A Comparative Rhetorical Analysis of the Speeches of Queen Elizabeth II and King George VI

Ivanka Mavrodieva
Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”
Email: mavrodieva@phls.uni-sofia.bg

Abstract: The article examines two speeches delivered by Queen Elizabeth II and King George VI in very complicated political and social situations. A rhetorical analysis is made comparing a radio speech broadcasted on 3 September 1939 and a statement disseminated on 5 April 2020 by electronic media (television and radio) and in a virtual environment by social media. The hypothesis is that both speeches represent messages, causes and ideals and that they are made according to contemporary media and communication channels and they fulfil the goals to present values and to bring people together around important and meaningful issues and also inspire faith and hope. The comparative rhetorical analysis involves exploring the situation, context, channels of communication, orators, audiences, genre features, argumentation, rhetorical figures, the impact and the effects of the royal rhetoric in crisis situations.

Keywords: political rhetoric, royal rhetoric, rhetorical analysis, communication channels, media.

Introduction
The term “royal rhetoric” is part of theoretical rhetorical heritage and practices from thousands of years, Irene Winter investigates royal rhetoric and the development of historical narrative in Neo-Assyrian reliefs. [1] Rhetorical taxonomies represent different genres of the traditional and modern royal rhetoric: King’s speech, Queen’s speech, Queen’s address, Queen’s statement, etc. Royal rhetoric is a significant subject from a rhetorical stand point and it could be investigated on different levels: genres, arguments, nonverbal communication, visual elements, functions and role in governance, politics and history of the monarchy, etc.

Method and research
Different approaches are used during the studies of speeches and in particularly royal speeches. Jens Kjeldsen compares Denmark, Norway and Sweden and he explains the motive of his choice: “…because these countries share dominant traits and circumstances such as religion, institutional and political systems, common history, party dominance, size and more.” and he presents the following research aims: How the royal speeches use different topoi and constitute nationhood and immigrants, provide an understanding for the values and moral foundations that the differences in rhetoric and regulation is built on.” [2] Barbara Joann Anderson has defenced a master thesis analysing royalty and royal speeches form visual rhetorical stand point and it is modern approach; she explains the aim of her study: “This thesis examines how three British female royals, Queen Elizabeth II, Diana, Princess of Wales, and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, use visual rhetoric to gain and maintain power in a world where they are rarely allowed to use their actual voices. [3] The research design includes the explanations presented by Lloyd Bitzer about the rhetorical situation - he clarifies the idea concerning rhetoric explaining that it is not only the art of persuasion and that it is reasonable to enlarge the scope of the notion and that rhetorical situation includes other circumstances and other forms of discourse, for example scientific, philosophical, and poetic
We agree with the idea presented by Lloyd Bitzer as well as his explanation about three situations which are well-known (dangerous, embarrassing, and ethical). [5] For the purpose of this study the methods of rhetorical analysis presented by the author of the article are adapted in 14 points: subject of rhetorical analysis, rhetorical or communicative situation, orator (background, rhetorical education, experience in public speaking, audience (features, attitudes, positions, etc.); genres features; structure of a speech; rhetorical argumentation; rhetorical figures and tropes; visual elements; non-verbal elements; multimodal elements; manipulative tools; intercultural differences; effects, impact, influence and dissemination through media, online media, social networks; final conclusion about the orator. [6]

**Historical situation and communication context**
King George VI’s speech was delivered in a situation which was a very important moment of World War II history because it was the official announcement of Britain’s involvement in the war. The speech was broadcast on radio on 3 September 1939. Queen Elizabeth II made a video statement on 5 April 2020 during the Covid-19 epidemic, when British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was infected by the coronavirus and he was being treated and hospitalized. The two situations are quite different from a political, social, cultural and media point of view, but they are selected for analysis on the basis of rhetorical situations. The Queen’s speech was broadcast by television, radio and the media and it received large dissemination within a short time. The following criteria are selected and used during the analysis: important events and processes in the history of the monarchy and the involvement of the king and queen as status quo and conscious responsibility to deliver a speech; to make positions worthwhile and to lift people’s spirits in difficult times.

**Genre’s features of speeches**
We shall begin by referring to a speech that is of a different genre, the Queen Elizabeth I’s speech to the troops at Tilbury delivered on 9 August 1588. This speech is exhilarating, motivating, inviting, and delivered on the battlefield, it is of the Harangue type. [7] We would like to make the refinement here that the speeches analysed in the current paper are different from the genres and types of speeches delivered by Queen Elizabeth II on Christmas and these speeches are solemn and wishful, they present perspectives and concepts for the government in the future. [8] The two analysed speeches are not part of the parliamentary rhetoric when the King or the Queen deliver speeches during the opening the work of the legislative institution – the British Parliament. [9] The two speeches of King George VI and the Queen Elizabeth II are multifaceted and it is difficult to determine them according to traditional rhetorical classifications and taxonomies. They could be named ‘conceptual statements’, because they carry the elements of uniting around causes, values, they instil a faith and hope in difficult times. At the same time, the speeches are far from propaganda speeches which includes direct ideological appeals. The speeches refer to royal rhetoric, in the broad sense of the term deliberative or political rhetoric, they can be included in it, while having specific features.

King George VI’s speech is a radio speech according to the medium, since it was broadcasted over the radio, which during the World War II established itself as a modern and effective communication channel and through it not only news but also official statements were relayed. The speech delivered by Queen Elizabeth II could be defined as a royal virtual and visual rhetoric or multimodality royal rhetoric.
King George VI’s speech duration is of about 5 minutes. The speech of Queen Elizabeth II is just over 4 minutes. The video clips begin by announcing the status quo and the situation, respectively: King George: Outbreak of War Speech, 3 September 1939 [10]; the inscription “The Queen” [11]

Orators
The names of the King are Albert Frederick Arthur George and he was born in 1895. He is King of the United Kingdom and the Dominions of the British Commonwealth until 1936 to 1952. He becomes the King in a complicated situation and circumstances after his brother, the firstborn son and King, abdicates from the throne. King George VI overcomes speech deficiencies with the help of experts, as known from his biography. He is 44 years old and takes on commitments and fulfils them by delivering speeches, realizing the importance of the situation and overcoming anxiety by relying on a trusted person. On September 3, 1939, his speech was radio broadcasted and the main topic of the statement is the involvement of Britain in World War II.

The names of Queen are Elizabeth Alexandra Mary, she was born in 1926 and she was crowned in 1952 after the death of King George VI. She is the Queen of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth realms. At 92, she delivers a speech that traces the parameters of contemporary rhetoric, based on tradition. Queen Elizabeth II is not verbose, and she does not seek unnecessary public attention; she is aware of her status and obligations and she is known to speak only at significant events. Queen Elizabeth II has delivered several speeches during more than four decades in official events: the death of Princess Diana, the death of her mother and others. Behind this speech it is evident that there is a team of experts positioning royal rhetoric on social networks and virtual space. Presentation in modern communication channels does not in any way diminish the qualities of the speaker or the speech; on the contrary, the world understands what the behaviour of a monarch is with dignity and engagement in social causes.

Audiences
King George VI’s radio speech is addressed to a wide audience, it is heterogeneous and some groups are engaged in fulfilling their commitments as soldiers, others work in factories and farms, others are politicians, etc. The announcement of entry into war and puts millions of people in an emergency and difficult situation and they are the addressees of a message from the King.

The virtual speech of the Queen Elizabeth II is also positioned to reach a broad audience, one of millions and even a billion. The media and the virtual public are heterogeneous on the criteria of age, gender, race, profession, religion, belonging to groups etc., but common things are life in crisis, quarantine, social exclusion, the infected, patients, hospital treatment, epidemics and pandemics.

Structural features of speeches
A comparative analysis of the two speeches shows that the situation is not directly named, and no direct suggestions are made, templates and clichés and ideologues are absent. King George VI makes no mention of Germany and Hitler anywhere, the beginning is an identification of the situation, though described indirectly, figuratively: “In this grave hour, perhaps the most fateful in our history, I send to every household of my peoples, both at home and overseas, this message, spoken with the same depth of feeling for each one of you as if I were able to cross your threshold and speak to you myself. For the second time in the lives of most of us, we are at war.” [12] Although he speaks first-hand, he achieves identification with the audience.
The King focuses on unification and oneness, without giving extreme marks and not drawing the image of the enemy. The orator prefers the euphemistic variant and at the same time has a categorical expression: „Such a principle, stripped of all disguise, is surely the mere primitive doctrine that might is right, and if this principle were established throughout the world, the freedom of our own country and of the whole British Commonwealth of nations would be in danger.” [13] Queen Elizabeth II does not talk about Covid-19; she starts with presenting the situation, but she prefers other words not the term ‘coronavirus’:

“I am speaking to you at what I know is an increasingly challenging time. A time of disruption in the life of our country: a disruption that has brought grief to some, financial difficulties to many, and enormous changes to the daily lives of us all”. [14]

The finale of the King George VI speech is in line with the status quo and traditions and contains traditional addresses and wishes, bearing in mind the difficult situation and the war: “If one and all we keep resolutely faithful to it, ready for whatever service or sacrifice it may demand, then with God’s help, we shall prevail. May He bless and keep us all.” [15]

Queen Elizabeth II’s speech has a clear structure and a brief conclusion. The appeal of the finale is one of the most cited sentences of her statement, which means achieving a rhetorical and communicative effect and impact on the audience: “But for now, I send my thanks and warmest good wishes to you all.” [16]

Arguments and rhetorical figures
The King’s speech does not contain many and varied arguments because its functions are to inform about the situation. The argument of the power (argumentum ad baculum) was used by the King, there was no personalization and concreteness, but a presentation of cause and values, of commitments and the role of the monarchy. This argument is combined with the information about the situation, the consequences of the war for the world, although again there are no specific facts from a geopolitical point of view: “We have been forced into a conflict, for we are called, with our allies to meet the challenge of a principle which, if it were to prevail, would be fatal to any civilized order in the world.”; “This is the ultimate issue which confronts us. For the sake of all we ourselves hold dear, and of the world order and peace, it is unthinkable that we should refuse to meet the challenge.” [17]

The argumentation of the Queen’s speech is more various in comparison with the King’s speech. The argument from the personal experience of the Queen’s childhood is used to prove her commitment to causes, as well as to show that she takes responsibility in difficult times, such as war. The speaker presents her commitment as a child when she and her sister gave speeches on the radio: “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.” [18]

The Queen sends positive evaluations to citizens, but she also sends appeals to abide by order and self-discipline: “That the attributes of self-discipline, of quiet good-humoured resolve and of fellow-feeling still characterise this country. The pride in who we are is not a part of our past, it defines our present and our future.” [19]

Queen Elizabeth II encourages people, she demonstrates empathy; the orator avoids rhetorical figures such as gradation and epithets. There is no verbosity in speech, a laconic manner of speaking dominates and this is an appropriate approach to avoid extreme emotions, since the focus is not on pathos: “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.” [20]

Queen Elizabeth II presents her approval evaluation to citizens, demonstrates awareness and commitment to the crisis; she explains briefly the activities of different groups in the complicated situation and she focuses on values: “Across the Commonwealth and around the world, we have seen heart-warming stories of people coming together to help others, be it through delivering food parcels and medicines, checking on neighbours, or converting businesses to help the relief effort.” [21]

Non-verbal tools used by royal orators
The evaluation of the voice of the King George VI from an oratorical point of view does not include admiration, paralinguistic features improved gradually as a result of training with the therapist. His speech therapist Lionel Logue stood in the room from which the speech was broadcasted, and he supported the royal orator during the delivering of the statement. Consequentially, it is reasonable to appreciate the role of royal rhetoric and dedication to the status of the monarch and he fulfils the role as well as possible. Queen Elizabeth II demonstrates a model of royal art of speaking from a rhetorical standpoint on the following levels: voice, pauses, accent, power of the voice, articulation, pronunciation, volume, and diapason etc.

The dress code of King George VI is impeccable, he is in military uniform, it is in accordance with the protocol and etiquette and it is relevant in view of the situation and the topic of the speech, involvement in the war of the UK. The photo is black and white, but it accurately represents the condition and posture, posture, and the orator concentration.

Figure 1: Screenshot of the website https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opkMyKGx7TQ

The dress code of the Queen is impeccable too, the dress is colourful (the green is of a specific nuance and it bears associations with spring, life, better future), the brooch and the pearls are part of the monarch’s style and they are elements of her image and reputation built over the decades. The expression on her face is calm and serious, the Queen represents confidence and conviction; she radiates dignity all the time.
There are common features of the two speeches: both royal orators deliver the statements sitting on a chair, in a room in the palace (closed space); it is obvious from the photo about King George VI [22] and from the video clip about Queen Elizabeth II. [23]. The audio recording and radio broadcasting tools are presented on the photo and it indicates the communication channel and the table establishes more comfortable circumstances for the orator King George VI who worries to speak in front of audience. The interior includes a table but Queen Elizabeth II sits on a chair without any other furniture and she is calm and transpires big confidence. The video clip is not homogeneous from a rhetorical stand point because it includes moments of activities of people, doctors, medicine staff during the crisis and their everyday lives and professional engagements. It is not possible to analyse other nonverbal elements of the behaviour of the orator King George VI from authentic sources but there is additional information presented in the movie “The King’s Speech” which is a work of fiction and art. [24]

Conclusion
The article presents the outcomes of the analysis with no claims of completeness. Both speeches are short, but they are rich in content and they could be analysed from different perspectives using different methods. The results confirm the hypothesis that the two speeches delivered by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II are a part of the history of rhetoric in the 20th and 21st centuries and they contribute to contemporary royal rhetorical heritage. The speeches send out messages, present significant causes, the focus is on values and ideals. It was also established that the speeches were delivered according to the modern media for the relevant time: the radio in 1939 and the Internet in 2020; considering the affordances of communication channels to reach a wide audience. Both speeches achieve the set goals and the reasons for this are the results of the comparative rhetorical analysis, which follows the steps of exploring the situation and the context, identifying the characteristics of the speaker and the audience, exploring genre’s features, presenting arguments and rhetorical figures as well as non-verbal and visual communication and the effects of the royal rhetoric. Studies could include an exploration at other levels (such as their impact on politics and the agenda settings, influences on communities), research could also examine royal rhetoric in a broader communicative context.
Citations and Notes:


The Queen Addresses Parliament at State Opening, 14.10.2019 г. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRlnTdkboR8


[24] „The King’s Speech“ (2010). Director: Tom Hooper. Colin Firth plays the role of King George VI. Lionel Logue (language and speech therapist) helps King George VI to improve manner of a pronunciation, articulation and to deliver speeches. The radio speech including Britain’s declaration of war on Germany.

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