Draft papers

International seminar

Conflicts in Conflict

Disagreements and ruptures in protest movements from medieval to contemporary times

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

First session: Medieval history

Justine Firnhaber-Baker (University of St Andrews): *Rebels against Themselves: Internal Conflicts in the Jacquerie Revolt of 1358*

Eliza Hartrich (University of York): *Manifestos, Mobilisation, and the Myth of Cohesion: Local and National Aims in Late Medieval English Revolts*

Segunda session: Early Modern History

Eva Guillorel (Université Rennes 2), *Songs, history and memories of conflicts in conflict: the use of oral sources to document early modern rebellions in France*

Mauro Hernández (UNED), *Forced Rebels: Internal Fractures in Rural Riots (Castile, 18th Century)*

Third session: Modern History

Katrina Navickas (University of Hertfordshire), *Conflicts of movement: the contested routes of democratic and trades' marches in England in the long 19th century*

Álvaro París (USAL): *Fractured communities: popular politics and civil war in Southern Europe during the Age of Revolutions (1789-1830)*

'Rebels against Themselves: Internal Conflicts in the Jacquerie Revolt of 1358'

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When the Jacquerie revolt began on 28 May 1358, it was not initially clear who was responsible nor who its targets might be. If on the 28th a group of villagers killed five knights and four squires, their next datable act, 3 days later, was to execute a non-noble – a mason – in an adjacent town. In fact, it would not be until after the revolt was over in August 1358 that the French Crown settled on a formula to describe the antagonists and their victims, naming the rebels as 'the non-nobles' and their targets as 'the nobles'.[1] This stark, binary division served clear royal purposes. It exempted from any involvement the Valois Crown, its captured King Jean II (then in London), and the inexperienced Dauphin ruling in his stead. It erased any possible commonality between nobles and non-nobles, such as vertical solidarities of sympathy or interest around the dynastic question then pitting the Valois against the Évreux of Navarre, as well as the imbrication of noble interests and identities with the Crown's fiscal and military policies.

Casting the revolt as an act committed by non-nobles against nobles resolutely defined it in terms of social conflict between two undifferentiated constituencies, though neither were homogenous blocks. However, nobles had much more in common with one another than non-nobles did, and while that relative homogeneity made them an easy target, it also gave them an organizational advantage. The rebels' heterogeneity, by contrast, served as an initial strength in the mobilization of revolt, but ultimately caused its downfall as different interests and identities came into conflict.

It is true that the category of 'noble' was not an uncomplicated one in mid fourteenth-century France, as Philippe Contamine's definitive work on that subject long ago established. While England's distinction between noble and gentry was not operative in France, French nobles ranged in wealth and prestige from princes of the blood with vast lands and wealth measured in tens of thousands of *livres tournois* to

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[1] Notably, lordship seems not to have been at issue, either in terms of the events that transpired or in the way that the surviving texts present those events. Unlike in the English Rising of 1381 to which the Jacquerie is often compared, there was almost no destruction of records, and no ecclesiastical lordships were damaged, violence being almost entirely confined to the pillage and destruction of manors and fortresses belonging to lay nobles.

simple squires who could hardly afford a horse. But if nobility covered a range of situations, it was a well-defined category, one that inhered in genealogical descent from noble parents and was expressed and affirmed through social and cultural practices. Moreover, the nobility enjoyed certain specifically noble privileges when it came to taxes and to land holding. Nobles even possessed a political body, the Second Estate, whose existence had become increasingly important during the heyday of the French Estates in the 1340s and 1350s.

It is thus understandable that the quality of nobility made nobles at both ends of the scale and everyone in between a target during the Jacquerie, and the nobles returned the favour, treating non-nobles as an undifferentiated group, against whom repression and reprisals were to be carried out reflexively in the months following the revolt. The chronicler Jean le Bel remarked that nobles killed the innocent along with the guilty 'for they had no leisure to investigate'. If guilty and innocent were not salient categories, nor did other differences, such as those of wealth or status, seem to make much of an impression either. Non-nobles in the countryside were not distinguished from those in cities. Violent repression was carried out in the cities of Meaux and Amiens, and attempted against the city of Senlis.

But there was far more differentiation among the non-nobles of northern France than there was among the nobility. Aside from disparities in wealth and status as great or greater than those found among the nobility, non-nobles did not even all fall under the same judicial or political umbrella. An individual's legal status was dependent on a multitude of factors, of which the simple fact of non-nobility was only one, nor was any individual non-noble likely to be part of the Third Estate, which comprised only the wealthiest and most established citizens from the privileged towns known as *bonnes villes*. The characteristic of being 'non-noble' was merely a negative one, the absence of nobility. There was no *single* culture of non-nobility to serve as the same unifying function as the chivalric ethos did for the nobility, eliding differences of wealth and rank through participation in a shared outlook and aesthetic.

Thus, the quality of 'non-nobility' belied wide disparities not just of economic and social background but also of political opportunity, as well as culture and identity. That heterogeneity did not prevent non-nobles from finding common cause during the Jacquerie. The nobles were quite right about that. Prosopographical analysis of

identifiable Jacquerie rebels demonstrates that they were primarily rural folk engaged in agriculture – i.e. peasants – but there were also substantial numbers of artisans among them. And although there were penniless men and even serfs among them, a number were well-off and educated, some even with careers as minor royal or seigneurial officials. The fewness of the identifiable rebels – less than 500 – in relation to the number of undocumented participants – which probably numbered in the tens of thousands – indicates, however, that this profile is probably not typical and may be entirely misleading. The majority of rebels may have been much poorer and less literate than sources suggest, those identifiable rebels constituting just the unrepresentative tip of an iceberg whose submerged shape can only be guessed at.

If the Jacquerie's rebels were primarily rural – and perhaps poorer and more marginal than the sources indicate – urban participation and urban participants were vital components of the uprising. Some of their inhabitants joined the revolt, including even some communal forces, and they provided victuals for rebel contingents passing through – one of the rare places we can see women involved in the revolt. Leaving aside the complicated case of Paris for the moment, large urban settlements with unambiguous involvement in the Jacquerie include Beauvais, Rouen, Amiens, Compiègne, Senlis, Meaux, and Laon, to which could be added a dozen or more smaller agglomerations with urban characteristics, such as fairs and/or some degree of communal organization – places like Vitry in Champagne, Gisors in Normandy or even the epicentre of the revolt, Saint-Leu d'Esserent, which was a busy river port with a strategically located ferry, as well as the site of a quarry and a Cluniac priory. And as the spatial spread of these places suggests, geographic diversity was another aspect of the revolt's heterogeneity, a feature which in the medieval context meant not only topographical diversity but also differences of language, customs, law and jurisdiction.[2]

The rebellion's multiple and intersecting heterogeneities served as a strength during the initial phase of mobilization. Except for the first incident on 28 May, the revolt did not begin with a clearly defined objective or even a leader. All indications are that leadership was instituted *after* that first attack, at which point a programme also began

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[2] Another part of the iceberg below the waterline whose size and shape we cannot judge is how many rebels subject to seigneurial jurisdiction do not appear in the source base, which is almost entirely of royal provenance.

to take shape. While I caution strongly against extrapolating actors' motives from their social backgrounds, we can see that the revolt appealed to a broad range of interests (as well as people) from the plethora objectives that can be ascribed to the revolt. These range from animus against the Valois crown for dynastic, fiscal and military reasons, to political and strategic support for the bourgeois reform regime led by Marcel in Paris, to criticism of the nobility's economic and aesthetic excesses, as well as their military deficiencies, to longstanding interpersonal or communal disputes, to cupidity, criminality, misogyny, and even the ludic impulses of the young (fun). What I am saying here is that a lot of people could 'see themselves' in the revolt and at least initially understand it as a vehicle for their interests. The undefined, protean quality of non-nobility allowed the revolts' recruits a wide interpretative horizon in which to frame their actions and those of other rebels during the initial, also undefined and protean, phase of the uprising.

We can observe the coalescence of heterogenous non-noble objectives at the revolt's inception, where the interests of Picard villagers and bourgeois Parisians came together to spark the flame that ignited the rebellion. As I showed in my book, the murder of 5 knights and 4 squires by the inhabitants of several villagers who converged on Saint-Leu d'Esserent was probably intended to keep those nobles from garrisoning the castle at Creil, allowing the Dauphin to interrupt shipping on the Oise River as he had already done on the Seine and the Marne, a blockade directed against Marcel's regime in Paris. The attack was premeditated and organized, but it does not seem that it was orchestrated by Paris. It took Paris 24 hours to react and nearly two weeks to organize its own forces to take advantage of it. For the villagers' part, if they had acted in response to the unexpected threat of the nobles' armed passage toward the Oise, it was only in the aftermath of that response that they elected a leader – a wealthy, married, and literate man with military experience named Guillaume Calle – and it was he, it seems, who wrote to Marcel to suggest an alliance.

Calle and the subordinate rebel captains who were elected or appointed during the revolt also made contact with some of the Jacquerie's major urban allies – or would-be allies. Urbane, if not actually urban, peasants like Calle and other 'tip of the iceberg' rebels had much in common with townspeople and interacted with them often in commercial and social transactions. They may have had similar views on what we

might call politics, and those views might have been shared by 'submerged iceberg' rebels, too. The story that several months before the Jacquerie a couple of noblemen were chased out of a Francilien village with the wish that they would go to Paris 'where they kill nobles' is certainly suggestive. But the glue that held the rebel alliance together began to crack almost immediately.

Conflict over and about leadership emerged within days of the revolt's inception. The execution of the mason on 31 May, which I alluded to at the beginning of this paper as the second datable event in the Jacquerie, was carried out to punish a non-noble's attempt to nominate someone other than Calle to be 'captain of the countryside'. A number of village captains, subordinate to Calle and either appointed by him or chosen by their village, claimed that their troops threatened mutiny and death if the captain did not 'lead them where they wished to go' or attack targets they had chosen. Likewise, Calle reportedly had to threaten some of his captains with execution if they did not carry out his commands. And some rural communities questioned whether Calle and other captains had the authority to issue any commands at all. Both above and below the waterline, the iceberg was full of fissures.

Nor was the alliance with Paris without problems. By the second week of June, about 10 days after the Jacquerie began, the Parisian militia had marched out of the capital to harness the revolt to Marcel's objectives. Ultimately, they were bound for Meaux in order to assault and seize the castle there that was being used to blockade the River Marne. The rural rebels' leadership seems to have endorsed this plan. Calle sent messengers to villages near Meaux, instructing them to join the attack, and he and a large part of the Jacques forces participated in the attack on the castle of Ermenonville *en route* to Meaux. However, differences in Marcel's objectives and those of the rural rebels became apparent at the Parisian militia's first stop, when the commander ordered villagers to destroy houses belongs to one of the Crown's councillors. They objected that he 'wasn't noble', which he wasn't, but agreed or were forced to destroy it anyway. A very similar thing seems to have happened only a day or two later, when the Parisians and Calle jointly besieged the fortress of Ermenonville, again held by a Crown councillor, Robert de Lorris, who was also Marcel's personal enemy. The Jacques are said to have spared Lorris and his family from a grisly death when he 'renounced his gentility'. That story may be apocryphal, but Ermenonville did

mark a split between Calle and the Parisians. The capital's militia marched on to Meaux, but Calle and his forces headed in the opposite direction, toward Beauvais, where they were to meet and be defeated by an international army of nobles led by King Charles of Navarre.

Navarre had been allied with Marcel's regime in Paris in opposition to the Valois Crown which had treated him and his family very poorly. Consequently, many Jacques believed that they could trust him. It was probably for that reason that Calle accepted an offer of parley from Navarre without demanding hostages for his safe conduct, an otherwise inexplicable decision that saw him beheaded as soon as he entered the camp. Navarre and his army then routed Calle's now leaderless forces. Navarre's defeat of the Jacques near Beauvais occurred almost simultaneously with the total defeat of the Parisian militia and those Jacques accompanying it at Meaux, and in the weeks after that double defeat, the urban-rural coalition that had supported the revolt fell almost completely apart. With the sole exception of Senlis, towns that had welcomed Jacques now closed their gates to them, leaving them without any defensive infrastructure of their own. They accepted letters of safeguard from Charles of Navarre and left the rural Jacques to be slaughtered by Navarrese forces and those of noblemen acting on their own or in concert with the Dauphin.

The effect of Charles of Navarre on the revolt showcases the fatal conflicts within the rural uprising, but it also demonstrates the noble solidarity that guaranteed its suppression. For most of the 1350s, the nobility had been divided in their support or opposition to Navarre, who was one of France's great nobles and a potential claimant to the French throne in his own right. Navarre had eventually become a mortal enemy of King Jean II. When the Jacquerie broke out, he had been in Normandy defending his patrimonial lands from Valois attack, but when noblemen approached him for help in suppressing the Jacquerie, he agreed, even though some of those who did so were staunch allies of the Valois. His agreement to help his enemies destroy the Jacques, allies of his ally, Marcel, may have been solely out of self-interest, but the chronicle accounts say that the nobles appealed to his sense of noble solidarity. They begged him not 'to allow gentility to be destroyed'. As one of my students has noticed in a dissertation he's writing now, French nobles also successfully sought help from other supposed 'enemies' – those of the English held county of Ponthieu and the English-

allied imperial county of Hainaut, a move that has an interesting parallel with noble Scots hospitality toward John of Gaunt during the English Rising of 1381.

The Jacquerie seems to have durably dissuaded any efforts to create a capacious coalition of non-nobles in northern France for the rest of the Middle Ages. In Languedoc and in Flanders, urban and rural rebels worked together in the Tuchinat and the White Hood rebellions of the 1380s. But in the northern French heartlands of the Jacquerie, that great wave of revolt that followed the death of Charles V and coincided with the English Rising seems to have left the countryside cold. Neither the agitators of the Harelle of Rouen nor the Hammermen of Paris seem to have sought or been approached by rural partisans. Perhaps the rebels of that generation looked for a less volatile mixture of interests than that which had constituted both a great strength and the fatal weakness of 1358's failed revolution.

Manifestos, Mobilisation, and the Myth of Cohesion:
Local and National Aims in Late Medieval English Revolts
Eliza Hartrich (University of York)

Historiography: Late Medieval Revolts and the Myth of Cohesion

In a 2012 article for *History Compass*, Sam Cohn argued that late medieval revolts were, sociologically speaking, more 'modern' than revolts of the 16th-18th centuries or even than the 2011 Arab Spring or 2011 riots in English cities. Key to Cohn's hypothesis was the contention that popular rebellions in 14th- and 15th-century Europe featured extensive prior planning, elected leadership, and maintenance of cohesion—all contributing to the fact that these revolts very often resulted in the successful achievement of rebel aims or redress of their grievances. He contrasted these factors with the more haphazard and immediate modes mobilisation used in the 21st century, in particular the role of Twitter and Facebook in enabling 'instantaneous interaction that drew thousands into the streets, signalling the hot-places, where to meet, saferoutes, and where the police were advancing'.[1] Cohn's statement represents perhaps the most extreme articulation of trends in scholarship on medieval revolts occurring throughout the late 2000s and 2010s, in which many historians (Justine Firnhaber-Baker, Christian Liddy, Jan Dumolyn, and Jelle Haemers, to name only a few) effectively debunked 1970s surveys by Guy Fourquin and by Philippe Wolff and Michel Mollat that dismissed late medieval revolts as disorganised and 'conservative' reactions to subsistence crises. Research in the 21st century has made clear that people from all walks of life in late medieval Europe mounted co-ordinated and ideologically sophisticated resistance to political authority. Authorities recognised these rebel movements as an inherent part of political life, and took the threats posed by them seriously.

This paper does not dispute the validity of any of this important work, but does seek to question tentatively the underlying assumptions that a 'sophisticated' revolt likely to achieve 'success' was cohesive and extensively co-ordinated. The 15th-century English revolts investigated here— the Jack Cade Rebellion of 1450 and the sequence of English revolts occurring in 1469-71—DO exhibit some of the more frenetic and immediate mobilisation techniques Cohn cited for Arab Spring and the 2011 riots in London, Manchester, and other English cities. These revolts, I argue, gained their potency in part of the fact that they were NOT cohesive movements with a clear agenda. Broad statements of intent and amalgamated manifestos representing seemingly contradictory interests were designed to be vague enough to appeal to the widest possible constituency. Groups and individuals with local grievances could find something in these statements that struck a chord, temporarily fusing local and national discontent. Certain elements of these revolts appear as co-ordinated 'movements' or even military campaigns, but the effectiveness of resistance was due in part to the more diffuse aspects of rebellion, popping up in different parts of the country at different times. In these revolts, we see not necessarily 'conflicts' among rebels, but rather a waxing and waning of intensity, shifts in focus and location, and dissolution of coalitions.

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[1] Samuel Cohn, 'The "Modernity" of Medieval Popular Revolt', *History Compass* (2012), 731-41, quotation at 731.

<u>Background: The Revolts</u>

The revolts studied here—the Jack Cade Rebellion of 1450 and a series of risings in 1469-71—are all very difficult to define in terms of chronology, location, or purpose. The Cade Rebellion seems to have emerged in the county of Kent on England's south-eastern coast in May 1450, in the aftermath of defeats in the Hundred Years' War that resulted in the loss of England's lands in Normandy. Local elites in villages and small towns had been assembled by the Crown in the previous month to defend the English coast against potential French invasion and, as Montgomery Bohna has pointed out, they used the same leaders and muster points when mobilising a rebel host.[2] The immediate spur for the rebellion was probably the death of one of King Henry VI's leading advisers, William de la Pole, duke of Suffolk. Suffolk had been impeached by parliament in early 1450 and exiled from England, but as he was leaving England ordinary sailors from the Kentish port of Dover took control of the ship, conducted their own trial of Suffolk for treason, and executed him. Rumours that the king's advisors would take revenge on Kent by declaring the entire county a royal hunting ground (and subjecting it to the harsh restrictions of forest law) helped to stir up fear in Kent and recruit supporters to the rebellion. From Kent, the rebel host moved on to camp at Blackheath, just outside London, and they temporarily took control of the capital in early July 1450. At the same time, separate uprisings occurred in Sussex, Essex, Wiltshire, Hampshire, East Anglia, and Gloucestershire, among other locations in southern England, often involving attacks on the persons and properties of bishops and abbots who played key roles in royal government and who also were involved in long-running disputes with civic governments or local gentry. In the end, the rebels lost a pitched battle on London Bridge on 5 July 1450, and the rebel leader—Jack Cade—was killed in Kent while fleeing the capital. While Cade's death is conventionally seen as the 'end' of the revolt, his name continued to be cited by dissidents. As late as July 1451—a year after the 'original' Cade's rebellion—artisans in Norfolk attacked the estates of local gentlemen Thomas Hoo, Lord Hastings, and Thomas Brews; they claimed that both men were 'traytourys' and that the attacks were fulfilling Cade's mission.[3]

The rebellions of 1469-71 are less studied than the Cade Revolt, in part because the sporadic 'popular' rebellions of peasants and townspeople in this period have often been viewed as minor incidents at best ancillary to the aristocratic coup perpetrated by Richard Neville, earl of Warwick, and, at worst, as semi-fictitious revolts stirred up by Warwick's henchmen to make King Edward IV seem ineffective. Recent work by Penny Tucker, however, has shown a much more complex picture of these popular rebellions and their relationship to Warwick's challenge to King Edward IV and his eventual deposition of Edward IV in favour of the previously deposed King Henry VI.[4] The first rising seems to have occurred in Yorkshire in April-May 1469, led by a shadowy figure known as Robin of Redesdale, followed by a Yorkshire revolt in June 1469 led by Robin of Holderness, and another Yorkshire revolt claiming to be led by Robin of Redesdale in July 1469. The July Redesdale rebels were championed by Warwick, and Redesdale's forces defeated a royal army at the battle of Edgcote on 24 July 1469. While the rebellions appear to have originated in Yorkshire, disturbances also occurred in Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Bridgwater, and Coventry, amongst other places, during the summer of 1469 and the months that followed. Warwick was able to use these rebellions to gain temporary control over King Edward IV, but by

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[2] Montgomery Bohna, 'Armed Force and Civic Legitimacy in Jack Cade's Revolt, 1450', *English Historical Review*, 118 (2003), 563-82.
[3] TNA, KB9/85/1, m. 6; I.M.W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (Oxford, 1991),158.
[4] Penny Tucker, '"Robin of Redesdale's Rebellion" of 1469', *Northern History*, 58 (2021), 239-58.

the autumn of 1469 the king was again acting on his own behalf. Further risings in Lincolnshire in March 1470 prompted Warwick to flee the country, but he returned to England in September 1470 and by October had overthrown Edward IV in favour of Henry VI. Over the course of March-April 1470, Edward IV defeated Warwick and regained his throne, but Thomas Neville, Bastard of Fauconberg, stood at the head of a rebellion in Kent in May 1471 that culminated in an unsuccessful siege of London.

Leadership

The diffuse structure of these revolts—with loosely-connected incidents of protest occurring in different locations across the country—was facilitated in part by the fact that the nominal leaders of the Cade Rebellion and, at least, the Robin of Redesdale and Robin of Holderness revolts of 1469 were pseudonymous individuals with no known identity or affiliations. As such, they could mean all things to all people: shadowy charismatic figures that groups and individuals with a variety of grievances, even potentially contradictory ones, could view as an ally. The adopted names Robin of Redesdale and Robin of Holderness almost certainly alluded to the legend of Robin Hood, the outlaw who cunningly thwarted the authority of the sheriff of Nottingham. Robin Hood ballads and plays circulated around England in the fifteenth century, and the story and characters would have been familiar to many. Chroniclers reported that Jack Cade and Robin of Redesdale were also called 'John Amendalle' and 'Robin Mend-All'—aliases that implied that these men could serve as figureheads for any cause or any grievances that needed to be redressed.[5] The English Crown may well have recognised the utility of legendary and panacean names for provoking mass discontent. It is telling that the warrant issued for the arrest of Jack Cade took great pains to force a specific identity onto the universal figure of the rebel leader. Cade, according to the proclamation, was born in Ireland and while living in Sussex had killed a pregnant woman, prompting him to abjure the realm and to swear allegiance to the French.[6]

Manifestos and Mobilisation

Certain elements of Cade's rebellion and the 1469-71 revolts followed the 'modern' organisational structures identified by Cohn. Cade's revolt, in particular, featured a captain who mimicked acts of government, issuing safe-conducts and orders for troops to be sent to the rebel camp.[7] There is also some evidence that those who entered Cade's camp swore oaths of loyalty to him, although the role of oaths in creating bonds of loyalty among the rebels and cementing a common purpose is much less often cited than, for instance, in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.[8] The building of a unified military host, after all, was but one part of all these rebellions.

The form of mobilisation that perhaps most characterised the Cade Revolt and the 1469-71 rebellions, as well as most other large-scale rebellions in 15th-century England (such as the Jack Sharpe revolt of 1431, associated with Lollard heresies), was the manifesto. Manifestos were

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[5] I.M.W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (Oxford, 1991), 78; Tucker, 'Redesdale's Rebellion', 244.
[6] *The Politics of Fifteenth-Century England: John Vale's Book*, ed. Margaret Lucille Kekewich, Colin Richmond, Anne F. Sutton, Livia Visser-Fuchs, and John L. Watts (Stroud, 1995), 207.
[7] See, e.g., those issued to London alderman Thomas Cook: *John Vale's Book*, 206-7.
[8] For oaths in Cade's revolt, see Harvey, *Cade's Rebellion*, 75.

sets of articles enumerating the grievances of the rebels, but they rarely made specific demands for military support. These manifestos were circulated throughout the country, especially in towns, and most survive in multiple copies and iterations.

At least three different sets of articles were issued by the Jack Cade rebels. The first, made in May 1450, represented the grievances of the 'commones of Kente', and was probably designed to recruit supporters locally. It opened with the accusation that it was 'openly noised that Kente shulde be destroied with a roial power and made awilde foreste' in punishment for Suffolk's execution at Dover. Other complaints (about the diversion of royal revenues to the king's favourites, the inability of key nobles to access the king's presence, the perversion of justice, and the loss of English lands in France) were directed more generally at problems perceived to be afflicting the realm, but several items were specific to Kent: complaints that tax collectors in Kent had been put out of pocket by being forced to pay for writs exempting the barons of the Cinque Ports from the collection of the 15th, that the court of Dover arrested people outside their jurisdiction, that the people of Kent had to travel too far to attend sessions held by the justices of the peace, and that nobles interfered in the election of MPs (Members of Parliament) in Kent.[9] Interestingly, an otherwise practically identical copy of the May 1450 manifesto discussed above includes the same clause about being denied free election of MPs, but removes the reference to the 'seide shire of Kente', thus turning a local grievance into a more pervasive national one.[10]

This process of homogenising the local grievances of Kent's wealthier yeoman peasants was yet more apparent in new manifestos issued later, which sought to find audiences beyond the county. A 4 June 1450 manifesto, though still issued in the name of the 'trewe legemene of Kente' and requesting that a judicial commission be sent into Kent to punish abusers of the law there, made only one reference to the county in its list of grievances. All other complaints were more general ones about the king's counsellors leading him astray, the king being encouraged to break his coronation oath by bending the law to his own will, the king treating the people's goods as his own, the role of bribery and corruption in limiting access to royal justice, and the impoverishment of the Crown. The intent to broaden appeal and recruit supporters more widely is made clear by concluding exhortations that anyone who is the king's true subject should assist the rebellion: 'whatever he be that wulle not thees fawtes were amendyd, he is ffalser then Jew or Sarsone'. Moreover, the rebels sought not to alienate potential supporters by higher social standing by clarifying that 'we blame not alle the lordes nor alle that biene aboute the Kynges persone, nor alle gentilmene, nor alle men of lawe, nor alle byschoppes, nor alle preestes'.[11] By altering and universalising their message, the Cade rebels were probably not just aiming to draw new recruits to the main host encamped on Blackheath. Creating multiple centres of rebellion, rather than ensuring internal cohesion, was the principal goal. They were creating a generic programme that different groups across the country could ascribe to, thus facilitating new uprisings only loosely associated with the 'original' Kentish force—for instance, that in Wiltshire in late June 1450, in which local rebels killed Bishop Aiscough of Salisbury. This mode of mobilisation—encouraging more-or-less 'spontaneous' risings elsewhere in the

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[9] *John Vale's Book*, 204.

[10] The Kent-based MP clause is found in *John Vale's Book*, 205. The same clause, but with Kent removed, is in the MS British Library Cott. Roll IV 50 published in 'Appendix A: The Bills of Complaint of 1450', in Harvey, *Cade's Rebellion*, 187.

[11] The 4 June manifesto is printed in Harvey, *Cade's Rebellion*, 188-90.

country that could find some common ground with a generalised call for reform—also ensured, as we have seen, that revolts citing Cade continued for months after his defeat and death.

The Robin of Redesdale rebels adopted a similar tack in May 1469, distributing a manifesto beyond the original Yorkshire locale of the rising in an attempt to generate or harness discontent throughout the country rather than to create a single unified body of rebels. As Penny Tucker has discussed, a Norwich mercer named William Bilmyn was indicted in May 1469 for sharing articles produced by Robin of Redesdale with a group of people in the popular Norfolk pilgrimage site of Walsingham, and apparently saying that Robin's points reflected the best interests of the realm.[12] It may be no coincidence that, around the same time, violence against royal officials occurred elsewhere in Norfolk, although not explicitly citing Robin of Redesdale.[13]

It is difficult to know the exact language of the complaints that featured in the articles issued by the Robin of Redesdale rebels in May 1469, as the only surviving copy dates to July 1469 and (as we shall see) was not actually circulated by the Yorkshire rebels themselves. The later copy of what purports to be the May 1469 articles, however, are notable for being extremely general and vague, with no specifically 'Yorkshire' grievances. They stated that King Edward IV had the largest estate of any king of England, but that his wife's relatives (her father Lord Rivers, his wife the duchess of Bedford, and their sons) and several other named advisers had caused him to alienate his lands and instead live on revenues generated by the commons. The articles also made an implicit threat to the king, stating that the same circumstances had led to the depositions of previous kings Edward II, Richard II, and Henry VI.[14] These claims were, indeed, very similar in tone and content to those made in the 4 June 1450 Cade manifesto.

Manifestos also proved a means by which very different dissident groups attempted to form coalitions or pool support. Richard Neville, earl of Warwick (also known as 'Warwick the Kingmaker') was chief proponent of this approach, seeking to demonstrate that his own grievances against King Henry VI in 1460 and King Edward IV in 1469 were fundamentally linked to those expressed by popular protest movements. Warwick, along with his father, the earl of Salisbury, and the earl of March (the future King Edward IV), re-circulated the 4 June 1450 Cade manifesto ten years later, in advance of the lords' landing in Kent to support the duke of York's challenge to Henry VI.[15] In doing so, Warwick and his fellows indicated that their aristocratic rebellion was a continuation of the Cade movement from a decade earlier, undoubtedly in the hopes of encouraging former Cade sympathisers to join their own force. Warwick embraced the same tactic in July 1469, this time when seeking to change the advisers surrounding Edward IV. Warwick circulated the articles of complaint made by the Robin of Redesdale rebels in May 1469 and then added his own similarly general grievances.[16] Vague and universalised rebel programmes, after all, could sound very similar to one another. By juxtaposing different rebel manifestos against one another, groups could see that their own cause was not dissimilar to that of a different rebel group and that some form of coalition might be possible. For Warwick, specifically, he hoped to gain the appearance of being the voice of the 'commons' by illustrating the resonances between his own agenda and earlier popular rebellions.

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[12] Tucker, 'Redesdale's Rebellion', 248.
[13] Tucker, 'Redesdale's Rebellion', 246.
[14] *John Vale's Book*, 212-14.
[15] *John Vale's Book*, 210-12.
[16] *John Vale's Book*, 212-15.

<u>Local and National Aims</u>

The generalised content of the manifestos did not necessarily lend itself to a clear message or to cohesion among rebels. It, instead, facilitated the proliferation of loosely-affiliated local rebellions occurring alongside (or, indeed, following) a 'main' revolt with a captain and encampment. There was little in the manifestos circulated that was so specific as to alienate potential allies, and many could see their own discontent with the state of the realm, or with financial mismanagement and legal corruption at a local level, in the manifestos. Rather than 'conflicts' within rebellions, then, there were different centres of revolt or different contingents that followed the same basic principles but had divergent primary aims.

Sometimes, these aims coalesced into a simultaneous general movement of discontent that meant that the monarch and his counsellors had to dilute their military force by engaging on multiple fronts. In July 1469, for instance, Edward IV proved unable to move decisively against the Robin of Redesdale rebellion because he was anxious not to ignore Warwick's troops advancing from London and brewing discontent in Norfolk occurring at the same time—both movements separate from but certainly connected to the Robin of Redesdale revolt through the circulation and adoption of the Redesdale articles. The Robin of Redesdale rebels' success at the battle of Edgcote, however, in fact demonstrated the potential weaknesses of this approach for sustained action. Once Lord Rivers and other key courtiers of Edward IV had been executed following the battle, the Robin of Redesdale rebels seem not to have pursued further action against the king; they had accomplished their stated goals and did not necessarily feel the need to continue aiding further rebellions in Lincolnshire or the earl of Warwick's continued challenges to Edward IV.

Local rebellions, even when clearly affiliated to a 'main' revolt, operated on their own chronology, sometimes coinciding with that of other movements and sometimes not. The town of Colchester in Essex during the 1450s proves a case in point. Cade's agents allegedly stirred up a revolt in Colchester on 26 June 1450, led by local merchant Thomas Sente.[17] There was a larger revolt there on 1 July, as Cade was gaining control of London, in which some leading citizens of Colchester were assaulted and their homes robbed.[18] Exactly how these revolts relate to civic politics is unclear, although evidently the town's current bailiff, William Lecche, who had also served as MP in 1449-50, took part, as well, so it was clearly not a simple case of 'haves' vs 'have-nots'.[19] The people of Colchester continued their protests long after Cade himself had been defeated and killed, exhibiting how Cade's name and agenda were harnessed for local purposes in ways that were certain not driven by Cade himself or his chief agents. On 10 September 1450, at least fifty men in Colchester armed themselves and announced that Cade was still alive and they were ready to die with him in his cause. Colchester bailiffs Nicholas Peke and Thomas at Wode promptly imprisoned the perpetrators of this rising, but another rising ensued on 14 September.[20] The very next day, 15 September, a group of one hundred armed men broke into the Colchester gaol and released Richard Taillour, a brickmaker and one of the leaders of the 10 September rising. As they were doing so, the men re-affirmed both their loyalty to Cade and their belief that he still survived, and threatened to kill Peke.[21]

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[17] TNA, KB9/26/1, m. 1; KB9/271, m. 46.
[18] TNA, KB9/26/1, m. 16.
[19] TNA, KB9/26/1, m. 17; Harvey, *Cade's Rebellion*, 89-90, 94, 109.
[20] TNA, KB9/26/1, mm. 12, 15.
[21] *CPR 1446-1452*, 415, 503; Harvey, *Cade's Rebellion*, 143-4.

The experiences of the city of Salisbury across 1450-71 further demonstrate how protest movements existed independently, intersecting with broader 'national' rebellions at times when they believed their interests coincided or affiliation to a 'national' cause could lend legitimacy to a local dispute. The citizens of Salisbury had been in conflict with their bishop before the Cade rebellion began: a property dispute between city and bishop in 1443 was followed in June 1449 by a more dramatic incident in which the citizens attacked Robert Hungerford, Lord Moleyns—a local lord and supporter of the bishop—at the George Inn.[22] When the Cade rebellion broke out in the summer of 1450, Salisbury used the occasion to escalate violence. Bishop Aiscough of Salisbury (himself one of the king's unpopular counsellors railed against in the Cade manifestos) was murdered at nearby Edington on 29 June 1450, and following day the city broke out in rioting, with attacks on property belonging to the bishop and other ecclesiastical lords; particularly notable is the fact that the citizens burned episcopal records relating to the bishop's landholdings in the city.[23] This all occurred while Cade himself was marching on London. Disputes between Salisbury and its bishop, however, continued into the 1450s and 1460s, without the spur of Cade's rebellion and with a new bishop in situ. John Halle, an inveterate enemy of the bishop and frequent mayor of Salisbury, was even imprisoned by Edward IV in August 1465 for not obeying royal arbitration between the two parties.[24] Halle himself saw the rebellions of the earl of Warwick in 1469-71 as a cause allied to his own, and joined the earl's rebel forces in September 1470 of his accord even though other members of the civic elite were less enthusiastic about the earl's programme.[25]

Conclusion

Large-scale, national revolts in late medieval England, therefore, were not characterised by cohesion. They were polycentric and fit many different interest groups under a wide umbrella. The use of generic pseudonyms for rebel leaders and the circulation of amalgamated and unspecific articles of grievance suggest that, far from being a deficiency, such vague intentions were regarded as helpful in achieving a broad appeal—creating a moment in which various germs of discontent could bloom simultaneously. These kinds of revolts, however, inevitably featured sub-groups with their own agendas, which they sometimes harnessed in the name of a wider cause but sometimes pursued independently. Moreover, the desire to achieve local aims meant that many of these sub-groups never swore formal allegiance to a rebel leader or joined the army led by him. They, instead, used the general call to arms issued by rebel leaders as a spur to express bubbling resentment or to escalate existing disputes.

The complex, multi-centred, and intersecting nature of medieval revolts is certainly not a new discovery. Justine Firnhaber-Baker's work on the Jacquerie and the publications of the Voices of 1381 project on the Peasants' Revolt have made important strides in this regard, and this paper follows in their footsteps. These works, notably, all focus on large-scale revolts rather than ones confined to a particular city or locality, in contrast to work by Liddy, Haemers, Dumolyn, Patrick Lantschner, and (to some degree) Cohn. The larger revolts of the later Middle Ages should give

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[22] J.N. Hare, 'The Wiltshire Risings of 1450: Political and Economic Discontent in Mid-Fifteenth-Century England', *Southern History*, 4 (1982), 13-31, at 21-2; Harvey, *Cade's Rebellion*, 124.
[23] TNA, KB9/133, mm. 2, 3, 24, 27, 32; Harvey, *Cade's Rebellion*, 123-6; Hare, 'Wiltshire Risings of 1450', 13-16.
[24] Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, G23/1/2, f. 76v.
[25] WSHC, G23/1/2, f. 96.

us pause before hailing the medieval revolts for their organisation, cohesion, and unity of purpose, and attributing these features as indicators of 'sophistication'. When rebel leaders wanted to generate mass protest movements, they instead often diluted their agendas and sought to appeal to as many potential allies as possible—allies who often operated independently of any central host or leadership. This did not make the rebellions any less politically savvy, but rather constituted a strategic choice to create a many-headed hydra of discontent that would be difficult for authorities to quell. Rebel leaders sent out manifestos across the country in the hopes of sparking local risings, but such a wide reach meant that they could not necessarily control exactly how individuals in the localities interpreted these programmes and acted upon them.

Songs, history and memories of conflict in conflicts : the use of oral sources to document rebellions en France (16th-18th centuries)
Éva Guillorel – Salamanca, 29 April 2025 – Pre-paper

How can oral sources help historians to document divergent positions within a group during rebellions in the early modern and modern times, or to document divergent memories in the understanding of past revolts? I would like to address this question by looking at a cultural production often associated with protest movements: songs. Songs are a privileged way of expressing social and political protest, easily accessible even for illiterate people. The revolts and revolutions of the 19th-21st centuries, which are better documented than previous periods, show the importance of this media (consider, for example, the many reuses of *La Marseillaise* or the *Internationale* during 19th and 20th-century European uprisings. More recently, in 2022, the Italian workers' song *Bella Ciao*, now considered a symbol of anti-fascist resistance, was translated in Persian and reused to oppose the violence of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and songs continue to accompany demonstrations in opposition to repression all around the world. The authorities's efforts to control and often ban singing is a good illustration of the subversive power of songs and the threat they pose to the stability of the established order. When interpreted collectively, songs can unite a group around shared ideas, playing on their emotional power. But they can also be a vehicle for expressing divergent points of view.

How to access forms of vernacular cultures through songs is a methodological challenge for historians interested in early modern and modern revolts, since this oral expression rarely left written traces. When we possess such songs, they were often recorded after the events, either written down or recorded from oral sources during ethnographic surveys. In this case, they document not so much the protest movements as such, but rather the remembrance of these events. Analysing these sources allows us to study the tensions linked to the memory of revolts, meaning how communities selectively remember past rebellions and make diverse judgements about them, sometimes taking opposing sides, which often reflect intra-community conflicts that have persisted or been reactivated over the centuries.

This paper is in line with the renewal of historical research on interrelations between oral traditions, conflicts and memories. It is inspired in particular by Guy Beiner's major work on the Irish uprisings in the 1790s around the attempted landing of the French and the rebellion against the British authorities: this historian provides a detailed analysis of the methodological issues linked to the various available sources (including oral sources) as well as the mechanisms of vernacular memory and social forgetting. The other source of inspiration is a collective research programme entitled 'Song and social protest in early modern Europe: Acts of rebellion, performance of memory', which I was very happy to lead from 2013 onwards in collaboration with David Hopkin at the University of Oxford, thanks to a British Academy funding: it resulted in two collective books, one in English, *Rhythms of Revolt. European Traditions and Memories of Social Conflict in Oral Culture* (2017) and its expanded French translation *Traditions orales et mémoires sociales des révoltes en Europe, XVe-XIXe siècles* (2020).

This paper is based on several examples drawn from episodes of revolts and revolutions in 16th-18th century-France, although I will focus mainly on the area I am most familiar with: Brittany (Western France). I will first address methodological questions about the use of songs as a source for the history of "conflicts in conflict", and then focus on the divergent memories associated with these revolts and how they reveal later tensions and conflicts inside local communities.

Songs as a source for the study of "conflicts in conflict" in protest movements: questions of method

Historians may be tempted to search in oral sources, particularly songs, for traces of the motivations, organisation and even tensions involved in uprisings, particularly in the context of the so-called 'popular' revolts of the 16th to 18th centuries. At that time, the insurgents' cultures were primarily oral, and few – if any – traces emanating directly from the rebels have been preserved. The sources used by historians to document these revolts are mainly drawn from repressive archives, which provide a biased access to certain aspects of this oral culture, for example through the record of insurgents' speeches written down in trials. Many cultural historians have developed such an 'oblique approach' (in the words of Peter Burke) to European popular culture.

But there is very little evidence of songs in these archives, or they are mentioned very briefly without details in the midst of descriptions of noise and disorder. There are a few other mentions in contemporary or slightly later chronicles of revolts. Brice Evain has listed them for the French and English revolts between the 1540s and the 1640s. For France, he has found only one example where the texts of several songs have been preserved, for the Nu-Pieds revolt in Normandy in 1639, although nothing proves that they were actually sung or that they originated from the rebels.

All these documents rarely provide more than a few words or verses of songs. They are therefore difficult to use in order to detect internal conflicts within the insurgent communities. In order to enlarge the corpus, it is necessary to focus not only on anti-tax and anti-seigniorial revolts, but on the major political and religious confrontations, for which we possess more sources. All the periods of political uncertainty of the French « old Regime » monarchy and the associated uprisings gave rise to a large number of songs, in particular the Wars of Religion (from the 1560s onwards) and the Fronde during the minority of Louis XIV (1648-1653). As for The French Revolution, it is often regarded as a peak of song production.

Pierre de l'Estoile reported how, as late as 1605 and despite the peace edict signed in Nantes in 1598, which was supposed to restore harmony between Protestants and Catholics, the population of Paris remained divided: the authorities banned the singing of a song about « Colas' cow », composed to mock Protestants; the performance of this song led to fights and even to the murder of one of the singers by a humiliated Protestant.

In the case of the Fronde, the production of songs was part of a wider set of written texts known as 'mazarinades', which were widely distributed in the form of printed broadsheets. These songs were composed for two purposes: first, to provide a journalistic account of developments in the civil war between the supporters of the Prime Minister Mazarin and the 'Frondeurs' (above all parliamentarians and nobles) ; secondly, to defend positions for or against Mazarin's politics, and to praise or criticise the actions of the main leaders. However, in the context of the Fronde, alliances were highly fluid and the opposing sides were divided and reconfigured on several occasions. An in-depth analysis of the songs could certainly help identify divisions and reconfigurations within the Frondeurs' faction, but it has yet to be done.

Even when we have song texts, we are unable to understand most of them without information about the context in which they were circulated and performed. Texts are often elliptical and allusive, which is also a protection for singers in a context of revolt against censorship or repression by the authorities. What is more, what is unsaid and only implicitly understood by the audience is difficult to grasp for historians. The meaning of a song does not lie that much in the words, but in the communicative intention of the singer and the reception of the audience. The choice of tunes also carries meaning, without being explicitly stated. A

same text and a same tune can be sung with different meanings depending on whether irony or particular gestures are added, and the same song can be received differently depending on the point of view of the listeners. This flexibility and mutability of meaning in songs offers the possibility of expressing dissident positions. It explains both the reasons for their success, because everyone hears them the way they want, but It is also what makes them so difficult for historians to study.

The French Revolution is an ideal period for analysing conflicts in conflict. On the one hand, we have a huge number of songs composed during this decade, which reflect all political sensibilities. On the other hand, political positions were very unsettled and evolved rapidly, and there was a great deal of dissent within groups sharing common interests. In the early 20th century, Constant Pierre listed around 3,000 songs in his landmark study entitled *Les hymnes et chansons de la Révolution: aperçu général et catalogue*. But this is only a portion of the whole repertoire, and he concentrated only on songs in French mainly preserved in Paris. This overview can be expanded by looking at other areas.

Let's take the example of Brittany, based on the research conducted by Youenn Le Prat. This historian has studied the song repertoire composed in the Breton language, and he shows how songs reveal the divergent positions taken within the same community by those who supported the Revolution and those who opposed it. Brittany, and western France more generally, was the scene of an extremely violent civil war between supporters of the new Republican ideas and defenders of the old order favouring the king and the Church. From 1793 onwards, the region was divided between 'Blue' republicans and 'White' counter-revolutionaries (also known as Chouans). Opposition took the form of local or regional uprisings, bloody armed battles and numerous acts of violence committed by both sides against the civilian population. Areas of support or opposition to the Revolution can be traced: on a Brittany-wide scale, they can be broadly superimposed on the zones of protest in the 17th century against Louis XIV's politics (i.e. the Bonnets Rouges revolt in 1675), then on the progressive or conservative political vote in the 19th and 20th centuries, with political continuities that are still clearly visible today.

But it is also necessary to play with scales and look at the level of a village, a hamlet or even a family to understand more cleverly the differences in appreciation of counter-revolutionary insurrections within the same community. Youenn Le Prat based his study on a song entitled "The Blue people of Cléguérec", which denounces the pro-Republic parishioners in this village in southern Brittany. The versified text, for which no melody is known (so we do not know whether it was sung or proclaimed), is known from a single version. It was certainly composed in 1796, at a time when the civil war was at a peak. In 1793, many inhabitants of Cléguérec took part in the assault on the neighbouring town of Pontivy and several of these insurgents were arrested and executed. Subsequently, bands of Chouans organised themselves in the forest surrounding Cléguérec, and the inhabitants were divided over what attitude to adopt towards the Revolution. The song, which is in favour of the counter-revolutionary movement, names more than 30 people in the parish who are dangerous because they are republicans: they live in different hamlets, and the song also denounces an entire hamlet that is totally committed to the Revolution.

This list actually represents only 1 or 2% of the population of the parish, and other written sources allow us to identify supporters of the Revolution who are not on the list. Youenn Le Prat analysed all names to trace the genealogical, social, political and economic profile of the denounced people: they were mainly well-off and literate peasants who were part of the richest families in Cléguérec, and who were often related to each other. Nearly half of the names are those of women, a category which is rarely mentioned in written sources because they were excluded from political rights, but it is clear from this song that they

played a major role in the eyes of their opponents. So this song allows us to trace and even map the internal divisions within the village, and to see how two groups with radically opposed political ideas are interpenetrated and have to coexist in their daily lives. In this case, the song helps us to understand tensions and divisions within a single community in a situation of civil war in a more illuminating way than other written sources, and by highlighting characters who are rarely featured in written archives, particularly women.

It should be noted that this versified text was published in 1912 by François Cadic, a conservative clergyman, who collected it from an old woman during his ethnographic surveys. It had certainly already circulated for more than half a century between the time it was composed and the time this woman may have learned it in her youth from her family. These precisions therefore invite us to integrate the dimension of remembrance into the study of "conflicts in conflict."

Dissident memories of protest movements revealed by songs

This question is related to the last point of the call for papers for this workshop: "How did disagreements and tensions affect the memories built in the aftermath of protests and in later times?"

We can use the example of the counter-revolutionary civil wars in Brittany to analyse how intra-community divisions during a conflict are long-lasting. In the case of the song on Cléguérec, Youenn Le Prat has analysed the electoral behavior of the descendants of the individuals named in the song and he has shown the permanence of political positions throughout the 19th and 20th centuries: the descendants of the 'Blue' side voted for republican candidates under the Third Republic against royalist and bonapartist candidates. Other songs played a role in reactivating past political conflicts at a local level. In the 20th century, pro-Chouan songs were still sung during election campaigns to call on residents to vote for conservative candidates by emphasizing the courage of their ancestors in their fight for the Church and against the Republic. Until the 1960s, in the pubs of Baud, a village in Morbihan (the same region as Cléguérec), socialist activists would sing songs about the death of Chouan leaders in the 1790s to mock them and encourage the inhabitants to vote for the left-wing parties instead of the conservatives. I still found people who remembered these political struggles and the associated songs during my own own fieldwork conducted in the first decades of the 21st century. Here again, only the context allows us to understand the reversal of the text and the irony of the interpretation, which does not explicitly appear in the text.

Beyond these interpretative aspects linked to the performance, there are also songs for which the transformation of the text itself over the generations denotes a divergent interpretation of past conflicts. A very rich repertoire of historical ballads in the Breton language has been collected in Brittany, called *gwerzioù*. Many of them were composed between the 16th and 18th centuries and relate to events that took place locally. They were not written down during the Old Regime and they are known thanks to the numerous ethnographic surveys carried out mainly between the first third of the 19th century and the 1980s: tens of thousands of versions of songs transmitted primarily orally in families and between neighbours were gathered in that context. A limited number of ballads laments refer to rebellions and protest movements ranging from the 16th century wars of religion to the French Revolution.

I conducted my Ph.D. on this corpus of Breton ballads. The interest of this source lies in the multiplicity of versions collected for the same song: each informant interviewed over more than 150 years provides a version learned orally that contains textual variations. Studying these variations shows how the same narrative can be reinterpreted differently, how the view of the past varies according to the people and how it is updated according to the

communities's current concerns. The variations reveal dissident points of view that reflect intra-community conflicts on the religious and political level.

The ballad on the death of the Marquis of Pontcallec is a striking example to illustrate this point. This Breton nobleman took part in an uprising against the Regent (who ruled France during the minority of King Louis XV).This conspiracy, supported for a time by Spain, failed and several leaders were arrested, tried and beheaded in Nantes in 1720, including the Marquis of Pontcallec. The first known version of this ballad was published in 1845 by Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué in the second edition of his highly successful anthology of Breton songs entitled *Barzaz-Breiz*. He collected it from oral tradition and partly rewrote it to emphasize the dimension of Breton martyrdom, which clearly appears through a long and repetitive refrain cursing the traitors who denounced him. This text and the associated melody have become very popular and have often inspired Breton artists and musicians since its publication. But alongside this standardized and reworked text, other versions have continued to circulate orally in families, with a wide variety of verses and tunes. These different versions are the corpus I have focused on for my research on this song. The general story is the same: In order to avoid the king's soldiers looking for him, the marquis disguises himself as a poor man and takes refuge in a presbytery with the complicity of the local priest; but a beggar denounces him, he is arrested and sent to the scaffold. As always in this repertoire, the ballad is very long (several dozen verses) and very detailed concerning the place and people names as well as the details of the action.

We know about thirty versions from oral tradition, some of which are sufficiently detailed to allow us to discern different positions on this conspiracy. Half of them give a very positive picture of it: the Marquis of Pontcallec is the "best man in the world", "the great friend of the Bretons", "a pious and brave man" who committed no crime other than defending his country and who was unjustly condemned by bad judges.This image is very far from the portrait of the marquis as it can be drawn from the many preserved written testimonies, particularly the archives of his trial which evoke a violent and angry man, a smuggler who terrorizes his peasants as much as the neighbouring noblemen and officers. We may wonder whether the song was composed by people close to the marquis, with the aim of glorifying him and defending his reputation while the justice system discredited him. It is reasonable to think that, as usual, the song was composed at the time of the events, even if there is no written record of it in the 18th century. The fact that the ballad was passed down orally until the second half of the 20th century shows the song it was able to integrate into the oral repertoire and therefore corresponded to the tastes of the singers and the audience, here by emphasizing the edifying and heroic death of the characters, a motif commonly found in ballads.

On the contrary, the other half of the versions give a very negative image of the marquis: he is a heavy drinker, a depraved man, mainly preoccupied with eating well and seducing young girls. In a version collected in northern Brittany, an entire dialogue is developed around the arrival of the marquis in jail: he asks to sleep with a country girl, refusing the bourgeois women who are unhealthy. Another version, collected this time in the area where the marquis lived and was arrested, introduces an epilogue in which it is said that the marquis gained nothing from sleeping with girls. Others present the marquis not as the best but as the worst of men, "a cruel and hard man" who killed his best servant. Sometimes it is enough to change just one word or two, transforming "the best man" ("*gwella den*" in Breton) into "the worst of men" ("*gwassa den*"), to change the whole interpretation of the ballad. Other singers add a commentary that explains how the song should be understood, in a positive or negative way. Several versions renew the song by linking it to the revolutionary context, which is more meaningful for the performers: it is no longer Louis XV's "dragons"

(soldiers) who stop the marquis but "chouans" and the song thus becomes a republican song criticising the counter-revolution.

The long-term transmission of songs thus makes it possible to understand how, within the same communities, people can have a different view on past uprisings. But we must keep in mind that most singers have only a very vague – if not totally non-existent – knowledge of the reality of this revolt 250 years after the events. Repeated remembrance of past uprisings is therefore primarily a means of reaffirming current political identities that unite or divide groups of inhabitants within villages.

Other Breton songs could be studied to analyse the divergent memory of past events. On a French scale, Brittany is a particularly interesting case because we have very rich oral traditions collected over more than two centuries. However, it is obviously not the only region concerned by strong memorial phenomena associated with revolts in past centuries. In the Cévennes (a mountainous area in the southern Massif Central), the revolt of the Protestant Camisards against the repressive politics of Louis XIV in the early years of the 18th century has also left traces of memory over time, less in the form of songs than of legendary tales. Philippe Joutard has studied this phenomenon in detail, combining an oral survey conducted in the 1960s with the numerous written archives documenting the revolt and its memory since the 18th century. Following him, Valérie Sottocasa has studied how the recollection of the same past uprisings was regularly invoked and renewed in the Cévennes from the religious wars of the 16th century to the French Revolution, and how it nourished long-term political fractures. Among other things, she has shown how local memories have idealized the Protestants' struggle by erasing forms of internal dissent. For example, in 1791 in the town of Sainte-Affrique, tensions with Catholic soldiers staying in Protestants' homes recalled the intimidation methods used during the "dragonnades" by Louis XIV and reawakened memories of events that had taken place 90 years earlier. But this memory was simplified and idealised, giving the impression that the Protestants were all united in their struggle against the king of France, when in reality some Protestant cities had refused to help the mountain insurgents during the Camisards revolt. In this case, there was a real dissension at the time of the uprising, but it has been evacuated from the communities' memories.

Conclusion

Songs can constitute an original and complementary approach to written sources for studying past revolts and revolutions and the memorial traces of these rebellions, and for attempting to approach the internal dissensions that may have existed within the insurgent groups. Taking into account ethnographic sources based on oral traditions collected at a later period invites us to consider "conflict in conflict" not only during the episodes of protest but also through the various and sometimes contradictory memories resulting from some rebellions. However, the possibilities of research based on this source should not be overestimated. The cases that can be documented are only exceptions. The most normal situation is the absence of traces of songs written down during the revolts, and the forgetting of these protest movements in local memories. But there is a lack of historical studies on this repertoire, as oral traditions are mainly studied by ethnologists or ethnomusicologists. Further research would undoubtedly make it possible to find other European examples that would make it possible to document, through songs, traces of "conflicts in conflict" during the revolts and various forms of memories revealing different interpretations of past revolts and how these divergent discourses reveal new forms of conflict within the communities.

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Forced Rebels: Internal Fractures in Rural Riots (Castile, 18th Century)

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On the night of March 15, 1724, a small armed crowd of around one hundred men, residents of the small town of La Vega (Las Palmas, approximately 2,000 inhabitants), gathered in front of the residence where a commission was lodged—dispatched to investigate certain tree fellings in the so-called Lentiscal woods. When the homeowner asked who was knocking, "he heard a great murmur of people, who said to open the doors because La Vega said so."[1] A similar scene occurred in Peñaranda de Bracamonte (Salamanca) in 1759, when the local judge (alcalde) attempted to calm down a nighttime disturbance: "the people of the tumult responded, 'we don't want to [calm down],' and when His Honor asked who they were, they boldly replied, 'the People.'" [2]In another case from 1800 in Villanueva del Rey (Córdoba), regarding the use of certain pastures that had been leased to outsider herders, the women who had taken it upon themselves to drive away the sheep stated in their testimonies before court that "they would do the same with however many [flocks] might come, because the People came before any individual and his livestock."[3] More examples could be cited, but it should come as no surprise that participants in such tumults often presented themselves not merely as representatives of the broader population, but as the population itself.

To what extent can such declarations be taken at face value? To what degree were these tumults genuinely collective endeavors, involving the entire local neighbors (*vecinos*)? And if only a portion of the population participated, what role did the rest play? Did they merely remain on the sidelines, or did they in some way oppose the rioters? Should we believe—as is often claimed in witness depositions—that some residents were compelled to join the protest? Were they, at least in part, rebels against their will? All of these questions concern the composition of the crowd, which is typically identified as the main agent in episodes of open protest. Yet the very notion of "the crowd" (like that of "the people") demands critical reflection. What I will propose is an empirical examination of how this concept is defined and the problems it raises in specific episodes of protest

To that end, I will draw upon documentation from a series of rural tumults in eighteenth-century Castile—roughly one hundred episodes analyzed to date. These are judicial proceedings, many of them incomplete, that ultimately reached the highest governing body of the realm, the Council of Castile, and specifically its Government Chamber (*Sala de Gobierno*), between 1713 and 1808. These episodes tend to be isolated events affecting a single locality—often with only a few hundred inhabitants, sometimes fewer—far removed from major urban centers. They unfold over a short period (typically one or two days) and rarely recur. Almost a third of them would fall under what John Walter has termed the "politics of subsistence"—that is, linked to shortages or rising grain prices—though they also encompass a wide range of other

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[1] Archivo Histórico Nacional, Consejo Suprimidos section, *legajo* (hereafter AHN/Cons.) 95, exp. 7, *pieza* 2. La Vega (Las Palmas), 1724.

[2] AHN/Cons. 256, exp. 10, Peñaranda de Bracamonte (Salamanca), 1759.

[3] AHN/Cons. 2,059, exp. 34, pieza 2, ff.1–16, Villanueva del Rey (Córdoba), 1800.

motivations: local elections, disputes over common lands, conflicts with neighboring towns, and so on. Many of these disturbances stem from deeper grievances, of which we know little, and emerge as the final resort in a long history of petitions and lawsuits that can stretch back decades. In many respects, these are minor episodes—unlikely to have made headlines— yet they often attracted the attention of the highest authorities of the state and, on occasion, of the king himself.[4]

As noted above, the participants in these tumults often present themselves as the embodiment of the rural community to which they belong—a community appearing collectively, often armed (however rudimentarily), vociferous, and anonymous, with clearly defined goals and enemies. Yet we are well aware that, no less than urban communities, rural communities—frequently idealized as domains of solidarity and shared values—are also arenas of conflict and competing interests. [5]There is no reason to assume that these tumults were exceptions to this rule, even if their protagonists claimed to speak with a single voice. Unfortunately, the short duration of the episodes examined makes it difficult to detect fractures among the participants, shifts in leadership, or changes in objectives that might shed light on such internal divisions. These fractures and dissenting voices become most visible when the crowd identifies its "enemies"—either through shouted slogans or by attacking their homes with stones. Such enemies are often outsiders—grain dealers, commissioners like those in La Vega, or a magistrate overseeing an election—but at other times it is certain *local* residents who are targeted, without necessarily being excluded from the community as such. It could be argued that these individuals occupied positions of power— mayors, councillors, notaries, constables—or of relative wealth—middling landowners, often lenders or grain hoarders, local strongmen typically referred to as "the powerful"(*los poderosos*)—and were thus, at least partially, excluded from the imagined collective. They would therefore not be part of "the people," a category that also appears in the narratives of judges tasked with investigating these tumults. However, it is also true that many of these local offices, especially in smaller towns, were elective and renewed annually. The attitude of these elected judges during unrest often vacillates between the duty to restore order, fear of the consequences of confronting the crowd, and sympathy for the protesters' demands. As for the wealthy, they rarely act to suppress the tumults; rather, they tend to withdraw and wait for calm to return.

But beyond the familiar lines of fracture between participants and targets of the riot— or between "the people" and "the powerful"—there are other cases worth closer examination. These involve local residents who, in their statements as witnesses or defendants during criminal proceedings, claimed to have participated in the events

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[4] We are referring to a type of protest similar to the rural uprisings in England or France, which G. Rudé already addressed in the first two chapters of *George Rudé, The Crowd in History* (Siglo XXI, 1978). Also, Walter, John. "Public transcripts, popular agency and the politics of subsistence in early modern England.", in Walter, John, *Crowds and popular politics in early modern England*. Manchester University Press, 2013. 196-222.

[5] The concept of community is not without its problems either. See, for example, Spierling, K.E. and M. Halvorson, "Introduction. Definitions of community in Early Modern Europe", in Michael Halvorson and Karen E. Spierling, eds., *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008), pp. 1–23. Also, Peter Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

under coercion. I refer to them as *forced rebels*. Let us consider what the trial transcripts reveal in this regard.

In the previously mentioned case of La Vega, the legal representative of two imprisoned minors offered a detailed account of how the riot's instigators had compelled them to join:

> "forced and terrified to such an extent that, had they not complied, it might have cost them their lives—a fear and dread sufficient to strip even the bravest man of his liberty, and not based on mere apprehension, but on the sight of an armed and determined band of men arriving in the dead of night to a remote field, where anyone might reasonably fear that they would act upon their threats."[6]

In Villafranca de los Caballeros (Toledo) in 1789, during a women-led riot aimed at preventing the export of grain from the town, the mayor reported that "few of those who did not accompany the mob were left unmolested."[7] The intimidation was carried out individually, but affected nearly everyone. At times, it even mimicked the appearance of legality: in the aforementioned case of Hornachos, the man appointed by the rioters to act as mayor "at the behest of the town's public crier, issued a proclamation summoning all residents to the Plaza de San Roque at three in the afternoon, under penalty of a four-ducat fine."[8] Intimidation was exerted even when the disturbance took place elsewhere: in 1799, in connection with a bullfight riot in Taracena, several residents of Guadalajara—many of them workers at the Royal Textile Factory—were involved. One of them, Manuel del Patrocinio, a cloth weaver, "threatened those who wished to leave Taracena, forcing them to remain in the village."[9]

But it was not only threats and violence. Some residents of Viso del Marqués, who in 1742 rose up in defense of their physician—recently dismissed by the town council—claimed to have been persuaded by a fellow resident, Juan Sánchez, known as *Matabiejas*. He admitted to "stirring up his neighbors and urging as many as he could to rebel, without allowing them time or place to consider their actions; and while many were indifferent regarding the election of the physician, others were drawn by novelty, others by curiosity without particular affection, and to all he indicated the place where they were to assemble." Persuasion, in any case, was not always clearly distinguishable from coercion. Some of the accused admitted to having engaged in such "propaganda" among their neighbors: "and when Simón Martínez resisted, arguing that his poor eyesight made it difficult to see at night, that it was unseemly for him to associate with those not of his class, and that he did not wish to get involved in noise and quarrels, he was pressured almost to the point of violence and was told that, even if he could not walk by himself, he would be carried along, and that it would cost him neither arm nor leg, nor *chavo* nor *maravedi,* as Joseph García Muñoz would accompany him."[10]

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[6] AHN/Cons. 95, exp. 7, pieza 2, La Vega (Las Palmas),

[7] AHN/Cons. 2,025, exp. 5, Villafranca de los Caballeros (Toledo), 1789.

[8] AHN/Cons. 1.424, exp. 9, Hornachos (Badajoz), 1788.

[9] AHN/Cons. 2,130, exp. 7, Taracena (Guadalajara), 1799.

[10] AHN/Cons. 92, exp. 3. Viso del Marqués (Ciudad Real), 1742.

Persuasion—even several days in advance—played a major role in the 1802 women's riot in Segovia, thoroughly studied by M. Martín Polo. She recounts how women went door to door, "asking others to help and join the riot, because what we are about to do is for the benefit of all, and it concerned her just as it concerned the rest, and opposing the grain shipments was in everyone's interest."[11]

But above all, the main evidence of such intimidation comes from the statements of witnesses and the accused. While not especially numerous—suggesting such cases were far from the norm—they do appear. The most striking example is perhaps that of Villamuelas (Toledo).[12] There, as in other towns in the region, a riot broke out in May 1802 in protest against high bread prices. Many witnesses, and some of the accused, stated that they had been forced to participate in the unrest. Tomás Corbacho declared that he acted "under compulsion and pressure" from several neighbors (he names three), "who threatened him," adding that the number of rioters "was large." He also claimed to be "deeply repentant" and begged to be judged with leniency, offering the names of the ringleaders—those "who showed the greatest zeal and insisted most forcefully on the pursuit of their goals." Antonio de Santiago, a field laborer and town councillor, stated that he joined the mob "for fear of being beaten." Another man was surrounded and "forced to accompany them through threats and beatings." Others gave less forceful explanations, claiming they had been persuaded with arguments such as: by demanding lower bread prices, "nothing would happen to them, since any consequences would fall not upon the declarant, but upon those who had persuaded him."

Many of the accused were themselves charged with having intimidated their neighbors. Ramón Corbacho, a 40-year-old agricultural laborer from Villamuelas, married, was accused of entering a house with others "in a threatening manner," where several residents "were playing a game of truque," and of forcing them to abandon their pastime and join in the operations to search storehouses, demand lower bread prices, and extract funds from the municipal treasury. Another accused, Manuel de Santiago, after Mass, "proclaimed loudly that the men of this town were no men at all if they failed to do what had been done in Mora." At the conclusion of the proceedings, the majority of the 31 defendants (including three women, all "of low condition") submitted a plea claiming they had been coerced into participating, arguing that the case records showed "no actions on their part suggesting that they were authors or willing accomplices in the disturbance."[13]

It is striking that many of the self-exculpatory statements come from people who, in their capacity as witnesses, are not (at least initially) being accused, and therefore face no risk of criminal sanction—yet still declare they were forced to participate in the riot. It is worth noting that the Villamuelas case is also exceptional in that many of the depositions include the identification of possible culprits (those who led the riot,

[11] Martín Polo, Manuel, ." Cuando el "genio y carácter dulce y subordinado" se tornó en "audaz y revoltoso": el motín de las segovianas en 1802", en José Antolín Nieto, Daniel Muñoz Navarro y Ricardo Franch Benavent (eds). *Ciudades en movimiento: negocios, trabajo y conflictividad en la sociedad española, siglos XVI-XVIII*, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2023, pp. 363-382, sp. 369-ff.
[12] AHN/Cons. 2,193, exp. 23. Villamuelas (Toledo), 1802. Everything cited below comes from this file.
[13] AHN/Cons. 2,193, exp. 23, pieza 3, f.2. Villamuelas (Toledo), 1802

issued threats, or assaulted the storehouses of wealthy farmers).[14] Both of these features are highly unusual in depositions that are typically vague in detail, suspiciously uniform in their account of events, and extraordinarily reluctant to denounce the participation of other neighbors—offering a wide range of excuses for this silence. [15]What is extraordinary about the Villamuelas case is that, for once, we have "proof" that the witnesses' statements were rigged. A judge sent by the Council of Castile discovered that after the events—but before the judicial process began— several prominent townspeople (the mayors, a notary, the lesser notary known as the *fiel de fechos*, and "other persons") conspired to bribe the local notary handling the case in the first instance, with the aim of "shaping the case to the benefit of the prisoners and the rest of the rioters against whom proceedings needed to be brought. To prevent this, they had devised and agreed that each of them would contribute 300 reales in order to collect a good amount and reward the notary Prados with it." In exchange, the notary would draft exculpatory statements that shifted the blame onto just a few participants. One witness was told "what he had to say, and was instructed not to embitter the declaration, because if he did, the matter could not be properly handled." Another was told, more bluntly: "Man, don't be a fool: what suits you all is for the Bolero to be declared guilty."[16]

All of this raises several issues. The first and most obvious is the truthfulness of these statements. As mentioned, it is common for them to appear nearly identical, with only a few minor variations. This always leaves the impression that the testimonies were manipulated and conceal "pacts of silence" among the townspeople. The Villamuelas case—extremely exceptional—shows that such pacts could be entirely explicit, and reveals how they were put together. But in most cases, we can only suspect their existence. How reliable are the depositions? It is a relevant (indeed, fundamental) question, as they are our main source of information about the events. Yet it is also often interesting to examine how the narrative is structured—clearly a collective one in this context—around events of grave importance that could result in severe punishment.[17]

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[14] Witnesses "curiously" agreed in accusing four residents: Manuel de Santiago, aka *Torrobo*, Bernardo Fernández Rico, Antonio Alonso.

[15] In the same Villamuelas case, Antonio Bermúdez, also imprisoned, when asked who had stood out most during the riot, stated: "everyone with one voice demanded what has already been referred to, and I cannot say in particular who stirred up the commotion." It was also common to claim that it was nighttime, that the participants were hidden under their cloaks, or simply that they did not know or recognize them (which is hard to believe in relatively small villages).

[16] It proved difficult to collect the considerable sum, especially from the poorest participants, "many of whom described the hardship they faced gathering the money, since they did not want to offer goods in pledge instead, and had to sell a donkey or a pig. The notary and the mayor, when taking their statements, urged them to finish paying", and the court clerk told them the money was also to compensate the gentlemen of the Council "since those gentlemen lost many ounces at the gaming tables and needed money." Later, the masterminds of the scheme were accused of fraud. As for *El Bolero*, the file does not specify who bore that nickname, but it is likely it referred to one of those convicted as ringleaders.

[17] For the construction of narratives and their "truthfulness", see the fantastic book by Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2024). Although based on very different sources—letters of remission in France—it subtly explores the complex issues of narrative construction, the role of intermediaries—scribes and lawyers—and what this tells us about the "truthfulness" of testimony before early modern courts.

Sometimes, there is little room for doubt: the defendant's version is simply false. In the 1766 riot in Lorca, in which over two hundred well-armed men reportedly took part, one of the accused, Francisco Amador—who had fled and was arrested six years later—claimed before the judge that he had been "forced by violence" to participate in the disturbance. Amador elaborated with great detail, claiming that claimed he tried to evade them, but the rioters told him that "if he didn't do as ordered immediately, they would take his life [...] and fearing the threat of death, he had no choice but to grab a four-span musket he had at home and go out with it." After that, at the first opportunity, "he tried to slip away and return home." However, these lengthy explanations failed to convince the magistrate, who countered that several witnesses stated that he took part " in all the excesses committed that day." Amador strongly denied this. It's not surprising: in 1766, he had been sentenced *in absentia* to two hundred lashes and ten years of imprisonment, and his escape did not help his case. The new trial opened in 1772 threatened to increase the penalty—though curiously, it ended quite differently: his sentence was commuted to eight years of exile, since he had provided valuable services to justice in capturing bandits and smugglers. One wonders to what extent his defender's argument was persuasive—that there was no crime, since "natural law, superior to civil law, obliged my client to preserve his life."[18]

But assuming (and I believe it's reasonable to do so) that the claims of intimidation, threats, or coercion are true—what lies behind them? In my view, these forced participations offer relevant insights on he inner workings of the riot. I will try to outline them:

1. They demonstrate effective *communal control* in precisely the kind of situation where the control of authorities has melted away like sugar in water; the crowd replaces the magistrates. And it does so, in most cases, collectively, even though judges later insist on identifying individual "instigators" or culprits.
   This subversion—turning the world upside down—is a well-known component of riots, visible in many aspects: the occupation of public space (especially the square), the takeover of the soundscape (for example, through alarm bell-ringing), the appropriation of symbols and rituals of justice, occasional carnivalesque elements (such as disguise or cross-dressing), and the assumption of decisions (about prices, imprisonments) usually reserved for authorities. The ability to command and the expectation of being obeyed is a core element of this usurpation of power by the crowd.
2. Despite the existence of these "reluctant/dissenting" individuals who need to be coerced, the very act of coercion reminds us that the riot aspires to speak on behalf of the entire community—and seeks to make this visible. This is, I believe, one of the sources of its legitimacy—*Fuenteovejuna*, all as one—and we know that legitimacy is a key element in the dynamics of revolt, which must be built and displayed above all. The need to incorporate the "lukewarm" stems from a conception that attributes to community action a natural, almost primordial legitimacy, which individual actions inherently lack.
   The effort to construct this cohesion is evident in other features of the riot: the crowd's shouting, the collective roaming through the streets, the creation of a

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[18] AHN/Cons. 1,076, exp. 30. Lorca (Murcia), 1772.

narrative that will later be presented in nearly identical testimonies before the judge—whether deliberately crafted (as in Villamuelas) or the result of implicit "pacts of silence" or shared complicities. The depositions point to a small number of "culprits," who often turn out to be outsiders: strangers, misfits, troublemakers…

3. These pressures are also evidence of certain lines of division (even fracture) within local communities, which are not easy to detect. Not even the urgent need for bread (real or perceived), which affects (almost) everyone, is enough to unite these communities in revolt, even temporarily. Of course, there is a clear division between rich-powerful and poor ("people of honor" vs. the "rabble"), but this is not so evident when the motives for the riot are different (a protest against a physician, a demand for a bullfight). One can also sense a divide between locals and outsiders, who are sometimes made scapegoats in the judicial aftermath of the riot. Unfortunately, the documentation I work with, which sticks closely to the facts and is blind to context, does not allow for further exploration of these fault lines. Case studies may help, but they must be willing and able to examine the broader context of the riots.

4. One such line of division is gender. Although we know that women participate in riots—and sometimes lead them—in the cases I've studied, they never claim to have been threatened or forced. [19]Instead, they say they came out "drawn by curiosity" (although they don't explain why they didn't leave once that curiosity was satisfied). This excuse also appears among men, but it is more common among women. In fact, a judge sent to the town of Montalbanejo, accompanied by troops, to reinstate a mayor, encountered a riot and observed that "there were many women, and it was presumed this was due to curiosity."[20] Curiosity was considered such a credible reason that it was even included as an exculpatory circumstance in the 1774 royal decree on riots.

5. Community pressure often takes the form of violence—another defining feature of riots—whether verbal (threats, insults, shouting slogans) or physical. [21]And it is this violence that some witnesses later claim forced them to participate in events they later—whether genuinely or strategically—deplore. But crowd violence, as we

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[19] On female participation, see the excellent analysis of a bread riot in Manuel Martín Polo, "When the sweet and submissive …". My own documentation, however, provides few cases of female protagonism, except for the notable case of Villafranca de los Caballeros in 1789. The issue of women's participation has long been debated, beginning with Edward Palmer Thompson, *Customs in Common* (Spanish translation, Madrid: Capitán Swing, 2019), and is too vast to address here.

[20] Even more explicit are the mayors who stated "that some women had come out, driven by curiosity, as is typical of their sex, to see what was happening." AHN/Cons. 1,778, exp. 28. Montalbanejo (Cuenca), 1794. This gendered portrayal of curiosity is just as sexist—though perhaps less offensive—than Cobb's comment on envy as a revolutionary force: "envy was perhaps the most effective recruiter for Terror and for the terrorist, just as the White terrorist was to march behind the banner of vengeance. Women, in particular, who are most at home in forms of violence inspired by shortage, are the likeliest agents of that ugly sentiment." (Richard Cobb, *The Police and the People: French Popular Protest 1789–1820*, 1970, p. 284). Nobody –Billy Wilder dixit- is perfect..

[21] Violence iis one of the main reasons—if not *the* main reason—that makes it difficult for me to agree with considering riot as a peculiar form of petition, contrary to what Diego Palacios Cerezales argues in "Petitioning by Riot in Spain and the Origins of Modern Mass Petitioning", in *Petitioning in the Atlantic World, c. 1500–1840*, ed. Miguel Dantas Da Cruz (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), pp. 219–39.

have long known, is not mindless or unrestrained. It shows clear signs of self-control, a sense of proportion, and awareness of its goals.

Indeed, the violence aimed at these *forced rebels* is a good example of that self-control. Its deployment is always gradual: it begins with collective pressure, energetic persuasion, intimidation and threats perhaps, the moderate use of force (pushing or grabbing the target)—but never (in any case I've documented) direct or injurious aggression. All of this speaks to a kind of violence that can inspire fear, even panic, in its targets, but is far from uncontrolled.

In short, although the judicial sources I have worked with do not allow for an in-depth exploration of the circumstances that lead to the presence of *forced rebels*, they do provide enough evidence to suggest that this is a subject worth investigating. To do so will require working with individual case studies—not limited to judicial sources, but also able to delve into the social context, likely through local archives—and reconstruct the communal logics that underpin riots. I hope this proposal can also serve as an invitation to explore them further.

Conflicts of movement: the contested routes of democratic and trades' marches in England in the long 19th century

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The protest march was an integral part of popular politics during the long nineteenth century. As England urbanised and industrialised, the rise of democratic and trades' movements resulted in mass demonstrations and marches. The politics of the street was enacted in contested routes and destinations for protests. This paper examines the development of political procession routes in English cities, showing the conflicts over the right to march between protesters and police, and between different social movements. Critics of the Chartist democratic movement of the 1840s and the women's suffrage movement in the 1900s have often pointed to the internal divisions as reasons for their initial failure, but this paper will argue that the debates over tactics and organisation were integral to the development of the movement in the popular sphere as the politics of the street.

Map data:

- London:
  https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1k6cntO9x5BAp0C0dTeBy i13rywcb5R0&usp=sharing
- Birmingham:
  https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=13j_PzH4LvJ_us2hNVbOOx_1MScVb5Yo&usp=sharing
- Manchester:
  https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1HamhVgq1PIiB_oEbM-RSTA7-kH_-R0M&usp=sharing

Inspired by the American and French revolutions, democratic and trades union movements emerged and evolved in England, Britain and Ireland from the 1790s onwards, through a non-linear process of successive periods of growth followed by state repression. Enfranchisement and democracy were hard fought, fiercely debated, and involved a wide range of movements with varying aims, membership and tactics. Debates among historians have often arisen about whether the democratic campaigns – from the first radical societies in the 1790s, through to the Chartist democratic movement of the 1830s and 1840s, to the women's suffrage movement of the 1900s - were weakened or hampered by divisions within the leadership and the rank-and-file. These divisions have been framed over the choice between militant and constitutionalist tactics, that is, between 'moral' and 'physical force'.[1] This paper examines

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[1] Tom Scriven, *Popular Virtue: Continuity and Change in Radical Moral Politics, 1820–70* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2017); Len Mayhall, 'Defining Militancy: Radical Protest, the Constitutional Idiom, and Women's Suffrage in Britain, 1908–1909', *Journal of British Studies*, 39(3) (2000), 340-371.

the development of the political procession and march by such movements in English cities, to consider the extent to which that division is at all helpful. It argues that constitutionalism was a spectrum of militancy and radicalism, that involved divisions among groups but ultimately followed a similar trajectory. Indeed, debates over tactics and organisation were integral to the process of formation and spread. Inter- and intra-movement divisions should not be understood as aberrations to progress, but as an essential part of the development of democratic politics.

The development of the political procession in the 19th century

Studies of urban life in Britain and Europe have highlighted the procession as integral to social and political ritual from the Middle Ages onwards.[2] A Weberian view of the procession would suggest that traditional communal practices and rituals could not survive in a new environment of change and social conflict in the later nineteenth century. Rather, the continuation and increasing elaboration of political processions suggest the opposite. Participatory rituals, of course, were never static in their meaning or purpose. Opposing or hidden agendas could be transmitted behind the official symbolism. And importantly, the context for debates and divisions could change, notably increasing suppression by authorities and forces of law and order, that reshaped attitudes to the efficacy of tactics among the movements, uniting them or radicalising them further.

The rise of the democratic radical and trades' movements in Britain from the 1790s onwards reoriented both the purpose and the routes of the political procession. Political processions became a show of representing the 'people' to the authorities (rather than in civic processions, the elites shown to the people). Political processions marched to the 'mass platform' demonstration or public meeting. Historians of popular protest have focused on the symbolic, textual, and representational elements of such processions. As Robert Poole has shown, the working-class democratic societies formed processions dressed in their Sunday best clothing and other emblems to display respectability but also to stress their legitimacy when protest was restricted by the authorities.[3] The climax of the first major working-class democratic movement occurred on 16 August 1819, when processions marched to St Peter's Fields in Manchester for a mass rally of over 60,000 people. The meeting immediately became known as the 'Peterloo Massacre'. The local authorities sent in yeomanry cavalry and regular military to disperse the crowds, and over 18 people were killed and 750 people severely injured.

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[2] Simon Gunn, 'Ritual and Civic Culture in the English Industrial City, c.1835-1914', in *Urban Governance in Britain and Beyond Since 1750*, ed. R. J. Morris and R. Trainor (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 231, 238; Stephane Gerson, *The Pride of Place: Local Memories and Political Culture in Modern France* (Cornell University Press, 2003).

[3] Robert Poole, 'The March to Peterloo: Politics and Festivity in Late Georgian England', *Past & Present,* cxcii (2006), 109-153; M. Nouvian, 'Defiant Mourning: Public Funerals as Funeral Demonstrations in the Chartist Movement', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, xxiv (2019), 208-26.

At the trials of the radical leaders in 1820, the prosecution were intent on proving the illegality of the mass meeting, by arguing that the radicals had undertaken military-style drilling on the moors in preparation for the demonstration on the 16th August. To the authorities, military-style drilling was evidence of ulterior, revolutionary, motives.[4] There was a thin line between marching and drilling, often encouraged by marchers to be portrayed as militarised, at least to emphasise their orderliness and masculinity. Processions 'had to be orderly and self-discipline, but not so disciplined and purposeful that it resembled a military demonstration'.[5]

Local leader Samuel Bamford and the other members of the radical club had previously disagreed with more militant organisers in Manchester, notably John Bagguley, over the necessity for violence. They further mistrusted the Spenceans, the followers of the Newcastle republican Thomas Spence, who had incited riots at mass demonstrations at Spa Fields in 1816-17, and were later to be involved with the Cato Street Conspiracy of 1820, the plot to assassinate the government.[6] Bamford specifically advised the marchers from his home town of Middleton to leave any weapons behind, and show the authorities a peaceful yet orderly crowd demanded the vote.[7]

Nevertheless, in this case, Bamford and the other Peterloo radicals defended the practice of drilling. They referred to veteran reformer Major John Cartwright's interpretation of the right of English citizens to arm, as drawn from Magna Carta, the 1215 document that was mythologized as a key canon in English constitutional history. The right to arm was proof of their constitutionalism, not revolutionary intent.[8] But the radicals also insisted that the purpose of drilling was to ensure orderly behaviour, without arms, and that the processions to St Peter's Fields and in other towns were not parades, but rather drew on the customary forms of religious and friendly society processions in working-class culture, and the civic processions of local elites. The government suppressed such tactics with the passage of the 'Six Acts' through parliament in late 1819, legislation which included bans on drilling, but also on processing with emblems and symbolism. So a tactic that had been previously understood as peaceful and customary had been transformed into 'seditious' and militant, not just by the actions of the democratic radicals but by legislation and the government.

Debates over the right to march in the 1830s and 1840s

The position of the new forces constituted under the 1829 and 1839 Metropolitan Police Acts, under commissioners who were directly answerable to the Home Secretary, made the trades

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[4] *The Trial of Henry Hunt* (London, J. Dolby, 1820), closing speech of Mr Scarlett, p. 281.

[5] Paul O'Leary, *Claiming the Streets: Procession and Urban Culture in South Wales, C.1830-1880* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2012), p. 3.

[6] John Belchem, 'Henry Hunt and the Evolution of the Mass Platform', *The English Historical Review*, 93, no. 369 (1978), 739–73.

[7] *The Trial of Henry Hunt*, speech of Samuel Bamford, p. 137.

[8] Robert Poole, *Peterloo: an English Uprising* (Manchester, 2019), pp. 75-6.

and political movements' claim to the right to hold processions in London as a broader issue of the state. Processions became more ordered and marshalled as trade unions grew rapidly from 1825 onwards, following the repeal of the Combination Acts that had prohibited collective bargaining. Organising committees were established early to co-ordinate routes, negotiate with magistrates and police, and publicize the events. The trades and political movements developed a strict order of societies grouped around banners, and the rank-and-file marching four or six abreast in line. Marshals were employed as a response to police constables monitoring the routes and to prevent further bans on processions issued by police and magistrates.

The day before a huge trades' march on 21 April 1834, Robert Owen, leader of the Grand National Consolidated Trades' Union, and a separate delegation from the central committee of London trades, had waited upon the Home Secretary, Lord Melbourne, to request that the metropolitan police did not interfere. The chief magistrate at Bow Street declared that the march would potentially endanger the public peace, and arranged for the police to line the route, and extra military to be on duty, including the Royal Horse Guards stationed in Regent's Park, and 29 pieces of artillery on standby, but the event passed off peacefully.[9]

Chartism was the largest democratic movement of nineteenth-century Britain. Following the failure of the 1832 Reform Act to enfranchise the population, the formation of the National Charter Association in 1837, demanding the 'six points' of universal manhood suffrage and parliamentary reform, created a movement that attracted tens of thousands of adherents across the country. The political procession was an integral part of the Chartist repertoire of protest.

The earlier historiography of Chartism was dominated by discussion delineating the reasons for the movement's immediate failure by 1850. One reason given was the overwhelming financial commitment that the organisation of a political movement entailed. The costs of holding a procession were high. The 1840 accounts of Birmingham Chartist Association listed procession expenses including carriage and horses, £2, postillions 10/6, union band and brass band at £3,5s each, 8 men carrying banners 12s, rosettes and ribbon 11s, 100 placards printed with 'Peace, law and order', 17s; tollgate fare 1s 6d.[10] Large branches in the industrial centres could just about afford these practical costs, but smaller branches struggled. Middle-class dominated groups – notably the Anti-Corn Law League – were much more secure in being able to afford the costs of practical politics.[11]

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[9] *Poor Man's Guardian*, 26 April 1834.
[10] *Northern Star*, 29 August 1840.
[11] Kenneth Judge, 'Early Chartist Organisation and the Convention of 1839', International Review of *Social History*, 20: 3 (1975), 376; Eileen Yeo, 'Some Practices and Problems of Chartist Democracy', in James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson, eds., *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-1860* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1982), p. 344; Paul Pickering, 'Chartism and the 'Trade of Agitation' in Early Victorian Britain', *History,* 76: 247 (1991), 221-237.

Another key reason for the failure of the movement in the older literature was the supposed divide between 'moral' and 'physical' force within the movement. Again, I would like to argue here that methods of protest were part of a larger repertoire that political activists and crowds chose from according to circumstances. Drawing on sociologist Charles Tilly's influential concept of repertoires of protest, we see that protest could be both ideological and shaped by rational responses to resources, restrictions and changes of context, especially in response to policing and repression.[12] The division between moral and physical force was therefore stretched or overturned at times of agitation and conflict.

Here I also draw on historical sociological studies of more recent agitation – especially Clifford Stott and John Drury's study of the anti-poll tax riot in Trafalgar Square on 31 March 1990, which argued that police intervention shifted crowd consensus around what was deemed peaceful protest and what was legitimate violence. Prior to the police attacking a standing crowd, the consensus was that violence should not be a valid protest tactic. Yet 'conflict with the police subsequent to their intervention was described by [the participants] not as 'violence', but as a form of defensive action for the crowd as a whole to resist what were seen as unjustified and indiscriminately violent police actions. In other words, 'violence' came to be seen as a normative means of preventing further illegitimate police action'. The overall consequence was that the aims of the protest shifted from their initially peaceful and political demand, to resisting the actions of the police.[13]

There are also echoes of David Waddington's 'flashpoints' theory of protest here too. Waddington and his co-writers produced a model of public disorder that identified critical aspects in an incident that determined the level of disorder. A 'flashpoint' was 'a dramatic break in a pattern of interaction' between crowd and police, and was determined by changes in perception that the protesting group had in their relationship to the state and to the police, and the use of violence to achieve their aims.[14] Though later critiqued for being too prescriptive, including by Waddington himself, the theory is useful to highlight contingent elements of protest that could shift in the circumstances, especially in relation to policing and the implementation of the laws governing public order.

In 1842, the Chartist executive committee ensured the mass procession was the central feature of the presentation to parliament of their second national petition for the vote and parliamentary reform. The march to parliament contravened the 1661 Tumultuous Petitioning Act still in force, which limited petitioners to a maximum of ten people, but the police and special constables were directed to not interfere, rather to occupy 'corner houses and others in commanding positions', given their relatively thin coverage compared with the

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[12] Charles Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1753-1834* (Harvard University Press, 1998).

[13] Clifford Stott and John Drury, 'Crowds, Context and Identity: Dynamic Categorization Processes in the Poll Tax Riot', *Human Relations*, 53: 2 (2000), 262-3.

[14] David Waddington, Karen Jones and Charles Critcher, *Flashpoints; Studies in Public Disorder* (1989); Michael Smith, *Protest, Policing and Human Rights: a Dialogical Approach* (Abingdon, 2023); Mike King and David Waddington, 'Flashpoints Revisited: a Critical Application to the Policing of Anti-Globalisation Protest', *Policing and Society*, 15: 3 (2005), 255-82.

numbers of Chartists and spectators.[15] Following the experience of 1842, the Home Secretary and Metropolitan Police Commissioners sought to redress the imbalance between crowds and police. The position on policing and the right to march had reversed by the time of the presentation of the third national petition in April 1848. Negotiations over whether the Chartists were allowed to march en masse from Kennington Common over the Thames to parliament manifested the authorities' fear of the mass crowds in an era of European revolution. 12,000 police and 85,000 special constables were called up in preparation for the mass meeting on 10 April 1848.[16]

The Chartist National Convention informed the Home Secretary, George Grey, on Friday of their intention to march from Kennington Common to parliament on the Monday, 10 April 1848. Grey cited the 1661 Tumultuous Petitioning Act in his justification of banning the procession and the stationing of forces across Blackfriars Bridge. The Convention sat at nine o'clock, where the leader Feargus O'Connor persuaded the delegates of the dangers of holding the mass procession. O'Connor then met Grey at the Home Office to confirm the altered arrangements. Part of the assembled crowd at Kennington Common nevertheless attempted to process over Blackfriars Bridge, where the police held a line for an hour until they were broken through and a confrontation ensued.[17]

O'Connor's negotiations with the Convention were integral to the movement's conception of itself as a democratic body, however hierarchical and faction-led it was in practice. O'Connor's fiery leadership and strong personality forced through the decision to withhold the march, but it is also evident that the breakaway crowd decided their own legitimacy, and further created a situation whereby their actions became militant because of the intense policing response. This was a flashpoint determined by the immediate circumstances of the day, though shaped by prior convictions within different parts of the movement – and the crowd – about the significance of mass tactics, which were increasingly conceptualised as rights – the right to petition, the right to march, the right of assembly.

Divisions from the later 19th century

Processions were thus designed to encourage solidarity and demonstrate the scale of the movement on the streets, but this did not always engender unity within the movement's organisation. The hierarchical organization of procession committees and the choice of routes could conversely crystallize ideological and class differences. The development of trades' organisation and the emergence of labour and socialist movements from the 1860s onwards also created further points of conflict that were expressed in protest marches. Chris Wrigley has charted the waxing and waning popularity of the trades' May Day marches in this period. Their size and popularity were dependent on the particular combination of labour politics and

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[15] F. C. Mather, *Public Order in the Age of the Chartists*, pp. 37-8.
[16] T.N.A., HO 45/2926, Home Office papers, Disturbances (Middlesex), payment of special constables, April 1848; HO 45/2410 part1, Chartist Disturbances (London), April 1848.
[17] *Northern Star,* 15 April 1848; David Goodway, *London Chartism*, p. 76.

economic depression at the time. In 1890, the May Day marches involved an estimated 100,000 to 250,000 people, with numbers boosted by Eleanor Marx and Tom Mann securing the support of London Trades' Council following the Dock Strike. Trades unions and the political left were not united, and throughout the peak of May Day marching, different unions organized their own processions and separate stages at Hyde Park. For example, although in 1893 both Trades' Council and the Eight Hour Working Day Committee gathered their supporters at the usual starting spot of Embankment, they followed different routes.[18]

Just as movements were divided by class and religion, so they were also divided by gender. The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) – the largest women's suffrage movement in the 1890s and 1900s - were perhaps the most highly marshalled and organised into groups because of the fear of male violence against them - instances common of the women being attacked. This may also have been the reason why middle-class female suffrage campaigners shifted the routes of processions in Manchester and Birmingham to respectable suburbs and parks rather than through town centres and working-class areas.[19]

Gendered movements were on the other hand divided by class. The Pankhursts' leadership of the WSPU from 1903 changed the direction of female suffrage activism towards militancy. Street protest and violence against property were an integral part of suffragette tactics. The interventions of middle and upper class female suffrage activists into the politics of the street in working-class areas, however genuine, were shaped by class. Barbara Green notes how the writings of prominent WSPU leaders often manifested an obsession with the image of working-class women and crowds, but not always an empathy. The split of Sylvia Pankhurst from the WSPU and her new organisation, later known as the East London Federation of Suffragettes, reflected the class divides within the suffrage movement. Sylvia set up her new campaign centre in Bow, at the heart of the working-class and migrant East End. Hence the complexity of the splits of the WSPU into the Women's Freedom League and the East London Federation of Suffragettes, who preferred a grass-roots strategy in working-class areas.[20]

The 26 July 1913 rally of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS)' contingents marched from Kensington, Maida Vale, the British Museum, and Piccadilly.[21] The contrasting social and political wings of the female suffrage movement was also reflected in their different choices of route. The East London Federation of Suffragettes (ELFS) centred their activities in the East End. On Sunday 15 August 1915, for example, the ELFS organized an anti-conscription march across London. In the same way as the 1889 dock strikers, the 'march from East to West', as George Lansbury described it in *Women's*

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[18] Chris Wrigley, 'May Day in Britain', in *The Ritual of May Day in Western Europe Past Present and Future,* ed. A. Peterson and H. Reiter (Abingdon, 2016), p. 137.
[19] *Manchester Evening News*, 18 July 1923, 'No More War' demonstration Saturday 28 July 1923.
[20] Barbara Green, 'From Visible Flâneuse to Spectacular Suffragette? The Prison, the Street, and the Sites of Suffrage', *Discourse*, 17: 2 (1994-95), 69, citing Pankhurst quoted in Sandra Stanley Holton, *Feminism and Democracy: Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 36.
[21] *Votes for Women*, 25 July 1913.

Dreadnought, was a deliberate show of crossing class territories from their heartland in the docklands to the West End. Lansbury reported 'it was a long trudge. Nearly three hours on London streets is no joke and yet we were all cheerful and gay'.[22]

Conclusions

Critics of the Chartist democratic movement of the 1840s and the women's suffrage movement in the 1900s have often pointed to the internal divisions as reasons for their initial failure, especially divides between militancy and constitutionalism. Historians now by contrast propose a broader conception of militancy to include civil disobedience justified through a radical interpretation of constitutional history. Henry Miller argues for petitioning parliament as one of the acts that formed a praxis between militancy and constitutionalism in this sense.[23] What Eileen Yeo called an 'open intimidating constitutionalism' wasn't therefore an oxymoron.[24] It did not just draw on tropes of Magna Carta and the right of citizens to arm - it could include other rights and forms of action that we now take for granted as peaceful, but at the time, because of government repression of the democratic movements, and more philosophically because the connection between property ownership and representation hadn't yet been broken, the working class taking on actions such as petitioning, holding conventions or large demonstrations, and other actions that were part of elite political practice was a form of political militancy.

I argue that the debates over tactics and organisation were integral to the development of the movement in the popular sphere as the politics of the street. There was an element of militant performativity in protest on the street and in the meeting room that crossed that permeable division between the constitutional and the militant or physical elements of organisation and protest.[25]

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[22] *Women's Dreadnought*, 21 August 1915.

[23] Henry Miller, 'The British Women's Suffrage Movement and the Practice of Petitioning, 1890-1914', *Historical Journal*, 64: 2 (2021), 334, citing C. Eustance, 'Meanings of Militancy: the Ideas and Practice of Militancy in the Women's Freedom League, 1907-1914', in J. Purvis and M. Joannou, eds., *The Women's Suffrage Movement: New Feminist Perspectives* (Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 51-64.

[24] Eileen Yeo, 'Some Practices and Problems of Chartist Democracy', in Epstein and Thompson, eds., The Chartist Experience, pp. 345-7.

[25] Barbara Green, 'From Visible Flâneuse to Spectacular Suffragette? The Prison, the Street, and the Sites of Suffrage', *Discourse*, 17: 2 (1994-95), 67.

Fractured communities: popular politics and civil war in Southern Europe during the Age of Revolutions (1789-1830)

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0. Introduction

My research focuses on the counterrevolutionary dimension of popular politics during the Age of Revolutions (1789–1830). In recent decades, the study of popular royalism and popular loyalism has moved beyond traditional explanations based on elite manipulation and false consciousness. Plebeian opposition to revolutionary and republican projects was more than a mere reaction against modernization. Royalists and counterrevolutionaries deployed "modern" political discourses and practices (such as public meetings, street riots, collective petitions, civic militias, the press and pamphlets) to gathered broad popular support[1].

I am particularly interested in the everyday dimension of popular counterrevolution, that is, how ordinary people appropriated political ideas, symbols, and practices through their own experiences. I study how artisans, journeymen, day labourers and working women engaged in politics in pursuit of what they perceived to be their own interests.

Since the beginning of my research, I have found it challenging to explain how working people from similar social backgrounds became divided along political lines during the Age of Revolutions. The clash between revolution and counterrevolution unleashed a violent process of civil war and political retaliation, terrorising society and leaving traumatic wounds. To approach this conflict from below, we need to understand how politics fractured communities and —to what extent— old tensions and divisions were expressed along new political lines.

1. Familiar repertoires of contention: disputes over public space, ritualised retribution and selective violence

While working on the counterrevolutionary aspects of popular politics in Southern Europe, I have encountered two main distinct but interrelated logics of collective action[2]. On the one hand, we found familiar repertoires of contention related to well-known traditions of popular protest. To give a few examples, we could mention protests addressed to the authorities regarding food prices, taxes, or administrative restrictions; street clashes with public officers and soldiers; or resistance to military conscription. Similarly, we found repertories more oriented towards disputes over public space, such

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[1] See as an example: Andoni Artola and Álvaro París (eds.), *Royalism, War and Popular Politics in the Age of Revolutions, 1780s-1870s. In the Name of the King*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-29511-9

[2] I do not mean to suggest that these logics are essentially different in themselves, but rather that historians tend to approach them through two distinct methodological lenses.

as street parades carrying flags, symbols and banners; and gatherings to single out, shame and threaten individuals or groups labelled as enemies of the community—often accompanied by songs, chants, and rough music. These "traditional" forms of protest were adapted to new political meanings during the Age of Revolutions, often embodying a specific and exclusionary political message pitting revolutionaries (or reformers) against counterrevolutionaries (royalists, loyalists, conservatives, and the like).

From the French Revolution onwards, symbolic disputes over public space became particularly frequent. Revolutionaries invested public spaces with new meaning through political symbols and objects. Flags, statues, plaques, and liberty trees were material symbols of sovereignty, embodying the abstract concept of the nation and making it tangible in everyday space. Sometimes words were as important as objects, since renaming a familiar space—such as Liberty Street or Square of the Constitution– was another way of investing it with new political meaning[3].

Consequently, when counterrevolutionaries wanted to challenge the new order, they targeted these symbols and objects. Iconoclasm became one of the main expressions of the contending legitimacies between constitutional and absolutist –or republican and monarchical– regimes[4]. Statues, portraits, flags, cockades, and other political objects were torn apart, dragged through the streets, burned, buried, and humiliated in parodic ceremonies intended to purify the public space. Iconoclasm was one of the ways in which common people engaged in politics by endorsing, opposing or accelerating regime changes. Crowd action was in this context an act of sovereignty. Physical destruction of objects functioned as a cathartic ritual to restore the natural order of things and erase the memory of revolution it as though they had never existed at all. Political iconoclasm has also a healing effect. By reestablishing the old symbols—such as royal portraits or white flags—royalist crowds dispelled the revolutionary evil, redressed the wound and re-sacralised the space to restore the order of the community.

The "war of symbols" brought the appropriation of sovereignty into the material realm. Ribbons of certain colours, handkerchiefs, garments, hats and accessories, took political connotations and became the target of attacks[5]. Quarrels in streets and taverns took on a political dimension when one of the parties attributed political meaning to an item of clothing, a gesture, a curse or a toast. The politicisation of everyday life involved not only objects but also words, sounds and songs. Insults and slander became "'politicised" and people began using political insults as derogatory terms in ordinary situations—replacing

[3] Ignacio García de Paso and Álvaro París, "Las lápidas de la Constitución: Ritualidad, espacio público e iconoclastia en el liberalismo hispano (1812-1874)", *Historia y Política* (2025), https://doi.org/10.18042/hp.2025.AL.03

[4] Emmanuel Fureix, *L'oeil blessé: Politiques de l'iconoclasme après la Révolution française*, Paris, Champ Vallon, 2019.

[5] Álvaro París and Jordi Roca Vernet, "Green Ribbons and Red Berets: Political Objects and Clothing in Spain (1808-1843)", Enrico Francia and Carlotta Sorba (eds.), *Political Objects in the Age of Revolutions. Material Culture, National Identities, Political Practices*, Roma, Ed. Viella, 2021, pp. 61-96.

traditional labels such as thief, ruffian, or slut[6]. Therefore, everyday disputes over gambling debts or the use of public spaces often took political overtones, revealing how new political alignments permeated ordinary life. To conclude, politics did not "descend" to the masses but were appropriated and reshaped from below.

These repertoires were often violent or could led to violent episodes. Violence against things was sometimes a prefiguration of violence against people, so bodies were also dragged through the streets, mutilated and humiliated in the same way as objects (see fig. 1). Attacking a statue and dragging its pieces, or burning someone in effigy, could serve as a substitute for actual personal harm or as a prelude to it.

Figure 1. Violence against political objects…and individuals
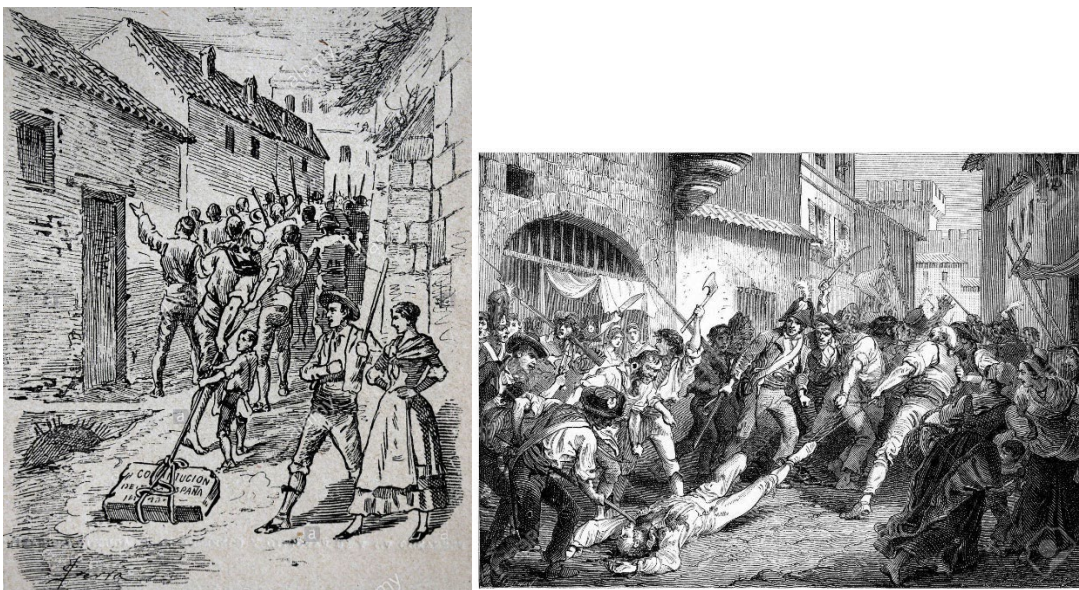
Left: dragging the stele of the Constitution (Spain, ca. 1823). Right: Dragging the corpse of *Maréchal* Brune (Avignon, France, 1815)

However, most of this popular violence was selective, targeting specific and carefully picked targets, such as relevant officers or prominent individuals, who could be portrayed as a representation of the enemies of the community. Lynchings of authorities became a common phenomenon in contexts of extreme political violence, such as the Peninsular War (1808-1814) in Spain or the second Bourbon Restoration in France (1815)[7]. A paradigmatic case is that of *Maréchal* Brune, who was lynched by a royalist mob in Avignon, dragged through the streets and thrown into the Rhône river (see figure 1).

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[6] Christopher Calefati, "La lingua affilata. Repertori di ingiuria politica e il caso delle Puglie del 1848-1849", *Rassegna Storica del Risorgimento*, 106 (2019), pp. 75-90.

[7] Pierre Triomphe, *1815 : La Terreur* blanche, Toulouse: Privat, 2017 ; José María Cardesín Díaz (dir), *Revuelta popular y violencia colectiva en la Guerra de Independencia*. Madrid: CEPC, 2024

These killings resonate with patterns of contention that were well-established under the Ancien Régime. Far from being the expression of irrational crowds driven by impulse, these acts were highly staged and ritualised, aiming to redress grievances and restore a violated order.

To be perceived as legitimate, these attacks drew on shared understandings of justice and collective memory. They were public and ritualised, often involving large numbers of people from different sectors of society to represent the idea that the community acted as a whole. This violence often "created" a sense of community, uniting the perpetrators in an act of popular justice that restored the transcendent order. This dramatized violence bound them together through their shared responsibility, thus building a communitarian identity by the inclusion of participants, the acquiescence of the bystanders and the exclusion of the "others" (the enemies or traitors embodied in the victim).

To put it in other words, we could say that this form of political violence was a performative act that built a sense of collective identity, bringing together the "community" and identifying it with a political field, through the exclusion of the adversary (the Spanish nation against the French invaders, the French people against the aristocrats, or the loyal subjects against the heretic freemasons). Although intentionally brutal, this violence was more or less contained, restricted, and localised, both due to its target (a singular scapegoat or an isolated group) and its aim (to build a sense of unified community).

Therefore, this form of violence followed the same logic as the disputes over public spaces, iconoclasm, and the war of symbols, which turned the streets into markers of sovereignty. To engage more explicitly with the topic of our seminar, this form of political conflict helped create an apparently "new" political community (defined in "modern" terms) using the materials of the traditional one. Both revolutionaries and royalists sought to shape their sense of political community in accordance with the preexisting common identity and sense of belonging. On one side, the political nation, as the community of the citizens bearing rights, from which only the privileged were excluded. On the other side, the traditional monarchy as an expression of natural order and customary law jeopardized by revolution. These notions of community presented themselves as mutually exclusive, so that conflict served to build them dialectically and make them appear as natural and evident. Community did not exist by itself; it was built through conflict.

But what happened when violence was directed against the community itself, aiming to purify it by eliminating of a substantial portion of its members?

2) Political massacre, physical exclusion and violence of extermination

During the Age of Revolutions, a second and more troubling form of popular mobilization appeared, one that was not incompatible with the first but cannot be fully explained by its logic either. Alongside the punitive and ritual violence directed at selected targets,

symbols, and objects, we find another form of violence at the foundations of the so-called political "modernity". Political massacres have been studied and theorised for the French Revolution but were common across Southern Europe in the period 1789-1830[8]. Massacres were the expression of a violence of extermination and purification, directed not at singular individuals but at whole groups of people marked as enemies within the community. These were not simply punitive acts but acts of annihilation, that sought to physically eliminate those seen as "others" within a fractured social body.

Some scholars have interpreted this violence as a vestige of premodern times, a remnant of ancestral impulses, or a relapse into a state of savagery that suspended the social contract. Psychosocial explanations—from the old reliable crowd psychology to the history of emotions—have predominated over political ones. However, I argue that this kind of extreme violence is an integral part of popular politics during the Age of Revolution, although often overlooked or misunderstood.

The examples of this violence go from prison massacres, episodes of White Terror and purges to the most extreme and dehumanizing form of violence —political cannibalism— which I have discussed elsewhere[9].

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[8] Jean-Clément Martin, «Massacres, tueries, exécutions et meurtres de masse pendant la Révolution, quelles grilles d'analyse?», *La Révolution française,* (2011) [En ligne], URL : http://journals.openedition.org/lrf/201; Nicolas Cadet, *Honneur et violences de guerre au temps de Napoléon : La campagne de Calabre*, París, Vendémiaire, 2015.

[9] Álvaro París, "Tocar a degüello: violencia y masacre contrarrevolucionaria en la Europa meridional (1789-1848)", *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez,* forthcoming. If you'd like to hear more on this, you can check out this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjo59Feky6E. On political cannibalism, see Addante, Luca (2021), *I cannibali dei Borbone: Antropofagia e politica nell'Europa moderna*, Milán, Laterza. Corbin, Alain (1990), *Le village des cannibales,* Paris, Aubier.

Figure 2. Massacre at the Lyon prisons during the first White terror (1795)

Source: Auguste Raffet (1804 - 1860), *Massacre dans les prisons de Lyon / 24 avril 1795,* Musée Carnavalet, G.29113

Figure 3. Massacre of friars in Madrid (1834)

Source: Ramón Pulido, *La degollación de los frailes en San Francisco el Grande*, 1902

Far from being irrational outbursts, these episodes had a political logic that arose from two dynamics. On the one hand, the civil war which traversed Southern Europe from the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars to the 1848 revolutions. The clash between

revolution and counterrevolution, created a political landscape divided between two irreconcilable worldviews. Violence tore apart local communities and pitted neighbours against one another. Working people took up arms in rival militias, engaged in cycles of revenge, and sought to exclude (even physically) their peers from the community. This revolutionary war was, in a sense, a new type of conflict. It was not a war between rulers over territorial disputes, but a clash to determine the legitimacy of government, the nature of sovereignty and the role that the people-in-arms had to play in the political community.

On the other hand, through this total civil war, politics permeated every aspect of ordinary life. Revolutionaries were branded as blacks[10] (*negros*) in Spain, *giacobini* in Italy and *terroristes, castagniers* or *grilleux* in Southern France. These derogatory terms served to exclude them from the community, casting them as "others".

Along with these new terms, however, political massacres borrowed their language and imagery from the religious violence of the medieval and early modern periods—one of the reasons why I decided to bring this debate to this seminar. In Spain, revolutionaries were portrayed as heretics and compared to the Jews and Muslims expelled in the past. The community must be purified of a disease by purging the body politic to restore its integrity and reestablish the disrupted peace. In France the religious references of political massacre were even more explicit[11]. During the White Terror of 1815, Bonapartists were equated with Huguenots and sons of Belcebu, and called to be burned at the stake, invoking a new Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre. In Marseille, the so-called "Massacre of the Mameluks" in June 1815, targeted Bonapartist soldiers, but also the entire population from Ottoman territories, collectively referred to as "Egyptians"[12].

It is therefore tempting to analyse these episodes as relapses into pre-modern logics, separating them from the cold rationality of "new" political violence embodied in the guillotine. This would be however misleading. Counterrevolutionary violence was as modern as revolutionary one. Their logics were, in fact, intertwined and mutually reinforced.

Civil war between revolution and counterrevolution "politicised" everyday life and tore apart the imagined unity of the community. Of course, politics served to resolve preexisting tensions and factional rivalries, but it also generated new fractures.

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[10] A derogatory term—without any specific racial connotations—used to exclude them from the community as heretics and 'impure'

[11] Valérie Sottocasa, *Mémoires affrontées. Protestants et catholiques face à la Révolution dans les montagnes du Languedoc*, Rennes, PUR, 2004,

[12] Denis, Vincent y Grenet, Mathieu (2016), «Armée et (dés)ordre urbain pendant les Cent-Jours à Marseille : le 'massacre des Mamelouks' en juin 1815», *Revue Historique des Armées*, 283, pp. 25-37 ; Álvaro París, "Royalist Women in the Marketplace: Work, Gender and Popular Counter-Revolution in Southern Europe (1814-1830)", en Oriol Luján y Diego Palacios Cerezales (eds.), *Languages, Discourses, and Practices beyond the Vote: New Perspectives on Politicisation in the Nineteenth Century*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023, pp. 55-77.

3. Questions for the debate

Do we need a specific methodological approach to understand the shift from selective violence directed to preeminent individuals to indiscriminate massacres against an entire group of people? Is there a continuum between the act of popular justice against an individual to restore equilibrium, and the idea that the community is diseased and must be internally cleansed by exterminating its own corrupt members? I believe that these two momenta were part of a coherent process of popular politicisation in which the making of a political community through internal cohesion required the exclusion of the "others".

However, perhaps my personal "fixation" with this difference between the familiar, limited, and carnivalesque violence of popular riots and the unsettling dimension of political massacres lies only in the historian's mind and arises from the explanatory framework I use. When studying popular politics, we are used to working with the idea of a "community", a "people", or a "crowd" with a set of shared values, which legitimises its collective action by appealing to this customary logic[13].

Maybe this way of thinking about protesters as a more or less coherent unity (even when we stress that this sense of unity is nothing but a strategy) is what makes it difficult for me to understand how this "community" can be violently torn apart and turn against itself. How the discourses that served to point out the wealthy and powerful "other" (the authority, the rich, or the master) as an enemy from "outside" the community can also be used against one's own neighbours. Maybe, in conclusion, my (or our?) conception of popular protest is too focused on consensual rhetoric to understand sectarian violence as an integral part of it.

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[13] E.P. Thompson, *Customs in common*, The Merlin Press, 1991.