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Abstract

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Authors Jens E. Kjeldsen, Department of Information Science and Media Studies, University of Bergen.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5940-6940>

Jaap de Jong, Centre of Linguistics, Leiden University.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5539-5095>

Judi Atkins (deceased 2021), School of Politics and International relations, Aston University, Birmingham.

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Keywords Covid-19, Elisabeth II, Margareth II, pandemic, rhetoric, royal, speechmaking, epideictic, constitutive, monarch, crisis, genre, royal crisis address

*Jens E. Kjeldsen; Department of Information Science and
Media Studies, University of Bergen, Norway.
0000-0002-5940-6940 / jens.kjeldsen@uib.no*

*Jaap de Jong; Centre of Linguistics, Leiden University,
Netherlands.
0000-0001-5539-5095*

*Judi Atkins; School of Politics and International relations,
Aston University, Birmingham, United Kingdom.*

Jens E. Kjeldsen, Jaap de Jong, and Judi Atkins:

The Genre of the Royal Crisis Address

Six European Monarchs' Rhetorical Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic

This article offers a rhetorical analysis of the addresses delivered by six Northern European monarchs in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. The analysis establishes a new genre with distinctive traits and functions: *The royal crisis address*. This genre has two constitutive traits: To demonstrate the seriousness of the situation and to constitute the citizens and encourage them to behave in the right way. The genre also has three optional traits: to provide thanks, to empathise with those affected, and to reassure and inspire the nation. In a national crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic, these rhetorical functions will also be performed by national leaders, however, because of the apolitical position and charismatic and historical power of the royals in the North European monarchies the royals can perform these functions with a special authority. We describe how this is done through the five functions and through epideictic and constitutive rhetoric.

1. Introduction

This article offers a rhetorical analysis of the addresses delivered by six Northern European monarchs in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. These occasions warrant attention because, other than the annual Christmas or New Year message (see Kjeldsen 2019; Atkins 2020), today's royals give few televised speeches. Indeed, it is only at significant moments such as the outbreak of war or a national

emergency that the monarch will speak directly to the people. Broadly speaking, these extraordinary speeches are intended to assuage the public's fears and provide solace, and to reinforce the idea that "the crisis requires a deployment of resources and a sense of collective sacrifice, on par with a war" (Duxbury 2020). The royals alone can deliver speeches of this kind, as their constitutional position affords them rhetorical opportunities that are unavailable to political leaders. As Hazell and Morris put it, the royal responses to Covid-19 "show how monarchs can speak to and for their nations in ways no partisan politician can" (2020: 841). This suggests that such royal responses may constitute a distinctive genre.

This genre can be distinguished from other genres through its special configuration of a) an exigence of crisis calling for the monarch to speak, b) the monarchs' unique position historically and authoritatively, and c) the content and style of the speeches embedding deliberative advocacy in epideictic rhetoric. We also demonstrate the five primary rhetorical functions of the genre.

We begin by explaining our theoretical departure points of epideictic rhetoric, constitutive rhetoric, and rhetorical genre theory. We then identify the five primary rhetorical functions of royal speeches in crisis situations and show how the addressees perform the constitution of nationhood. Our analysis demonstrates that extraordinary royal speeches are a genre of rhetoric, and that they can be an essential tool in the communicative work of the nation at a time of crisis.

2. Crisis and the genre of royal rhetorical constitution of community

Our case studies are from Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom – all of which are constitutional monarchies that operate within the framework of a parliamentary representative democracy. In each of these Northern European countries, the monarch is formally the head of state but, in practice, their power and duties are mostly ceremonial. Executive power is instead exercised by the cabinet, which is led by the prime minister. As the legal head of the government, the prime minister possesses a range of prerogative powers, among which are the appointment and dismissal of ministers, the (re)allocation of ministerial portfolios, and the management of government business (Heffernan 2003: 357). By contrast, the powers of the monarch are limited to such formalities as the appointment of the prime minister and the granting of royal assent to legislation (Poole 2010: 146 n.1). This constraint elevates the monarchy above the political fray and, in Bagehot's words, "removes it both from enmities and from desecration." In turn, the neutrality of the Crown enables it to act as a "visible symbol of unity" (Bagehot 1873: 68) by offering itself as the embodiment of the nation and its values. This is still the case for the Northern European monarchies in the 21st century.

The ceremonial role of the monarch lends itself especially to the use of epideictic rhetoric. This genre is concerned with praise and blame and, though it is oriented to the present time, the orator will also make use of "historical recollection or anticipatory conjecture" (Aristotle 2004: 1358b [p. 80]). Consequently, epideictic speech is a central feature of such occasions as commencements, dedication cere-

monies, and commemorative events. Recently, scholars have turned their attention to the role of epideictic rhetoric in strengthening adherence to social norms and values, which themselves provide a basis for the attribution of praise or blame (Kampf and Katriel 2016; Atkins 2018: 362; Kjeldsen 2019: 227; Condit 1985). Indeed, epideictic discourse has the potential to “strengthen the common values in society, create community, and form the beliefs that determine future decision-making” (Vatnøy 2015: 1). This is particularly relevant for the royal crisis address since both speaker and genre are – or are expected to be – apolitical. Thus, as we will show, this genre provides special rhetorical affordances as pre-political rhetoric, while still advocating measures and policies.

A key objective of epideictic speech is to explain a challenging issue for the benefit of an audience. While any rhetorical situation is rife with ambiguity, given that events can be interpreted and defined in a variety of ways (Atkins 2018), the demand for an explanation takes on new urgency in periods of crisis. At such times the audience will “actively seek and invite” speech that enables them to understand the problem they face, and thus provides reassurance (Condit 1985: 288). The ability to define social reality in this way enhances the authority of the speaker, and this is especially true of a monarch. In short, although monarchs lack political power, “they do have the power of definition” (Kjeldsen 2019: 228).

While the epideictic speech is the traditional royal genre – since the monarchs are not supposed to be political – the actual speeches are closer connected to crisis rhetoric, and therefore to the deliberative (i.e. political) genre, since they explicitly deal with how we should act. Deliberative speeches are, as Aristotle defined them, speeches that exhort or advocate a policy and those that oppose it. They aim at the future as they seek to provide advice regarding a policy, projecting advantages or disadvantages of a given proposal. The substance of deliberative speeches is counsel or advice, and the audience is usually an assembly or the general public, and its subject or topics cover issues of ways and means, war and peace, national defence, imports and exports, and legislation (Aristotle 1.3, 1358 b5-23). Epideictic speeches, as Aristotle defines them, seek to praise or blame a person or entity. These ceremonial speeches focus on the present and reflect on existing conditions and memories from the past. The objective of ceremonial speaking is honour or dishonour, its substance focuses on virtues or vices, and its audience is usually made of spectators or critics who function as judges of an individual or entity and the value espoused in their action (Aristotle 1.3, 1358 b10-1359 b6). However, as shown by Balot (2013), the epideictic and the *sumbouleutic* (i.e. deliberative) in *The Art of Rhetoric* have shared principles. As Aristotle writes, an idea may have “the form of advice, but it takes the form of praise (1.9, 1368 a3, 3-6; see also Balot 2013, p. 300). Balot argues that, both Plato’s Socrates and Aristotle’s book *The Art of Rhetoric* holds the idea that “encomiastic oratory could be exhortatory” (Balot 2013, 298). He also demonstrates how Aristotle’s account of the epideictic genre emphasises “the central importance of the epideictic orator to the healthy functioning of political life” (Balot 2013, 284), which is precisely, we suggest, how the royal speeches about the Covid-19 virus functioned in the pandemic. In a similar argument, Condit (1985)

argues that the functions of the epideictic speeches are to define and help us understand the social world, to shape and share a human community, and to display the eloquence of the orator. Here, we concentrate on the two first functions.

As a hybrid genre, the royal crisis address is formed by the two traditional genres of the deliberative and the epideictic. Before the monarchs' pandemic speeches, health and political authorities had already established the character and severity of the crisis and pointed out how the citizens should act. The royal crisis address performs – as we will show – many of the same functions, but the monarchs' special position adds types of authority, gravitas, and national unity that are unavailable to politicians in deliberative speeches, while at the same time making the plea for action appear apolitical. Thus, the royal crisis addresses we examine are deliberative speeches dressed in epideictic and constitutive rhetoric and spoken through the special position of the monarch. It is precisely this genre hybrid and speaker position, we argue, that establishes the genre and its rhetorical power.

A rhetorical understanding of genre departs from the view that a genre is a recurrent rhetorical situation. This perspective also argues that humans respond to similar situations in parallel ways: since “there is a limited number of situations, in which a rhetor can find himself” and “a limited number of ways in which a rhetor can and will respond rhetorically to any given situational type” (Black 1978, p. 133). In line with this the theory of the rhetorical situation was developed ten years earlier, determining the constitutive factors of 1) a rhetorical exigence, 2) an audience, and 3) situational constraints (Bitzer 1968). This was followed up by determining genres as groups of responses which share a certain type of situation and exigence. Genres also share certain types of content and stylistic traits as well as a distinct constellation of these traits (Campbell & Jamieson, 1978). Rhetorical genres, however, are more than formal categories; they are cultural regulations of human action, and thus are ways that we may act in unison. Miller calls this *typified rhetorical action* (Miller 1984, p. 151). In the pandemic, when the royals spoke, the main rhetorical task of political leaders and health authorities was to encourage citizens to behave in a certain way, so that the spread of the virus could be curbed. Thus, the exigence of the situation was clearly deliberative in the sense that it was directed towards specific actions. The royal crisis speech in a pandemic shares the central constitutive elements of the rhetorical situation with politicians and health authorities. We suggest, however, that the distinctive ethos and authority of the monarchs, and the special configuration of the generic elements, which we describe below, makes the royal crisis address a distinct genre with its own form of typified action.

Windt has argued that presidential speeches on international crises constitute a specific genre, where presidents use their ethos to create “crisis situations” (Windt 1973, 126-7). Windt suggests that presidential crisis rhetoric moves from the deliberative to the epideictic, when moving from giving account of the facts to “presenting the crisis as a test of national character.” (Windt 1973, 130-31). Dow (1989) has argued for an understanding of presidential crisis rhetoric, that *responds* to an already established crisis, which is the kind we examine. Dow suggests that such crisis

responses do not primarily offer pragmatic, i.e. deliberative, rhetoric, but instead offer interpretations allowing the audience to make sense of the events. In some crisis speeches, she writes, deliberative strategies will dominate, while in others epideictic strategies will dominate (Dow 1989, 306). We will show that the royal pandemic speeches constitute a unique fusion of the two types of strategies. The main exigence calls for deliberative speeches, because of the need to comply with measures. Political leaders have already done this. However, there is a need to support this deliberative rhetoric by using the royals to constitute the situation as urgent and the citizens as a nation willing to comply.

In a royal crisis speech, the authority of the monarch offers the power not only to define an issue or situation, but to construct a communal identity. This is achieved through constitutive rhetoric, whereby audience members are interpellated into a collective subject position immediately upon entering into a rhetorical situation (Charland 2013: 436). The collective identity transcends individual concerns and interests and, moreover, is imbued with several essential qualities. Among these characteristics are motives, interests, a territorial identity, and a cultural history (Charland 2013: 435; Mills 2014: 114), which provide a basis for persuasive appeals and, in turn, for action. Although constitutive rhetoric may be a feature of everyday rhetorical acts, such as the British Queen's Christmas broadcast (Atkins 2020), it comes to the fore in times of national emergency. These moments often demand a national response and, by interpellating the people into a collective subject position – such as “the Swedish people” – constitutive rhetoric enables them to “act in concert to address these crises” (Hoye 2019: 288).

The inherent characteristics of a collective identity also include norms and values. At this point constitutive and epideictic rhetoric intersect, as the former creates the community to which the latter reinforces feelings of loyalty and belonging. This is achieved through praise, whereby the epideictic speaker will amplify “a sense of communion centred around particular values recognized by the audience” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 51; see also Condit 1985: 289). Equally, the orator might hail an individual or institution as an exemplar of these values, and so seek to engender a sense of pride in the nation's achievements.

Closely related to the kind of rhetorical influence exerted through deliberative, constitutive, and epideictic speech are the concepts of authority and legitimacy. Weber distinguished between three types of legitimate authority: legal authority, which is founded on “a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands”; traditional authority, which is underpinned by “an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them”; and charismatic authority, which rests on “devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him” (Weber, Roth and Wittich 1978: 215ff.). In one sense, the monarchy exemplifies traditional authority. After all, it is based on tradition and handed down through inheritance, which in turn confers authority on the current ruler. At the same time, however, the capacity of the monarchs to exert

influence through traditional authority is limited. Indeed, for all practical purposes, the royals of contemporary Northern Europe possess no legal authority over the people.

Therefore, we suggest that while the rhetorical functions of the monarchs' speeches in a crisis necessarily must be based on the traditional authority of their royal position, their efficacy and distinctive contribution depend both on how this traditional authority is combined with a monarchical charismatic authority, and on the bond the royals have created with the nation during their reign. This is also an essential component in making the royal crisis speech a distinctive genre. To gain the respect and support of the people, it is not enough to be the king or queen; one must establish a certain relationship with them. This connection is cultivated through the lived and shared history of the ruler and their people. Thus, as we show below, the institutional role of royalty is not the only kind of important authority a monarch may enact. Equally important is the monarch's constitutive performance of the personal and national character, which is uniquely afforded to the royal persona and its established authority. In accordance with Cherry (1988), we distinguish between *ethos*, as the characteristics an audience attributes to a rhetor, and *persona*, as the roles created in the discourse offered by the rhetors to the audiences. Our textual study examines the *persona*-constructions of the pandemic speeches to reveal how the speeches create authority and contribute to establishing the genre of the royal crisis speech.

Our analysis is based on the speeches of King Carl XVI Gustaf (Sweden), Queen Elizabeth II (United Kingdom), King Filip (Belgium), King Harald V (Norway), Queen Margrethe II (Denmark), and King Willem-Alexander (Netherlands). These countries are selected because they are all North European monarchies, where governments adopted different approaches to managing Covid-19. In brief, Norway and Denmark were among the first in Europe to impose a lockdown, with measures including the closure of schools and restaurants and the imposition of travel restrictions (Brzozowski 2020). Whereas Belgium followed within days, the UK was among the last to do so, having initially proposed to "build up some degree of herd immunity" (Vallance quoted in Scally, Jacobson and Abbasi 2020). The Netherlands introduced containment measures that initially were intended to "build up population immunity" (Rutte quoted in Tullis 2020). However, Dutch citizens were not required to remain at home at first; Prime Minister Mark Rutte framed it as *intelligent lockdown*. Finally, Sweden diverged from most European countries by adopting a strategy akin to "herd immunity," with shops and cafes remaining open and no limits imposed on travel (Fiore 2020). These approaches illustrate the "exigence" (Bitzer 1968: 6) of the various rhetorical situations in each country, while the horror of Covid-19 was realized through the rapid increase in the number of victims in countries as far away as China and closer to home in Europe.

3. Performing the rhetorical functions of royal crisis address

As suggested, the performance of the rhetorical functions of royal crisis speeches is

shaped by the authority and ethos of the monarch in their country. This in turn determines how the monarch may address both the situation and their national audience. Naturally, the rhetorical situation and the specific circumstances in each country provide different constraints (Bitzer 1968). The spread of the virus, for instance, forced the monarchs to address their people from places from which they do not usually speak. Queen Margrethe delivered her speech from Fredensborg Palace, the spring and autumn residence of the Danish Royal Family, while King Harald of Norway delivered his speech from the Royal Lodge (Kongsseteren), a winter residence on the outskirts of Oslo. The royal couple were in quarantine there because they had recently travelled abroad. King Carl Gustaf of Sweden delivered his speech from the Stenhammar Palace, where he and the Queen had been staying since the beginning of the Covid-19 virus outbreak. Similarly, King Willem-Alexander and his family were in quarantine in their palace Huis ten Bosch after their winter holidays in Lech (Switzerland), where five Coronavirus cases had been discovered, and King Filip of Belgium spoke from the Palace in Brussels. Finally, the British Queen Elizabeth II spoke from Windsor Castle, where she had been self-isolating with her husband, Prince Philip, since March. So, the monarchs did not deliver their speeches from the centres of politics, but from their ‘private homes’, in self-isolation. This added to the a-political character of the speeches. The fact that all the monarchs were following government advice by self-isolating enabled them to act as exemplars to their people.

The royal speeches addressing the Covid-19 virus were widely watched on television (see Table 1), though it is important to point out that the figures will be higher if the streaming viewership is included.

Date	Speaker	Length (total speech time)	Number of words	Average sentence length (in words)	Words per minute	Television viewing figures (total population)
March 15	Harald of Norway	2:25	280	12.7	116	> 1.0 million (5.38 million)
March 16	Filip of Belgium	2:38	255	13.0	96	Unavailable
March 17	Margrethe of Denmark	5:23	603	13.1	112	>3.29 million (5.8 million)
March 20	Willem-Alexander of The Netherlands	6:40	804	10.5	121	>5 million (17 million)
April 5	Carl Gustav of Sweden	6:27	615	11.6	95	Unavailable
April 5	Elizabeth of the United Kingdom	4:11	524	25.0	125	23.97 million (66.65 million)

Table 1: The speech length and speaking speed of the Northern European royals

Our analysis reveals that the speeches perform five primary rhetorical functions in order to address the exigence of the pandemic. The first two are constitutive of the genre: 1) Demonstrate the seriousness of the situation; 2) Constitute the citizens as unified and encourage them to act in the right way. The remaining three are optional, but relevant because they will strengthen the message and the ethos of the monarch: 3) Provide thanks; 4) Empathise with those affected; 5) Reassure and

inspire the nation. While several – if not all – of these rhetorical functions were performed by politicians and other actors during the crisis, the position and power of the monarchs ensures they are uniquely positioned to perform these functions with royal authority. This is also evident in the way in which the royal speaking position ascribes importance to the situation. These functions demonstrate the genre-hybrid of the royal crisis address: The two first functions (demonstrating the seriousness of the situation and encouraging the citizens to act in the right way) are clearly the tasks performed in deliberative rhetoric. The remaining three functions are clearly epideictic. However, in the royal crises addresses all five functions are integrated making them simultaneously advocate, constitute, and praise values. In the following, we first demonstrate the five functions (part 4), then we show how these functions are connected to the special apolitical royal speaking position that constitutes not only the persona of each monarch, but also the nation itself (part 5). Finally, we describe the genre traits and special configuration that constitutes the genre of the royal crisis address and makes it different from for instance the prime ministers' speeches (part 6).

4.0 The five functions of the royal crisis address

4.1. Demonstrate the seriousness of the situation

The first constitutive function is to demonstrate the seriousness of the situation. This is clear from the fact that it is extremely rare for a European monarch to address the nation in a live transmission. Thus, that the monarchs decided to give an unprecedented speech – before they ever spoke a word – was already a powerful rhetorical act (see also Benoit and Brinson 1999: 150). In Denmark, for instance, aside from the annual New Year speech, a monarch had not addressed the whole nation in a broadcast since King Christian X, the grandfather of the present Queen, spoke about the liberation that followed the end of World War II in 1945. The significance of the Queen's speech is clear from the fact that so many watched it (see Table 1). For Filip of Belgium, meanwhile, it was his first exceptional speech since the 2016 terrorist attacks on Zaventem and Maelbeek, and in the UK the Covid-19 virus broadcast was Queen Elizabeth II's fifth special address in her 68-year reign (Ryan 2020).

In these circumstances, the speech of each monarch embodies the position they are arguing in their exceptional address. The argumentative position is that the pandemic is unprecedented and everyone – including the royals themselves – is affected. This constitution of the exigence is present in the opening section of King Harald of Norway's speech, where he tells his audience that "We find ourselves in a situation that is unreal, alien, and frightening for all of us. We do not recognize our everyday life or the world around us." The government had implemented a full lockdown early on, and the King's words acknowledged the extent of its impact on the Norwegian way of life. Indeed, his use of "we" and "us" place him in communion with his people at this strange and difficult time. Similarly, Willem-Alexander of

the Netherlands – a historian by education – stresses the historic aspect of the situation, saying: “2020 will be a year that each of us will remember for a long time.” He proceeds to call attention to the reach of the pandemic, noting that “the coronavirus is affecting all of us. In the Netherlands, in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom and in the rest of the world.” Likewise, Belgium’s King Filip defines Covid-19 as “an unprecedented global health crisis” and Queen Margrethe of Denmark points out that: “We share this fate with all of Europe, indeed, with the rest of the world.” By emphasising the uniqueness and gravity of the exigence, the monarchs prime their people for what is to follow. This paves the way for constituting the citizens and encouraging them to act in the right way.

4.2. Constitute the citizens as a unity and encourage them to act in the right way

As we have seen, the monarchs act on behalf of the authorities when urging the population to follow the advice of the government and experts. For instance, King Harald states: “Now our most important task is to try to slow down the dramatic development, by following the orders given by the authorities.” King Willem-Alexander says: “It is important that we continue to give them our confidence and follow all directions.” King Filip argues in the same way: “The governments have taken their responsibility and have taken drastic measures that have a major impact on our daily lives. This requires great adaptability from all of us. We must do this for ourselves, but also for others and especially for the vulnerable among us.”

These deliberative encouragements to act acquires a special rhetorical significance because of the institutional and rhetorical constitution of the royal speaking position. Simply put, the monarchs lack the power to make laws, but their royal authority enables them to represent the nation to itself. This is evident in Queen Elizabeth II’s speech, where she told her people that: “I hope in the years to come everyone will be able to take pride in how they responded to this challenge. And those who come after us will say the Britons of this generation were as strong as any.” Here, Elizabeth II constitutes her people as “the Britons of this generation,” thereby affording them a basis for solidarity and common endeavour while praising the strength of those who are acting correctly. However, her words also contain a subtle appeal to the better nature of those individuals who are ignoring government advice, who are currently excluded from the “everyone” of the future. Her language of aspiration invites identification with the subject position “the Britons of this generation” – that is, those who are being strong and adhering to the rules – and so to bolster the nation’s collective response to the pandemic (Hoye 2019).

Carl Gustaf of Sweden adopted the same rhetorical strategy of appealing to the nation’s conscience. Thus, he describes how he is thinking of “the children in our country who are now at risk of losing grandparents. Of missing out on the security and wisdom they can offer.” “For their sake,” he continues, “we must act responsibly and selflessly. Everyone in our country has this obligation. Each and every one of us.” After stressing the uncertainty of the situation, he reminds his listeners that one

day they will look back and think about how they responded: “Did I think about other people? Or did I put myself first? We will have to live with the choices we make today, for a long time to come. They will impact many.” It is through this overtly moralising language that the King is able to compensate for his lack of legal authority by reinforcing government messages and seeking to influence public behaviour towards immediate action.

4.3 Provide thanks

The first of the three optional genre traits is the monarchs’ use of their speeches to express appreciation for, and to praise, key workers and others on behalf of the nation. Carl Gustaf of Sweden, for instance, offers thanks “to those of you making sure that older people receive the care they need, that we can buy food, that public transport continues to operate, and everything else we so easily take for granted.” King Filip too hails the “exceptional efforts” of Belgium’s health professionals, along with the nation’s business leaders for their preparedness to take “courageous decisions to lessen the [economic] shock” of the pandemic. Some of the monarchs, such as Queen Elizabeth II, thank not only essential workers but “those of you who are staying at home, thereby helping to protect the vulnerable and sparing many families the pain already felt by those who have lost loved ones.” Here, she echoes the UK government’s message “Stay at home. Protect the NHS [National Health Service]. Save lives,” while subtly censuring citizens who were violating lockdown measures and placing others at risk.

King Willem-Alexander also expresses gratitude to “those working in logistics [...] childcare, public transport, the police, and many other fields.” He diverges from the other monarchs by acknowledging the contribution of experts, who are “showing us the way with information based on scientific research and knowledge based on experience.” He then goes on to say that: “It’s important that we continue to place our trust in them and follow all their instructions. Their one and only aim is to get us through this crisis together as best we can whilst minimising the risks for those who are vulnerable.” With the pronoun “we,” the King constitutes himself as part of the Dutch people, while simultaneously engaging the nation in a collective display of deference to its experts. This moment of self-abnegation is noteworthy, given that it seems at odds with the traditional authority of the monarch. However, it is wholly appropriate to the situation, as it acknowledges not only the seriousness of a threat from which not even the King is immune, but also the “epistemic authority” (Pierson 1994) of the scientific community in whose hands a solution lies.

4.4. Empathise with those affected

Another optional function common to the six speeches is the offering of empathy. These emotional displays enable the royals to demonstrate identification with their people, while uniting the nation in a shared ordeal. This is evident in King Filip’s

address, where he tells his listeners that: “Mathilde and I are thinking about each of you, and especially those affected by the disease. We also sympathise with the elderly who are isolated in their own home or in a care institution.” In a similar vein, Queen Margrethe offers her “deepest sympathy to the bereaved families.” She continues by saying that: “My thoughts go to all who have fallen ill and to their nearest relatives here in Denmark, in Greenland and in the Faroe Islands,” before extending her sympathy to “all the Danes abroad who at this time feel very far from home.” In so doing, Margrethe again demonstrates her awareness of the impact of Covid-19 on those of her people who live outside the Kingdom of Denmark and may be separated from their loved ones.

King Willem-Alexander – with pictures of his three daughters on his desk – speaks directly to the children of the Netherlands. To this end he subtly adapts his style, using simple words and short sentences, to appeal to the younger members of his audience, while empathising with them in their new reality and strengthening his ethos as a family man: “I know how you must be feeling excited at first about all the free time you have. But it quickly wears off. Not being able to go to school. Or to football or ballet class. Birthday parties that won’t take place. That’s quite hard.” An important component of these displays of empathy is the monarchs’ first-hand experience of the crisis, which in turn supplies a basis for identification (Burke 1969). This is particularly evident in the speech of Elizabeth II, where she defines the situation as “a disruption that has brought grief to some, financial difficulties to many, and enormous changes to the daily lives of us all.” Her son Charles’s Covid-19 illness (not mentioned in the speech but well known to the audience, because of many references in the media) and her own self-isolation give her words additional weight, and she proceeds to draw a parallel between the present exigence and World War II: “It reminds me of the very first broadcast I made, in 1940, helped by my sister. We, as children, spoke from here at Windsor to children who had been evacuated from their homes and sent away for their own safety. Today, once again, many will feel a painful sense of separation from their loved ones. But now, as then, we know, deep down, that it is the right thing to do.” This comparison permits Elizabeth II to empathise with the nation’s plight, while enabling her to create an explicit connection between the moral rectitude of wartime evacuation and that of adhering to lockdown rules. Meanwhile, the familiarity of this parallel offers comfort to the people: just as Britain had come through the war, so too would it weather the pandemic (see Lawson 2020).

4.5. Reassure and inspire the nation

An important optional function of the royal speeches about the Covid-19 virus is to encourage the people to remain resolute and united, and to offer them hope for the future. This is evident in Filip of Belgium’s reminder that “Each of us can help face this crisis [...]. This trial will make us stronger,” and the Dutch King Willem-Alexander’s assurance that: “Alertness, solidarity and kindness: as long as we can sustain these qualities, we will be able to tackle this crisis together, even if it lasts for

some time.” Elizabeth II likewise reassures her audience that strength and togetherness will overcome the crisis, but she alone highlights the importance of international co-operation in tackling this unique challenge: “This time we join with all nations across the globe in a common endeavour, using the great advances of science and our instinctive compassion to heal. We will succeed – and that success will belong to every one of us.” This international perspective reflects the Queen’s role as Head of the Commonwealth, while her linkage of “man-made” treatments and the “natural” human quality of compassion ensures that every country can play its part in ending the pandemic.

The King of Sweden employs a different approach when offering comfort to his people: “Easter will soon be here. And whether or not we celebrate it, I believe that we can embrace its message: The journey is long and arduous. But in the end, light triumphs over darkness, and we will be able to feel hope again [...] And though it might be hard, remember: You are not alone.” As in Christian discourse, the metaphor of darkness conveys a negative evaluation on the pandemic, while light is equated with hope and therefore is evaluated positively (Charteris-Black 2011: 71). Though simple, the idea of the triumph of light over darkness can be highly effective, and Carl Gustaf presents it as a source of inspiration that will help the nation through the difficult times that lie ahead.

Carl Gustaf’s message is echoed in Elizabeth II’s peroration, which is also intended to encourage and give hope to her audience: “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. But for now, I send my thanks and warmest good wishes to you all.” The unreferenced quotation “We will meet again” is from the well-known 1939 song by Vera Lynn, and the lack of attribution indicates that the Queen expects her (British) audience to grasp the reference. Indeed, write Morris and Hazell, this quotation “drew on deep wells of public memory, emphasised the nature of the present peril, but avoided the populist and lazy rhetoric of mentioning war itself” (2020). Once again, Elizabeth II used the *topos* of World War II to comfort her people and inspire them with a vision of a brighter future.

5. Constituting royal authority and the nation

As demonstrated by our analysis, the primary rhetorical functions of the speeches are connected to the apolitical royal speaking position, which is simultaneously assumed institutionally and constituted textually during the address itself. In the rhetorical constitution of themselves, the nation, and the authorities, the monarchs all do the same kind of rhetorical work, which gains significance because of their special speaking position. However, as our account of the five functions suggests, the royals create different types of persona (Cherry 1988). In other words, the dominant public view of a royal before the delivery of the speech determines not only the persona the ruler may perform during the address, but the way in which she or he is able to constitute the nation.

The most notable personas in our sample are those performed by the British and Danish Queens. By virtue of their long reigns, these monarchs are integral to the nation's self-understanding; Elizabeth II had ascended to the throne in 1952, while Margrethe did so in 1972. The long history shared by the ruler and their people strengthens the traditional authority on which a monarchy is built. Indeed, it is this history that establishes Queen Elizabeth II and Queen Margrethe as *mothers* of the nation, and thereby affords them a strong speaking position. King Harald of Norway and King Carl Gustaf of Sweden similarly base their personas on their long reigns, but their performed characters are less clearly defined than those of the two queens. As neither King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands nor King Filip of Belgium has a relationship with their people that has developed over decades, they are not in a position to establish the same kind of royal authority. Instead, they present themselves as the *young royals*. In the following discussion, we expand on how the speeches establish royal authority by textually creating the speaker's persona and constituting the nation. We argue that – young or old – the monarchs use these special speeches to enact deliberative advocacy in epideictic rhetoric answering an exigence of crisis.

Aged 93 at the time of her broadcast on the Covid-19 virus, Elizabeth II performs the persona of (grand)mother to the nation (see Dymond 2020). The fact she had lived through World War II gave her the power to define the situation, and so her speech “came invested with the authority of someone able to draw on long personal experience of the country's trials” (Morris and Hazell 2020). This is evident in her anecdote about her first radio broadcast in October 1940, in which she had told child evacuees that: “We know, every one of us, that in the end all will be well; for God will care for us and give us victory and peace” (quoted in Bradley 2012: 178). As noted above, this sentiment is echoed in the peroration of Elizabeth II's Covid-19 speech. Furthermore, her ability to draw parallels between those who were separated from their families in wartime and in the current crisis enables her to provide reassurance, while reinforcing the message that adhering to government policy is the right thing to do. This combination of experience and a decades-long connection to her people thus affords Elizabeth II a unique ethos that has a special value in times of national crisis.

Even without explicitly mentioning the War, the *topos* of World War II has a strong presence in Elizabeth II's constitution of the nation and “the British people.” She invites her audience to identify with a version of the national character, one which had seen the nation through wartime, saying: “I hope . . . that the attributes of self-discipline, of quiet good humored resolve and of fellow-feeling still characterize this country. The pride in who we are is not a part of our past, it defines our present and our future.” In other words, if people follow the rules (by displaying these “British” qualities), the nation can be proud of how it handled the Covid-19 virus, both now and in the years to come. The characteristics listed above are described as attributes of “this country” but, strictly speaking, they belong to “the British people,” a subject position that Elizabeth II creates through the pronouns “we” and “our.” In this way, she reinforces a common national identity that is connected

to “an established past and an imagined future” (Kjeldsen 2019: 227).

A noteworthy feature of the UK’s response to the “first wave” of Covid-19 was the nationwide “Clap for our Carers,” which took place every Thursday evening for ten weeks. For Elizabeth II, this event would also form part of the nation’s collective memory of the pandemic, and she told her listeners that: “The moments when the United Kingdom has come together to applaud its care and essential workers will be remembered as an expression of our national spirit; and its symbol will be the rainbows drawn by children.” Here, the references to “the United Kingdom,” “com[ing] together,” and “our national spirit” underscore Elizabeth II’s rhetoric of common endeavour and national unity. Furthermore, by instancing the children’s pictures of rainbows that were displayed in the windows of homes across the country, and which swiftly became a *topos* of the pandemic, she reinforced her message of solidarity and of hope for a better future.

In the first part of her speech, Queen Margrethe subtly distances herself from the government and the health authorities, while aligning herself with the people of Denmark:

During the past week, the authorities have had to make a number of necessary decisions that affect the daily lives of us all [...]. The prime minister has just had to announce even harder decisions. We need to make our contribution, each and every one of us. What we do and how we act these days may prove decisive for how the situation develops in the next few weeks.

Queen Margrethe then describes the seriousness of the virus, and again positions herself as a member of the national community who is heeding the politicians’ instructions: “The authorities’ advice is really rather simple: Wash your hands. Keep a distance from others. Avoid physical contact. Stay at home.”

Like the population in general, Queen Margrethe is listening to the prime minister. The phrase “the authorities’ advice” frames her as a receiver of the directions given, and not as a part of the institution that is issuing them. She is not only beyond party politics, she constitutes herself as apolitical, even when promoting advice. However, she still is a royal authority, and it is on this basis, as the nation’s “moralising mother” that she reprimands those who do not follow the official guidelines. Margrethe begins by reprimanding the transgressors, firstly with the friendly words: “These are the basic rules and, fortunately, many follow them. Unfortunately, it is not all who take the situation sufficiently seriously,” and she proceeds to administer a reprimand: “We still see groups of all ages in far too close proximity. There are even some who still hold parties and celebrate special birthdays. That is not a decent way to behave. It is thoughtless. And, first and foremost, inconsiderate.” Here, Margrethe creates a “we” and an “us” that position her as belonging to the national community and yet still above it, as subject to the government but also above it, and therefore as being in a position to recognize the authorities on behalf of the nation. This allows her to address the people in a more moral tone than would normally be unacceptable for a young or new prime minister in Denmark, which is clear from her way of reprimanding of those who do not take

the situation “sufficiently seriously” and behave in a manner that is “thoughtless” and “inconsiderate.” Thus, in a situation where it is necessary to control people’s behaviour to curb the virus, but legally and practically impossible to do so, the moral rhetoric of a monarch becomes an important rhetorical tool to instruct, persuade, and control the nation.

In common with Queen Margrethe, the Norwegian King Harald aligns himself with the people, listening to and following official advice. He constitutes the nation as follows: “Norway is known as a society based on trust. Now there is a special need to show each other trust. Both to ensure that everyone takes responsibility for preventing the spread of infection. And for the country’s authorities to make good and wise decisions.” Like the Danish Queen, Harald encourages the population to listen to public officials and trust in their decisions, and he simultaneously speaks from a position as part of the people – separate from Norway’s political leaders – and as a national authority. This lends special value to the closing section of his speech, in which he sends his “thoughts and prayers” to all who are afflicted by the virus. The rhetorical persona of King Harald is less distinct than Margrethe’s performance as the moralising mother; indeed, he shares nothing about himself in his address. Nevertheless, his speaking position constitutes him as a national authority, and he achieves this status by defining the situation, providing consolation, giving instructions, and taking a national perspective when addressing his people.

The Swedish King Carl Gustaf likewise constitutes himself as part of the people by using a general “we” and positioning himself a member of the national community. However, his gratitude, encouragement, and advice appear to derive more from his status as an experienced citizen than from his royal position. For instance, he tells his listeners that he will be 74 years old in a few weeks’ time, and that he has “experienced many of the crises that our country has endured.” This contributes to an ethos claim which is similar to that made by Elizabeth II, as it gives Carl Gustaf the power to define the situation. The suggestion is that he has experienced crises alongside his people, and for this reason, he knows that there is hope: “And one thing I have learned is this: however deep or protracted a crisis becomes, it will ultimately come to an end. And when this one does, we will all benefit from the consideration and strength that the Swedish people are now demonstrating.” So, in common with the addresses of Queen Elizabeth II, Queen Margrethe, and King Harald, the speech of King Carl Gustaf fuses the traditional authority of the monarch’s formal role with decades of service to the nation. Importantly, they all embody a speaking position unavailable to prime ministers and others in an exceptional and specific situation of urgency, communicating through a special configuration of rhetorical content and style, thereby enacting the genre of the royal crisis address (as also demonstrated in parts 4.1-4.5).

For King Willem-Alexander and King Filip, who ascended to their respective thrones in 2013 and were in their 50s at the time of the pandemic, it is not possible to perform the persona of the father of the nation. Instead, the young royals portray themselves as the heads of their own families by displaying family photographs on their desks during their broadcasts. Taking the monarchs in turn, Willem-Alexan-

der views his task as king to be “binding, representing and encouraging” (Het Koninklijk Huis n.d.), and so to demonstrate empathy with his people during the pandemic. He tells them that: “The measures that have been taken to restrict the virus are drastic but necessary. I understand your distress,” and he goes to considerable lengths to name and encourage many subgroups of people within the country. These displays of encouragement and empathy contribute to his persona as an older brother or an uncle, as opposed to a father, and indeed his speech on the Covid-19 virus showed a particular concern for the young people of the Netherlands. This is evident in his use of simple words and phrases, as well as shorter sentences, when he addressed them (see Table 1).

While Elizabeth II refers to national identity on seven occasions, Willem-Alexander does so only three times. At one point, he praises the Dutch “national character,” saying: “And the Netherlands wouldn’t be the Netherlands if people didn’t spontaneously offer their help [...] Corona has unleashed an incredible amount of positive energy, creativity and public-spiritedness. These are the qualities we will be needing not only for the time being, but certainly also later on should things get even more challenging.” Here, Willem-Alexander creates a common identity that is based on the idea of the Netherlands as a social democracy, as a country that is committed to the welfare of others. By conferring a positive evaluation on the Dutch people, and using the collective pronoun “we” to constitute his listeners as such, he encourages them to continue to display the virtues and behaviours that will see the nation through the crisis.

In his short address, King Filip also performs the persona of an uncle or brother. This is captured in the more intimate tone of his speech, where he uses his wife’s first name instead of the formal “The Queen and I” associated with the older monarchs: “Mathilde and I are thinking about each of you.” However, Filip does not attempt to establish a unique rhetorical position from which to engage with the crisis and, moreover, his speech – like that of Carl Gustaf – does not construct a speaking position distinct from that of the political authorities. He also diverges from the other monarchs because he does not explicitly seek to constitute the Belgian “national character.” This is likely attributable to the presence of three distinct linguistic communities in Belgium, which are Flemish, French and German-speaking, and which render the construction of a single, overarching national identity more difficult. Consequently, the king’s task of symbolising the Belgian nation is a difficult one “in a country that is regularly subject to ‘*communautaire*’ indigestion” (Claes 1986: 24). The peroration of the speech reflects the fragility of this situation, as it contains no bold presumptions of unity, but nonetheless the King ends with a note of hope, saying: “Each of us can help face this crisis. The spontaneous calls for connections and solidarity are heart-warming. I encourage them. This trial will make us stronger.”

6. The genre of royal crisis rhetoric: Monarchs and prime ministers compared

In the preceding discussion, we examined the main functions performed by the royal speeches about the Covid-19 virus in six North European countries and argued that their speeches constitute a distinct genre. Firstly, only the royals could have delivered these speeches, and in doing so they embody a distinct authority and speaking position. Secondly, the content and style are closely connected to a very specific situation and exigency. Thirdly, these two things work in unison with the five functions and create a special configuration that is the *genre of the royal crisis speech*. While these functions on their own are neither constitutive traits of the genre nor specific to the monarchs, they gain special significance when combined with the rhetorical constitution of royal authority and of “the nation” creating a genre different from the prime ministers’ speeches on Covid-19. A key factor here is the non-partisan nature of the West European monarch, which enables them to provide a “neutral focus of national loyalty in times of crisis” (Hazell and Morris 2020: 844). Furthermore, the monarch is the symbolic embodiment of the nation whereas a prime minister personifies the ideological commitments of their party. As a result, the monarch alone can “represent the whole nation in an emotionally satisfying way [...] [and] interpret the nation to itself” (Bogdanor 1995: 301). This ability is closely related to the monarch’s charismatic authority, which can foster an emotional attachment in their subjects – particularly if they have reigned for many years and carried out their duties in an exemplary fashion. Conversely, a prime minister’s term of office is limited and, because their role demands the enactment of policies that may be unpopular, they are less likely to command widespread public devotion. The characteristics of the royal speaking position thus ensure that the five functions work differently in the special addresses from in the speeches of a prime minister.

As we have seen, the seriousness of the situation is demonstrated by the mere fact that the six monarchs directly addressed the nation, and they did so from the self-isolation from their palaces. By this time, their prime ministers had spoken publicly about the Covid-19 virus on many occasions. In the UK, for instance, Prime Minister Boris Johnson held a daily press conference throughout the “first wave” of the pandemic, whereas Queen Elizabeth II delivered a single broadcast. Consequently, her words arguably carried more weight and so had a greater impact (see Morris and Hazell 2020). Although the prime minister can of course provide thanks, it would appear strange for them to thank themselves and their own administration. Only an outside authority – such as the monarch – can perform this task, as Queen Margrethe did in Denmark. Relatedly, the monarch’s status as the symbol of the nation entails that they alone can offer thanks to essential workers and others on behalf of their people. Indeed, their non-partisan position enables them to express the nation’s gratitude without risking accusations of hypocrisy. The performance of this function proved problematic for Johnson, as his government planned to impose immigration restrictions on low-paid foreign healthcare workers, and consequently his participation in the weekly Clap for Our Carers attracted widespread

criticism (Payne 2020).

The government can compel obedience through legislation, and senior politicians will reprimand the people if they believe it necessary. A case in point is the Dutch premier Mark Rutte, who describes how: “Your mind stops when you see images of crowded beaches, people colliding in parking lots,” and goes on to say that this behaviour “is anti-social and must stop.” The monarch, meanwhile, has only the moral power to ask people to act in a certain way, and as such the specific guidance regarding coughing into one’s elbow, social distancing, and so on is not their concern. Instead, they concentrate on providing empathy and reassurance. If they do offer advice, it has a “human touch”, like Willem-Alexander’s suggestions for stopping the “loneliness virus”: “We all know someone in our vicinity who will be needing people to look out for them [...] Many people [...] are keeping an eye out for others and helping out when and where they can. We cannot stop the coronavirus. What we can do is stop the loneliness virus! Let’s make sure together that nobody feels abandoned.”

Interestingly, the situation was reversed in Denmark. Here, the political commentator of the newspaper *Politiken* observed that Queen Margrethe can reprimand her subjects with more weight than the prime minister, Mette Frederiksen, saying: “She cannot be accused of being political or of wanting to stir up emotions. She may brand a behaviour as a moral *faux pas*” (Madsen 2020). Margrethe’s position as a long-serving monarch gives her special licence to talk about moral affairs, and even to reprimand the people, thus supporting the government’s policy. By contrast, in March 2020, Frederiksen had been prime minister for only nine months and thus, apparently, lacked this authority. Taken together, these examples demonstrate that the rhetorical work of political leaders is more instructive than that of the monarchs, who lend their royal authority to reinforce the directions issued by the government – albeit in different ways depending on the length of their reign and the nature of their relationship with their people.

We have demonstrated that the royal position endows the monarch with a distinctive authority because he or she is a national leader, and yet is unconnected to everyday politics. This in turn lends them a special kind of credibility. Being a royal, however, is not enough; the specific rhetorical contribution of the monarch’s speech also resides in their character and in the historical and personal bond between them and their people. A young king like Filip cannot undertake the same rhetorical work as Margrethe, for instance, as he lacks the authority that derives from a life lived alongside the nation. Similarly, Elizabeth II’s 68-year reign and her personal experience ensure that her references to World War II carry considerably more weight than Johnson’s Churchillian rhetoric (Crace 2020). The rhetorical work performed in this speech, and the style in which it was delivered, performed an important task in the communicative management of the Covid-19 crisis in the UK. The Queen provided a rhetorical contribution that Prime Minister Johnson could not have done alone.

7. Conclusion

In general terms, the genre of the royal crisis speech, as revealed through the Covid-19 speeches of the European monarchs in early 2020, can be described like this: A national crisis, such as the Covid-19 virus, sets the nation in a state of emergency (exigence), the political authorities deal with the crisis politically, administratively, and communicatively, but need rhetorical support to establish national coherence and adherence to measures, which can be delivered by the apolitical monarch, who cannot directly advocate policy (constraints). In answering the exigence, the monarch uses his or her formal royal position, rapport with the people, and charismatic authority to perform at least two functions (demonstrate the seriousness of the situation and constitute and encourage citizens to behave the right way), and may also perform the optional functions to enhance message and ethos (thanks, empathy, and reassurance). These five functions are the main content topoi of the genre, and in line with the genre-demands the speeches express these topoi in a serious, solemn, but natural, style seeking identification with the people. In this way, the special constellation of exigence and constraint in situation, combined with specific content and style in rhetorical response, constitutes the genre of the royal crisis speech.

The functions we have identified are not unique to the monarchs, however, as demonstrated, they operate in a different way in the speeches of prime ministers and other officials. In part, the distinctiveness of the extraordinary speeches stems from the monarchs' lack of legal authority, though they possess both traditional and, to varying degrees, charismatic authority. This power confers upon them the ability and the right to constitute "the nation." Conversely, prime ministers have legal authority, but their partisan bias entails that they cannot successfully undertake constitutive work in the same way; their efforts are invariably tainted by party ideology and so risk alienating sections of the national community. The monarchs' political neutrality, therefore, is an important feature of royal crisis speeches.

The genre is further distinguished by the role of history, both as a *topos* and as the life the monarch has shared with their people. We have seen that the long-serving royals can refer to events in the nation's history with an authority and authenticity a prime minister is unable to muster, a case in point being Elizabeth II's evocations of World War II. By virtue of their long-standing relationship with the nation, the older monarchs have a rhetorical licence that a prime minister may not possess. This is exemplified in Queen Margrethe's reprimanding of those who are disobeying government guidance. Except for Carl Gustaf, the monarchs who have ruled for many years are better able than younger royals or the prime minister to perform constitutive work. The situation is somewhat different in the Netherlands, where Prime Minister Rutte's ten years in office have given him some authority to constitute the nation – though his ability to do so is constrained by his constitutional position.

We have demonstrated that the genre of royal crisis speech is characterised by the traditional authority of the monarch's position, in conjunction with their character and their relationship with their people. Overall, royal speeches are a rich

source for analysts of rhetoric seeking to illuminate the constitution of a nation's self-image and its role in the communicative management of national crises.

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