Bulletin of the *Transilvania* University of Braşov
Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies • Vol. 12 (61) No. 2 – 2019
https://doi.org/10.31926/but.pcs.2019.61.12.12

Some uses of the royal wit kit: A pragmatic and narrative approach to the structure and functions of royal witticism

Marina-Cristiana ROTARU[1]

This article focuses on the use of verbal humour in two royal contexts and aims to identify, on the one hand, the structure of the joke and how the joke can be deciphered and, on the other hand, the communicative function(s) of the royal use of humour. In addition, the paper aims to prove that royal jokes are circumscribed to an 'archive', a particular set of norms which, in spite of its flexibility, has its own boundaries. The analytical framework rests mainly on narrative and pragmatic approaches. The investigation reveals that, being subject to the 'archive", royal jokes have to violate the cooperative principle and yet, the message manages to get through and context plays a paramount role in making the message clear. Furthermore, the paper shows how humour can facilitate the exercise of some of the rights of a constitutional monarch: the right to encourage and the right to warn.

Key-words: *verbal humour, isotopy-disjunction mechanism, functions of jokes, royal archive, co-operative principle*

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the use of verbal humour in two royal contexts. The first context is circumscribed to the year 1916, when Romania, while still maintaining its political neutrality, was preparing ground to join the Entente. The main character of this royal context is Queen Marie of Romania, a staunch advocate of Romania's

[1] Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest, marina.rotaru77@gmail.com

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joining forces with the Allies. The second context is temporarily set in 1997, when Romania lobbied intensively for joining NATO and the European Union. The spearhead of this lobby was King Mihai of Romania, who undertook a long European tour promoting Romania's cause.

Although the two royal contexts are distinct from each other, we claim that they can clearly illustrate ways in which constitutional monarchs (or their spouses – leading representatives of the Crown) understand to respect the Crown's prerogatives. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a well-known analyst of the political life in Britain, Walter Bagehot, examining how constitutional monarchy came into being (as a result of loss of political power, the monarch withdrew from the political arena and became an arbiter of the political game) coined the three rights that can be exercised by a constitutional monarch: "the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn" (Bagehot 1966, 111). Bagehot's description of the three rights of a constitutional sovereign is still valid today, so we use it as the historical background of our investigation.

The manner in which a constitutional monarch expresses himself/herself and acts is not accidental but regulated and circumscribed by 'a royal archive'. The term 'archive' was defined by Michel Foucault as "all the system of statements" organized in such a way as to allow "the formation and transformation of statements" (Foucault 2002, 145-146). Drawing on Foucault, Jan Blommaert uses the concept of 'archive' in order to illustrate the manner in which people assume a stand (thus giving birth to a discourse). He maintains that there is a set of limitations that circumscribe the generation of a discourse and that these limitations are contained in the 'archive', which he defines as "The totality of all meaningful statements and their rules of production at any given time in a given society". In addition, Blommaert underlines that "Archives impose restrictions on what can be said meaningfully" (Blommaert 2005, 251).

Although the 'archive' has its own internal regulatory system, it is not rigid, but flexible, being able to transform itself. Blommaert maintains that what facilitates the transformation of the 'archive' is 'creative practice', a concept that he borrows from Raymond Williams. According to Williams, 'creative practice' (or 'creativity') could be defined as "practical consciousness", a multifarious attitude to social norms triggered by "the tension between the received interpretation and practical experience" of social norms (Williams 1977, 130).

Blommaert underlines that, in spite of the regulated nature of creativity, it is not "static but elastic" because creativity "develops within hegemonies while it

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attempts to alter them, and so may eventually effectively alter them by generating 'supplements' to what is already in the archive" (Blommaert 2005, 105-106). However, given the existence of these hegemonies, the adaptable nature of the 'creative practice' is not unlimited. Therefore, creativity activates "both 'push' and 'pull' forces, forces that pull someone into existing hegemonies and forces that push someone out of these hegemonies" (Blommaert 2005, 106). The key role in questioning old hegemonies and creating new ones is played by "the individual agent, […] who, out of his/her own personal experience in society starts to feel that dominant understandings do no longer work" (Blommaert 2005, 106).

Taking into account Jan Blommaert's definition of the concepts 'archive' and 'creative practice', we can also define 'royal archive' as the whole collection of meaningful royal expression and action and the principles according to which they operate at any given time in a given royal context. The 'royal archive' is characterised by a certain degree of creativity which, though limited by the elements already present in the archive, can be meaningfully stimulated, up to a point, by members of a royal family who, thus, make their own contribution to the royal archive.

The humorous instances that I have selected for this analysis are two short dialogues that have, as main characters, Queen Marie and King Mihai of Romania, respectively. The investigation uses both a pragmatic approach and a narrative approach which aim to illustrate how language is used in a royal context in order to contribute to a meaningful manifestation of the monarch's rights and to highlight the internal architecture of royal humorous texts.

2. Methodology

The analytical framework of this investigation is circumscribed to a pragmatic approach, which proves whether Grice's maxims are violated or not and, if they are violated, why they are violated. The other approach adopted in this analysis is of a structuralist nature and aims to reveal the internal makeup of a royal joke and how humour is conceived as a result of a tension between what the characters would like to say and what they can really say given the existence of a royal archive. The role of context will also be emphasized as a mandatory tool for making sense of the joke.

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2.1. The Pragmatic approach

Like people, humour comes in all shapes and sizes (wit, irony, satire) and has a strong social dimension, fulfilling various social functions that will be identified and enlarged upon later on. Pragmatics, which is "the study of contextual meaning", can help reveal "what people mean in a particular context and how the context influences what is said" (Yule 1997, 3). A successful act of communication between two people engaged in conversation presupposes that the two participants co-operate with each other in order to produce a meaningful exchange of information. This assumption is called *the co-operative principle* which implies that the participants in a conversation are expected to "make [their] contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which [they] are engaged" (Yule 1997, 37).

This principle has been formulated by Grice in four maxims: the quantity maxim, the quality maxim, the relation maxim and the manner maxim. According to the maxim of quantity, the interlocutors should provide the amount of information appropriate for the purposes of the exchange and should refrain for adding extra information. The maxim of quality presupposes that the interlocutors exchange true information and refrain from stating what they consider to be false information. The interlocutors should also avoid passing information which they cannot support with evidence. According to the maxim of relation, the interlocutors should exchange information that is relevant to the purposes of their conversation. According to the maxim of manner, the participants to the exchange should "avoid obscurity of expression" and "ambiguity" and should be "brief" and "orderly" (Yule 1997, 37). Of use in the pragmatic analysis of the three humorous royal instances is the concept of "illocutionary force of the utterance" (Yule 1997, 48), which helps reveal the true meaning of the utterance as intended by the royal character.

It is generally assumed that the observance of all the four maxims ensures a meaningful exchange of information. However, some contexts make an exception. Our investigation proves that royal contexts often violate one or more of Grice's maxims because of the limitations imposed by the royal archive according to which the monarch's neutral position is sacrosanct. Paradoxically, the premeditated violation of the co-operative principle does not obstruct communication. Moreover, it helps the monarch protect his/her expected neutrality. However, the intended meaning of the speaker would not be easily deciphered without an awareness of the context.

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2.2. The Structuralist approach: the sequential organization of jokes

For the purpose of the present paper, we have considered an approach based on the isotopy disjunction model (henceforth IDM), which provides the means to identify the structure of the joke (a linear structure) and illustrate how the intended meaning of the joke can be deciphered. In revealing the intended meaning of the joke, an understanding of the functions of the joke is also helpful and will be enlarged upon later on.

The first to tackle the concept of isotopy was Greimas (1966), who initially maintained that an isotopy rests on a recurrence of semes (where a seme is defined as the basic unit of meaning). The original definition was reformulated by both Greimas and other researchers who have disputed the topic in various manners, providing shifting definitions of the term "isotopy" (Attardo 1994, 60-81). Drawing on Greimas's taxonomy, we can say that the sentence "The Queen wears the Imperial State Crown for the State Opening of Parliament" is isotopic because its elements (the Queen, the Imperial State Crown and State Opening of Parliament) contain the seme "royal ceremonial".

Newer definitions of "isotopy" have dropped the concept "seme". While drawing on Greimas, Salvatore Attardo defines isotopy by stressing its semantic dimension: "the repetition of semantic features, a definition which subsumes a large number of semantic phenomena, all related to the coherence of the text and the establishment of its topic (Attardo 1994, 81). For the sake of coherence in this paper, we will base our analysis on this definition.

IDM reveals that verbal jokes have a linear organisation. The meaning of the text of the joke can be captured from the information contained in the elements of the line and from the context (Attardo 1884, 93). Chronologically speaking, the true meaning of the joke is revealed by the identification of a first sense (S1) and then, the "unexpected" and "immediate" (Attardo 1994, 95) revelation of a second sense (S2) – the second sense being the true meaning of the joke.

What triggers the revelation of the second sense (the intended meaning of the joke) is a component of the linear structure of the joke called 'disjunctor', which "causes the passage from the first sense (S1) to a second sense (S2) antagonistic to the first one" (Attardo 1994, 95). In the mechanism of the disambiguation of the meaning of the joke, the disjunctor does not work alone, but it is helped by another component called 'connector'. The connector is "any segment of text which can be given two readings" (Attardo 1994, 96). In the mechanism of disambiguation, the disjunctor triggers the transformation of S1 into S2 (which implies that one of the

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two readings of the connector is removed through a selection process to which the context contributes directly) (Attardo 1994, 96) while the connector "playfully justifies" this change (Attardo 1994, 95). Chronologically, the connector precedes the disjunctor. However, it is often the case in verbal humour that "the disjunctor and connector coincide" (Attardo 1994, 102).

IDM as an analytical approach to humorous lines is also helpful because it allows the analysis of the text "in terms of three functions" (Attardo 1994, 85), an approach developed by Violette Morin. The definition of these functions has triggered conflicting positions in the literature. Drawing on Morin, and trying to avoid contradictions, Attardo adopts an approach to humorous texts using functions but refrains from naming these functions, preferring "opaque labels for them". Hence, for Attardo, Function 1 is labelled F1 (Attardo 1994, 88). These three functions also follow the linear structure of the joke.

Function 1 "consists of a textual sequence, often narrative, that introduces the characters, determines the situation, and in general establishes the context of the events narrated in the text" (Attardo 1994, 88). In other words, F1 outlines the background of the joke. The next function, Function 2, "creates expectations" and "introduces the need for a resolution in the story". F2 often manifests in "the form of a question which obviously needs to be answered" and "often contains the connector, which enables the switch between the two senses of the joke" (Attardo 1994, 88-89). Function 3 always comes at the end of the text. It includes the disjunctor, which generates the change of meaning from S1 to S2 and "is responsible for the humorous effect itself" (Attardo 1994, 89).

Therefore, Function 1 (the establishment of the context of the joke) and Function 2 (the identification of the question to be answered) point to "a probable sense which is belied by the third function" (Attardo 1994, 89), Function 3, which marks the climax of the joke and which is characterized by "brevity and immediacy" (Attardo 1994, 89), thus producing the humorous effect.

3. Analysis of humour in two royal contexts

3.1. Queen Marie of Romania and the 1916 neutrality of the country

In 1916, Romania was preparing to enter the war while still fiercely protecting its neutrality status which the country had assumed since 1914. Both the Entente and

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the Central Powers wanted Romania on their side since the kingdom occupied a key position on the map and could tilt the balance of power in favour of one of the two camps. Public opinion in Romania was also split between a pro-Ententist camp and a pro-German camp. Even the royal family was divided: Queen Marie, granddaughter of Queen Victoria of Great Britain, was a staunch supporter of the Entente while King Ferdinand, a German-born prince, was naturally inclined to side with his fatherland. The king's moral struggle was excruciating, having to choose between the country whose sovereign he had become and his native country. Eventually, the king understood that Romania's interests lay with the Entente and, supported by the queen, successfully defeated the first Hohenzollern: himself. But the secret had to be closely guarded so that the announcement of Romania's siding with the Entente come at the most opportune time for the country.

While events were rapidly unfolding, France decided to send to Bucharest a skillful diplomat, Auguste-Félix-Charles de Beaupoil, Count of Saint-Aulaire, whose task was to convince Romania to side with the Entente. Given the peculiar circumstances, the ceremony of the presentation of letters of accreditation before the king avoided the traditional reference to the relations between the two countries. Any such reference would have created an undesired tension. The first part of the ceremony went as planned, but the royal protocol also included a presentation to the queen, who was waiting for the French ambassador and his staff next door. Even with the queen the conversation had to be directed towards other topics in order to avoid any allusion to the delicate position of neutrality. Accompanied by Lieutenant Robert de Flers, a French playwright, who steered the conversation towards the topic of theatre, Saint-Aulaire then decided to compliment the queen on her beautiful and bright colourful outfit in an attempt to move away from the sensitive issue of Romania's neutral status (Count of Saint-Aulaire 2016, 55-56). The queen's historic reply shows her intelligence and quick wit:

> 'As you can see,' she said, with a smile that revealed her bright teeth, a smile that was not a reaction to circumstances, but came from her heart, I do not like neutral colours.'[2] (Count of Saint-Aulaire 2016, 57)

[2] My translation (După cum vedeţi, spuse ea cu un surâs care-i descoperi dinţii strălucitori, surâs care nu era de circumstanţă, ci din inimă, mie nu-mi plac culorile neutre).

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Both King Ferdinand's and Queen Marie's reactions to the presentations of Count Saint-Aulaire's letters of accreditation are circumscribed to the royal archive according to which, a constitutional king has to respect the position of political neutrality. Given the sensitive political context of Romania's preparing ground to side with the Entente, the king also had to keep his country's neutrality shrouded in mystery until the very last moment. Hence, the king's constitutional neutrality overlapped perfectly with the strategic attitude adopted by Romania at the time. Queen Marie, too, had to respect this neutrality although she was not queen regnant, but only the king's consort. The constitutional neutrality of sovereigns, enshrined in the royal archive, applies to her, too. However, the very fact that she is not queen regnant allows her more leeway. Though she cannot express ideas, she can indirectly suggest some since, unlike the king, she does not have a constitutional position in the architecture of the State. What the queen does here in respect to the royal archive is to enlarge the royal archive with a new, unofficial, yet useful function of a queen consort (a function apart from that of providing the country with an heir) – the function of a valve. By means of creativity, and using her wit, Queen Marie's intervention worked as a valve for the king, who had to suppress any gesture that may have been interpreted in one way or another. One of the dominant principles of the royal archive, the Crown's neutrality, is challenged by the creative mind of the queen who pushes the limits of the archive and generates a supplement to it with the help of a quick wit.

The restrictive nature of the royal archive can be revealed with the help of a pragmatic approach. In stating that she does not like neutral colours (with a clear reference to Romania's neutral status which she did not support), the queen intentionally disregards the co-operative principle by violating the maxim of quantity and the maxim of manner. The queen is not as informative as some might have wished because the archive (doubled by the political context) does not allow her. And her manner of conveying information is intentionally ambiguous by the use of the polysemous word "neutral". The context plays a key role because in understanding what the queen meant because it reduces the intended ambiguity to zero as the analysis of the linear structure of the reply reveals, as shown below. It should also be mentioned that someone unaware of the historical context may very well miss the point that the queen was trying to make.

First, we start with a presentation of the three functions of the humorous line. According to Attardo's taxonomy, Function 1 establishes the background: Romania's neutrality during the First World War and the country's preparations to join the Entente, still kept secret for strategic reasons, the characters (the

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Romanian sovereigns and the French diplomats). Function 2 arouses expectations. In Queen Marie's line, these two functions are missing, in the sense that they do not appear linguistically formulated, but they can be inferred from the context. The pronoun "you" in the queen's "As you can see" makes reference to the characters of the joke. The expectations (manifest in Function 2) are also inferable from the context. One can imagine Count of Saint-Aulaire admiring the queen's dress. Function 2 is present in this imaginary line of the diplomat. Function 3 comes at the end of the dialogue between the French ambassador and Queen Marie and is contained in the queen's reply, thus helping the intended meaning of the queen manifest itself.

The compliment which must have been paid to the queen by Saint-Aulaire contains the connector, which prepares the ground for the disjunctor. For the moment, if we take into account only the first two functions, we have access to what seems to be the denotative meaning of the dialogue: an ambassador compliments a queen on her beautifully coloured dress and she replies, acknowledging and accepting the compliment, that she does not like neutral colours. But this first sense (S1) seems incongruent with the context. The diplomat's compliment, which includes the connector, builds a tension which needs to be solved. It is Attardo's expectation that the ambassador's comment builds and needs to be satisfied. The solution is provided by the queen's line (As you can see, I do not like neutral colours) which contains the disjunctor (neutral colours). The queen may have worded her reply differently. She may have answered: 'As you can see, I do not like faint or pale colours'. The manner in which she was wording the meaning that she intended underlines the way in which she wanted to make her commitment to the Entente cause manifest. The disjunctor, the phrase "neutral colours" shifts the meaning of the text from S1 (a meaning apparently circumscribed to fashion) to S2 (the deliberate meaning of the queen's reply: her support for the Entente).

Thus, the queen enriches the royal archive with a supplement: a witty manifestation of royal commitment. She plays the role of a valve in diffusing the tension growing up during the meeting of the king and the French diplomat. She was able to reveal Romania's intention in a way in which the king could not have done, by means of a plurisemantic word: "neutral". Hence, the queen's reply demonstrates the dynamic nature of the royal archive while, at the same time, it underlines its restrictions: the royal archive can be supplemented on condition that the new addition is meaningful. Acting, in a way, as King Ferdinand's voice, Queen Marie asserts one of the three rights of a constitutional monarch as identified by

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Walter Bagehot (1966): the right to encourage. She skilfully found a way to show Romania's still undisclosed commitment to the cause of the Entente and encourage the French diplomatic mission in their efforts to help Romania through the war. Therefore, humour can prove a very useful tool in royal diplomacy as far as the royal archive is concerned, supplementing it in meaningful and efficient ways.

3.2. King Mihai of Romania on the first European tour for Romania's integration into NATO and the EU

In 1997, Romania launched a massive campaign for her integration into NATO and the European Union. The spearhead of the campaign was King Mihai, who was approached by the Romanian authorities in this respect. It may read provocative to ask a constitutional monarch (even if no longer on the throne) to lobby for his country which, even after the collapse of the communist regime, has continued to remain a republic. But the solution found by the Romanian State was not without logic. At the end of 1996, the democratic parties of the Romanian political establishment built a coalition called "The Democratic Convention", and managed to win the general elections. The leader of the Democratic Convention, Emil Constantinescu, became the first democratic president of Romania, replacing the former communist Ion Iliescu. In 1997, the Romanian government annulled a communist decision taken in 1948 by means of which the king and the entire royal family at the time were deprived of their Romanian citizenship. This allowed the king to return to Romania in February 1997 without any obstacles.

Why was the king invited to lobby for Romania? Why wasn't president Emil Constantinescu the one to assume such a prominent role in Romania's struggle for integration into the leading Euro-Atlantic organisations since, constitutionally, the president is in charge of the country's foreign policy? It was obliquely acknowledged that the king's power of representation on the international arena (where the lobby was being fought for) was greater than the newly elected president's.

Logistically supported by the Romanian State, the lobby was spearheaded by the king. Naturally, such a momentous enterprise should have been widely covered in the Romanian central press. Paradoxically, the main central dailies which, during the presidency of Ion Iliescu, supported the opposition, refrained from presenting the king's tour and informing their audience on the king's efforts to support the country. That is why the royal tour of 1996 was generally ignored by public opinion, unaware of what the king was trying to do. The only

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newspaper which did publish materials regularly on every stage of the royal tour was *România Liberă*. But even for a pro-democratic and pro-European newspaper like *România Liberă*, the newshole reserved for the royal lobby was very limited and the information was scarce.

In retrospect, it may not be far-fetched to believe that President Emil Constantinescu was directly interested in minimizing the echo of the king's campaign for Romania's NATO and EU integration. In the context of the king's return from exile, which stimulated the interest in a monarchic restoration (a topic which Emil Constantinescu, while still a presidential candidate, included in his campaign, vouching to organize a national debate on the matter), President Constantinescu, who was trying to strengthen his political position, had no real intention to allow the king to be in the ascendant. More news on the king's lobbying for Romania may have shadowed the president's public image as the champion of Romania's interests.

In the book *Regele Mihai. Un Surâs care nu se vede*, published years after the royal tour of 1996, the king succinctly, but suggestively, reveals his opinion on President Constantinescu's position regarding the monarch's lobbying for Romania. The short extract from the interview given by the king in the above-mentioned book contains the humorous line which is the subject of our analysis:

The book's author, Lia Lucia Petric-Epure: 'You have lobbied extensively for Romania's integration into NATO and EU. When did you have the last important meeting and how was Your Majesty's lobby received?'[3].

The King: 'Constantinescu went squeak-squeak publicly to support me in what I was trying to do. I was warmly and officially received once the political situation changed. Our cousins treated us very well. The last important meeting was before the NATO conference. In fact, we have very strong relationships, Queen Sophia being my first cousin. There is no problem there. I stayed over at my cousins' house several times'[4] (Petric Epure n.d., 32-33).

The restrictive nature of the royal archive prevents the king from being as informative about the manner in which the king's lobby was received. The royal

[3] My translation (Lia Lucia Petric Epure: Aţi făcut foarte mult lobby pentru integrarea României în NATO şi EU. Când aţi avut ultima întâlnire importantă şi cum a fost primit lobby-ul Majestăţii Voastre?).

[4] My translation (Regele Mihai: Constantinescu a făcut chiţ-chiţ public că mă susţine în ce încercam să fac. Eu am fost primit călduros şi oficial o data cu schimbarea. Verii nostri s-au purtat cât se poate de bine. Ultima dată a fost înainte de conferinţa NATO. Cu familia regală din Spania, de altfel, avem legături foarte apropiate, regina Sofia e vara mea primară. Acolo nu există nicio problemă. Eu am şi locuit la ei de mai multe ori).

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archive, which expects that the monarch avoid meddling into the political debate and guard his neutral position of arbiter forces the king to violate the maxim of quantity to a certain degree. While the monarch provides enough information on the manner in which his lobby was received in the Western European countries which he visited, he is laconic with reference to the manner in which his lobby was received back home. The answer is concise, but suggestive. The other maxims are respected. The king is honest in answering the questions and weighs the answer according to the intended purpose of the question, thus respecting the maxim of quality. The maxim of relation is also respected.

The maxim of manner, which requires the participants in a dialogue to avoid obscurity of expression and ambiguity, seems to be violated, too. The fact that the king uses an onomatopoeic expression (go squeak-squeak) in giving the answer may seem a bit ambiguous for some. But the onomatopoeia itself (a form of metaphor) contains the force of the king's utterance: the king does not mean to present a state of fact, but to signal an incongruity between the importance of the tour for Romania and the apparent apathy manifested by the Romanian press and by some senior officials. The king must have had a strong belief in uttering the phrase about President Constantinescu's attitude. The belief behind the king's utterance, called by the literature the "motivating belief" (Garmendia 2007, 152), was his conviction that, where national interest is at stake, selfish attitudes should be avoided. More on the use of the onomatopoeia will be provided below, in the analysis of the functions of the text and the linear structure of the joke.

Function 1, which establishes the context, is embedded, somehow, in the question of the king's interlocutor (the lobby is mentioned, which presupposes the existence of lobbyists). Function 2, which arouses expectations, is manifest in the same question, namely in the part referring to the way in which the royal lobby was received. Interestingly, the connector, which usually accompanies Function 2, is not present in the king's interlocutor's question. In this royal context, the connector seems to coincide with the disjunctor, being present in the king's answer, where Function 3 manifests itself. The couplet "connector+disjunctor" is revealed in the phrase "Constantinescu went squeak-squeak […]", which reveals the intended meaning of the king's answer.

The onomatopoeia "squeak-squeak" has a metaphoric dimension and is characterized by a "mismatch" between "the speaker's motivating belief's referential content and the utterance's locutionary content" (Garmendia 2007, 154-155). By describing President Constantinescu as going squeak-squeak, the king does not say or believe that Constantinescu is a mouse. The king only compares the president's being economical with reference to the king's tour with the short, high-pitched

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sound of a mouse. The disjunctor thus facilitates the passage from a potential first sense (S1) to the real sense (S2) of the king's utterance and the connector simultaneously provides reasons for the transition from S1 (a general evaluation of Constantinescu's attitude, an evaluation which may have been worded in more noncommittal terms) to S2 (a humorous, yet critical evaluation of the president's public position towards the royal tour). The use of the onomatopoeia "squeak-squeak" to characterize the president's public stand creates an unexpected and immediate humorous effect. In so doing, King Mihai has found an ingenious way to exercise one of the three rights of a constitutional king: the right to warn. He warned against the egoistic attitudes of politicians who put personal political interest before national interest.

4. Conclusions

Royal humour (in its verbal manifestation) follows certain rules that are included in the royal archive, a set of norms that regulate the conduct of constitutional monarchs and their discourse. By means of creativity, the royal archive can be extended, but its flexibility is not unlimited. The limit is crossed when meaningless acts are performed. As long as royal actions make sense within the framework of expected and/ or relevant royal behaviour, the archive remains flexible, providing monarchs with supplements in exercising their constitutional rights.

Specific to royal humour is the violation of the co-operative principle. But this violation is neither arbitrary nor unjustified. The violation of the co-operative principle is required by the royal archive which imposes limitations on what a constitutional monarch can say in a given context and how they can convey a message. In spite of the violation of maxims, the message does get through.

The IDM as an approach to humour helps reveal the internal architecture of a humorous text. The three functions mentioned above, which characterize not only humorous texts, but narrative texts in general, underline the internal logic of the joke and contribute to the understanding of how jokes are built, following a linear structure.

The two royal contexts analysed above show how polysemous words (neutral colours) and onomatopoeia and metaphor (go squeak-squeak) can turn into efficient communicative tools of the royal wit kit. The two monarchs investigated in this analysis prove to have an instinctive understanding of the mechanism of humour, evidence of a "humour competence" (Attardo 1994, 13) which they must have acquired while performing the role of sovereigns.

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