

# ON POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN MEDIEVAL STUDIES: SUMMARISING THE RESEARCH FIELD AND ITS THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

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## ABSTRACT

Communicating means taking part in an exchange of information. Of necessity, communicating is an intersubjective practice that involves the participation of a sender and a receiver, both of whom make sense of and give meaning to the act of communicating. Political communication, the topic of this work, seeks to create or use a public space in order to communicate with the public, who participates in the two dimensions of the communicational act. Through this, political communication affects the public conception of politics and the political order – local or otherwise – in which the public either takes part, complains about, revolts against or confirms, reinforces, legitimises or delegitimises. Rumours and gossip, speeches and subversive songs, pamphlets, flyers and libels, posters, drawings, and political poems are all oral or written forms of communication. In this study, we shall examine the theoretical foundations and practice of political communication, focusing on the medieval period and, particularly, on Castile<sup>1</sup>.

## KEYWORDS

Political Communication, Information, Public Space, Public Opinion, Communicational Mechanisms.

## CAPITALIA VERBA

Communicatio politica, Informatio, Loca publica, Fama publica, Mechanismi communicationis.

Every communicational act involves more than simply issuing a message. It involves information actively contributed by the sender and a significant degree of participation by the receiver, who, in addition to acknowledging the receipt of the message, must understand it. Communication implies interaction between agents. It is, therefore, a collective phenomenon, subject to constitutive rules established by the members of the interacting groups. It is a process inserted into a given socio-political context, broadly understood, and historically contingent, which means that the rules of the communicational act are subject to change through new communicational acts. Since communication is effected through symbols —linguistic or otherwise— all communication is symbolic, and the correct interpretation of symbols, of signs, is verified through specific communication channels (artefacts, texts, images, gestures, actions) which are, for their part, subject to other representational processes in a multi-layered structure of meaning.<sup>2</sup>

One of the most relevant aspects of political communication processes is their conception as a tool for the preservation/confrontation/destruction of political power. The efficiency of these processes and of the mechanisms of communication that they mobilise is linked to the political context and also to the technical manipulation of these instruments, the communicative ability of the actor (an organisation, an individual that represents it, or an individual acting in his/her private interests, which are not necessarily devoid of political meaning) —an ability understood not only in terms of dialectical skill in the construction of a discourse but also in “placing” said discourse in the right arena and before the right audience.

The study of political communication in the Middle Ages dates back to the 1970s, with Richter's and Clanchy's research, which focused primarily on oral communication. Over time, the field opened up to examine artistic media and music, gestures and smells, colour, clothing, symbolic objects and, from a perspective related to both everyday life and deliberate political messaging, insults, gossip and even subversive songs. The study of written communication has transcended the writings of the powerful to incorporate texts, in the form of official demands but

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1. This article is part of a research project entitled “Ciudad y nobleza en el tránsito a la Modernidad: autoritarismo regio, pactismo y conflictividad política. Castilla, de Isabel I a las Comunidades/ Towns and conflict. Castile from Elizabeth I to the ‘Comuneros’” (HAR2017-83542-P, MINECO 2018-2021/AEI/FEDER, UE), funded by the Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación (Spain). It also is part of a research project entitled “Más allá de la palabra. Comunicación y discurso políticos en las Castilla Trastámara (1367-1504)/ Beyond the word. Political Communication and Discourse in Trastámara Castile (1367-1504)” (PID2021-125571NB-I00, funded by MCIN/AEI /10.13039/501100011033 / FEDER, UE “Una manera de hacer Europa”).

2. Stollberg-Rilinger, Barbara. “La communication symbolique à l'époque pré-moderne. Concepts, thèses, perspectives de recherche”. *Trivium*, 2 (2008): 1-35; Althoff, Gerd. “De l'importance de la communication symbolique pour la compréhension du Moyen Âge”. *Trivium*, 2 (2008): 1-21. Bélanger, André-J. “La communication politique, ou le jeu du théâtre et des arènes”. *Hermès. La revue*, 17-18 (1995): 125-143. 14 January 2021. <[www.cairn.info/revue-hermes-la-revue-1995-3.htm](http://www.cairn.info/revue-hermes-la-revue-1995-3.htm)>. Leeuwen, Jacoba van, ed. *Symbolic Communication in Late Medieval Towns*. Louvain: Leuven University Press, 2006.



mostly less-formal expressions, such as libels, flyers and political poetry, created by the lower and middle classes.<sup>3</sup>

Political communication has been traditionally examined from the perspective of conflict, or at least the confrontation of the positions of different actors. However, if we look beyond diplomatic relations that link state agencies, communication can be seen not only as an instrument that brings different political positions closer to one another but also as a mechanism to generate political cohesion within agencies, which share available information with their agents and make them part of the processes of generation and dissemination.<sup>4</sup>

The aim of this contribution is to examine existing research on political communication in the Middle Ages, both in general and, more specifically, in Castile. I shall try to take into consideration the logic on which political communication was based, how it operated, its function, the spaces in which it took place, the agents and agencies that generated it, the construction of public opinion through it and what tools were used to articulate it. My aim is not only to undertake a research overview but also, through a structured examination of the field, to present a comprehensive analytical framework.

## 1. Political communication: The construction of an analytical model

As pointed out by Wolton, the notion of political communication emphasises the importance of communication processes in the configuration of the political framework and in the expansion of public space—for which political communication

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3. Richter, Michael. *Sprache und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter: Untersuchungen zur Mündlichen Kommunikation in England von der Mitte des elften bis zum Beginn des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts*. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1979, cited in: Mostert, Marco. "New Approaches to Medieval Communication?", *New Approaches to Medieval Communication*, Marco Mostert, ed. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1999: 15-37. Clanchy, Michael T. *From Memory to Written Record*. England, 1066-1307. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979; Hattori, Yoshihisa, ed. *Political Order and Forms of Communication in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Rome: Viella, 2014. For a very comprehensive bibliography for the publication date, which is still useful today, see: Mostert, Marco. "A Bibliography of Works on Medieval Communication", *New Approaches to Medieval Communication*, Marco Mostert, ed. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1999: 193-297. A more up-to-date (but synthetic) review and bibliography can be found in: Genet, Jean-Philippe. "Image, représentation et communication politique", *Power and Persuasion. Essays on the Art of State Building in Honour of W.P. Blockmans*, Peter Hoppenbrouwers, Antheum Janse, Robert Stein, eds. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010: 275-289. For a historiographical review with a focus on medieval studies, see: Nieto Soria, José Manuel. "Comunicación y conflicto político: algunas perspectivas de análisis", *Comunicación y conflicto en la cultura política peninsular. Siglos XIII al XV*, José Manuel Nieto Soria, Óscar Villarroel González, eds. Madrid: Sílex, 2018: 17-47.

4. Studies that address organisational communication clearly stress the potential of this approach. See, for instance: McPhee, Robert D.; Tompkins, Phillip K., eds. *Organizational Communication: Traditional Themes and New Directions*. Beverley Hills: Sage Publications, 1985; Putnam, Linda L.; Krone, Kathleen J., eds. *Organizational Communication. 4. Participation, Power and Gender*. London: Sage Publications, 2006; Putnam, Linda L.; Nicotera, Anne Maydan, eds. *Building Theories of Organization: The Constitutive Role of Communication*. New York-Abingdon: Routledge, 2009.



is a first-rate drive. Though this approach specifically applies to political communication within democratic societies, it can be adopted in medieval studies. This perspective emphasizes: first, the relevance of the interaction that results from the (simultaneous) circulation of existing discourses; second, the role played by the communicational act, taking precedence over the role of confrontation, discursive or otherwise; third, the weight of information and the construction of different ranges of public opinion, regarding both communicational process and political construction; fourth, the field of analysis, limited to contradictory discourses, narrowing the focus on the analysis of political struggle, conflict and difference, which greatly simplifies the task at hand —simplifying, though, does not mean ruling out the study of other political communication processes that directly or indirectly affect political contestation and its communication, such as those taking place in the course of institutional and uncontested interactions between the different agencies that constitute the body politic. All in all, the approach proposed is the same as emphasising the cultural framework in which process, message and actors intervene.<sup>5</sup>

In this sense, the logic of political communication analysis rests on the very need to communicate that politics implies because, as pointed out by Mercier, “at all levels, politics needs communication to fully crystallise”. Politics, or the political —so as to broaden the notion beyond modern conceptions— must address, and express itself within, the framework of social values in which it operates. It must be able to link with the (political) community, more or less widely conceived according to specific circumstances, and mobilise it according to the values of the senders of the political message —not necessarily the rulers, although it is obvious that these are the most interested in leading this process. First and foremost, political communication must develop the communicational processes and instruments necessary to endow its programme with authority, and it is in this sense that one of the most subtle aspects of these processes must be considered since “communication intervenes as a staging of the owners of power, in association to a move towards the legitimation of

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5. Wolton, Dominique. “La communication politique : construction d’un modèle”. *Hermès. La revue*, 4/1 (1989): 27-42, quote in 30. Also focused on modern society – which is the focus of the journal – see the special issue: Wolton, Dominique. *Hermès. La revue*, 17-18/3-4 (1995). Particularly with regard to the relational framework and the contradictory nature of these processes: Lemieux, Vincent. “Un modèle communicationnel de la politique”. *Hermès. La revue*, 17-18/3-4 (1995): 93-105 and Wolton, Dominique, “Les contradictions de la communication politique”. *Hermès. La revue*, 17-18/3-4 (1995): 107-124. For the notions of “communication” and “politics” and their relationship, see: Prado, Plinio Walder. “Jeux de langage et théorie de la communication. Notes sur Wittgenstein et Habermas”. *Hermès. La revue*, 1/1 (1988): 143-159. For everyday communication in the milieu of the royal agency and the progressive formalisation processes undergone by it, see: Fianu, Kouky. “À tous ceux qui ces lettres verront”. La formalisation de la communication royale selon Odart Morchesne (1427)”, *Information et société en Occident à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Claire Boudreau, Kouky Fianu, Claude Gauvard, Michel Hébert, eds. Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2004: 427-438; and Martín Prieto, Pablo. “Los preámbulos como instrumento de comunicación y propaganda de la realeza Trastámara en Castilla”, *Hermès. La revue*, 17-18/3-4 (1995): 229-261.



authority".<sup>6</sup> As pointed out by Dominique Wolton: *la communication mêle de manière inextricable valeurs et intérêts, idéaux et idéologies. Et rien ne garantit, surtout au moment de son triomphe technique et économique, que les idéaux de la communication d'hier s'inscriront dans les réalités de demain.*<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, as argued by Balandier, when power enters the stage, it becomes "theatricalised" through the mobilisation of myths, symbols, and rituals, and through the conception of political action as performance. His analysis of Machiavelli's *The Prince* is that of a ruler who must act as a political actor to dominate the city. Ceremonies, whether royal or civic, processions, parades, political assemblies (*Cortes*, councils), political courts and public punishments are spectacular forms of communication; they are theatricalisations that contribute to objectivising and reaffirming the political principles according to which society is organised, ordered, and unified around the ruler. Politics is built on a base of active and expressive techniques provided by the field of action. In traditional societies, these processes summon an audience to an event that is going to take place in real time. During these, the ruler demands the audience's active, and legitimising, participation. Actors, symbols —space itself assumes a symbolic role— and especially words interact in the act of communication, and it is this interaction which ultimately determines the content and scope of the message.<sup>8</sup>

Ultimately, political communication aims to control the interpretation of the political in a given context. In this regard, communication can help to identify problems and offer solutions (at least in appearance) through their integration into the political debate. This lends these issues a legitimacy that relies on the capacity of the actor (the authority) to identify and respond to the matters that concern the community, even if this response is more or less fabricated —the result of the authority's ability to manipulate the process. In the same way that problems can be identified and incorporated into the political debate, the process can work the other way around, outlining matters that it wishes/desires to sideline. Successful political communication provides or strengthens the

6. Mercier, Arnaud. "Presentación general. Identificación de *la comunicación política*", *La comunicación política*, Arnaud Mercier, ed. Buenos Aires: La Crujía, 2012: 7-26, quotes in 7.

7. "Communication links in an inextricable way values and interests, ideals and ideologies. And it cannot be guaranteed, especially at the moment of its technical and economic triumph, that the communication ideals of yesterday will be inscribed on the realities of the tomorrow": Wolton, Dominique. *Penser la communication*. Paris: Flammarion, 1997: 13-14.

8. To represent the way in which power acts on the stage, Balandier coined the term "theatrocracy": *¿ tout univers politique est une scène, ou plus généralement un espace dramatique, où sont produit des effets ?* ("all political universes are a scene, or in general, a dramatic space where effects are produced"): Balandier, Georges. *Le pouvoir sur scènes*. Paris: Fayard, 2006: 19-22, 27-28, 32-34, 42-43, 174, quote in 125; Bouhaïk-Gironés, Marie. "Le théâtre, entre communication politique et action politique (France, XIIIe-XVIe s.)", *The Languages of Political Society. Western Europe, 14th-17th Centuries*, Andrea Gamberini, Jean-Philippe Genet, Andrea Zorzi, eds. Rome: Viella, 2011: 229-244; Bourdieu, Pierre. *Langage et pouvoir symbolique*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001: 213-258 (Chapter: "La représentation politique"); Galletti, Anna Imelde. "All the world's a stage": La théâtralisation de l'histoire", *L'histoire et les nouveaux publics dans l'Europe médiévale (XIIIe-XVe siècle)*, Jean-Philippe Genet, ed. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1997: 55-74; Nieto Soria, José Manuel. "Comunicación y conflicto político...": 17-47.



legitimacy of the ruler, of the communication actor. The recognition of legitimacy rests both on the substance of political action and on the way this process is carried out, especially when the discourse and other instruments of political communication use emotional tools to attract support, affect and understanding. The very possibility of applying the same logic independent of the type of agent/agency involved—the king, a group of rebel aristocrats, a group of craftspeople protesting against the urban authorities—is based on a shared conception of communication. The specific expression of this conception—marked by a shared political context—can be reduced to a single communication system, in whose logic, procedures and instruments all actors participate, and within which specific subsystems of communication are outlined.<sup>9</sup>

At any rate, the logic of political communication cannot be understood outside the political contexts in which it operates. The procedures and tools it uses, the spaces within which it takes place, and even the actors who participate in the process force us to consider political communication as a set of historically contingent practices and agencies. In every context, therefore, we need to identify not only the sender but also the conditions in which it acts in its capacity as a political actor (as sender of a political statement), the receiver, the actors who are affected by this statement, the public space (political insofar as communication is addressed to a community that is understood politically) and the means of communication deployed. Genet reminds us that these means are not only a technical tool but also a set of socially elaborated structures whose comprehensibility and ability to manipulate rely on the whole communication process. It is essential to understand this structural framework, the language and the codes used as well as the different communication languages employed (including not only word-based languages but also music and gestures), which play such an important role in everyday political communication and in more specific spheres such as that of ritual and liturgy.<sup>10</sup>

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9. Wolton, Dominique. "La communication politique...": 27-42. Gingras, Anne-Marie. "La argumentación en los debates televisados entre los candidatos presidenciales de Estados Unidos: la emoción como táctica de persuasión", *La comunicación política*, Arnaud Mercier, ed. Buenos Aires: La Crujía, 2012: 99-111. Genet, Jean-Philippe. "Histoire et système de communication au Moyen Age", *L'histoire et les nouveaux publics dans l'Europe médiévale (XIIIe-XVe siècle)*, Jean-Philippe Genet, ed. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1997: 11-29. Sophia Menache discusses the unity of the communication system, arguing for the existence of a multiplicity of systems, elaborated and operated by specific agencies/actors. She specifically identifies the Church and the Crown and even recognises a sort of communication system exclusive of heretic groups. See: Menache, Sophia. *The Vox Dei. Communication in the Middle Ages*. New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

10. Achache, Gilles. "Le marketing politique". *Hermès. La revue*, 4/1 (1989): 103-112; Lasswell, Harold D. "The structure and function of communication in society", *The Communication of Ideas*, L. Bryson, ed. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948: 38-44. 5 September 2016 <pdf4pro.com/view/the-structure-and-function-of-communication-in-society-42a4e7.html>; Genet, Jean-Philippe. "Histoire et système de communication...": 11-29; Dumolyn, Jan. "Political Communication and Political Power in the Middle Ages: a Conceptual Journey". *Edad Media. Revista de Historia*, 13 (2012): 33-55.



## 2. Political communication, culture and political languages

“Political culture consists of a widely shared, fundamental beliefs that have political consequences. Political culture shapes how individuals and the society act and react politically”.<sup>11</sup> This belief system is specific for each culture and even for each subculture and reflects different degrees in which socialisation processes affect each group and individual. From this perspective, political culture is the framework in which politics unfolds, so that political communication processes affect (among other things) social dynamics; thus, they can be explained as a function of these processes’ structure, content, and flow.<sup>12</sup>

This makes sense of the theory that politics is culturally experienced, making it necessary to examine the language on which this political experience is built.<sup>13</sup> Political communication, culture and language are thus inextricably linked. Language, its forms of expression and meaning, the way expressions and meanings are operationalised, their weaknesses or strengths, and the way they are transformed by actors in the context of specific socio-political practices, need to be addressed. As noted by Spiegel, this context is of the utmost importance. It is within its framework that discourse emerges/is produced and is key in “filling” discourse with meaning and de-codifying the motivations and message that underlie the communication process. This is especially so in a context of political struggle in which actions and political messages travel through mainstream channels while, at the same time, exhibiting a remarkable ability to transit less well-trodden paths or even open new ones.<sup>14</sup> It is on the basis of this socio-political context, and the interaction of

11. Paletz, David L.; Lipinski, Daniel. “Political Culture and Political Communication”. *Working Papers: Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials*, 92 (1994): 1-17, quote in 3. See also: Reinhard, Wolfgang. “Qu’est-ce que la culture politique européenne ? Fondement d’une anthropologie historique politique”. *Trivium*, 2 (2008): 1-22. 29 August 2016 <[trivium.revues.org/1152](http://trivium.revues.org/1152)>.

12. For a historiographical overview of the notion of political culture, see: Formisano, Ronald P. “The Concept of Political Culture”. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 31/3 (2001): 393-426. An interesting review article about the use of the concept can be found in: Carrasco Manchado, Ana Isabel. “¿Cultura política o cultura de la ‘política’ en los discursos de la nobleza? Una categoría de análisis para el estudio de la politización de la nobleza castellana en el siglo XV”. *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, 34 (2016): 27-57.

13. Balandier, Georges. *Le pouvoir sur scènes*, Paris: Fayard, 2006: 161. For this, we must take note of computer-based studies of language which provide interesting information concerning the vocabulary used, the frequency with which certain mottoes are used and the contexts in which they emerge. See the European Research Council project directed by Jean-Philippe Genet, Plateforme d’Analyse Linguistique Médiévale. <[palm.huma-num.fr/PALM/](http://palm.huma-num.fr/PALM/)>; and the Consortium Sources Médiévales. <[cosme.hypotheses.org/266](http://cosme.hypotheses.org/266)>. See also: Fletcher, Christopher. “What Makes a Political Language? Key Terms, Profit and Damage in the Common Petition of the English Parliament, 1343-1422”, *The Voices of the People in Late Medieval Europe. Communication and Popular Politics*, Jan Dumolyn, Jelle Haemers, Hipólito Rafael Oliva Herrero, Vincent Challet, eds. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2014: 91-106; Fournel, Jean-Louis; Zancarini, Jean-Claude. *La grammaire de la République: langages de la politique chez Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540)*. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2009; and Braekevelt, Jonas; Dumolyn, Jan. “Diplomatique et discours politiques. Une analyse lexicographique qualitative et quantitative des ordonnances de Philippe le Bon pour la Flandre (1419-1467)”. *Revue Historique*, 662/2 (2012): 323-356. 20 January 2021 <[www.cairn.info/revue-historique-2012-2-page-323.htm](http://www.cairn.info/revue-historique-2012-2-page-323.htm)>.

14. Smith, Jay M. “No More Language Games: Words, Beliefs, and the Political Culture of Early Modern France”. *American Historical Review*, 102/5 (1997): 1413-1440. The reference to Spiegel in: Spiegel,



different contexts, in which political discourse is framed, that the different elements which constitute said discourse (“idioms, rhetorics, ways of talking about politics, distinguishable language games of which each may have its own vocabulary, rules, preconditions and implications, tone and style”) must be conceptualised,<sup>15</sup> especially if the socio-political context or field is regarded as the, also linguistic, outcome of joint actions carried out by a collective. It is this shared context that presents the actors of communication —of political communication— with the linguistic system and mechanisms of codification and de-codification necessary for discourses and actions to be understandable to all. Furthermore, as pointed out by Lakoff, the ability to understand (political) messages rests on mental frameworks and structures of which we are not fully aware, and which organise the way we experience the world. In this regard, language —political or otherwise— is never neutral, for each word activates a framework of reference in the brain, or a series of interrelated frameworks, forcing its de-codification and also its codification on the basis of the experience and the meanings provided by the frameworks. In other words, the efficiency of (political) communication processes depend on the language used responding identically within the frameworks of both sender and receiver, and even of the same culture and subculture. Anything else short-circuits the whole process and, eventually, triggers a change in the framework which, if the re-framing is successful, modifies those aspects of the (political) system in which the contradiction has emerged. This does not mean that all linguistic codes —broadly speaking— are equally accessible to all groups, but that contexts and frameworks, if they are shared sufficiently, create the political space in which the language and political discourse of different groups can interact dialectically, affecting the development of the socio-political structures that they share and the underlying power relations.<sup>16</sup>

This is the case of rhetoric, one of the main instruments of a political language conceived from cultivated and popular perspectives alike —the commons also used

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Gabrielle M. “History and Post-Modernism IV”. *Past and Present*, 135 (1992): 194-208. Complementing Spiegel: Bourdieu, Pierre. *Langage...*: 67-98 (Chapter: “La production et la reproduction de la langue légitime”), and Bourdieu, Pierre. *Langage...*: 343-377 (Chapter: “Censure et mise en forme”).

15. Pocock, John Greville Agard. *Political Thought and History. Essays on Theory and Method*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009: 89.

16. Clark, Herbert Herb. *Using Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996: 3, 13-15, 17-18, 36 and 140. Lakoff, George. *No pienses en un elefante. Lenguaje y debate político*. Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 2007: 17, 25, 40-41 and 147. For an examination of the links between language and political community in the Middle Ages, see: Genet, Jean-Philippe, ed. *La légitimité implicite*. Paris-Rome: Publications de la Sorbonne-Ecole française de Rome, 2015: 225-355 (Chapter: “Légitimité de la communication linguistique”); and Gamberini, Andrea. “The language of politics and the process of state-building: approaches and interpretations”, *The Italian Renaissance State*, Andrea Gamberini, Isabella Lazzarini, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012: 406-424. Mairey, Aude, ed. “Monograph Langues politiques, XIIe-XVe siècle”. *Médiévales*, 57 (2009). 7 June 2019 <medievales.revues.org/5797>. An interesting case study can be found in Boone, Marc. “Langue, pouvoir et dialogue. Aspects linguistiques de la communication entre les ducs de Bourgogne et leurs sujets flamands (1385-1505)”. *Revue du Nord*, 379/1 (2009): 9-33. 8 June 2019 <www.cairn.info/revue-du-nord-2009-1-page-9.htm>, where the construction of a political relational framework between duke (French language) and count (Flemish language) led to the progressive incorporation of the Flemish into the ducal administration of the county.





their own linguistic tricks. Nieto Soria has analysed in detail the rhetorical battlefield of Castilian politics. Along with a legitimising rhetoric—based on such principles as the defence of the kingdom and the Crown, the commonwealth, the fight against tyranny, and the right to resistance—he identifies other rhetorical forms which incorporate a range of instruments that expanded the base of persecuted political principles. He refers to: an activist rhetoric, based on complaints, protest and the creation of spaces of convergence with the *Hermandad* and the *Cortes*; a disseminating rhetoric, based on political discourses, sermons, predications, political poetry, epistles, and proclamations; and, finally, a perpetuating rhetoric, which dealt with fame and the construction of historical memory.<sup>17</sup> These resources were not monopolised by a specific group, aristocratic or otherwise. Thus, in the urban arena different forms of rhetoric and discourses were shared, whilst adapting them to their contextual needs, by the various components of urban social structures.<sup>18</sup> From the elite to the common, in both cities and the countryside, all groups were able to develop their own rhetoric—which, as a rule, used and abused the notions of commonwealth and justice—and also to identify and make use of the spaces in which these discourses occurred and, in general, the linguistic communication tools that best suited their interests. On the one hand, this emphasises the increasing awareness among urban elites of the need to dominate the art of rhetoric as a discursive strategy to meet political ends from at least the late 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, with the dissemination of humanistic ideals. Fargeix has documented this phenomenon in Lyon, especially in the final third of the century. On the other hand, the use of language as a tool for denunciation is paradigmatic, not (only) as an instrument of propaganda but (also) as a legal weapon. As a result, rhetoric is not used only for propaganda: it emerges in letters of complaint to the king or the *Cortes*, in which cities seek one another's legal support, and formal letters of denunciation addressed to the royal courts of justice.<sup>19</sup>

17. In contrast, González Alonso argues that political language had only a limited development during the Middle Ages, burdened by the role played by theology and Roman law in its formation. Nieto Soria, José Manuel. “Más que palabras. Los instrumentos de la lucha política en la Castilla bajomedieval”, *Conflictos sociales, políticos e intelectuales en la España de los siglos XIV y XV*, José Ignacio de la Iglesia Duarte, ed. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2004: 165-204; and González Alonso, Benjamín. “Rey y reino en los siglos bajomedievales”, *Conflictos sociales, políticos e intelectuales en la España de los siglos XIV y XV*, José Ignacio de la Iglesia Duarte, ed. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2004: 147-164. See also: Nieto Soria, José Manuel. “La oratoria como ‘speculum regum’ en la Crónica de Enrique IV de Diego Enríquez del Castillo”. *Memorabilia*, 7 (2003): 1-8. 8 February 2021 <dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=1201847>. For a synthesis and a broad essay about what these discursive formulae represented, see: Corral Sánchez, Nuria. “Comunicación, discursos y contestación política en la Castilla tardomedieval”. *Territorio, Sociedad y Poder*, 15 (2020): 47-65; and Corral Sánchez, Nuria. *Discursos contra los nobles en la Castilla tardomedieval*. Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2021.

18. On the reality and limits of participation, see: Watts, John. “The Pressure of the Public on Later Medieval Politics”, *The Fifteenth Century. IV. Political Culture in Late Medieval Britain*, Linda Clark, Christine Carpenter, eds. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2004: 159-180.

19. For this issue, see the monograph: José María Monsalvo Antón, ed. “Culturas políticas urbanas en la Península Ibérica”. *Edad Media. Revista de Historia*, 14 (2013); Monsalvo Antón, José María. “Aspectos de las culturas políticas de los caballeros y los pecheros en Salamanca y Ciudad Rodrigo a mediados del siglo XV. Violencias rurales y debates sobre el poder en los concejos”, *Lucha política, condena y legitimación en la España medieval*, María Isabel Alfonso Antón, Julio Escalona Monge, Georges Martin, eds. Lyon: École



### 3. Information, space and public opinion

In 1993, Philippe Contamine emphasised the scant attention that information had previously been paid in the field of medieval studies. Since then, a growing field has begun to address, albeit not systematically, different aspects of the process of transmission of news; the actors responsible for their mobilisation, including occasional and professional couriers and ambassadors; the rhythms and mutual links created between the different agencies involved —cities, lords and the central powers, addressing other state agencies or institutions in their own political apparatus; the ritual that surrounded the transference of information; and the basis of reality or disinformation that sustained the process, with special emphasis on rumour.<sup>20</sup>

Information, especially political information, is rarely aseptic and neutral. The information provided by central authorities and the various elite groups obviously responds to their interests, and seeks to generate favourable currents of opinion or, at least, to stifle contestation. This does not mean that medieval political communication was not subject to the opinion, including the emotional opinion, of the intended audience, or that it was impervious to criticism and even rejection. On the other hand, access to a wide audience required summoning powers, letters, messengers and ambassadors, and, in the cities, bell ringing and city criers. Communication did not scorn more dramatic resources, the elaborated scenography

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normale supérieure de Lyon Éditions, 2004: 237-296; and Monsalvo Antón, José María. “En torno a la cultura contractual de las élites urbanas. Pactos y compromisos políticos (linajes y bandos de Salamanca, Ciudad Rodrigo y Alba de Tormes)”, *El contrato político en la Corona de Castilla. Cultura y sociedad políticas entre los siglos X al XVI*, François Foronda, Ana Isabel Carrasco Manchado, eds. Madrid: Dykinson, 2008: 159-209; Montero Málaga, Alicia Inés. “Capital relacional y capital social en el acceso de la alta nobleza al gobierno municipal burgalés a principios del siglo XVI. La provisión de la alcaldía mayor a Francisco de Brizuela”. *En la España Medieval*, 41 (2018): 227-256; and Jara Fuente, José Antonio. “‘Commo cunple a seruiçio de su rey e sennor natural e al procomún de la su tierra e de los vesinos e moradores de ella’. La noción de ‘servicio público’ como seña de identidad política comunitaria en la Castilla urbana del siglo XV”. *e-Spania*, 4 (2007): 1-30. 23 December 2007 <espania.revues.org>; Mondragón, Silvina Andrea. “‘sepan quantos esta carta de procuración vieren’: un análisis de la comunicación política y los sectores populares en Castilla bajomedieval a partir del caso de Alfonso Sánchez del Tiemblo”. *Trabajos y Comunicaciones*, 53 (2021): 1-13. 18 February 2021 <doi.org/10.24215/23468971e142>. And for a broader context, see: Dumolyn, Jan. “Privileges and novelties: the political discourse of the Flemish cities and rural districts in their negotiations with the dukes of Burgundy (1348-1506)”. *Urban History*, 35/1 (2008): 5-23; and Fargeix, Caroline. *Les élites Lyonnaises du XVe siècle au miroir de leur langage. Pratiques et représentations culturelles des conseillers de Lyon, d’après les registres de délibérations consulaires*. Paris: De Boccard, 2007: 326-336 and 460-482.

20. Contamine, Philippe. “Introduction”, *La circulation des nouvelles au Moyen Âge, Société des historiens médiévistes de l’Enseignement supérieur public*, ed. Rome: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994: 9-24. 29 September 2015 <www.persee.fr/doc/shmes\_1261-9078\_1994\_act\_24\_1\_1641>; Nadrigny, Xavier. “La place des messageries dans la municipalité toulousaine durant la première moitié du xve siècle”, *Information et société en Occident à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Claire Boudreau, Kouky Fianu, Claude Gauvard, Michel Hébert, eds. Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2004: 261-280; and Monnet, Pierre. “Courriers et messages : un réseau de communication à l’échelle urbaine dans les pays d’Empire à la fin du Moyen Âge”, *Information et société en Occident à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Claire Boudreau, Kouky Fianu, Claude Gauvard, Michel Hébert, eds. Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2004: 281-306.



of which, such as lecterns and gallows, enabled both the re-dimensioning of public participation and the very mechanisms used to shape public opinion to change. Proclamations, a summarised version of public statements, were replaced by the full reading of documents or by impromptu speeches. However, official communication systems, such as letters and directives, were generally addressed to a more restricted public on a need-to-know basis: the central or local authorities in charge of their implementation.<sup>21</sup> This still leaves room for information obtained by private means, such as letters —merchants and their agents in other cities are a classic example— and personal conversations.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast, during the final two centuries of the Middle Ages, and especially during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, new literary genres emerged that had an impact on the way information was conceived in terms of both production and scope, as well as on the audience. Memoirs were the result of the birth of a wide variety of new interests —not only political— and the appearance of non-professional authors, whose works are justified, as noted with regard to other fields of development of political communication, by the desire to pursue the commonwealth, the royal service and even the good of the cities from which the authors came. Memoirs were thus presented as a public good and were addressed to an audience that was politically active within their “natural” fields of action. This is closely linked to the transformation of diplomatic relations between cities, between cities and the state, and between states. Memoirs, for instance, incorporated useful advice

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21. Carmona Ruiz, María Antonia. “The Perception of Popular Discourse in Late Medieval Chronicles: the Case of the ‘Relación de las Comunidades de Castilla’”, *The Voices of the People in Late Medieval Europe. Communication and Popular Politics*, Jan Dumolyn, Jelle Haemers, Hipólito Rafael Oliva Herrero, Vincent Challet, eds. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2014: 63-71; Verdon, Jean. *Information et désinformation au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Perrin, 2010. See the essential: *Information et société en Occident à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Claire Boudreau, Kouky Fianu, Claude Gauvard, Michel Hébert, eds. Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2004, examine the notion of information and the distinction between formal and informal information, and a number of contributions analyse the process of selection, organisation and action of messengers and criers inside political structures. *La circulation des nouvelles au Moyen Âge* focuses not only on technical matters involving the circulation of messages but also, and especially, on ambassadors and official couriers. For the urban world, see: Buchholzer-Rémy, Laurence. *Une ville en ses réseaux: Nuremberg à la fin du Moyen Âge*. Paris: Éditions Belin, 2006: especially 253-310. Proclamations, their ritual instruments and their efficacy as a communication act have been addressed in a significant number of publications; see especially the works compiled by: Lett, Didier; Offenstadt, Nicolas, eds. *Haro! Noël! Oyé! Pratiques du cri au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2003; and Nieto Soria, José Manuel. “El pregón real en la vida política de la Castilla Trastámara”. *Edad Media. Revista de Historia*, 13 (2012): 77-102. For the proclamation public reading – with legal effect – of legal dispositions and orders, see; Maddicott, John. “The County Community and the Making of Public Opinion in Fourteenth-Century England”. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 28 (1978): 27-43. For a work more focused on the operation of central institutions, see: Barrio Barrio, Juan Antonio, ed. *Cancillerías, notariado y privilegios reales en la construcción del Estado en la Edad Media*. Alcoy: Editorial Marfil, 2004.

22. Doumerc, Bernard. “Par Dieu écrivez plus souvent! La lettre d’affaires à Venise à la fin du Moyen Âge”, *La circulation des nouvelles au Moyen Âge, Société des historiens médiévistes de l’Enseignement supérieur public*, ed. Rome: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994: 99-109; Hayez, Jérôme. “Avviso, informazione, novella, nuova: la notion de l’information dans les correspondances marchandes toscanes vers 1400”, *Information et société en Occident à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Claire Boudreau, Kouky Fianu, Claude Gauvard, Michel Hébert, eds. Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2004: 113-134.



for the management of embassies. To different degrees, cities were also capable of institutionalising their own official and unofficial communication mechanisms, not only with the monarchy and its agents, the nobility and the Church, but also, and especially, with other urban entities with which information was exchanged, adhesions negotiated and alliances crafted: for example, the powerful urban leagues in the empire and the Castilian brotherhoods. The cities' ability to develop their own instruments of negotiation and diplomacy contributed to generating variously developed political apparatuses of information, communication and representation to assume the costs of these operations and to select skilled and experienced personnel—an experience often gained in the private sphere.<sup>23</sup>

We must, however, be careful because public opinion is difficult to perceive and even more difficult to assess, and even though medieval public opinion does not entirely meet Habermas' definition, it was nevertheless real and is reflected in the record.<sup>24</sup> At any rate, these specialised communication processes contributed to forming a public sphere for the dissemination of information which, depending on the actual instruments mobilised, expanded to include broad segments of the population, such as the urban classes, with the organisation of open councils, civic oaths, speeches and civic ceremonies, which could have a religious character or not. This opened up "socio-political" spaces marked, to an extent, by the projection of the political and other forms of sociability: squares, markets, taverns, workshops and bathhouses. Concerning open councils and civic oaths, informal forms of political sociability were complemented by other, more formal, expressions, constructed by the political authorities in the form of parades, royal entries, processions and other ceremonies that reflected the "itinerary" of power through the urban space. Formal and informal spaces came into conflict not only in the process of informal crystallisation of public opinion but even through the formalised absorption of the former by the latter. In Castile, especially during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, urban councils

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23. Blanchard, Joël. "Nouvelle histoire, nouveaux publics: les mémoires à la fin du Moyen Âge", *L'histoire et les nouveaux publics dans l'Europe médiévale (XIIIe-XVe siècle)*, Jean-Philippe Genet, ed. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1997: 41-54; Lazzarini, Isabella. "Argument and Emotion in Italian Diplomacy in the Early Fifteenth Century: the Case of Rinaldo degli Albizzi (Florence, 1399-1430)", *The Languages of Political Society. Western Europe, 14th-17th Centuries*, Andrea Gamberini, Jean-Philippe Genet, Andrea Zorzi, eds. Rome: Viella, 2011: 339-364; and Lazzarini, Isabella. *Communication and Conflict. Italian Diplomacy in the Early Renaissance, 1350-1520*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Iannuzzi, Isabella. "El discurso político y cultural como trámite diplomático. Pedro Mártir de Anglería", *Comunicación y conflicto en la cultura política peninsular. Siglos XIII al XV*, José Manuel Nieto Soria, Óscar Villarreal González, eds. Madrid: Sílex, 2018: 189-228; Monnet, Pierre. "Villes, ligues, princes et royaume: négociations et négociateurs dans l'Empire tardo-médiéval", *Négocier en la Edad Media / Négocier au Moyen Âge*, María Teresa Ferrer Mallol, Jean-Marie Moegil, Stéphane Péquignot, Manuel Sánchez Martínez, eds. Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005: 215-239; Buchholzer-Rémy, Laurence. *Une ville en ses réseaux: Nuremberg...*

24. Habermas, Jürgen. *Historia y crítica de la opinión pública. La transformación estructural de la vida pública*, Mexico-Barcelona: Ediciones G. Gili, 1994: 3-4, 44-51 and 89-93; Lippmann, Walter. *La opinión pública*. Madrid: Cuadernos de Langre, 2003: 34 and 42; Laborie, Pierre. "De l'opinion publique à l'imaginaire social". *Vingtième Siècle*, 18 (1988): 101-117. 4 August 2020 <[www.persee.fr/doc/xxs\\_0294-1759\\_1988\\_num\\_18\\_1\\_4857](http://www.persee.fr/doc/xxs_0294-1759_1988_num_18_1_4857)>. For a theoretical contextualisation in the modern period, see: Capellán de Miguel, Gonzalo, ed. "Historia, política y opinión pública". *Ayer*, 80/4 (2010).



complained of the organisation of political assemblies by certain urban groups, in open or covert defiance of the urban authorities. In addition, as a result of stealing the debate from the forms of control that operated in official spaces of power, these unofficial assemblies often reached out to the Crown for protection against, and bypassing, local levels of government.<sup>25</sup>

Following Watts, the development of vernacular literature in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, its didactic tone and national—or at least communal—approach, influenced the emergence of a national audience which shared the same concerns, structured around homogeneous political ideas: the good of the kingdom and the community, the rejection of bad counsellors and the image of the good ruler. All these ideas permeated the new imaginary and contributed to creating an audience ready to understand, debate and propose/demand/take action (i.e. communicating) in response to the information received.<sup>26</sup> This audience was a good deal broader than the traditional local elites, both in cities and the countryside, extending also to the peasantry, as became manifest with the degree of political awareness and organisation of, and the cogency of the demands posed by, the peasant revolt of 1381.<sup>27</sup>

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25. Larivière, Claire Judde. “Du Broglio à Rialto: cris et chuchotements dans l’espace public à Venise (XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle)”, *L’espace public au Moyen Âge. Débats autour de Jürgen Habermas*, Patrick Boucheron, Nicolas Offenstadt, eds. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003: 119-130; Fargeix, Caroline. “La reconnaissance de délibérations lors des assemblées lyonnaises du X<sup>e</sup> siècle dans les registres consulaires: un problème politique”, *L’espace public au Moyen Âge. Débats autour de Jürgen Habermas*, Patrick Boucheron, Nicolas Offenstadt, eds. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003: 291-227; Jara Fuente, José Antonio. “Entre el conflicto y la cooperación: la ciudad castellana y los corregidores, praxis de una relación política hasta la monarquía isabelina”. *Studia Historica. Historia Moderna*, 39/1 (2017): 53-87; Oliva Herrero, Hipólito Rafael. “‘La prisión del rey’: Voces subalternas e indicios de la existencia de una identidad política en la Castilla del siglo XV”. *Hispania. Revista Española de Historia*, 238 (2011): 363-388; Gautier Dalché, Jean. “Les processus de décision dans un gouvernement urbain selon les Ordonnances d’Avila (1487)”. *En la España Medieval*, 6 (1985): 507-520. For a theoretical reconstruction of the notion of public space, since Saint Augustine, see: Genet, Jean-Philippe. “Espace public: du religieux au politique?”, *La comunidad medieval como esfera pública*, Hipólito Rafael Oliva Herrero, Vincent Challet, Jan Dumolyn, María Antonia Carmona Ruiz, eds. Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 2014: 23-41. For a more general perspective see: Lienhard, Thomas, ed. *Construction de l’espace au Moyen Âge: pratiques et représentations*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2007; and Boone, Marc; Howell, Martha C., eds. *The Power of Space in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe. The cities of Italy, Northern France and the Low Countries*. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2013.

26. In relation to the expansion of the audience base in the medieval period, especially from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards, see: Watts, John. “Popular Voices in England’s Wars of the Roses, c. 1445-c. 1485”, *The Voices of the People in Late Medieval Europe. Communication and Popular Politics*, Jan Dumolyn, Jelle Haemers, Hipólito Rafael Oliva Herrero, Vincent Challet, eds. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2014:107-122; Fletcher, Christopher. “Manhood, Kingship and the Public in Late Medieval England”. *Edad Media. Revista de Historia*, 13 (2012): 123-142; and Liddy, Christian D.; Haemers, Jelle. “Popular Politics in the Late Medieval City: York and Bruges”. *The English Historical Review*, 533 (2013): 771-805.

27. For the scope of an analysis concerning the medieval period, see the essential: Guenée, Bernard. *L’opinion publique à la fin du Moyen Âge d’après la “Chronique de Charles VI” du religieux de Saint-Denis*. Paris: Perrin, 2002; Gauvard, Claude. “L’opinion publique aux confins des états et des principautés au début du X<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Les Principautés au Moyen Âge, Actes des congrès de la SHMES (Bordeaux, 1973)*. Bordeaux: Société des historiens médiévistes de l’enseignement supérieur public, 1979: 127-152; Gauvard, Claude. “Le roi de France et l’opinion publique à l’époque de Charles VI”, *Culture et idéologie dans la genèse de l’État moderne*.



Perhaps the best outlined and most socialised form of public opinion was fame, which was linked to perceptions of order, reputation and honour, the civic-moral parameters against which conducts were measured and thus defined as acceptable or otherwise. Acceptable conducts were granted uncontested access to the community, and its bearers were allowed to participate in communal fora and in their social, economic and political activities. Good fame determined the position of the individual in the socio-political space in which they operated, their suitability for public office in the city, their reliability in the management of urban and non-urban resources, such as land leases on behalf of the city or the Crown, and even their involvement in urban supply. Fame was not fabricated and became especially palpable in the street—expressed in the form of opinion, gossip, reputation and popularity—and was instrumentalised by the rulers, especially urban governments, to promote civic behaviour and, at the same time, legitimise a specific conception of civic responsibility which served the public interest but also that of the ruling lineages. It thus seems reasonable for fame to have had legal implications that affected the individual's access to public office, such as notaries and clerkships, and their credibility as forensic witnesses: the fame of a witness could well be the factor that swayed a court ruling one way or the other. In medieval Castile, the notion of reputation permeated political life, becoming the subject of discursive manipulations that reached the spaces and actors involved in intellectual production, chroniclers and the authors of treatises, who found in reputation the perfect mechanisms for the legitimisation or de-legitimation of the conduct of the “other”, of the political adversary.<sup>28</sup>

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*Actes de la table ronde de Rome (14-17 octobre 1984)*. Rome: École française de Rome, 1985: 353-366; and Gauvard, Claude. “Qu'est-ce que l'opinion avant l'invention de l'imprimerie?”, *L'opinion. Information, rumeur, propagande. Le rendez-vous de l'histoire*, Alain Corbin, Christian Delporte, Jean-François Sirenelli, Jean-Noël Jeanneney, eds. Nantes: Éditions Pleins, 2008: 21-59; Carrasco Manchado, Ana Isabel. “‘Vana’ o ‘divina’ vox populi: La recreación de la opinión pública en Fernando del Pulgar”, *Gobernar en tiempos de crisis. Las quiebras dinásticas en el ámbito hispánico (1250-1808)*, José Manuel Nieto Soria, María Victoria López-Cordón Cortezo, eds. Madrid: Sílex, 2008: 287-306. Val Valdivieso, M<sup>a</sup>. Isabel del. “La opinión pública en los núcleos urbanos de la Castilla de fines de la Edad Media: posibilidades de estudio”, *La comunidad medieval como esfera pública*, Hipólito Rafael Oliva Herrero, Vincent Challet, Jan Dumolyn, María Antonia Carmona Ruiz, eds. Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 2014: 173-191; Carmona Ruiz, María Antonia. “La documentación cronística castellana y la opinión pública en Castilla: posibilidades y límites”, *La comunidad medieval como esfera pública*, Hipólito Rafael Oliva Herrero, Vincent Challet, Jan Dumolyn, María Antonia Carmona Ruiz, eds. Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 2014: 211-225; Val Valdivieso, María Isabel del. “Las Cortes de Castilla en el siglo XV. ¿Reflejo de la opinión política de las ciudades del reino? El ejemplo de las Cortes de Salamanca de 1465”, *Cortes y parlamentos en la Edad Media peninsular*, Germán Navarro Espinach, Concepción Villanueva Morte, eds. Murcia: Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 2020: 69-96; Ohara, Shima. “Reflexiones sobre la difusión de la información política en el ámbito urbano durante el reinado de Enrique IV”. *Historia. Instituciones. Documentos*, 32 (2005): 247-261.

28. McDonough, Susan Alice. *Witnesses, Neighbors, and Community in Late Medieval Marseille*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013: 109-110 and 116; Kuehn, Thomas. “Fama as a Legal Status in Renaissance Florence”, *Fama. The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe*, Thelma Fenster, Daniel Lord Smail, eds. Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 2003: 27-46; Smail, Daniel Lord. “Archivos de conocimiento y la cultura legal de la publicidad en la Marsella medieval”. *Hispania. Revista Española de Historia*, 197 (1997): 1049-1077; Casson, Catherine. “Reputation and responsibility in medieval English towns: civic concerns with the regulation of trade”. *Urban History*, 39/3 (2012): 387-408; Veldhuizen,



Public opinion represents the degree of penetration of information into the audience that it targets, the scope and solidity of a given message. However, this does not preclude public opinion from being constructed more on the basis of perceptions of reality than on the facts on which this reality is grounded, especially, as pointed out by Lakoff and Westen, if this reality does not fit the individual's framework of understanding—sets of thoughts, feelings, images and ideas interwoven over time. This suggests that the choice of words, images, sounds, music, stage, tone of voice and other factors are probably as important for the success of the political communication process as the substance of the message. According to Watts, the language dealing with the public sphere must be understood as “the sense of a common discursive space; an implicit national forum to be addressed, but also a treasury—or perhaps an emporium—of acceptable language”.<sup>29</sup>

#### 4. Expressions of political communication

Propaganda and rumour are, historically, the most representative instruments of political communication. As Dumolyn points out, propaganda, like any other act of (political) communication takes place within the framework of a given network of power relations, without which the logic of said act becomes irrelevant. These power relations, in which the audience is also entangled, are projected onto and conceived in a given political and communicational structure and interact with the multiple agencies that take part in these processes, such as the Church, whose role in the efficient transmission of information, and in its interpretation, is anything but negligible. The dissemination of information among an increasingly broad audience in the closing years of the Middle Ages and its successful manipulation—which allow us to speak of the development of a communication “habitus” around propaganda—run parallel to political centralisation and the institutionalisation of the Modern State. In fact, the widespread adoption of these practices by Castilian society as a whole, especially during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, has led Nieto Soria to speak about a “propagandistic conscience” that reveals, at the same time, a generalised awareness of the fact of political communication.<sup>30</sup> Propaganda demands some

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Martine. “Guard your Tongue. Slander and its Punishment in a Late Medieval Courtroom”, *The Voices of the People in Late Medieval Europe. Communication and Popular Politics*, Jan Dumolyn, Jelle Haemers, Hipólito Rafael Oliva Herrero, Vincent Challet, eds. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2014: 233-246; Jara Fuente, José Antonio. “Çercada de muchos contrarios. Didáctica de las relaciones políticas ciudad-nobleza en la Cuenca del siglo XV”. *Edad Media. Revista de Historia*, 14 (2013): 105-127.

29. Westen, Drew. *The Political Brain. The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*. New York: Public Affairs, 2008: 3, 12, 86-87, 92-93, 96, 169, 206 and 346; Lakoff, George. *No pienses en un elefante...*; Watts, John. “The Pressure of the Public on Later Medieval Politics”, *The Fifteenth Century. IV. Political Culture in Late Medieval Britain*, Linda Clark, Christine Carpenter, eds. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2004: 159-180, quote in 161.

30. Dumolyn, Jan. “Political Communication and Political Power...”: 33-55; Jiménez Alcázar, Juan Francisco. “Con el qual deseo murieron todos los nuestros antepasados: propaganda, legitimidad y pasado



degree of censorship, a distance between audience and event which prevents a more direct —not necessarily more accurate— understanding of said event, leading to an alternative or more critical, and thus more difficult to manipulate, public opinion.<sup>31</sup>

Political poetry acts as a propaganda discourse, generally within the field of “current contexts”, which limits the sense of the account, and uses standard rhetorical resources —criticism of bad counsellors, saving the king from the accusation of tyranny— while adopting rhetorical artifices from literature to give the author leeway to safely criticise the powerful.<sup>32</sup> Political sermons emerge in the same context, in relation to the strengthening of the Modern State, which deploys all communication instruments at the government’s disposal. Not only were these mechanisms promoted by the rulers, but they also affected it, defining correct political conduct —framed by such notions as justice, humbleness, temperance, good government and peace— and ultimately legitimising the political action of the prince, who is both passively and actively identified with these messages.<sup>33</sup> Religious ceremonies, such as the *Corpus Christi*, mysteries and *autos sacramentales*, acquire a similar civic meaning, reinforcing not only the religious spirit but also the political order.<sup>34</sup>

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como factores de gobierno en los concejos castellanos (ss. XIII-XVI)”, *La gobernanza de la ciudad europea en la Edad Media*, Jesús Ángel Solórzano Telechea, Beatriz Arízaga Bolumburu, eds. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2011: 487-515; Genet, Jean-Philippe. “Les langages de la propagande”, *La sociedad política a fines del siglo XV en los reinos ibéricos y en Europa. ¿Élites, pueblo, súbditos? / La société politique à la fin du XVe siècle dans les royaumes ibériques et en Europe. Élités, peuple, sujets ?*, Vincent Challet, ed. Valladolid-Paris: Universidad de Valladolid-Publications de la Sorbonne, 2007: 89-109; Nieto Soria, José Manuel. “Propaganda política y poder real en la Castilla Trastámara: una perspectiva de análisis”. *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 25/2 (1995): 489-516. More generally: Nieto Soria, José Manuel, ed. *Orígenes de la monarquía hispánica: propaganda y legitimación (c. 1400-1520)*. Madrid: Dykinson, 1999. For a detailed analysis of the discourses deployed see: Carrasco Manchado, Ana Isabel. *Isabel I de Castilla y la sombra de la ilegitimidad. Propaganda y representación en el conflicto sucesorio (1474-1482)*. Madrid: Sílex, 2006; and Corral Sánchez, Nuria. “Dios salve a las reinas. Propaganda y legitimación en la Guerra de Sucesión castellana (1475-1479)”. *Amentu*, 12 (2018): 35-48.

31. Lippmann, Walter. *La opinión pública...*: 52; Lakoff, George. *No pienses en un elefante...*: 147. Venturini, Alain. “Vérité refusée, vérité cachée: du sort de quelques nouvelles avant et pendant la Guerre d’Union d’Aix (1382-1388)”, *La circulation des nouvelles au Moyen Age, Société des historiens médiévistes de l’Enseignement supérieur public*, ed. Rome: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994: 179-190.

32. Mairey, Aude. “La poésie, un mode de communication politique durant la guerre des Deux Roses”, *The Languages of Political Society. Western Europe, 14th-17th Centuries*, Andrea Gamberini, Jean-Philippe Genet, Andrea Zorzi, eds. Rome: Viella, 2011: 189-207.

33. Nogales Rincón, David. “Predicación y comunicación política en la Corona de Castilla (1369-1516)”, *Comunicación y conflicto en la cultura política peninsular. Siglos XIII al XV*, José Manuel Nieto Soria, Óscar Villarroel González, eds. Madrid: Sílex, 2018: 263-293; Andrews, Frances. “Preacher and Audience: Friar Venturino da Bergamo and ‘Popular Voices’”, *The Voices of the People in Late Medieval Europe. Communication and Popular Politics*, Jan Dumolyn, Jelle Haemers, Hipólito Rafael Oliva Herrero, Vincent Challet, eds. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2014: 185-204. Considering a broader array of actors: Grande Esteban, María Teresa. “Las raíces de la eficacia del discurso homilético de Fray Vicente Ferrer en la campaña de predicación castellana de 1411-1412”. *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante. Historia Medieval*, 15 (2006-2008): 165-188.

34. See a comprehensive analysis of English cities in: King, Pamela M. *The York Mystery Cycle and the Worship of the City*. Woodbridge-New York: D.S. Brewer, 2006; James, Mervyn. *Society, Politics and Culture. Studies in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988: 16-47 (Article: “Ritual,





Rumour is probably the best expression of the contradictory and conflictive nature of political communication because it emerges in a state of (serious) political strife—internal or external to the system—and in the absence, whether real or not, of other forms of information, which rumour aspires to remedy. Rumours spread through court and the *Cortes* and through rural villages, but it is in cities that they found a space and a public in which to grow exponentially, replacing the information that the government did not wish or did not know how to share. From this perspective, “[l]a rumeur est un système d’information parallèle qui vise alors à atteindre le statut d’une parole officielle tout en restant fort différente dans son mécanisme”.<sup>35</sup> This information was not carefully tailored but was in a constant state of (re)construction, which reflected the changing nature of public opinion, the reputation of its sources, and the material basis on which this reputation rested—the individual’s age, fame, socio-political position and relational networks could determine the credibility of their utterances. This information was not aseptic either: murmurs, subversive and licentious songs, stories and poems, and political prophecies were political statements in which the substantive event that motivated them was criticised, sanctioned and reconstructed, regardless of the social standing of the individual or the seemingly irrational content of the message. In contrast, the essentially oral nature of rumour, which facilitated its circulation through public spaces shared by different segments of the socio-political structure—taverns, squares and, in the case of “seditious” sermons, churches—allowed it to spread easily and rapidly among social groups, no matter how different their cultural levels. However, rumour did not always appear to undermine power: sometimes, it was the authorities themselves, or the factions that struggled for domination at the national or local levels, that spread rumours to bend public opinion unconsciously to their interests. Carrasco Manchado published a magnificent study of such a process during the reign of Isabella I. Rumours affected all social groups, including the Church, in the convulsive (national and local) European political arena of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. This brought these groups to the political debate, to the generation of consensus and dissent, to partisanship expressed in “infrapolitical” practices.<sup>36</sup> It is

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drama and social body in the late medieval English town”). See also Jørgensen, Hans Henrik Lohfert. “Cultic Vision-Seeing as Ritual: Visual and Liturgical Experience in the Early Christian and Medieval Church”, *Appearances of medieval rituals: The play of construction and modification*, Nills Petersen, Mette birkedal Bruun, Jeremy Llewellyn, Eyolf Oestrem, eds. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2004: 173-197.

35. Beaune, Colette. “La rumeur dans le Journal du Bourgeois de Paris”, *La circulation des nouvelles au Moyen Âge, Société des historiens médiévistes de l’Enseignement supérieur public*, ed. Rome: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994: 191-203, quote in 192.

36. Gauvard, Claude. “La Fama, une parole fondatrice”. *Médiévales*, 24 (1993): 5-13. 16 October 2015 <[www.persee.fr/doc/medi\\_0751-2708\\_1993\\_num\\_12\\_24\\_1265](http://www.persee.fr/doc/medi_0751-2708_1993_num_12_24_1265)>; Gauvard, Claude. “Introduction”, *La rumeur au Moyen Âge. Du mépris à la manipulation, Ve-XVe siècle*, Maïte Billoré, Myriam Soria, eds. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011: 23-32; Brocard, Nicole. “La rumeur, histoire d’un concept et de ses utilisations à Besançon et dans le Comté de Bourgogne aux XIVE-XVe siècles”, *La rumeur au Moyen Âge. Du mépris à la manipulation, Ve-XVe siècle*, Maïte Billoré, Myriam Soria, eds. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011: 119-131; Lecuppre, Gilles; Lecuppre-Desjardin, Élodie. “La rumeur : un instrument de la compétition politique au service des princes de la fin du Moyen Âge”, *La rumeur*



worth pointing out that it was not rare for rumour to be put in writing or even to be represented pictorially in posters or burlesque drawings, which, in the case of flyers, reveals an elaborated political motivation, a producing agent and a targeted audience which was socio-politically above the largely illiterate common people. Occasionally, these “public notes” aimed to damage the reputation of specific individuals with personal attacks that may or may not have been politically motivated. The spaces in which these messages were circulated were generally those in which verbal rumours thrived: ecclesiastical buildings, such as churches and convents, and easily accessible places such as markets and squares.<sup>37</sup>

Rumours, flyers and speeches also involved adopting a stance and, ultimately, actively, deliberately and collectively confronting power; rumours then turned into *tumulti* and, in the worse cases, *rebeliones* or *seditiones*. These were common in Castile, in relation to factional strife and, more generally, in the context of city politics. As analysed by López Gómez for Toledo, factions used rumours, insults—both oral and written—ritual jokes, debates and flyers in order to bend public opinion, not necessarily reflected as active support for a given faction but as passive acquiescence and submission to the message’s authors. Messages were often accompanied by threats of armed violence, while armed men were deployed in factional hot spots or in central public spaces, and factions paraded along the civic itineraries, flags aloft and drums beating, imitating triumphal entries and processions. These were sometimes even certified by notaries and clerks so they could legitimately be used in the faction’s written propaganda. Anonymous graffiti were also frequent, and letters were often sent outside, either seeking help for the faction or explaining its actions.<sup>38</sup>

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*au Moyen Âge. Du mépris à la manipulation, Ve-XVe siècle*, Maite Billoré, Myriam Soria, eds. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011: 149-175; Walker, Simon. “Rumour, sedition and popular protest in the reign of Henry IV”, *Political Culture in Later Medieval England*, Michael Jonathan Braddick, ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006: 154-182. For a general overview with emphasis on the political space of Castile, see: Carrasco Manchado, Ana Isabel. “El rumor político. Apuntes sobre la opinión pública en la Castilla del siglo XV”. *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 80 (2006): 65-90.

37. Liddy, Christian. “Bill Casting and Political Communication: A Public Sphere in Late Medieval English Towns?”, *La gobernanza de la ciudad europea en la Edad Media*, Jesús Ángel Solórzano Telechea, Beatriz Arízaga Bolumburu, eds. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2011: 447-461; Westervelt, Theron. “Manifestoes for Rebellion in Late-Fifteenth-Century England”, *Political Society in Later Medieval England: A Festschrift for Christine Carpenter*, Benjamin Thompson, John Watts, eds. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015: 184-198. A general overview for the Early Modern Age can be found in: Wood, Andy. *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England*. Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002; Haemers, Jelle. “Filthy and Indecent Words. Insults, Defamation, and Urban Politics in the Southern Low Countries, 1300-1550”, *The Voices of the People in Late Medieval Europe. Communication and Popular Politics*, Jan Dumolyn, Jelle Haemers, Hipólito Rafael Oliva Herrero, Vincent Challet, eds. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2014: 247-267.

38. Lantschner, Patrick. *The Logic of Political Conflict in Medieval Cities. Italy and the Southern Low Countries, 1370-1440*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015: 95, and for a general overview of the issues related to the space under examination, see 102-130; Dumolyn, Jan; Haemers, Jelle. “‘A Bad Chicken Was Brooding’. Subversive Speech in Late Medieval Flanders”. *Past & Present*, 214 (2012): 45-86; Althoff, Gerd. “De l’importance de la communication symbolique pour la compréhension du Moyen Âge”. *Trivium*, 2 (2008): 1-21 <[trivium.revues.org/1152](http://trivium.revues.org/1152)>; Fletcher, Christopher. “Rumour, clamour, murmur



Letters were a key instrument for both official and private communication. As pointed out by Buchholzer-Rémy, “[l]a ville qui écrivait s’affirmait comme un nœud de communications multiples où se croisaient les opinions publiques, le discours officiel, les journaux et les rumeurs des auberges”, and we could say something similar about other high political agencies. Philippe de Mézières, counsellor of Charles V of France, repeatedly advised the king to keep couriers in order to maintain contact with other kingdoms, preserve the friendship and love of their monarchs, and know the state of their dominions. Epistolary relationships not only involved the exchange of information but also allowed rulers to create a network of political relations, “remote friendships”, across various hierarchical levels (the importance of each correspondent was reflected in the intensity and duration of these exchanges), tackle conflict, from formally beginning negotiations and endorsing agreements to issuing threats, and even place the debate within the framework of the central state agencies. Concerning this, Nieto Soria identified eight issues that became primary concerns in the relationship between cities and monarchy in 15<sup>th</sup>-century Castile: government responsibilities, socio-political diversity, obedience and resistance, clemency, council, reform, country and civic responsibility.<sup>39</sup>

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and rebellion: Public opinion and it[s] uses before and after the Peasants’ Revolt (1381)”, *La comunidad medieval como esfera pública*, Hipólito Rafael Oliva Herrer, Vincent Challet, Jan Dumolyn, María Antonia Carmona Ruiz, eds. Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 2014: 193-210; Cohn Jr., Samuel K. “Enigmas of communication: Jacques, Ciampi, and the English”, *La comunidad medieval como esfera pública*, Hipólito Rafael Oliva Herrer, Vincent Challet, Jan Dumolyn, María Antonia Carmona Ruiz, eds. Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 2014: 227-247; and Dumolyn, Jan. “The Vengeance of the Commune: Sign Systems of Popular Politics in Medieval Bruges”, *La comunidad medieval como esfera pública*, Hipólito Rafael Oliva Herrer, Vincent Challet, Jan Dumolyn, María Antonia Carmona Ruiz, eds. Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 2014: 251-289; Challet, Vincent; Forrester, Ian. “The masses”, *Government and Political Life in England and France, c. 1300-c. 1500*, Christopher Fletcher, Jean-Philippe Genet, John Watts, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015: 279-316. Although focusing on the Early Modern Age, the following are interesting: Horodowich, Elizabeth. *Language and Statecraft in Early Modern Venice*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: especially the analysis of insults and gossip, 91-125 and 126-164; and Mellet, Caroline and Mellet, Paul-Alexis. “La ‘marmite renversée’: construction discursive et fonctionnement argumentatif d’une insulte dans les polémiques des guerres de religion (1560-1600)”. *Argumentation et analyse du discours*, 8 (2012): 1-18. 23 September 2019 <journals.openedition.org/aad/1242>. Fore Castile, see especially: López Gómez, Óscar. “La çibdad está escandalizada. Protestas sociales y lucha de facciones en la Toledo bajomedieval”. *Studia Historica. Historia Medieval*, 34 (2016): 243-269; and Fernández de Larrea Rojas, Jon Andoni. “Las guerras privadas: el ejemplo de los bandos oñacino y gamboino en el País Vasco”. *Clío & Crimen*, 6 (2009): 85-109. See also: Ohara, Shima. “Reflexiones sobre la difusión de la información política...”: 247-261; Jara Fuente, José Antonio. “Legitimando la dominación en la Cuenca del siglo XV: la transformación de los intereses particulares a través de la definición del bien común”. *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante. Historia Medieval*, 16 (2009-2010): 93-109.

39. See the essential: Buchholzer-Rémy, Laurence. *Une ville en ses réseaux: Nuremberg...: especially concerning networks, number of letters and addressees, 177-192, and quote on 185; Contamine, Philippe. “Introduction”...: 9-24; Monnet, Pierre. “Villes, ligue, princes et royaume...”: 215-239; Novák, Veronika. “La source du savoir. Publication officielle et communication informelle à Paris au début du xve siècle”, *Information et société en Occident à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Claire Boudreau, Kouky Fianu, Claude Gauvard, Michel Hébert, eds. Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2004: 151-163; Nieto Soria, José Manuel. “De la epístola al discurso político: ecos del diálogo entre gobernantes y gobernados en Castilla ca. 1450-1480”, *La sociedad política a fines del siglo XV en los reinos ibéricos y en Europa. ¿Élites, pueblo, súbditos? / La société**



Letters extended the space of communication that the agency/agent could access; in contrast, rituals circumscribed it, establishing limits within which their effects were constrained. Ceremonies and festivities—religious and civic, although in the Middle Ages religion permeated all aspects of private and public life—were instruments and an opportunity for political communication. Royal entries, which followed the same itineraries used in local ceremonies, superimposing on them the higher order of the royal civic liturgy and symbolic expression, made the king “present” in the urban space, turning the scenography into a channel of communication with his subjects. This communication, however, went both ways because cities used the opportunity to display their own political images through parliaments, representations and processions that aimed to emphasise the unity of the urban political community before the monarch and the city’s position in the kingdom’s political system.<sup>40</sup> Cities also displayed their cohesion and identity through rituals—meetings, festivities, civic and religious processions, *autos de fe*—looking inwards, building and expressing a set of beliefs, values and symbols through which to showcase a feeling of unity and the overcoming of internecine differences. The efficacy of these mechanisms, however, depended not only on the formal ceremony but also on the acknowledgment of its reality and effectiveness, which was expressed through active participation. This conferred onto these communicational acts at least a modicum of legitimacy, even on those occasions when ritual, rather than constructing unity, only papered over the differences, the more or less frequent conflicts that cracked the body politic.<sup>41</sup> Ceremonies that

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*politique à la fin du XVe siècle dans les royaumes ibériques et en Europe. Élités, peuple, sujets ?*, Vincent Challet, ed. Valladolid-Paris: Universidad de Valladolid-Publications de la Sorbonne, 2007: 111-127; Jara Fuente, José Antonio, “Vecindad y parentesco. El lenguaje de las relaciones políticas en la Castilla urbana del siglo XV”, *El contrato político en la Corona de Castilla. Cultura y sociedad políticas entre los siglos X al XVI*, François Foronda, Ana Isabel Carrasco Manchado, eds. Madrid: Dykinson, 2008: 211-239; Rábade Obradó, María del Pilar. “Actividad epistolar y conflicto político en la primera de las Décadas de Alonso de Palencia”, *Comunicación y conflicto en la cultura política peninsular. Siglos XIII al XV*, José Manuel Nieto Soria, Óscar Villarroel González, eds. Madrid: Sílex, 2018: 295-320.

40. In relation to space, ritual and communication see: Lecupre-Desjardin, Elodie. *La ville des cérémonies. Essai sur la communication politique dans les Pays-Bas bourguignons*. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2004; and Lecupre-Desjardin, Elodie. “The Distorted Messages of Peace: Controlled and Uncontrolled Reactions to Propaganda in the Burgundian Low Countries during the Fifteenth Century”, *Power and the City in the Netherlandic World*, Wayne te Brake, Wim Klooster, eds. Leiden: Brill, 2006: 45-57; Rosser, Gervase. “Myth, image and social process in the English medieval town”. *Urban History*, 23/1 (1996): 5-25; Carrasco Manchado, Ana Isabel. “Las entradas reales en la corona de Castilla: pacto y diálogo político en torno a la apropiación simbólica del espacio urbano”, *Marquer la ville. Signes, traces, empreintes du pouvoir (XIIIe-XVIe siècle)*, Patrick Boucheron, Jean-Philippe Genet, eds. Paris-Rome: Éditions de la Sorbonne-École française de Rome, 2013: 191-217.

41. For the analytical problems posed by these rituals, see: Muir, Edward. *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981: 230-231; and Buc, Philippe. *The Dangers of Ritual. Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory*. Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001: 1-5 and 248-259. Buc calls for caution with regard to the Early Middle Ages, first concerning the identification of rituals, because not all seemingly ceremonial practices are deserving of this consideration, and, second, because we are far from understanding the underlying meaning of some rituals. For a functional examination of these rites, see: Parsons, Gerald. *Siena, Civil Religion and the Sienese*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004: XV; Rosenthal, David. “Il carnevale e le politiche di pace nella Firenze del Cinquecento”, *Le destin*



celebrated royalty (or, in its absence, births, christenings, weddings, coronations, victories, deaths), major civic urban cycles (political meetings to appoint new magistrates or to lease out communal land) and religious celebrations, for example *Corpus Christi*, became perfect endorsements of the political order, despite these celebrations being occasions for conflicts for precedence between individuals—among the elite—and groups: for example, between guilds and religious brotherhoods.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, other symbolic elements participated not only in the political representation of agencies but also in its communication, operating these symbols, such as cities and other agencies, to express their political institutional identity and legitimate the political system and the position within it of its constituents, especially the elite: seals, flags and urban banners; civic imagery, expressed in illuminated manuscripts, for instance the *Libro de los caballeros de la cofradía de Santiago* (Burgos) and the *Annales historiques* (Toulouse), both of which also claimed and expressed the knightly/aristocratic status of the city's elite; frescoes—let us remember the *Allegory of Good and Bad Government* (Siena); tapestries—those of Coventry, analysed by Liddy, and Tarragona, by Juncosa Bonet, are very interesting; official vestments for civic celebrations—council habits; and special clothing for certain ceremonies, such as the *Corpus Christi* and mourning rites for dead kings. These are symbols that, in short, express the honour of urban agencies while displaying the dignity and political position of the members of the elite,

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*des rituels. Faire corps dans l'espace urbain, Italie-France-Allemagne*, Gilles Bertrand, Ilaria Taddei, eds. Rome: École française de Rome, 2008: 159-174; Lazzarini, Luigi. "La festa d'inverno: violenza civile e violenza rituale nella Pisa medievale e moderna", *Le destin des rituels. Faire corps dans l'espace urbain, Italie-France-Allemagne*, Gilles Bertrand, Ilaria Taddei, eds. Rome: École française de Rome, 2008: 175-189; Carrasco García, Gonzalo. "Ritual político, antropología e historiografía bajomedieval hispánica". *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma. Serie III. Historia Medieval*, 30 (2017): 121-192; and Bourdieu, Pierre. *Langage et pouvoir symbolique*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001: 159-173 (Chapter: "Le langage autorisé: les conditions sociales de l'efficacité du discours rituel").

42. Martínez, María. "Las fiestas, instrumento de poder y conflicto social (Murcia, siglo XV)", *Comunicación y conflicto en la cultura política peninsular. Siglos XIII al XV*, José Manuel Nieto Soria, Óscar Villarroel González, eds. Madrid: Sílex, 2018: 383-420; Martínez Carrillo, María de los Llanos. "Fiestas ciudadanas". *Miscelánea Medieval Murciana*, 16 (1990-1991): 9-50; Izquierdo García, María Jesús. "Elementos para una nueva lectura de la dominación social: las manifestaciones socio-culturales en Valladolid y Palencia durante la Baja Edad Media", *La Península Ibérica en la Era de los Descubrimientos (1391-1492)*, 2 vols. Seville: Junta de Andalucía- Consejería de Cultura, 1997: II, 1165-1178; and Martín Cea Juan Carlos. "Elementos para una nueva lectura de la dominación social: la oligarquía rural paredeña y los acontecimientos festivos en la Baja Edad Media", *La Península Ibérica en la Era de los Descubrimientos (1391-1492)*, 2 vols. Seville: Junta de Andalucía-Consejería de Cultura, 1997: II, 1179-1190; Palomo Fernández, Gema; Senra Gabriel and Galán, José Luis. "La ciudad y la fiesta en la historiografía castellana de la Baja Edad Media: Escenografía lúdico-festiva". *Hispania. Revista Española de Historia*, 186 (1994): 5-36. An overview of the Castilian case can be found in: Asenjo González, María. "Fiestas y celebraciones en las ciudades castellanas de la Baja Edad Media". *Edad Media. Revista de Historia*, 14 (2013): 35-61; and Guerrero Navarrete, Yolanda. "El poder exhibido: la percepción del poder urbano. Apuntes para el caso de Burgos". *Edad Media. Revista de Historia*, 14 (2013): 81-104. An interesting case study around mourning can be found in: Nogales Rincón, David. "Duelo, luto y comunicación política en la Castilla Trastámara". *Edad Media. Revista de Historia*, 17 (2016): 327-350.



which are thus distinguished as a special group and legitimised in their socio-political position.<sup>43</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

Contamine, in 1993, and Genet, in 1997, argued that political information and communication during the medieval period were neglected historiographical subjects, except for a few isolated studies dealing with written information, and that previously these notions had played little role in historical studies, citing the global analysis undertaken by Sophia Menache as the only exception.<sup>44</sup> Genet was forgetting Richter's and Clanchy's studies on oral communication in the 1970s, but other than this he was right. Merely two decades later, it may be said that the study of medieval political communication has broken all its former boundaries, spilling over the borders of ritual to examine the notion of news and its transmission mechanisms (and rhythms). More broadly, the field now regards information as the driving factor of communication and pays due attention to the agents and agencies with which it engages. In this work, we have taken into consideration not only the strictly political field but also other promising fields: for instance, commercial information, the reconstruction of the spaces of communication and the public opinion that both springs from and projects onto them, and forms of protest, in both oral and written formats, that emerge outside the mainstream fields of production of communication, such as murmurs, rumours, flyers, poetry and protest and subversive songs. The field of analysis has, therefore, greatly expanded because it now considers both agents and agencies at the top of the socio-political structure and the variously organised popular sectors. Recent years have even witnessed the challenges to the authenticity of communicational acts; political communication is not always grounded in truth. In 1452, in the context of a rebellion against the Duke of Burgundy, the city council of Ghent punished several residents of the city "because they have told lies and harmful words among the people, by which the city could have come into big trouble and

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43. Huyghe, Jessica. "Conduites de représentations et formation de l'élite urbaine: la politique de communication des conseils municipaux en France à la fin du Moyen Age", *La gobernanza de la ciudad europea en la Edad Media*, Jesús Ángel Solórzano Telechea, Beatriz Arízaga Bolumburu, eds. Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2011: 463-485; Montero Málaga, Alicia Inés, "Élite y nobleza urbana en Burgos a finales del siglo XV y principios del XVI. Una aproximación a partir del Libro de los Caballeros de la Cofradía de Santiago", *Élites, conflictos y discursos políticos en las ciudades bajomedievales de la Península Ibérica*, José María Monsalvo Antón, ed. Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2019: 141-166; Liddy, Christian D. "Urban politics and material culture at the end of the Middle Ages: the Coventry tapestry in St Mary's Hall". *Urban History*, 39/2 (2012): 203-224; Juncosa i Bonet, Eduard. "El arte como medio de expresión del conflicto político: el tapiz de las potestades o de la buena vida", *Comunicación y conflicto en la cultura política peninsular. Siglos XIII al XV*, José Manuel Nieto Soria, Óscar Villarroya González, eds. Madrid: Sílex, 2018: 421-455.

44. Contamine, Philippe. "Introduction"...: 9-24; Genet, Jean-Philippe. "Histoire et système de communication...": 11-29.



dispute". Rumour and opinion —a particular kind of rumour— were redefined by urban authorities as lies capable of causing grave harm to the community. As such, fallacies are part of political communication strategies, which explains the interest of the generators of opinion in proving the veracity of their assertions.<sup>45</sup>

I have not considered important communication tools such as speeches although I have referred to the political commonplaces around which they were built,<sup>46</sup> and to the fact that emotions affected, and were affected by, the communicational act, evoking and reinforcing representations and rules, consolidating the political order, promoting adhesion, causing rejection and, by articulating such emotions as fear, leading to more or less permanent submission.<sup>47</sup> Owing to their amplitude,

45. Lowagie, Hannes. "The Political Function of Oral Networks in the Later Medieval Low Countries", *The Voices of the People in Late Medieval Europe. Communication and Popular Politics*, Jan Dumolyn, Jelle Haemers, Hipólito Rafael Oliva Herrero, Vincent Challet, eds. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2014: 205-213, quote in 211-212; Gingras, Anne-Marie. "La argumentación en los debates televisados...": 99-111. For criteria of truth see: Genet, Jean-Philippe, ed. *La vérité. Vérité et crédibilité: construire la vérité dans le système de communication de l'Occident (XIIe-XVIIe siècle)*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne-École française de Rome, 2015, especially: Baranova, Tatiana Debbagi. "La vérité et les stratégies d'accréditation du discours politique pendant les guerres de Religion en France", *La vérité. Vérité et crédibilité: construire la vérité dans le système de communication de l'Occident (XIIe-XVIIe siècle)*, Jean-Philippe Genet, ed. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne-École française de Rome, 2015: 209-220; and Lecuppre, Gilles. "Une vérité bonne à dire, mais difficile à entendre. Deux œuvres de George Chastelain (vers 1457-1461)", *La vérité. Vérité et crédibilité: construire la vérité dans le système de communication de l'Occident (XIIe-XVIIe siècle)*, Jean-Philippe Genet, ed. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne-École française de Rome, 2015: 447-460.

46. A necessarily general overview can be found in: Guglielmi, Nilda; Rucquoi, Adeline, eds. *El discurso político en la Edad Media / Le discours politique au Moyen Âge*. Buenos Aires: Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas- Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1995; Genet, Jean-Philippe. "New Politics or New Language? The Words of Politics in Yorkist and Early Tudor England", *The Fifteenth Century Series. VI. The End of the Middle Ages? England in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, John L. Watts, eds. Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998: 23-64; Iannuzzi, Isabella. "El discurso político y cultural como trámite diplomático...": 189-228; Liddy, Christian D.; Haemers, Jelle. "Popular Politics in the Late Medieval City...": 771-805; Jara Fuente, José Antonio, ed. *Discurso político y relaciones de poder. Ciudad, nobleza y monarquía en la Baja Edad Media*. Madrid: Dykinson, 2017; Monsalvo Antón, José María, ed. *Élites, conflictos y discursos políticos...*; Corral Sánchez, Nuria. "Comunicación, discursos y contestación política...": 47-65; and Carzolio, María Inés; Muñoz Gómez, Víctor, eds. "Discursos contra los nobles en la Castilla tardomedieval. El discurso político en los cuerpos complejos de la monarquía castellana (s. XIII-XVIII). Narrativas de poder, comunicación y negociación". *Trabajos y Comunicaciones*, 53 (2021). 18 February 2021 <doi.org/10.24215/23468971e136>. A more theoretical perspective can be found in: Pérez Daniel, Myriam Rebeca. "Discusiones teóricas y metodológicas sobre el estudio del discurso desde el campo de la comunicación". *Comunicación y Sociedad*, 10 (2008): 225-247.

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and the relative novelty of the latter, both mechanisms deserve to be analysed separately.

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