TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF THE ROYAL GENRE. A LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: This paper aims at defining the royal genre with a focus on the British royal tradition. In fulfilling their constitutional and representational roles, British constitutional monarchs have used a broad range of texts delivered as speeches, messages or broadcasts which represent specific communicative events characterised by particular functions and communicative purposes. Furthermore, they are structured and characterized by specific wording. The key role which these types of texts perform is to support the monarch in fulfilling public duties and responsibilities within the framework established by the Constitution, which imposes certain limitations regarding what and how monarchs are allowed to communicate.

Keywords: genre, royal genre, archive, push forces, pull forces, creative practice, practical consciousness.

1. Introduction

This paper aims at proving the existence of a royal genre and at defining it. My analysis focuses on royal written communication circumscribed to the British royal tradition. Royal written communication includes a wide range of texts: from Speeches from the Throne and official speech delivered on state occasions, such as royal state banquets, to speeches delivered at times of national crisis, such as the 1991 War speech; from Orders in Council and Court Circulars to birth and death announcements or other kinds of messages and press releases.

My investigation is based on a corpus of royal texts that include Speeches from the Throne and speeches delivered at times of national crisis, namely the speech on the death of Princess Diana in 1997 or the Queen's broadcast to the UK and the Commonwealth on 5 April 2020 during the pandemic.

The analytical framework of my inquiry is mainly circumscribed to Vijay K. Bhatia as far as the concept of *genre* is concerned and to Walter Bagehot, as regards the rights and responsibilities of a constitutional monarch.

2. Methodological approach

In my methodological approach to royal texts, I have started from two questions:

- Question 1: When is a royal communicative act ripe enough to metamorphose into a *genre*?
- Question 2: Why do present-day British constitutional monarchs write the way they do?

The literature on the concept of *genre* is extensive, each proposed definition of the concept completing or clarifying previous ones. Carolyn Miller is one of the theorists of the concept, having attempted to synthesize previous findings. She defines *genre* as a type of "social action" carrying meaning which is generated by situational and social contexts. Furthermore, "as meaningful action", genre is decipherable by "means of rules"

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which "occur at a relatively high level on a hierarchy of rules for symbolic interaction". In addition, Carolyn Miller underlines that *genre* and *form* are not synonymous, that the former should not be reduced to the latter. *Genre* cannot be reduced to the structure or layout of a text. *Genre* is defined by its function and the social context from which it springs. Miller also defines genres as "recurrent patterns of language use" which "help constitute the substance of our cultural life". Finally, in Carolyn Miller's view, a *genre* "is a rhetorical means for mediating private intentions and social exigence; it motivates by connecting the private with the public, the singular with the recurrent" (Miller, 1984: 163).

Drawing on Carolyn Miller, John M. Swales defines genre as a goal-oriented and conventionalized social action. For Swales, a *genre* "is a class of communicative events", that is events "in which language (and/or paralanguage) plays both a significant and an indispensable role". In addition, communicative events are like "communicative vehicles for the achievement of goals" and "share [a] set of communicative purposes" (Swales, 1990: 45-46). Just like Miller, Swales emphasizes that purpose is more important than form in the identification of a *genre*. Hence, in the formation of a *genre* class, form follows function. As far as purposes are concerned, Swales adds that they "are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the *genre* (Swales, 1990 cited in Angermuller, Maingueneau and Wodak, 2014: 313). Apart from communicative purposes as primary genre features, there are other key elements that contribute to the birth of a *genre*, such as "patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience" (Swales, 1990 cited in Angermuller, Maingueneau and Wodak, 2014: 313).

Perhaps one of the most encompassing definitions of *genre* is the one provided by Vijay K. Bhatia, who includes, in his explanation of the concept, the key characteristics already identified by Miller and Swales (a meaningful social action governed by rules, which is purpose-oriented and conventionalized, and recognized by the specialist members of the community in which the genre has been generated). Bhatia's definition also underlines that there are constraints that limit the dynamics of the genre, but these constraints may be partially removed in order to fulfil certain personal objectives:

> "It is a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Most often it is highly structured and conventionalized with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discursive community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purpose(s)" (Bhatia, 1993: 13).

Returning to question 1, a communicative event (royal or non-royal) is ripe to turn into a genre when certain conditions are met: It is characterized by a set of goals which are acknowledged and understood by the community in which it unfolds. It must be recurrent and conventionalized (regulated by certain rules). In addition, the recurrent nature of the communicative event makes it "recognizable" by the community in which it periodically takes place.

As far as question 2 is concerned, British constitutional monarchs write the way they do because of their main roles: head of State and head of the nation. As head of State, a British constitutional monarch must preserve the position of political neutrality imposed by the Constitution. They cannot meddle into the political game and do not have any real political power. However, according to Walter Bagehot, the nineteenth-century constitutional analyst, a British monarch has three constitutional rights: "the right to be

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consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn" (Bagehot, 1966: 111). In addition, in the constitutional architecture of the British State, the Crown represents the "dignified part", that part "which excite[s] and preserve[s] the reverence of the population" as opposed to the "efficient parts", i.e. the Government and Parliament, - "those by which it, in fact, works and rules" (Bagehot, 1966: 61).

Besides the official position as head of State, a constitutional monarch also plays a more informal, yet equally significant role in the life of the country: head of the nation. In this capacity, the monarch has the duty to "interpret the nation to itself" (Douglas-Home and Kelly, 2000: 221). On the occasion of great national celebrations or events (such as royal jubilees), on Christmas Day or on Commonwealth Day or in times of crisis, the British monarchs since George V have addressed their compatriots by radio or television.

3. Analysis

My analysis focuses on two types of royal communicative events: Speeches from the Throne and speeches delivered by the monarch in times of national crisis: the Queen's broadcast following the death of Princess Diana, and the queen's broadcast delivered on 5 April 2020, triggered by the pandemic. In my investigation, I make use of Vijay Bhatia's definition of *genre* and I intend to offer a definition of the *royal genre*.

3.1. Speeches from the Throne (also known as the King's or the Queen's Speech)

Speeches from the Throne represent a peculiar category of royal speeches as they are not penned by the monarch, but by the Government. The monarch only delivers the speech personally during the State Opening of Parliament, a centuries-old ceremony which marks the beginning of a new session of Parliament. The function of the speech is to announce the Government's legislative agenda for the new parliamentary session. The Speech from the Throne constitutes a deeply rooted tradition which encapsulates the functions of both Parliament and the Crown within the State architecture. During the reigns of the Tudor monarchs, a speech was delivered at the State Opening of Parliament by either the Lord Chancellor or the Lord Keeper, not the monarch. Beginning with the reign of James I of England, the monarch would deliver a speech at the opening of the first session of each Parliament. Starting with the reign of Charles II Stuart, the monarch would deliver the speech at the beginning of each parliamentary session. It was in 1841 that Lord John Russell, a Liberal politician and a member of the Cabinet clarified the authorship of the Speech from the Throne before the House of Commons stating that the speech was drafted by the Cabinet ministers, who were also accountable for its content (Torrance, 2024: What is the King's Speech?, para. 5, para. 6 and para. 8).

The Speech from the Throne represents a highly conventional type of text both in terms of its production and distribution and its content. It is a symbolic element in the constitutional fabric of Britain and reflects its long parliamentary tradition. The monarch only gives voice to the text drafted by the government, an illustration of the adage "The king reigns, but does not govern". The neutral tone the monarch uses when delivering the speech suggests their political neutrality. The entire ceremony of the State Opening of Parliament is broadcast live on television and receives detailed coverage in the national press. From the point of view of Bhatia's definition of *genre*, the Speech from the Throne can be considered a "recognizable communicative event". The main

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audience is represented by British MPs, who are informed, via the speech, of the government's legislative agenda. There is also a larger audience to which the speech is addressed: the members of the general public who are thus informed of the new legislation brought forward by the executive. Hence, the purpose of the speech is readily acknowledged by both the members of Parliament (professional audience) and the members of the general public (lay audience).

As far as the structure and content of the Speech are concerned, they are distinctly structured, as illustrated by the tables below.

Forms of address	Sample	Sample Source
Opening formula (for addressing both the Lords and the Commons)	My Lords and Gentlemen	The Queen's Speech, 20 November 1837 (Victoria).
	My Lords and Gentlemen	The King's Speech, 14 February 1901 (Edward VII).
	My Lords and Gentlemen	The King's Speech, 6 February 1911 (George V).
	My Lords and Members of the House of Commons	The King's Speech, 10 February 1920 (George V).
	My Lords and Members of the House of Commons	The King's Speech, 12 November 1941 (George VI).
	My Lords and Members of the House of Commons	The Queen's Speech, 4 November 1952 (Elizabeth II).
	My Lords and Members of the House of Commons	The Queens's Speech, 10 May 2021 (Elizabeth II).

Table 1. Speech from the Throne: opening formula for addressing both the Lords and the Commons

The opening formula of the Speech from the Throne, by means of which the monarch addresses both the members of both Houses illustrates the constitutional triad of the United Kingdom, encapsulated in the phrase "king-in-parliament". In fact, the State Opening of Parliament, when the Speech of the Throne is delivered, is "the only time that the three constituent parts of Parliament meet for formal parliamentary proceedings" (Santo, 2016: 5). The formula used during the reign of Queen Victoria, the reign of Edward VII and the early part of the reign of King George V, "My Lords and Gentlemen" is replaced, starting with 1920, by "My Lords and Members of the House of Commons", which has remained unchanged ever since. The significant shift was brought about by the enfranchisement of women, made possible by the adoption, on 21st November 1918, of The Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act 1918. According to Section 1 of the Act, no woman could "be disqualified by sex or marriage for being elected to or sitting or voting as a Member of the Commons House of Parliament" (Qualification of Women Act, 1918). Previously, on 6 February 1918, an Act had been adopted by the British Parliament, Representation of the People Act 1918, which granted women who were at least 30 years of age the right to stand for election to the House of Commons.

The first woman to benefit from these legislative changes was Constance Markievicz, who won a seat in the House of Commons in 1918 but did not take it because of her Sin Fein membership. The first woman to become a member of the House of

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Commons was Nancy Astor, who, after a by-election, won a seat and took it (UK Parliament, Women in the House of Commons, para.2-para.3).

Formula for addressing only the Commons	Gentlemen of the House of Commons, The estimates for the services of next year […] will be laid before you […].	The Queen's Speech, 20 November 1837 (Victoria).
	Gentlemen of the House of Commons, The estimates of the year for defraying the cost of the Government of the country will be laid before you.	The Queen's Speech, 11 February 1890 (Victoria).
	Gentlemen of the House of Commons, The Estimates of Charge necessary for the Public Service […] will be laid before you at an early date.	The Queen's Speech, 31 January 1893 (Victoria).
	Gentlemen of the House of Commons, The Estimates for the year will be laid before you. Every care has been taken to limit their amount, but the Naval and Military requirements of the Country […], have involved an inevitable increase.	The King's Speech, 14 February 1901 (Edward VII).
	Gentlemen of the House of Commons, Estimates of the National Expenditure for the forthcoming financial year will in due course be laid before you.	The King's Speech, 12 February 1907 (Edward VII).
	Gentlemen of the House of Commons, The Estimates for the ensuing year will in due course be laid before you.	The King's Speech, 6 February 1911 (George V).
Formula for addressing only the Commons	Members of the House of Commons, The Estimates for the Public Service will be laid before you. The fulfilment of our international obligations under the Covenant, no less than the adequate safeguarding of My Empire, makes it urgently necessary that the deficiencies in My Defence Forces should be made good.	The King's Speech, 3 December 1935 (George V).
	Members of the House of Commons, The Estimates for the Public Services will be laid before you.	The King's Speech, 26 October 1937 (George VI).
	Members of the House of Commons, You will be asked to make further financial provision for the conduct of the war.	The King's Speech, 12 November 1941 (George VI).
	Members of the House of Commons, You will be asked to make further financial provision, not, happily, for the continuance of the war, but for expenditure on reconstruction and other essential services.	The King's Speech, 15 August 1945 (George VI).
	Members of the House of Commons, The estimates for public services will be laid before you in due course.	The Queen's Speech, 4 November 1952 (Queen Elizabeth II).

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	Members of the House of Commons, Estimates for the public service will be laid before you.	The Queen's Speech, 3 November 1977 (Elizabeth II).
	Members of the House of Commons, Estimates for the public services will be laid before you.	The Queens's Speech, 10 May 2021 (Elizabeth II).

Table 2. Speech from the Throne: formula for addressing only the Commons

In the Speech from the Throne, there is a singular reference to the members of the House of Commons only, concerning expenditures for public services. This occurs because "Parliamentary control over spending is primarily exercised by the House of Commons" (Queen's Speech. Estimates for the Public Services, 25 May 2010: para.4) and it is the Commons who grant the money. The wording varies from year to year (The Estimates will be laid before you at the accustomed period / The Estimates will be laid before you at an early date / The Estimates […] will, in due course, be laid before you). In general, the difference is only slight. During the reigns of Queen Victoria, King Edward VII, George V and George VI, the formula is often accompanied by a paragraph which explains the necessity of expenditures for certain areas. In the 1941 and 1945 Speeches from the Throne the formula is replaced by other formulation required by the context (the Second World War and the end of the war, respectively). Starting with the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth II, the wording becomes stable (Estimates for the public services will be laid before you) and is no longer accompanied by an explanatory paragraph.

Formula for concluding the Speech from the Throne	I pray that by the Blessing of Almighty God your Deliberations may be guided to the Well-being and Happiness of My People.	The Queen's Speech, 11 November 1852 (Victoria).
	I commend you earnestly in the discharge of your high responsibility to the care and guidance of Almighty God.	The Queen's Speech, 11 February 1890 (Victoria).
	I commend all your arduous labours to the continued blessing of Almighty God.	The King's Speech, 12 February 1907 (Edward VII).
	I pray that Almighty God may bless your labours.	The King's Speech, 6 February 1911 (George V).
	And I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your deliberations.	The King's Speech, 3 December 1935 (George V).
	And I pray that Almighty God may give His blessing to your counsels	The King's Speech, 12 November 1941 (George VI).
	I pray that the blessing of Almighty God will rest upon your counsels.	The Queen's Speech, 4 November 1952 (Elizabeth II).
	I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels.	The Queens's Speech, 10 May 2021 (Elizabeth II).

Table 3. Speech from the Throne: formula for concluding the Speech

It may be observed from the data collected in Table 3 that the formula underwent varying degrees of change throughout the reigns before stabilizing into a form that has remained unaltered over the past seventy years: "I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels".

At first glance, this may appear to be a simple, traditional closing formula, somewhat outdated for the 21st century. However, it is more than a mere convention. It reflects another role of the British monarch, that of Supreme Governor of the Church of England.

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Consequently, it is not at all unnatural for the sovereign to invoke divine inspiration and to ask God for His blessing to be bestowed upon the members of Parliament and to inspire them in their work. Through this formula, the monarch effectively entrusts them to divine care. As a Christian sovereign, the British monarch has the duty to pray to God for all people, exactly as stated in the Bible:

> **1** I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men;
> **2** For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.
> **3** For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; [...]. (The Holy Bible, The Authorized or King James Version, Timothy, Chapter 2, 2:1-2:3).

By doing so, the sovereign sets an example, in the hope that ordinary citizens will also pray that those in positions of leadership may be guided in their work by the word of God and may find ethical and moral solutions to the challenges they face.

The conventional character of the Speech from the Throne is also illustrated by typical references to the members of the Cabinet who have the right to initiate legislation. The monarch refers to them as “My Government” or “My Ministers”: “[…] a Correspondence between My Government and those of France and Spain” (Victoria, 1847); “My Government's foreign policy will as heretofore be based on a firm support of the League of Nations” (George V, 1935); “My Ministers have followed with growing concern the continuance of the conflict in Spain […]” (George VI, 1937), “My Ministers will submit to you the Charter of the United Nations” (George VI, 1945); “My government attach the highest importance to national security” (Elizabeth II, 1994); “My Government is committed to making devolution in Scotland and Wales work […]” (Elizabeth II, 2000); “My Ministers will remain at the forefront of the NATO alliance and of international efforts to degrade and ultimately defeat terrorism in the Middle East” (Elizabeth II, 2015).

These formal forms of address are part of the constitutional language used in such contexts and reflect the monarch’s prerogatives. The sovereign formally appoints the Prime Minister after the latter has won the general elections. By convention, the sovereign also appoints ministers and other State officials on the advice of the Prime Minister.

Constructions such as “My Government will persevere with measures to curb inflation” (Elizabeth II, 1952) or “My Ministers will seek improvements in the operation of the common agricultural policy” (Elizabeth II, 1977) underscore that the proposed political measures originate with the Cabinet and that ministers bear responsibility before Parliament for the advice tendered to the sovereign.

As the Speech from the Throne formally presents the government’s policy priorities for a new legislative session, typical linguistic formulations reflect the constitutional principles of ministerial initiative and parliamentary sovereignty, emphasizing the government’s competence to introduce legislation and Parliament’s authority to scrutinize and determine its outcome. Parliamentary language includes collocations with nouns and noun phrases such as “bill”, “legislation”, “measures”, and “draft Bill” or “draft legislation”, respectively.

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Noun or noun phrase	Collocation	Source
Bill(s)	Bills will be submitted to you for effecting further Improvements in the Administration of the Law.	The Queen's Speech, 11 November 1852 (Victoria).
	Bills will be introduced dealing with the Holding and Valuation of land in Scotland.	The King's Speech, 12 February 1907 (Edward VII).
	[…] a Bill will be introduced providing for the raising of the school age.	The King's Speech, 3 December 1935 (George V).
	A Bill will also be laid before you to nationalize the coalmining industry […]	The King's Speech, 15 August 1945 (George VI)
	[…]. Separate Bills will be introduced for this purpose.	The Queen's Speech, 3 November 1977 (Elizabeth II).
	A Bill will be brought forward to ban the advertising and promotion of tobacco products	The Queen's Speech, 6 December 2000 (Elizabeth II).
Draft Bill	A draft Bill will be published to improve the transparency of export controls […]	The Queen's Speech, 6 December 2000 (Elizabeth II).
	A Bill will be published in draft on the implementation of the recommendations of the review of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland.	The Queen's Speech, 6 December 2000 (Elizabeth II).
Legislation	Legislation will be introduced to regulate the private security industry.	The Queen's Speech, 6 December 2000 (Elizabeth II).
	Legislation will also be brought forward to reduce benefit fraud.	The Queen's Speech, 6 December 2000 (Elizabeth II).
Draft legislation	Draft legislation to promote competition, […] and protect households and businesses will be published.	The Queen's Speech, 10 May 2022 (Elizabeth II).
	Her Majesty's Ministers will publish draft legislation to reform the Mental Health Act.	The Queen's Speech, 10 May 2022 (Elizabeth II).
Measure(s)	[…] a measure will be laid before you to bring the Bank of England under public ownership.	The King's Speech, 15 August 1945 (George VI).
	Active measures will be taken to strengthen the long-standing ties of friendship […].	The Queen's Speech, 4 November 1952 (Elizabeth II).
	Further measures will be promoted relating to the Town and Country Planning Acts of 1947 […].	The Queen's Speech, 4 November 1952 (Elizabeth II).
	Measures will also be published to create new competition rules for digital markets and the largest digital firms.	The Queen's Speech, 10 May 2022 (Elizabeth II).

Table 4. Collocations typical of parliamentary language

A "Bill" is "a proposal for a new law, or a proposal to change an existing law that is presented for debate before Parliament". In order to become an Act of Parliament, it must be agreed upon by both Houses and then be sanctioned by the monarch (UK Parliament, What is a Bill?, n.d.: para. 1-3). The noun "Bill" collocates with the verbs "be submitted", "be introduced", "be laid before you", "be brought forward", which reflect the ministerial

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legislative initiative and Parliament's authority to deliberated and decide upon proposed legislation ("a Bill will be laid before you"). The same applies to the noun "legislation", which refers to "proposed legislation", i.e. Bills.

By comparison "a draft Bill" is a legislative proposal "issued for consultation before being formally introduced to Parliament", which "allows proposed changes to be made before the Bill's formal introduction" (UK Parliament, What is a Draft bill?, n.d.: para. 1). This explains why the noun phrase "draft Bill" or "draft legislation" collocates with "be published" and does not collocate with "be submitted", or "be laid before you", "or be introduced". Draft Bills are not formally presented to the two Houses, rather they are published solely for the purpose of preliminary consultation.

The noun "measure(s)" is rather vague and, hence, more encompassing than "Bill" or "legislation". It typically occurs in the formulation "Other measures will be laid before you" and is deliberately employed in this context for precise legislative purpose: "to allow flexibility for the Government to introduce other bills not mentioned in the speech" (Santo, 2016: 6).

3.2. Speeches in troubled times

If Speeches from the Throne represent highly conventional communicative events, characterized by a multitude of constitutional constraints, other royal communicative events are marked by less conventional features and afford the sovereign greater latitude in expression. Such are the speeches delivered by the monarch when the country is in a state of turmoil or emergency (Queen Elizabeth II's speech on the death of Princess Diana and the Queen's broadcast to the UK and the Commonwealth on 5 April 2020).

The queen's speech on the death of Princess Diana remains one of the most dramatic speeches in the history of the British monarchy due, not only, to the peculiar circumstances in which it was delivered, but also to the manner in which the sovereign used language in order to map the event. Harshly criticized for her initial lack of public reaction to Diana's death, the sovereign returns to Buckingham Palace, where she delivers her famous speech. The speech stands out for the balance and authenticity of the message, and the elegant honesty with which the Queen admits that there are lessons to be learned from this tragedy. Elizabeth II artfully reconciles the people's yearning for Diana's legacy to be publicly acknowledged and praised by the monarch and her own resolution to remain herself. The speech is one of the rare occasions in which the monarch makes a brief, yet revealing reference to her personal identity, that of "grandmother".

First she finely identifies the inherent reactions of an individual on hearing news such as the death of a loved one:

> It is not easy to express a sense of loss, since the initial shock is often succeeded by a mixture of other feelings: disbelief, incomprehension, anger - and concern for those who remain. We have all felt those emotions in these last few days. (A speech by The Queen following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, 1997: para. 2).

Notice the inclusive use of the personal pronoun "We", by means of which the queen indicates that she is on the same level as the general public in terms of reactions to the news of the princess's death. Then, she goes on to express in what capacity she addresses the nation: "So what I say to you now, as your Queen and

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as a grandmother, I say from my heart". The way in which she positions herself, first as "your Queen" and second "as a grandmother" is revelatory. The conjunction "and" symbolically renders the meaning that the position of "queen" does not exclude the role of "grandmother". However, by fronting her constitutional position, the queen underlines that duty comes first and that her address to the nation is that of the head of the nation who is expected to act with proper decorum. This line, unique in the history of royal speeches, is suggestive of the queen's inner struggle and of the manner in which she tackles it, the queen being aware of the fact that she is the head of the nation, expected to lead her people in mourning.

Queen Elizabeth's speech on 5 April 2020, delivered at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, is not so much the address of a head of state—though she was the head of state—as it iss the message of a nation's figurehead in the midst of an unprecedented crisis. In this capacity, the Queen addresses the entire country, extending gratitude both to the National Health Service and to volunteers for their support of those in need.

At the same time, the monarch does not fail to reassure the British people that better days will return, encouraging them to rediscover those very qualities that, throughout history, have enabled them to endure and prevail—what she referred to as the "attributes of self-discipline, of quiet, good-humored resolve, and of fellow feeling" (The Queen's broadcast to the UK and the Commonwealth, 2020: para 4).

The Queen also acknowledges one of the most dramatic aspects of the pandemic: self-isolation. However, rather than focusing on its hardships, she chooses to adopt a more optimistic perspective, suggesting that isolation might also serve as a positive and revelatory experience: " an opportunity to slow down, pause and reflect in prayer or meditation" (The Queen's broadcast to the UK and the Commonwealth, 2020: para 7).

In order to demonstrate that every cloud has a silver lining, the Queen refers to her own childhood experience, which she had in 1940, at the outbreak of the Second World War, and which involved a different kind of isolation. At the time, numerous British children were separated from their families and evacuated to the countryside to live with other families, in an effort to protect them against a potential German invasion of the island. The decision taken by the British government was, by no means, an easy one, and the experience must have been profoundly painful both for the children and their parents. Eventually, it proved to be a necessary and justified measure. During those days, the young Princess Elizabeth, together with her sister Princess Margaret, both evacuated to Windsor, broadcast a message of encouragement to the children of Britain. In a similar vein, the imposition of self-isolation during the pandemic was a necessary response to unprecedented circumstances. The parallel made by the queen between the wartime experience and the pandemic is far from coincidental. The Queen's reference to her own childhood marks a departure from royal discourse, in which the monarch's personal identity typically recedes behind the persona. Yet, in this case, the sovereign purposefully employed a personal experience overlapping a profoundly emotional and historic moment which she herself had lived and in which many people could recognize themselves to achieve her goal: to strengthen the Britons' confidence in their own capacity to endure hardship and eventually overcome it.

Elizabeth II concludes her address on a note of hope: "We should take comfort that while we may have more still to endure, better days will return. We will be with our friends again. We will be with our families again. We will meet again" (The Queen's broadcast to the UK and the Commonwealth, 2020: para. 10). The queen's words evoke the lyrics of Vera Lynn's iconic wartime song "We'll Meet Again", performed to boost the morale of

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soldiers during the war: „We'll meet again / Don't know where / Don't know when / But I know we'll meet again some sunny day". The sovereign's lines reveal not only her stoicism and resilience in the face of adversity, but also her rarely unveiled sense of playfulness, which, in this context, she uses to give people renewed hopes that "sunny days" will return.

These two speeches are illustrative of particular circumstances that require tailored responses. Consequently, one may wonder where a constitutional monarch may look for inspiration in order to respond coherently and appropriately to events. Experience, perhaps? In order to answer the question, I make use of Michel Foucault's concept of *archive*, Raymond Williams's concept of *creative practice* and Jan Blommaert's analysis of the concepts.

If experience may provide a solution, where can a repository of experience be found? I contend that this repository can be found in the *archive*. Michel Foucault defines it as "the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events". Hence, the archive is not an ossified structure, but a living organism, able to adapt and enrich itself with meaningful additions (Foucault, 2002: 145).

What accounts for the dynamic force of the archive is, according to Jan Blommaert, *creative practice*, a concept introduced and defined by Raymond Williams as "practical consciousness", generated by "the tension between the received interpretation and practical experience" of social constructs (Williams, 1977: 130).

Drawing on both Foucault and Williams, Blommaert emphasises the "elastic" character of the *creative practice* as it "develops within hegemonies while it attempts to alter them" by providing "'supplements' to what is already in the 'archive'" (Blommaert, 2005: 105-106). Furthermore, Blommaert points out that the flexible nature of creativity is restricted, not limitless due to the hegemonies in which it is expressed. Therefore, *creative practice* generates "both 'push' and 'pull' forces, forces that pull someone into the existing hegemonies, and forces that push someone out of these hegemonies" (Blommaert, 2005: 106).

Circumscribing the analysis to the royal context, the *archive* can be understood as both the collection of rules and regulations that govern a monarch's conduct, including the constitutional constraints, as well as the monarch's individual approach to their duties and responsibilities. The constitutional limitations, institutional restrictions and public expectations (themselves the result of the influence of the *archive*) represent the "hegemonies" mentioned by Blommaert, those "pull forces" that limit the "elastic" nature of creativity and restrict a monarch's freedom of action. However, the elasticity of creativity, though not boundless, allows one to produce their own additions to the *archive* and enrich it.

However, these additions are possible if able to satisfy three special conditions: to make sense in the context in which they operate (to be relevant to the context), to serve valuable social functions and to be in line with a constitutional monarch's double role: head of the State and head of the nation. Elizabeth II's unprecedented reference to herself as "a grandmother" makes sense in the context, helping her show that behind her public persona there is a human being, a grandmother, who cares deeply for her grandsons. In addition, it serves a critical social function: the ability to show empathy, which works like a connecting mechanism between two or more social entities; in our context: the monarch and her people. Therefore, this "supplement" to the queen's representation of herself is a relevant addition to the *archive*.

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The queen's broadcast to the UK and the Commonwealth on 5 April 2020, during the pandemic, is another meaningful contribution to the *archive.* Her autobiographical reference was relevant in the context. It was meant to demonstrate to younger people, who did not live through such dramatic times as the Queen's generation did, that hardships can be overcome, and that hope must always be kept alive. In the context of the self-isolation policy imposed by the government, the queen meant to foster a sense of cohesion with the nation and boost people's morale, pivotal roles of a head of nation.

4. Towards a definition of the *royal genre*

All the speeches analysed above perform social functions that are understood by the target audience: the nation. If some are highly conventionalized (the Speeches from the Throne), others manifest less rigorous features in terms of structure, content, purpose and the monarch can make use of this relative flexibility to make their own voice heard. But there is always an invisible boundary which limits their freedom: a sense of propriety expected of them by the nation. The repetitive nature of some royal communicative events makes them familiar to the general public, who is able to understand why a particular message is addressed to them and the manner in which it is addressed. Other royal communicative events are unprecedented, and the monarch is expected to explore and identify creative ways and means to approach the event adequately and articulately in order to be able to interpret it correctly. If this is the case, the *archive* becomes enriched with novel and significant additions, contributing to the general understanding of a royal communicative event.

In my attempt to provide a definition of the concept *royal genre*, I make use of the concepts of *archive*, *practical consciousness, push* and *pull forces* explained above and I draw on Vijay Bhatia's definition of *genre*. I consider that the royal *archive* provides ample and persuasive evidence of the existence of *royal genre*, which I define as:

> a distinct and recurrent communicative event, characterized by stability in time, shaped by discoursal intent which is acknowledged and shared by the nation and communities of other realms. Its structure is regulated by a historical and cultural "archive" which is continually carved by restraining or propulsive forces which either constrain the sovereign to conform to a well-established convention or to allow the sovereign to challenge that convention by means of a practical awareness and insight within the limits of their constitutional role.

The types of communicative events which make up the royal genre are varied. Hence, further analysis may find it suitable to categorize these events into sub-types. Their investigation, the aim of further research, may contribute to the clarification and extension of the definition that I have just formulated.

5. Conclusion

Royal communicative events, through their conventional and often recurrent nature have the capacity to generate royal genres. The "archive" – the source of royal genres – lends them some of its defining features. The elasticity of the "archive" proves that monarchs, though bound by constitutional considerations, do enjoy some degree of leeway which they can exploit in order to pursue or fulfil particular aims, relevant to the roles they play in the life of their countries. The "archive" stimulates the sovereign to look for and establish new, proper and efficient ways to manifest oneself and fulfil one's role. Thus, monarchs may contribute to the creation and development of new genres.

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