evident in the case of Gordon Brown, whose restraint of language seems to contribute to the perception of him as an inaccessible person and politician. Indeed, if we analyse the speech given by Brown when he assumed the role of PM, for instance, we can notice that he gave a very feeble example of what rhetoric is only one time, when he reinforced the communicativeness of his words by replacing tricolon with tetracolon: “I have heard the need for change: change in our NHS; change in our schools; change to build trust in government; change to protect and extend the British way of life” (139). For the rest, his speech and his oratory overall simply show a lack of rhetorical devices and persuasiveness.

Perhaps the only speech given by Brown that is worth analysing is his address to the Labour Party conference on September 25, 2006, when he staked his claim on the premiership.

Therefore, to begin with, in terms of ethos Brown’s speech is full of arguments which can be perceived by the audience as being ‘ethically appealing’. Indeed, Brown talked about religious and moral values, highlighting the fact that his father was a minister of the Church and that his mother taught him to use his talents. This way, through the description of his personal and professional skills and the association with authority figures, he manages to establish his credibility and trustworthiness.

Instead, in terms of pathos, an appeal to the audience’s emotions, Brown employs expressions such as ‘public service’ and ‘personal aspirations of the individual’, aware that these are topics of concern for most audiences. In this way, by demonstrating his personal commitment and engagement to the ideas he is promoting, Brown motivates his audience to care about the issues he is dealing with.

Moreover, regarding the logos of the speech and the topic itself, Brown sought to persuade the audience through deductive and inductive
reasoning. An example of such technique can be extrapolated from the following excerpt:

You can buy raw materials from anywhere, you can borrow capital from anywhere, you can engage with technology half way across the world, but you cannot buy from elsewhere what in the global economy you need most; the skills and the creativity of all our people—and that means that in education we must aim to be number one (140).

In terms of person pronoun usage, Brown’s ability consisted in welcoming his listeners into his speech and conveying ‘togetherness’ through the frequent use of ‘we’ and ‘us’ [i.e. “I believe that we have real achievements together”; “And we don’t want our children to say to us […]” (141)].

It is worth adding that Brown used ‘we’ sometimes inclusively, addressing the nation - exactly as in the examples above - other times exclusively, addressing only the Labour Party, for instance when he claimed: “The only reason any of us are here is that we are in politics as servants” (142). A further example of an exclusive ‘we’, bound only to the people present in the immediate situation – namely Brown’s Labour colleagues - can be detected when he claimed: “We must support Tony Blair” (143) or, similarly, in the closing remarks: “Let this message go out from our party to the people of Britain” (144).

Still in terms of pronoun usage, one can also notice that Brown often mentioned himself through the use of the first pronoun ‘I’ – abundant especially in the opening remarks, when Brown constructs his personal narrative. Therefore, as deducible from this, ‘I’ is used when the speaker aims to give evidence of his references, thus proving that he is capable of leading the country: “I’ve worked with Tony Blair for almost 10 years”; “I’ve spent all my political life defending the unity of Great Britain against narrow nationalism”; “When I made the bank of England independent […]” (145).

Still in order to strengthen the persuasiveness of his phrasing and also to invite dialogue with the audience, Brown also used ‘boosters’, defined by
Talbot (2003: 33) as “elements that modify the force of a statement, which serve as intensifiers and are used in expressions of interest or enthusiasm”.

Clear examples of boosters through which the speaker can show confidence can be extracted from the following excerpts: “And I believe we must now examine [...]”; “And I am confident that my experience [...]”; “This is the Britain I believe in” (146).

Additionally, one can notice that another technique mastered by Brown is ‘transition’, described by Hyland (2005: 76) as “how the writer intends the connections between elements of the discussion to be understood”.

Hence, transition is realized through conjunctions such as ‘and’ and ‘but’, which allow the speaker to link or contrast ideas, thus helping him create his point of view and permitting his audience interpret these links between further (in the case of ‘and’) or contrasting (in the case of ‘but’) ideas.

Similarly, it is worth mentioning that Brown also used engagement markers such as ‘by the way’, ‘if you want’ or ‘you may notice’, inviting the audience to participate in the speech and maximising the inclusive and persuasive impact of his argument. Also the rhetorical questions he often included serve the same purpose: “So these times challenge us to ask-what kind of society do we together want to become?” (147). This way, with the question followed by an answer, the audience is allowed to enter the deductive process of the speech and is guided by Brown to the conclusions he prefers.

Moreover, Brown also included several *tricola* in his speech. As previously stated, according to Thomas (2003: 49), the persuasiveness of this rhetorical device lays in the fact that “audiences and speakers seem to find linguistically grouped features and especially those in threes, aesthetically pleasing”. Therefore, aware of the persuasive power of this technique and to provide order and balance to his speech, Brown recurs to *tricolon* several times, for instance by saying: “[…] recognizing that the values of decent people everywhere are for liberty, democracy and justice
not just for ourselves but for everyone”; “They believed in duty, responsibility, and respect for others” (148).

Nevertheless, in confirmation of what was previously said with reference to a gradual decline of British oratory, apart from this speech one can notice that, overall, Brown’s oratory tends to be pretty repetitive, with an excessive use of the same rhetorical devices – like, for instance, tricolon, alliteration, contrast and anaphora – and all this results in monotony and boredom.

Hence, it seems that the only way out of such a tedious rhetoric is offered by politicians outside the two main parties, who have a facility for theatre and oratory. For this reason, in the following chapter I add the critical analysis of two interesting personalities in the field of British politics, namely Nick Clegg and Nigel Farage.

### 3.7. Two Discordant Voices: Nick Clegg and Nigel Farage

#### 3.7.1. Rationale

Within a context of progressive decadency of British oratory, it seems that the best examples of rhetoric come from leaders outside the Labour and Conservative parties. One should think of the charismatic personalities of Nick Clegg, leader of the Liberal Democrats and Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence Party.

Indeed, both politicians seem to refuse to locate themselves along the usual left-right axis of political opinion, more willing to position their parties on a street level. This is nowadays a very astute move that, although through an excess of ‘populism’, makes politicians like Clegg and Farage closer to the average man, in a time in which the other party leaders - Cameron and Brown for instance - seem to be located somewhere ‘out of touch’, too far away from where real people live.

Starting from these assumptions I shall examine, in the next two paragraphs, how Clegg and Farage manage to locate themselves on the street level, pretending to speak on behalf of the people. It will emerge that
Clegg does this through an imaginative rhetoric, able to attract and fascinate the audience, while Farage gets proximity with his listeners by means of ‘populist reasoning’.

3.7.2. Nick Clegg and the Evocation of a Utopian Society

Within the current context of poor oratory, represented by Cameron and Brown, perhaps one of the few charismatic personalities remains that of Nick Clegg, leader of the Liberal Democrats since 2007.

Indeed, through his oratorical style, Clegg seems able to build a stronger relationship with the audience than his colleagues, by addressing each questioner by name, or by looking straight into the camera and showing a relaxed and confident attitude.

Moreover, one should notice his development of the ‘verb-less’ style typical of Tony Blair, well-rendered in the speech held in Bournemouth in 2009, where, although Clegg cited key liberal principles, such as ‘freedom’ and ‘individualism’, the core theme of the speech was about ‘change’.

In terms of rhetorical style, his speeches showcase various elements of enargia, a visually powerful description that recreates something in words and that makes Clegg’s speeches wholly vivid and engaging. Indeed, George Puttenham, in his The Art of English Poesie (1589), defined enargia as the ‘glorious lustre and light’ uniting the ‘outward shew’ and the ‘inward working’ of figurative language.

Such liveliness is also obtained through the usage of devices like prosopopoeia, namely a way to communicate to the audience by speaking as another person or object, which serves the purpose of giving another perspective on the action being described.

Still, another device often used by Clegg in a context of enargia is topothesia, a description of imaginary or non-existent places that aims to persuade the audience about the existence of better places. In Clegg’s work this is an invitation to imagine a possible Liberal Democrat cabinet.

An example can be extracted from his Bournemouth speech, where he described a Utopian society of the future, ruled by his party:
Because I want to live in a country where prejudice, insularity and fear are conquered by the great British traditions of tolerance, pluralism and justice. Where political life is not a Westminster village freak show, but open, accessible and helpful in people’s everyday lives. Where fine words on the environment are translated into real action.
Where every child can grow up safe and secure, able to flourish, no matter their background, their income, or the colour of their skin. Where we make sense of the complex, globalised world of our times and play a creative role in shaping it.
Where rights, freedom and privacy are not the playthings of the government but safeguarded for everyone. I want to be Prime Minister because I want to be the first Prime Minister in my lifetime to be on the side of the weak against the powerful, on the side of freedom against conformity, on the side of human innovation against government decree.
I want to be Prime Minister because I have spent half a lifetime imagining a better society. And I want to spend the next half making it happen (149).

Such an imaginative language is a permanent feature of his style of speaking. It can be found in his Liverpool speech in 2010 as well, where Clegg invited his audience to imagine being on the doorsteps for an election in 2015:

Britain in 2010 is anxious, unsure about the future, but Britain in 2015 will be a different country. Strong, fair, free and full of hope again. A country we can be proud to hand on to our children. That is the goal we must keep firmly fixed in our minds. That is the prize (150).

This powerful and vivid rhetorical style, sometimes even apocalyptic, with Clegg speaking as a common man, is very emphatic and therefore able to reconnect people and politics. Nevertheless, his populist dialectic is embedded into an Aristotelian formation. Indeed, nothing is left to chance, from an extensive use of tricola to the continuous repetition of refrains,
from mixed metaphors to climaxing conclusions, everything is well-thought out in advance in order to appeal to the audience.

Due to Clegg’s extraordinary rhetorical skills, it is often said that the only orator who could compete with him is Nigel Farage, discussed in the next subchapter.

3.7.3. Nigel Farage and Populist Euro-Sceptic Discourse

3.7.3.1. Farage Populism’s General Features

As mentioned in the previous section, after having analysed Conservative and Labour Rhetoric, I would like to add a brief description of a very interesting personality in the field of British Oratory: Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence Party and member of the European Parliament, promoter of a populist and aggressive rhetoric mainly addressed against EU’s supranational institutions.

Indeed, Farage is spokesman of what is known as Euro-scepticism, a negative attitude toward the European Union, said to weaken the nation state and described as too bureaucratic and undemocratic. From this criticism, Euro-scepticism has contributed to the spread of a new form of political rhetoric, which is against the European Union’s rigidity and asks for a wider flexibility.

This new kind of rhetoric is extremely populist and aims to protect national identity from ‘alien influences’, focusing on the real interest of the common man. Nevertheless, introducing Farage from a CDA perspective, it needs to be said that, although the euro-sceptic attitude is probably the main feature of his political campaign, his ‘populism’ is directed not only against the EU, but also against both British parties, especially because of their denials to offer a national Referendum on the EU. Starting from this assumption, Farage’s populism can be described mentioning Mudde (2004: 543), who defines it as:

 [...] an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt
elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people.

Moreover, to justify Farage’s preference for a populist rhetoric Canovan (1999: 2) argues that:

Populism, understood as an appeal to ‘the people’ against both the established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values, should not be dismissed as a pathological form of politics of no interest to the political theorist, for its democratic pretentions raise important issues.

However, in spite of the intrinsic persuasiveness embedded into a populist rhetoric, it needs to be said that, in order to appeal to people, it is necessary for the populist vision to come from a charismatic leader, able to embody the popular will in his persona (Canovan, 1999: 5). From this point of view it can be argued that Farage’s dialectic works especially thanks to his charisma and empathy.

In addition to this, in order to offer a broader explanation of what populism is, Lee (2006, cited in Jackson, 2011: 2-3) argues that populist rhetoric uses populist reasoning which relies upon four attributes:

(1) invokes a virtuous people ‘portrayed as heroic defenders’ of time honored values; (2) identifies this rhetorically constituted people against a rhetorically constituted enemy ‘hoarding power’; (3) further compounds the enemy rhetoric by claiming to work against a ‘system’ (like government or the economy) once virtuous but now ‘sullied’; and (4) expresses an ‘apocalyptic confrontation’ or a ‘mythic battle’ set in a political order on the verge of collapse.

Thus, on the basis of these core topics, it can be argued that Nigel Farage fully embodies the image of the populist charismatic leader and that his rhetoric fulfills all the features and skills of a successful orator. Indeed, as Hädicke (2012) explains, Lee’s four strategies can be easily applied to
Farage. With regard to the first point, one can notice, from his speeches and interviews, that Farage is very likely to describe European people virtuously, namely as the defenders of a number of righteous values, while also including himself among this group of noble heroes.

Also the second strategy can easily be applied to Farage, since his rhetoric seeks to rally Europeans people against the ‘elitist’ and ‘un-elected’ heads of the UE.

This is also for the third strategy, since Farage often expresses his wish for a European cooperation without the European Commission, without a European Parliament and, finally, without a European Court of Justice. All these institutions are thus portrayed as part of an undemocratic system that was not so post 1945 when, in Farage’s words, “there were some very sensible ideas put together” (151).

Finally, also the fourth strategy can easily be applied since, by depicting the Euro-zone as being on the verge of collapse, Farage attempts to propel people against the system in what resembles the epic battle of ‘good versus bad’.

3.7.3.2. Farage’s Depiction of the EU as the Negative ‘Other’

As deducible from the definitions of ‘populism’ proposed in the previous subchapter, one of the main features populist rhetoric is founded upon is the negative depiction of a well-identified enemy. In the case of Farage’s rhetoric such enemy is represented by the EU, depicted as an ‘ultranationalist dictatorship’, while Barroso and Van Rompuy, the heads of the EU, are portrayed as ‘the quiet assassins of nation-state democracy’.

Hence, if we analyse Farage’s key words, among the most frequently we find words and expressions used to emphasise the lack of democracy and legitimacy on EU level. As a specific example, the heads of the EU are called ‘un-elected’, whereas the EU itself is accused of being ‘power without limits’. Again, for the same purpose, Farage often uses derogatory expressions such as ‘bull-boys’ to describe the European elite, in a clear
attempt to show their lack of credibility and, consequently, to weaken their position and reputation.

Simultaneously, the Euro-zone is often described as an ‘economic prison’, a disproportionate metaphor used to dramatize the situation. Additionally, metaphor Euro-Titanic is used to foreshadow an inevitable and tragic ending of the Euro-zone [e.g. “The euro Titanic has now hit the iceberg - and there simply aren’t enough lifeboats to go round” (152)].

Overall it can be said that Farage’s language is extremely metaphorical, pursuing the attempt to simplify abstract and complex political issues to politically less-sophisticated individuals, who are the main target of a populist discourse.

The picturesque dramatization of the current political situation is another feature of his style, pursued by means of biblical/religious metaphors which convey images of people being tortured or sacrificed: “sacrificed at the European altar, all in the name of preserving the European project” (153). Hence, what Farage pursues is a victimization of the European citizens.

In addition to his metaphorical language, it is worth adding that Farage often adopts colloquialisms, offences and informal expressions, always in the attempt to make people of a less-sophisticated political background understand what he means. This strategy serves the purpose of presenting himself as a common European citizen, creating affinity and proximity with the audience and offering simple solutions for complex political issues.

On this note, regarding pronoun usage, the main feature of Farage’s style is the opposition between ‘us-them’, aimed to emphasise the gap between the political elite and common people, in the typical contrast – extensively discussed throughout the thesis - ‘bad versus good’. In this way Farage splits the political stage into two adversarial camps and, of course, this also allows him to position himself on the side of the people, in a very populist way, as well as to move the responsibility of a bad political situation away from him.
Still in terms of pronoun usage, what is also worth pointing out is Farage’s use of the first person pronoun ‘I’ which, even though less frequent, allows him to maintain his leading position. On the contrary, ‘you’ is mostly used in an aggressive way, namely in the form of a direct verbal attack against his enemies and aimed to stigmatise them as being incompetent. A famous example is his verbal attack against the European council president, Herman van Rompuy: “I can speak on behalf of the majority of British people in saying that we don’t know you, we don’t want you and the sooner you are put out to grass, the better” (154).

In conclusion, Farage’s speeches are straightforward and captivating, even though not always diplomatic and respectful. Yet, if the first goal of rhetoric lies in arousing attention, Farage has undoubtedly found the right way to be noticed (Farndale, 2010).

3.4. Recapitulation and Chapter Conclusions

In conclusion, this second chapter of the thesis examined the use of rhetoric from significant figures in both Conservative and Labour politics, primarily in order to offer a new perspective on British rhetoric. Indeed, differently from American presidential rhetoric, which has always been held in high regard and is the subject of intense study, the history of rhetoric in British politics has been neglected for long time. Contrary to the common notion that Britain does not have the same rhetorical moments which characterize American politics – namely the State of the Union Address or the Inauguration speech - British politics has, in fact, some ritualized rhetorical moments. For this reason, as gleaned from American scholarship on presidential rhetoric, this third chapter sought to highlight the cultural, ideological and linguistic differences that affect British rhetoric, thus offering a contrastive analysis of Conservative and Liberal discourse in the United Kingdom.

Starting with these, at a first and cognitive stance the main differences between a Conservative and a Liberal mind-set have been presented on the basis of Lakoff’s theory, founded upon the idea that conservatives and
liberals hold two different models of morality. At the linguistic level, instead, such dissimilarities have been analysed in light of Fairclough’s reference model.

Hence, from the analysis it has emerged that, while Conservative political rhetoric is the rhetoric of the establishment, and thus attempts to justify the way things are and defend the status quo, by contrast, Liberal rhetoric of the last few decades is founded upon hope-inspiring and forward-looking visions which assume that forward is good, backwards is bad. Hence, it has been underscored that while British conservative rhetoric tends to stress appreciation of the existing goods, on the contrary progressive rhetoric has cemented the word ‘change’ into its own vocabulary.

Starting from these assumptions, at the linguistic level, the main differences we found between the main political elites in Britain, concern, first and foremost, word choice. Indeed, while conservatives tend to stress words such as ‘patriotism’, ‘national pride’, ‘authority’ and so on, by contrast, Liberals are more likely to emphasise concepts like ‘freedom’, ‘democracy’ and ‘solidarity’.

Also the pronoun usage marks a difference between these opposing parties. Indeed, while conservatives tend to mark the difference between ‘I’ and ‘you’, trying thus to impose their leadership and authority and neglecting the use of ‘we’ as a collective lexeme; Labours, by contrast, put emphasise on the inclusive ‘we’ and its anamorphous, in the clear attempt to encourage solidarity and convey a sense of togetherness and belonging.

Similar between both parties is instead the tendency toward an antagonistic rhetoric, founded upon dichotomies aiming to discredit the opponent and thus construct a polarized world founded upon the opposing values of ‘good’ and ‘evil’. Nevertheless, from the analysis has been emerged that the Right is slightly more likely to frame public policies and speeches as dichotomous contexts between opposing values.

Nevertheless, it needs to be said that the analysis has also highlighted the starting point of a gradual decline of British rhetoric. Proceeding
chronologically, indeed, the first orators described hold rhetorical skills which cannot be matched by the British politicians of the last few decades.

Hence, the 21st century oligarchy seems to be at a standstill, producing only mediocre orators who cannot crate affinity with the audience. For this reason, at the end of the section I decided to add the description of the more populist approach adopted by leaders outside the two main parties, namely Nick Clegg and Nigel Farage. Their rhetoric indeed, being founded upon the identification of well-identified enemies, is extremely dichotomous and aggressive, managing thus to give voice to the current political dissatisfaction of the working class.
4. CONCLUSIONS

We have seen in this thesis that Critical Discourse Analysis deals with the relationship between language and power. Indeed, unlike other forms of linguistic studies, the main purpose of CDA is explicitly socio-political, since it seeks to better represent the role of discourse in the reproduction of dominance and social inequality (Van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 2001).

Starting with these assumptions, we first provided a theoretical framework needed to analyse the relationship between discourse and power, discussing some of the general properties which can make a significant contribution to political analysis. Subsequently, we found that language is involved in dominance through the enactment of power in texts and speeches, in specific socio-historical contexts, as well as through the influence that certain kinds of discourses can have on the minds of others. In Van Dijk’s words (2006), manipulation acts by enhancing the power, moral superiority and credibility of the speaker, while discrediting and vilifying the ‘Others’.

Therefore, to illustrate and uncover the ways in which power is subtly reproduced in society through political discourse, a selection of official political speeches has been offered, considering two main contexts and a shared distinction between Liberal and Conservative discourse. Such an ideological distinction has been sketched mainly on the basis of George Lakoff’s metaphorical model which, analysing the worldview of liberals and conservatives by bringing together the perspectives of linguistics and philosophy, finds different ideological and rhetorical conceptions on both the left and right. Hence, also on the basis of Smith’s identification of a ‘liberal progressive narrative’ and a ‘social conservative narrative’ (2003), we have discovered that while progressives tend to use language that reflects moral values such as ‘fairness’, ‘compassion’, ‘forgiveness’ and so on, by contrast conservatives insist on ‘discipline’ and ‘obedience’. This is particularly true within the main contexts analysed, concerning, the first,
American presidential discourse and, the second, British prime-ministerial discourse.

Hence, the second chapter analysed the ideological and linguistic components enshrined in a selection of speeches given by the nominees of the last American presidential campaign, namely President Barack Obama and former Governor Mitt Romney. Moreover, the analysis of selected speeches has been followed by a discourse analysis of the three Obama-Romney presidential debates. Overall, summarizing our findings, we discovered that Obama’s interventions were significantly more audience-centric than Romney’s. This first result has been achieved thanks to the analysis of ‘person deixis’, pointing out that Obama used deictic expressions which convey a sense of ‘we-ness’ significantly more often and better than Romney.

Also the analysis conducted over the use of modals and tenses gave a similar result. Indeed, Obama’s preference for verbs such as ‘make’ and ‘do’, and for modals like ‘will’ and ‘must’ resulted in his higher level of personal commitment. Similarly, Obama seemed more likely than Romney to use words related to ‘thinking’ such as ‘I know’ or ‘I understand’, whereas Romney was far more likely to use perceptual words such as ‘I feel’ or ‘I see’, which are considered to be more subjective and related to uncertainty.

Still, in terms of volume, complexity and fluidity of speeches, throughout the analysis it has emerged that Romney showed a greater speech dis-fluency, characterized by false starts, breaks, irregularities, fillers or not lexical utterances. All these hesitations have been perceived as a symptom of uncertainty, probably contributing to decrease the trust of people towards the speaker. Similarly, although Obama spoke for longer, Romney used more words than Obama, speaking faster. Therefore, Romney came across as rushed and repetitive while Obama seemed more articulated, laborious and measured.

In conclusion, evaluating the reasons which led to Obama’s victory, it can be argued that Obama, significantly more than Romney, succeeded in
following a dominant discourse based on showing humour, certainty, solidarity and leadership to change. Nevertheless, what matters most is that, by telling his personal story, Obama made people believe in the American dream. What is more, by continuously addressing his statements to the public as a whole, he succeeded in becoming a man of the people instead of for the few.

A similar analysis has been conducted with reference to the second context examined, which concerns British prime-ministerial rhetoric. The choice to include this section arose from the realization that, while in the United States the phenomenon of presidential rhetoric has always been the subject of intense study, in Britain, by contrast, studies which analyse the ways in which prime ministers use rhetoric in public have been neglected for a long time. Hence the decision to apply a CDA approach also to British prime-ministerial discourse, thus offering an evolutionary analysis of the persuasive speeches delivered by the most effective British communicators of recent years, from Baldwin to Cameron in the case of the Conservative Party, and Bevan to Brown in the case of the Labour Party.

Nevertheless, caution must be exercised when drawing comparisons between American presidential rhetoric and British rhetorical premiership.

Indeed, the observation once made by George Bernard Shaw that Britain and America are two countries divided by a common language is particularly relevant here. As argued by Leith (2013) and confirmed by my analysis, there are concepts which resonate more profoundly for a British listener than for an American one. For instance, whereas American rhetoric is full of religion and American orators are mainly inspired by the language of the country’s founders and of the Bible, British orators, by contrast, seem to draw inspiration from Shakespeare and the Elizabethans. Hence, the world ‘liberty’, for instance, resonates more profoundly for an American audience because of its presence in the country’s founding documents. On the other hand, expressions such as ‘finest hour’ or ‘fight on the beaches’ are more loaded among British people, owing to Churchill’s wartime speech.
Therefore, taking such main differences for granted, by learning from American scholarship on presidential rhetoric, the third chapter of the thesis tried to highlight the cultural, ideological and linguistic differences that affect British rhetoric as well, thus offering a contrastive analysis of Conservative and Labour discourse in the United Kingdom.

Therefore, recapitulating our findings, one can argue that also in Britain while Conservative political rhetoric is the rhetoric of the establishment, by contrast Labour rhetoric is founded upon hope-inspiring and forward-looking visions. Hence, it has been underscored that while British conservative rhetoric tends to stress appreciation of the existing goods, on the contrary progressive rhetoric of the last few decades has cemented the word ‘change’ into its own vocabulary.

Such distinctions result, first and foremost, in word choice. Indeed, while conservatives are very likely to stress words such as ‘patriotism’, ‘national pride’, ‘authority’ and so on, by contrast, Labours tend to emphasise concepts like ‘freedom’, ‘democracy’ and ‘solidarity’.

Also the analysis over the use of deictic expressions gave results similar to those achieved within the American context. Indeed, it has been underscored that while conservative rhetoric in Britain has a high I-U ratio, which recognizes the distance between speaker and audience and thus enables the orator to impose his/her own leadership; Labour rhetoric, by contrast, denies such a distance, instead putting speaker and audience on exactly the same level. This is accomplished through the extensive use of the inclusive ‘we’ and its anamorphous, in the clear attempt to encourage solidarity and convey a sense of togetherness and belonging.

Lastly, the analysis has highlighted, both in the American and British context, that most of the speeches analysed concentrate in the happenings and actions of Self if compared to the domains enacted by the Others. In this sense, the ultimate goal pursued is to polarize, antagonize or unite the electorate.

In conclusion, our investigations of verbs, pronouns, conjunctions, metaphors and so on, have found a complete picture of how persuasion is
accomplished through specific and intentional lexico-grammatical choices. Hence, the results are in line with Fairclough’s notions that ideology resides in texts and invests language in various ways at various levels (Fairclough, 1995).


**Articles in books**


Canovan, Margaret 1999. *Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy.* Political Studies, Keele University. 2-16.


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Farage, Nigel 2013. *This Eu is the New Communism* speech. Video from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RjUJy7kDOM>.


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