CoR Workshop 6: Renewing Political Speech and Speechwriting (3 April 2019)
University College London

Introduction to the Network (Henriette van der Blom and Alan Finlayson)

1.   Henriette van der Blom is Senior Lecturer in Ancient History at the University of Birmingham and is the Principal Investigator for the Crisis of Rhetoric network. Van der Blom's research on Cicero led her to think more broadly about political speech, which resulted in the establishment of the Crisis of Rhetoric network. Alan Finlayson is a Professor in Political and Social Theory at the University of East Anglia and is the Co-Principal Investigator for the Crisis of Rhetoric network. His research analyses how people think and communicate about politics, and uses rhetoric to understand what political actors are doing.

2.   The Crisis of Rhetoric workshops encourage the audience to participate in the discussions and to help generate lessons. The theme of the sixth and final workshop was "Renewing Political Speech and Speechwriting", in which we had invited back political practitioners and journalists to respond to the project findings (providing a summary of the individual workshop summaries). Summaries of past workshops can be found on the network website: www.birmingham.ac.uk/cor

Introduction to the workshop (Alan Finlayson, Henriette van der Blom)

3.   The project began in September 2017, and this is the final out of six workshops at Queen Mary University of London, Universities of Birmingham, Glasgow, and Norwich, and University College London. We have involved academics from seven academic disciplines: Ancient History, Classics, History, Linguistics, Media Studies, Philosophy, Politics and over 130 participants (academics, ex-MPs, speechwriters, journalists from a range of media, civil servants).

4.   Our original goals were:
   o To develop common ground and a shared vocabulary uniting rhetoric researchers from varied disciplines working on different historical periods;
   o To develop knowledge of the challenges and difficulties faced by political speakers and speechwriters in the UK today;
   o To enable the application of rhetorical concepts and methods to the critical study of media rhetoric in British politics, including forms of rhetoric associated with online debate and discourse;
   o To apply ancient and modern rhetorical theory and analysis to the interpretation and assessment of examples of contemporary political speech;
   o To produce a short report recommending new methods in speechwriting and speechmaking practice and ways for journalists to present political debate.

5.   We entitled the project 'The Crisis of Rhetoric' because polls and research suggested a crisis in political communication today:

- 2012: A YouGov poll finds 62% agreeing that 'politicians tell lies all the time and you can't believe a word they say'.[1]
- 2014: Focus group research for The Fabian Society in 2014 found people want to see politicians change 'who they are, *the way that they talk* and act'.[2]
- 2016: The Electoral Reform Society describes the EU referendum campaign as 'a potent cocktail of low levels of information, high levels of mistrust and considerable negativity from the campaigns'.[3]
- 2017: IPSOS/MORI finds that 19% trust ministers to tell the truth, 17% for politicians generally (but little change since 1983).[4]
- 2018: YouGov finds that 11% trust politicians to tell the truth 'a great deal or a fair amount' (worse than estate agents but better than journalists on red-tops).[5]

6. There is a sense of a 'golden age' before the crisis, but a quotation from Lord Curzon suggests that such a sense is not unique to our time and that such as sense may not reflect reality in full:
Lord Curzon (1913) saw "a decline of oratorical furniture in the rapid diminution of quotation and literary allusion in the speeches of the day".[6]
He also worried about the media: 'now that every word is taken down and that the speaker, particularly the prominent or Front Bench speaker, knows that he is addressing, not a private club, but a gathering that may embrace the whole nation… he must walk delicately and measure his paces; he cannot frisk and frolic in the flowery meads of rhetoric; he dare not "let himself go"'
Those in whom "the silver of ordinary speech is turned into gold on his lips" and whose speech "strikes a chord in our heart which thrills as though it has been touched by celestial fingers'" still exist but are a minority.

7. What do we mean by a crisis?
- A crisis is a turning point: a change in the condition of something
- Rhetoric is one part of a 'system': parties, Parliament, publics, political ideologies, a political 'imaginary', a 'rhetorical culture', means of communication…
- By 'crisis' we mean a change in the condition of that system

8. What are the systemic pressures on rhetorical culture?
- A crisis of 'rhetorical statecraft'
- Increased political complexity *and* powerlessness
- Politicians' 'fear of words' (as a participant at workshop 1 remarked)
- Decline in the institutions of political speech

[1] Kellner, 'Democracy on trial', p. 6:
http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/ww4o7wko1q/WebVersion_Democracy%20in%20Britain%20A5.pdf.
[2] Wallis & Skrzypek-Claassens, 'Back to earth', p. 13: https://fabians.org.uk/publication/back-to-earth/.
[3] Brett, 'Its good to talk', p. 31: https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/latest-news-and-research/publications/its-good-to-talk/.
[4] Skinner & Clemence, Ipsos MORI Veracity Index 2017, p. 2: https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/politicians-remain-least-trusted-profession-britain.
[5] YouGov Trust Tracker 2018:
https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/kvmnzzrlyp/YG%20trackers%20-%20Trust.pdf
[6] The Rede Lecture, University of Cambridge, 6 November 2013.

- Waning of the dialogical aspect of monological speech: that political speeches are no longer in dialogue with its audience(s)
- Complex and varied 'forms' of media communication
- Lack of respect for the craft of speechwriting

This introduction acted as the backdrop for three sessions on specific aspects where we had most significant findings or where our findings needed most practitioner response.

Session 1: A Crisis of Appeals (Alan Finlayson; respondents: Tony McNulty, Sara Lodge)

9.   Finlayson started by outlining project findings in relation to the three classical appeals of ethos, logos and pathos (central terms throughout the project workshops) by defining the three terms and discussing their place in current political speech:
Ethos is or relates to: 1) Character: authority and credibility (trust) in the speaker; 2) Performance: of a role in the 'social drama'; of archetypes ('embodied metaphors'); 3) Identification and Community: ethos can help to convey a sense of identity and community; 4) How we are oriented in and relate to the world (to the past and the future).
In workshops, we discussed the crisis of ethos as the dichotomy between ethos and authenticity where previous distances in origin, location and social type are now closing in because of mass media/social media/globalisation, leading to conflicts about inequality. This, in turn, leads to problematisation of accepted ideas and arguments in politics, which populists have used to reject ideologies and instead build a platform on being authentic (ordinary, normal) and not embracing a rhetorical style of what is presented as the elite. The crisis of ethos is also a problem of defining/identifying communities which the political speaker can address and engage. Such an imagined community requires shared reference points, common narratives and archetypes, and a functioning cultural memory, but when these are contested ethos becomes partisan, based on exclusivity and crude archetypes, and rhetoric becomes 'epideictic' – focused on 'praise or blame'. The term the 'permanent present' was used of contemporary politics, meaning that politics today lack political memory, allowed no time to develop a rhetorical character, and provided no orientation to the future.

Logos is or relates to:
Enthymemes, which are the rhetorical form of logical argument, the 'flesh and blood' of persuasion. Enthymemes concern 'probabilities', connect propositions to 'common sense', connect 'particulars' to 'universals', and involve audiences in collective reasoning.
In workshops, we discussed the crisis of logos as reflected in the fact that today enthymeme is used as a 'hook' not as a 'challenge' because speeches are not deliberative (offering an argument of a choice between different option) and instead are treating audiences as of fixed opinion, because speeches appeal to 'prejudice' and are 'pandering', and because speeches prevent the exercise of 'rhetorical citizenship' (see summary of workshop 4).

In the workshops, we considered the idea that rhetoric should speak to 'a question' and 'negotiate the distance' between those addressing it, but that today enthymemes are increasingly used to achieve 'negation' rather than 'modification', to increase 'distance' and remove legitimacy from opponents and to make 'ad hominem' arguments. A related problem is the differing opinions as to what constitutes fact (fake news, post-truth, expert opinions).

10.   Finlayson concluded his discussion of project findings relating to the state of rhetoric today by offering project recommendations:
1) Research is needed on the 'places' of ethos and logos today;
2) Speeches should be considered as arguments not presentations, and not for 'writing' or 'advertising' but as a broader political, philosophical and literary practice;
3) Reflection is needed on the use of pronouns and verbs and other ways of creating unity or distance in public speeches;
4) Consideration is needed of ways to ensure consistency and continuity of character development, also across individual speech occasions;
5) Consideration is needed of ways to ensure continuity in arguments and not only in slogans;
6) Consideration is needed of what constitutes facts and how to deal with different opinions of this.

11.   Respondents Tony McNulty (MP for Labour, 1997-2010) and Sara Lodge (former speechwriter UN New York, Senior Lecturer in English Literature (St Andrews) including teaching rhetoric/speechwriting)) offered their impressions of the situation described, the findings and the recommendations.

12.   McNulty argued that the sense of a 'golden age' related to the expectation of MPs and of the people that MPs are omnipotent when they are not, and that the absence of rhetorical statecraft is a consequence of the absence of political statecraft; therefore, the solution to the rhetorical crisis is to improve political statecraft. Certainly, the problems in current politics are not new, but the political situation has brought them to the centre: now consensus is not seen as a good, and the starting premise is no longer 'here are the questions for debate' but rather 'here are the answers'. This quells debate and creates fixed opinion and no room for negotiation of consensus.

13.   Lodge argued that she agreed with the situation presented by Finlayson and discussed ways forward: do we need more positive public rhetorical occasions where we celebrate groups/communities? There is a strong tradition of this in the US (presidential address, the State of the Union address) but the UK equivalents are the Queen's ventriloquism of the government at the annual opening of Parliament or the Queen's Christmas message, thereby outsourcing the public occasion speech to the Queen and not allowing political leaders the occasion of a positive consensus speech. Another missing aspect identified by Lodge was the lack of rhetorical common ground in the UK: the US has the constitution, the founding fathers, Martin Luther King; the four nations in the UK have own touchstones such as Robert the Bruce and Robert Burns in Scotland, but what is the common ground in the UK? One way to address this absence could be to bring

debate into all schools. A final suggestion by Lodge was to set up election monitoring of UK elections and referenda, such as those taking place elsewhere in the world, to make sure that campaigns follow rules in a democratic manner; and to encourage more collaboration between journalists and university academics to check electoral claims and feeding the results of checking through the media.

14. The discussion following Finlayson's presentation and the responses by McNulty and Lodge included consideration of whether UK common ground/touchstones were desired because Brits might find them false and in disagreement with the traditional mode of debate in the UK. There was a sense that finding a British identity is difficult but also that disagreement for its own sake is not useful; rather we need a debate of views and not just of inflexible answers, and this is where this project can provide a way forward because politics is about justifying views around choices and practicalities. Rhetoric can harness both a unifying communication of identity but also a divisive communication of identity against other groups in society. Other discussants agreed with the definition of 'crisis' as 'change' and suggested that the 'crisis of rhetoric' needs to be contextualised within a series of crises influenced by outside changes such as in the advent of the internet, in media and other aspects of society.

15. A discussion of public engagement in politics, free speech, and democracy in the context of the ongoing Brexit debate followed, which led to a further point about bringing rhetoric into schools via a number of current and future initiatives to improve media literacy, analytical and debating skills. A point was also made about awareness of myths as an identity-creator, also in oratory, and about the relationship between ethos and ethics (speech and actions): a technically excellent speech does not necessarily signify a morally good politician. Good speech-making rests of good analytical skills and it was suggested that apart from initiatives in schools, there should be more rhetorical training in university teaching. The final point moved us back to the session presentation by suggesting a differentiation between all political talk and rhetoric/debate/persuasion because proper political rhetoric is about the future (deliberative speech) not about the past (forensic speech; court case legal arguments), and that political speakers should focus on presenting arguments for choices about the future.

Session 2: Speechwriting and Speechwriters (Henriette van der Blom; respondents: Simon Holder, Sophie Adelman)

16. Van der Blom started by outlining project findings in relation to speechwriting practices and the profession of speechwriters in the UK. In our workshops, we have heard from speechwriters about the variety of roles they embody: amanuensis (a person who writes down what the speaker dictates), editor (a person who helps the creation of the speech along, mainly by responding to ideas formulated by others), copyeditor (a person who receives the draft text and then improves upon it), decorator (a person who puts the finishing touches and flourishes on the text, not engaging with the argument or content of the text). In our workshops, we have also learnt about different speechwriting traditions, ancient and modern: the ancient Athenian logographers, the Roman disdain for

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professional speechwriters, the strong tradition in the US and some European countries, where Rhetoric is a scholarly discipline in itself (own departments), and there is a tradition of training in speechwriting and a sense of speechwriting community, and the different situation in the UK and other European countries where Rhetoric studies are incorporated under other disciplines (History, English, Politics, Classics), and where there is little tradition of formal training in speechwriting and, perhaps, less of a sense of a speechwriting community.

17. In workshops, speechwriters told us about some of the problems faced by UK speechwriters: lack of access to the speaker, involvement in speech preparation only at the last minute, the expectation that the speechwriter simply make things look 'pretty', the fact that speeches need to be amended to meet external demands, and that speeches are often seen as and prepared for 'one-off' speech occasions, not as one in a string of speeches. The situation of speechwriting training, as described by speechwriters, was that there is no standard training or overall professional vocational training, there is an unclear sense of the 'profession', that the speechwriter is not always occupying a single role but has to perform different roles, and that imitation of American speechwriting models is not always appropriate within a UK setting.

18. Van der Blom concluded her discussion of project findings relating to the state of speechwriting and speechwriters today by offering project recommendations:
    1) Learn from the Classics: learning the highly sophisticated system from ancient orators and rhetoricians around preparing a speech: ethos, logos and discovering and crafting of arguments suited to situation and speaker;
    2) Enhanced training in speechwriting: there are some initiatives (various universities offering MAs in rhetoric, oratory or speechwriting), but none in the UK Parliament.
    3) Training for speakers and writers in different 'genres': awareness of and ability of writing within different genres (deliberative, epideictic, forensic)
    4) Rhetorical education in schools: there are bottom-up initiatives (school debating societies, Debating Matters, Voice21, the English Speaking Union), but much more can be done here.
    5) Speechwriter accreditation? This would help to build up a sense of community in the way being done on a private basis by UK Speechwriters' Guild/ European Speechwriter Network

19. Respondents Simon Holder (Senior Campaign Manager, Civil Service Channels, PM's Office and Cabinet Office Communications) and Sophie Adelman (Chief Speechwriter in Cabinet Office Communications) offered their impressions of the situation described, the findings and the recommendations.

20. Holder, who had participated in workshop 1, argued that in the intervening 18 months, more recognition of speechwriting at Whitehall and Westminster had taken place and more attention to training as given, although a speechwriting community remains to be established. All the roles of speechwriters presented by van der Blom are included in the job as speechwriter, although writing speeches for ministers is different from writing speeches for civil servants (which are not always for public occasions). It is sometimes difficult to establish a personal

relationship with the speaker for ad hoc speeches and therefore difficult to capture the right tone/voice, although some speakers prepare much of the speeches themselves. Holder described himself as an 'accidental speechwriter' who had come into speechwriting through the civil service route.

21.   Adelman had a different career path, going from journalist to speechwriting consultancies, then to roles as professional speechwriter for US Senator, the British Ambassador in the US, and to her current role as Chief Speechwriter in the Cabinet Office. She very much considered herself a professional speechwriter, having been hired as such several times. Adelman emphasised the importance of the personal relationship between speechwriter and speaker (considering herself a 'thought partner' not a 'scribe'), and the speechwriter's task as enabling the speaker to provide their message with as much confidence as possible. Currently, there is scope for opening up the profession to a wider and more diverse group, and Adelman has been approached by younger females asking her for tips on getting into professional speechwriting.

22.   The discussion following van der Blom's presentation and the responses by Holder and Adelman included consideration of the proliferation of media training to politicians but not much training in public speaking, the differences between US and UK oratorical traditions ('storytelling' and cult of personality vs the reluctance to recognise the role of speechwriters because the speakers could be seen as 'unauthentic' in their need for such support to convey their messages) and the importance of the idea of the speechwriter as counsellor and part of a larger team. One participant emphasised the responsibility of the speaker to know what they want to say (*rem tene verba sequentur* – grasp the idea and the words will follow), because it would allow them to continue speaking even when the auto-cue fails or the notes are misplaced. The problem today is that many public-occasion political speeches are circulated in advance and that the speaker therefore cannot veer much from the manuscript (ex. of Ed Miliband forgetting the economy part of his party conference speech in 2014 because he wanted to imitate David Cameron's no-notes speech in 2007, but misinterpreted the historical example: it was about synthesising and communicating ideas, not about memorising a long text). There was also mention of the importance of the vetting process of important speeches, even for those speakers who write their own speeches, to avoid mistakes. Some participants thought that there was a speechwriting community in the UK, but often in smaller groups ('bubbles') which did not interact, and that training of civil servants is cost-prohibitive, making room for accessible training.

23.   There followed further discussion of tailoring the speech to the individual speaker and situation, about the need for preparing the speaker for altercation/ improvisation by anticipating opponents' arguments, and about the question of the need of a speechwriter accreditation, and whether there is a career structure for speechwriters at present. There is no official civil service career strand as speechwriter, although it would perhaps be desirable; in the past, the head of the civil service was against bringing in speechwriters who had not risen through the system for fear of disloyalty/misunderstanding of culture within. Such a tradition may have influenced British political speech, being understood more as a policy

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statement/briefing than an inspirational speech. In the US, political speechwriters are often hired as special advisors by politician and they are therefore seen as political appointees rather than permanent civil service staff, which suggests that the civil service system in the UK has influenced the modes of public discourse. One participant also pointed out the different speaking traditions in the two parliamentary chambers where the House of Commons accepts ministers reading out text while the House of Lords heckles such behaviour, while another pointed out that the UK parliamentary debating style is ingrained in British political discourse. Outside of civil service, there is perhaps growth in professional speechwriting at the moment because big tech communities/companies have executive communicators and because company managers need to address public audiences to an increasing extent.

Session 3: Rhetoric and the Media (Alan Finlayson; respondents Gabriel Milland, Simon Kuper)

24. Alan Finlayson started by outlining project findings in relation rhetoric and the media: in news reporting, there has been a shift from reporting of speeches to second-hand accounts of speeches, from 'amplifier' to 'filter', which has resulted in speeches being adapted for this situation of 're-mediation' and 'predigested' speeches, and consideration of who or what has power over the 'stage' rules in media-reported oratorical situations. In workshops, we discussion the medium of television and the ways in which it has changed political rhetoric:
     1) the 'multi-modality' challenges to traditional rhetoric where the 'specificity' of political speech can be lost to 'TV Talk', and where concerns about Good Television do not always align with what produces Good Rhetoric;
     2) TV promotes the appearance of 'intimacy': there is evidence of increased 'personalisation', 'informalisation' and 'conversationalisation' of political debate within the TV medium. Stoker *et al*. have shown that in 1945, speeches evaluated as occasions "for politicians to demonstrate virtues and vices), and for citizens to know, judge, and distinguish politicians", while in 2005, speakers were evaluated as 'normal' or not, as 'representatives OF rather than FOR the people'.[7]

     In workshops, we also discussed the televised Leaders' Debates in electoral campaigns, which does provide evidence for 'rhetorical citizenship' (electorate engaging with the policy debates of politicians), but research also finds that journalistic reporting focused on who won, not on what was said, and on the 'process' and on 'correctness' of behaviour, rather than on policy and views. Finally, research have found the reporting gendering: reporting on female politicians applying stereotypes to a larger extent than on male politicians.

25. New media (social media, YouTube) is playing a different role from more traditional media in reporting on political speech:

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[7] Stoker, Moss, Clarke & Jennings (2015): *The Good Politician: Folk Theories, Political Interaction, and the Rise of Anti-Politics*, Cambridge.

Hansard Audit 2018:[8] "News or news programmes on TV or radio were the leading source of election-related news or information at the 2017 general election: at 69%, they had a reach 20 points beyond any other source"; 48% of the public report having undertaken no form of online political engagement in the last year. But: 43% of 18-34s watched politically-related videos online (compared to 15% of over-55s).

You Tube is now a major source of political rhetoric and ideas, and new kinds of rhetorician are becoming popular (unrestrained by Party or Profession). Indeed, platforms promote particular rhetorical dispositions.

26. Finlayson concluded his discussion of project findings relating to rhetoric and the media today by offering project recommendations:
    1) We need more televised debates: following examples from Scandinavia where there are many more televised debates, also outside of election campaign contexts, which make engagement in debates an expectation of politicians, while lowering the risk of mistakes/misunderstandings in any single debate;
    2) We need actual debates, not just Q&A (whether between journalist and politicians or between audience members mediated by journalist and politicians), where politicians debate with each other on political visions and policies for the future;
    3) We need debates on specific topics, that is, debates on single topics/issues to focus the minds of politicians and the electorate and to make clear the choices between different politicians/parties on specific issues such as health care, economy, or schools;
    4) We need more and better use of new media, where You Tube could be a platform for more mainstream political views and for 'explanatory' rhetoric;
    5) We need more and better rhetorical criticism, a reporting culture of rhetorical as well as political criticism, engaging with not just the form but also the argument of the speeches, and what it tells us about the ideas of the politician communicating them.

27. Respondents Gabriel Milland (Partner in public communications consultancy, former journalist, former Head of Communication at several ministries and Deputy Director of the Cabinet Office, former speechwriter to Michael Gove) and Simon Kuper (columnist and journalist with the *Financial Times*) offered their impressions of the situation described, the findings and the recommendations.

28. Milland argued that in the last 18 months, the government has started monitoring rhetoric, also on YouTube, reflecting an anxiety about the power of YouTubers. He agreed, based on own work through focus groups, that the public want to see people like themselves, who are perceived as more 'normal' or 'authentic' rather than politicians and celebrities who appear not to reflect normality. This was one of the reasons for the failure of the Remain campaign in the EU referendum debate, namely that they were seen to be reflecting the need for authenticity, but did it wrongly by using celebrities rather than 'normal' people. In his time in Whitehall, there was no career track for speechwriting and Milland used to hire journalists to write speeches.

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[8] https://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/projects/research/audit-of-political-engagement, p. 4.

29.   Kuper argued that print media, podcasts and videos are now all part of the major news outlets which used to be print media only, including the FT. The big lesson of 2016 (the EU referendum debate) is that populist rhetoric must be better understood and taken seriously as an influential intervention in public debate. The previous political generations of spin doctors taught us to look through spin but the new generation of communication specialists (e.g. Boris Johnson, Jacob Rees-Mogg, Donald Trump, all populists) know about effective communication if not about policy. They all showed/appeared authentic when they were actually using complex rhetorical techniques which they had tested beforehand, such as Trump's manner of testing out lines at his rallies, almost like a comedian, until he hitting the right one (such as 'build the wall'). Today, readers of mainstream media believe their news providers because they trust them (such as the FT, the Times and the Guardian), and therefore these news outlets present not the speech itself but their analysis of the speech so that their readers can continue to trust them. But it is also true that the new politician is communicating through social media, not through speeches.

30.   The discussion following Finlayson's presentation and the responses of Milland and Kuper included discussion of the continued trust in the BBCs coverage (75% get their news from the BBC), and the perhaps surprising fact that the Guardian is now the third most consumed news outlet because of the expansion of the Higher Education sector (more university students), making this a great opportunity for politicians. When identifying the most important political speech in the last 2-3 years in the UK, it would be easy to mention PM May's speech outside Downing Street on social justice upon taking up office or her Lancaster House speech on Brexit, because in these speeches she set out a powerful argument. However, her failure to deliver on the argument proposed undermined her rhetorical and political power to the extent that trust in her public statements is now very low.

31.   Discussion then centred on the idea of authenticity, considering the fact that rhetorical theory argues the possibility of showing authenticity without being the same as the audience, and why this seems not to work today. Possible answers included the fact of major disengagement with politics as a consequence of the difficult economic situation and hard economic policy since 2008, the change from politicians always being in the news (e.g. PM Blair) to the ability to screen out politicians in selecting the news channels, which – to some extent – have made some politicians entertainers rather than policy makers (e.g. Trump). We also discussed whether popular audiences should be seen as engaging critically with this current situation or rather as manipulated by this new generation of politicians, with some suggesting that people care about truth (they say) but perhaps more about entertainment or identity communication, and others suggesting that politicians like Trump are careful to say what their different audiences want to hear. Others again suggested that the power has shifted from politicians to big corporations, and that people do not vote for politicians who fail to promise to do something (Trump promising a wall, Clinton not promising to protect citizens against terror or against global warming).

32. We also discussed the longer-term changes which might have influenced the current situation, including the change in the use of speechwriters: PMs have used speechwriters since the 1920s, and in the 1970s they still pretended writing their own speeches. But this impression was impossible to keep up because the politicians became more busy and delivered more speeches. The results were that it became harder for politicians to repeat themselves and that senior politicians became more detached from what they were saying. Yet, politicians such as Trump have shown that people want politicians to say the same thing repeatedly. In politics today, politicians are to a lesser extent representing their party and to a greater extent representing themselves, and media today want to build up a personality cult around politicians such as Boris Johnson and Jacob Rees-Mogg because they think their audience want it. Reporters at Westminster now separate between 'soap-opera' stories and policy stories. Another aspect of the changing situation around politics is the death of local newspapers who used to air a multiplicity of views which no longer has a natural outlet and therefore comes out in new ways.

33. A further discussion point, arising from the issue of 'authenticity' and personality cult was what academics have termed 'charisma' (building on the work of the German sociologist and philosopher Max Weber), which could be defined as a personality responding to a situation, and the way in which political communication seems to be moving away from words and towards visuals (and the need to master the visual techniques of communication in order to communicate effectively). On the other hand, the many political videos on YouTube are full of words, with long 'speeches' of half an hour or more, rather than slick visuals. It is not clear where we are heading but the newer media for political communication could be embraced by mainstream politicians in order to reach new (younger) audiences.

Closing discussion and next steps

34. The closing discussion focused on the following question: whether or not to argue for accreditation of speechwriters or other forms of outward recognition of their work. It was suggested to ask the speechwriters themselves whether they wanted this, e.g. a prize for best speechwriting (as it exists in some speechwriting communities abroad), or whether availability of Master's degrees was a better way forward because it would allow speechwriters to remain anonymous in relation to specific speeches (as one speechwriter in the room thought they wanted). Another participant suggested the need to recognise that the craft of politics is different from the craft of speechwriting, and that recognition could be a way to open up the profession of speechwriting; moreover, that validation of the profession had to come before the accreditation of the profession. The discussion also included consideration of the rhetorical crisis as a result of politicians being confused about which audience they are addressing and therefore not providing their reasons behind their views addressed for fear of being misunderstood/disliked.

35. The final point brought forward had wider implications: that the discussion of rhetoric and political discourse today must be seen within a wider context of advocacy for the Humanities (humanities disciplines): we need to make the argument of the practicality of Classics, English, History, language studies etc. as providing the skills that nobody else can provide for analysing and understanding what is going on in politics and political speech today and for providing recommendations and actions for improving the quality of political speech. This argument is crucial not only for the Humanities disciplines, which constantly have to justify their existence against STEM and other science disciplines, but also for the sake of public debate and political speech, and therefore for the quality of our society today.

36. This was the final of six 'Crisis of Rhetoric' workshops. The project team will now work on written output of the project findings, and prepare a launch of one of these outputs – a small booklet – at the Houses of Parliament in autumn 2019.