

# PUBLIC DISCOURSE, PROPAGANDA, AND PERSONALITY CULT UNDER LOUIS XIV

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## Abstract

Although ceremonial forms of public speech in the time of Louis XIV do not allow for the creation of a sphere of public deliberation, they aim at producing ethical effects and provide a rich source for the study of a historically determined cult of personality. They participate in the royal administration's program for the celebration of the absolutist monarchy, adding to its control over ideological mechanisms. Ceremonial speeches are an integral part of the royal text, a complex network of discursive practices which also includes histories and official memoirs as well as pictorial and sculptural representations. Each component has a specific function in its own given context, but it resonates with all the components within the royal text and derives its wider significance as an instrument of personality cult from this intertextual relationship. With Colbert as the major force behind its production, the royal text is elaborated in the context of State-sponsored institutions such as the French Academy, specifically as an instrument of monarchic celebration. By analysing two discursive strategies, the elaboration of the image of an infallible ruler and the defence and justification of his policies, we can identify 'topos' at the core of all forms of personality cult, even perhaps contemporary totalitarian regimes. This article aims at developing tools for the analysis of personality cult as a general phenomenon, and at understanding the function of public speech in guaranteeing the apparently immutable social order of the Ancien Régime.

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The most ceremonial forms of public discourse in the Ancien Régime provide a context in which to look for the constitutive elements of a cult of the King's person. In re-examining the material that allowed me to define the concept of ceremonial oratory and to detail some of its concrete contents (Zoberman 1998a), however, I seek to explore the conditions and the instruments of political regimes that are based on, or that resort to, personality cult. Considerations of the cult of personality in early modern France are a point of departure in this search. In this perspective, the very terminology drawn from such contemporary thinkers as Habermas, and most often derived from the study of nineteenth – and twentieth-century regimes, *e. g.* the concept of *public opinion*, may prove inadequate for the study of early modern Europe. Public speech itself is not so self-evident as may appear at first glance.

Rhetoricians in the seventeenth century tackled the issue raised by the Ancients whether eloquence could indeed exist in a non-democratic regime, lacking in public space for deliberation by the people. In an authoritarian Régime deliberative rhetoric is irrelevant, since there is no “body politic” to persuade. Père Rapin, a staunch advocate of rhetoric and eloquence, in his *Réflexions sur l'usage de l'éloquence de ce tems en général* takes into account the difference between the French monarchy and the Roman Republic, but states nonetheless that eloquence has its place in any type of regime.<sup>1</sup> The troubled times of the *Fronde* certainly involved speeches: Cardinal de Retz boasts of fiery, powerful tirades that galvanised crowds (see Delon 1989, 183-198). In Louis XIV's France, however, public address is fundamentally a factor of the apparent immutability of the Ancien Régime's social order. The contexts for the production of public speeches vary; their axiological contents reveal or barely mask symbolic demands on the part of upwardly mobile bourgeois groups behind the seemingly unchanging façade; still their common function as elements celebrating the monarch lends a coherence to these diverse examples of public speech.

A public speech is not necessarily or primarily directed at the entire audience in attendance. Compliments to personage of high rank or distinction, extending welcome, congratulations, or condolence, are directed at a single, named person: the crowd, which hears these remarks and whose presence serves as a solemnising witness and, by extension, through their expression of approval, whether mute or vocal, participant, whose feelings are presumably expressed by the speaker.

The ceremonial function of oratory depends on the interplay between the speaker's words and their material and symbolic context. The efficacy of a *public speech*, however, is meant to exceed the confined space of its delivery. The *Mercurie galant*, founded in 1674, and published regularly every month after 1677 – with quarterly *extraordinaires* and occasional issues on *affaires du temps*<sup>2</sup> – regularly mentions speeches delivered in various ceremonial circumstances. Such entries typically included speeches published *verbatim* or excerpts or reviews. Speeches, written on paper and occasionally printed,<sup>3</sup> are likely to be preserved and to survive the oratorical events for which they were originally designed, and thus to fulfil some of eloquence's functions beyond oral delivery – most notably the propagandistic effects characteristic of the *royal text*. For example, in 1688, Denis Talon delivers a *mercuriale*<sup>4</sup> in the Paris Parliament; his reputation as an orator inspires a request from an acquaintance for a copy of the speech, as we learn from the note Talon sent with the copy.<sup>5</sup> I call *royal text* a network of texts that echo one another while elabo-

rating and diffusing the *topoi* of royal celebration: panegyrics, histories and para-historical writings, official memoirs.<sup>6</sup> This network also comprises pictorial and sculptural as well as representations combining different media, such as medals and *devises*, often published as collections, generated according to one or several architectonic programs and decipherable as rhetorical discourses.

## The Royal Text and the Institutionalisation of Personality Cult

The royal text occupies a central position in the issue of the relationship between public discourse and personality cult. On the one hand, its elaboration and diffusion is controlled to a great extent by the royal administration. On the other hand, what we know today of public speeches in Louis XIV's time and the sources extant is largely determined by and focused on the demands generated by the royal celebration. Even if stylistic elegance or a particularly warm reception (hardly surprising, since orators are often chosen for their reputation) are often alleged to explain the inclusion in the *Mercur*<sup>7</sup> of all or part of specific speeches, the real justification lies in the very subject matter of the passages quoted or of the ceremonies that occasioned their production. The *Mercur*'s general editor, Donneau de Visé, shapes his journal *Into* an instrument of elaboration and diffusion of the royal text.<sup>8</sup>

Colbert is the major force behind the royal text as its promoter, organiser, and taskmaster. Before him, Richelieu had been intent on using some institutions for the benefit, material or symbolic, of the State.<sup>9</sup> The Church in his view was to serve the interest of the Monarchy. The creation of the French Academy is a clear indication of his tendency to institutionalise the vectors of ideology.<sup>10</sup> Colbert goes even further in his attempt to control ideological mechanisms. He himself is a member of the French Academy. He persuades the King to succeed Chancellor Séguier as its Protector, a step that ties the Academy even more tightly to the State and completes the process started with the granting of Letters Patent by Louis XIII. In 1663 Colbert establishes the Petite Académie (the forerunner of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres). Even more than Richelieu, Colbert sets up a deliberate system for the production of a cult of the person of the King. From that perspective, provincial academies, which multiply and which become an official part of the network of cultural Institutions sponsored by the monarchy thanks to the much sought-after title of "royal," are most significant.<sup>11</sup> Collectively, they project an explicit self-representation as a conduit for the diffusion of royal propaganda.

This process might be accounted for in terms of a penetration of the public sphere by the State.<sup>12</sup> I will turn, instead, to Althusser's Marxist reflection on the State (Althusser 1970). Academies, for instance, are part of the Ideological State Apparatus (*Appareil Idéologique d'État*). Althusser's references are clearly contemporary capitalistic societies – or, at the earliest nineteenth-century regimes. Not only does he contrast the plurality of the State Ideological Apparatuses (SIA) with the singularity of the State (repressive) Apparatus; he also states that these State Ideological Apparatuses are normally distinct from the "public domain," even though the effects they produce fall within the State's global function.<sup>13</sup> In the move from individual recommendations and lists of men of letters who should be given a stipend (Richelieu's system) to institutions directly or indirectly placed under

royal patronage, with Letters Patent and privileges, but also with a duty to celebrate the regime, as they increasingly tighten their control over their members' output, Colbert reconfigures intellectual life and its relation to the powers-that-be. Letters, like the Church,<sup>14</sup> belong under the dominion of the government, and directly so. The French Academicians eagerly remind their audiences that the King is first among them.<sup>15</sup> What is at stake in the analysis of public speeches in terms of image and propaganda is revealed precisely in the interplay between public and private, in what proceeds from the ambition to make the SIA's institutional situation conform thoroughly to their function within the State, in the attempt completely to control ideology. Louis XIV's regime elaborated tools for the implementation of a specific form of personality cult. They contribute to construct, reproduce, and multiply his image in various media. His actions are presented, explained, orchestrated. Public oratory, where the King's word in particular is amplified, propagated, and admired,<sup>16</sup> serves as a support for this propaganda, for its immediate audiences and those which will later read the printed texts. An examination of the system that was thus gradually evolved can be expected to provide means for distinguishing it from other concrete versions of personality cult. The Nazi regime had its Ministry of Propaganda and the significance of the Führer's personal charisma is well known, in particular where public address is concerned. Modern totalitarian regimes depend to a great extent on the ruler's pronouncements. Celebratory ceremonies are by no means unknown to such regimes. One might indeed wonder whether the fact that whole crowds create portraits of their rulers – on the bodies of the individuals comprising them and through anamorphic topography of the very crowds – might not be one clue pointing to the type of specificity whose necessity I am here trying to bring to the fore.

Public discourse at the time when Louis XIV has taken charge of the government directly is, therefore, overdetermined. On the one hand, institutional and government control is tightening: in the French Academy's public sessions, for instance, the delivery of "spontaneous" speeches is governed by ever stricter rules and, more and more, the Academy officially designates some of its members to deliver speeches in specific solemn occasions.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, solemnised public speech in is determined to a large extent by recorded ceremonials and compilations,<sup>18</sup> often in great detail (where specific details may result from chance occurrences and historical oddities<sup>19</sup>) that also function as a kind of jurisprudence.

## Absolute Trust: The Ethical Significance of the "Blameless Ruler" Topos

Public speeches in the seventeenth century occur in various contexts, such as academies, parliaments, and municipalities. Even though gatherings at the town level intuitively constitute the context most appropriate to the notion of "public speech," there is no evidence that any *essential* difference can indeed be identified among these different contexts. Such gatherings are merely more evocative *a priori* of what Habermas calls the "public sphere." Under Louis XIV's regime, however, it is unlikely that they constitute a true space for public deliberation. Louis XIV's subjects – "the people"<sup>20</sup> – are not speaking subjects. They are also rarely the primary targets of the orators. As a rule, the people are talked about rather than authentically addressed. In any event, what might be expected from the *listening crowds*,

beyond admiration for the orator's performance, would not be the making of political decisions, but compliance with requests for contributions – obedience rather than deliberation. When Hébert, the outgoing mayor of Soissons, harangues his successors, the incoming municipal magistrates, he exhorts them to do their duty and he urges the people to defer to the authority of those they chose for their magistrates; (the fact that the lowest social strata have most likely little to do with any elective process does not free them from the obligation to obey the municipal body). Persuasion is aimed at obtaining the contributions requested of the various categories of people. The town as a whole will, however, derives important benefits from its inhabitants' obedience to their magistrates and to their king. When the mayor of Brest delivers a speech to pass on the authority and dignity of this function, all the inhabitants are ceremonially in arms; the incoming mayor takes an oath to be faithful to the King, but also to maintain the town's privileges (see *Mercur* 1678, 179 ff.).

Manipulation then consists in obtaining the behaviour ostensibly taken for granted. In his 1687 panegyric Tallemant marvels at the behaviour he attributes to the Protestants who converted *en masse* to Catholicism after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes:

*Whence might these prodigies arise ... unless from the People's extreme Trust in their Prince's love toward them. They cannot imagine he might demand from them anything that would not pertain to their welfare and their advantage. They cannot believe that so just, so moderate, so wise a Prince is on the path of error, and with that in mind they run with no hesitation where his voice beckons them, they bow with no difficulty to whatever it pleases him to inspire them to do, and God sees thus the Firstborn Son of his Church triumphant over heresy and falsehood, and France unified in a single herd, and knowing but one Pastor (Zoberman 1991, 211).*

Part reality, part wishful thinking, this passage is also a form of exhortation. In a tradition similar to that of *mirrors*, the orator depicts as actual, behaviour that sounds not only as a pure representation but as an appeal despite its textually descriptive status.<sup>21</sup> The projected effect, however, is less concrete action than belief. The orator elaborates a joint image of the subjects and their king or, rather, of the subjects in their relationship to their monarch. Directed toward the outside world, this image must satisfy those who have an interest in its elaboration. Addressed to the audience or, in some cases, to a specific group in the audience, this image must carry their adhesion. What we can identify here is the kind of devotion characteristically ascribed to the people in the framework of personality cult.

In celebrating a brilliant stroke, the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, Tallemant sets forth a positive representation of an action, a move that might be accounted for in terms of propaganda proper.<sup>22</sup> He does so, however, by stressing the King's virtues ("so just, so moderate, so wise a Prince") and the close, truly affective link between Prince and subjects: "They cannot believe that [their] Prince is on the path of error, and with that in mind they run with no hesitation where his voice beckons them, they bow with no difficulty to whatever it pleases him to inspire them to do..." A universal basis for personality cult may be constituted by a trust in the ruler so complete that it allows the circumventing of any doubt or question and functions to justify *a priori* all his actions.

Public speech and the use that is made of it help to fashion and circulate an image that supports and legitimises absolute trust. This trust can serve as a guarantee for the unswerving support accorded the monarch, whatever reservation a specific decision should logically generate. I have referred elsewhere (Zoberman 1998b) to Madame de Sévigné's strategy when confronted with a situation that could potentially put her at odds with the royal policies. She owes it to herself to voice her indignation with regard to the way the former Surintendant Fouquet is treated. But she is a member of the aristocracy. She maintains the King's innocence and accuses lower-born and narrow- and evil-minded counsellors; she in effect resorts to an aristocratic variant of the popular phrase, "If only the King knew." In fact, that refusal to confront directly the mere possibility of the authority's injustice may be a fundamental trait of personality cult and a *topos* of its discourse. It appears in Gitta Sereny's biography of Albert Speer (Sereny 1995), when she reports her interviews with Hitler's secretaries. In retrospect they see one man, Hitler, as bearing the whole responsibility for WWII's atrocities, just as they had concentrated their admiration on him. According to them, at the time of the nazi regime, nobody knew how nefarious a man Hitler was. Had they been told, however, they could no more have believed it, than they could have ascribed to him the responsibility of the horrible things they might have learned. They would have assumed that those around him were deceiving him. The infallible leader with no other purpose than his people's happiness is deceived by an entourage with egotistical and/or perverse motives. This kind of reflection – this reflex – is characteristic of the discursive inconsistencies so often generated by the type of fanaticism or blind faith that the cult of the ruler aims at creating.

The convention of the ruler's blamelessness is in fact useful for all social groups. The neediest suppose a relationship with the ruler that is often viewed as privileged and providential. Seventeenth-century celebrants of the royal cult averred that Louis XIV deserved the epithet "Grand" granted by the Parisian municipality or the title "Father of the people" more than any Roman emperor ever granted those praises – truth and affection alone had earned Louis le Grand all his honorific titles, whereas most rulers owe theirs to sheer flattery.<sup>23</sup> But the same affectionate phrase was used in the case of Stalin... Those who, like Madame de Sévigné, need to indicate disagreement with the Monarch but must, out of group (or class) solidarity, mark their social loyalty, find in the *topos* of the king's innocence a relatively harmonious solution to the dilemma. I would warn against rushing to assimilate Louis XIV and Stalin or Hitler. I am merely stating that this specific rhetorical locus may operate in different historical contexts; neither is it necessary that elections or plebiscites be held for it to flourish. It seems logical; at least as a hypothesis, to consider it as a component of a core common to all personality cult *texts*.

The seemingly paradoxical solidarity among groups in Louis XIV's reign can actually be logically expected, because of the stage the French monarchy had reached by then. The monarchy in the Ancien Régime is based upon a division according to Estates theoretically fixed (and often perceived as such). However, the economic structures were changing. Prerogatives and ranks may still have been ferociously maintained at Court rituals. But the worldly and courtly elite is defined more and more by behaviour, not birth – the aristocratic defining characteris-

tic – and this allows for a certain form of upward mobility. Concomitantly, the traditional nobility is domesticated and transformed into its courtly avatar. Absolutist monarchy requires that all groups be satisfied. High aristocrats, as well as great financiers (who grew out of what can already be called the bourgeoisie, as well as lower office holders and all the subjects of the King must benefit – or, at least, share the feeling they are benefiting – from the regime. Public speeches of Louis XIV's time orchestrate still more explicitly than pseudo-historical texts the idea that the people's happiness is the guiding principle of royal action. Chronicles and annals recur throughout Louis XIV's reign, but they grow more numerous during the difficult last years of the Seventeenth Century. Such texts abound in direct assertions like "At the same time the King saw to the relief of his people" (Bossuet 367) or "Care and precautions taking by the King regarding the high cost of foods" (Du Londel 1694, 12-13). By contrast, the same encomiastic content in the kind of speeches I am studying generates fully developed explanations. At this juncture one moves from blind faith in an infallible ruler to a favourable presentation of his action – from an image to propaganda.<sup>24</sup>

### From Image to Propaganda: The People's Happiness

Reminding "the people" that any decision emanating from the government aims ultimately at making or keeping them happy is a simple form of narrative propaganda. No matter how impenetrable his motives may be, the ruler acts in such a way as to ensure general happiness. This brand of discursive strategy is particularly striking when it is used to explain present suffering. In the flood of kingly praise that springs from the innumerable ceremonies of thanksgiving organised in late 1686 and early 1687 to celebrate the King's recovery from his fistula operation, orators quite naturally have a field-day transcribing the King's very actions in medical terms. Père Ambroise from Quimper, for instance, is quite willing to acknowledge that the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes may have produced pain. But he immediately corrects the perspective. In the final analysis those who were forced to convert paradoxically find in this coercion the condition for their well being:

*Let him who wants, or rather who will be able to do so in a worthy fashion, speak of the wisdom of this great King who provided the life of grace to so many souls by this holy zeal ... his patience, his gentleness, his gifts, by laws as salutary as they are just; even though at first, like Medicines, they seemed bitter to the sickest who now proclaim the health they received from them (Ambroise de Quimper, 11-12).*

Pain can thus be explained away in terms of healing. Stating that suffering is (a step toward) health and well being verges on denial. This type of assertion is most likely to appear in the context of discussions of war. It is also where the contradictions inherent in a discourse that actualises heterogeneous *topoi* can be seen most clearly. War cannot simply be overlooked even though one of the *topoi* most frequently amplified is that paradoxically the people pursue the activities and the pleasures of peace even as war is raging. Of all such academic speeches, Tallemant's 1689 panegyric of Louis XIV was read in the gloomiest historic context. Yet, it opens on the peace *topos*:

*Will they believe it across Europe, Gentlemen, that one is concerned here only with fetes and award ceremonies? All the Potentates armed against us are in continual turmoil; one sees but war councils, assemblies, marching troops everywhere; and we, serene and free of care, we at our leisure observe the progress of the Arts, we discuss eloquence and Poetry, and know war only through the accounts we are given of our Enemies' difficulties and of the continual advantages we gain on them. Heeding solely the Sage who governs us, we live in full confidence (Zoberman 1991, 243).<sup>25</sup>*

It is precisely during that period that propaganda proper intensifies. The French Academy is apparently an institution very sensitive to alterations in the general program of royal propaganda, which it assimilates quickly and reflects faithfully. It is not surprising, therefore, that this kind of assertion should find echoes in the provinces – but with a contradiction that shows clearly the problems created by the confrontation of discourse with reality. In a speech “On the Current War,” the *avocat du Roi* (the Crown’s attorney) at the *Présidial du Rouergue* offers a variation on Tallemant’s assertion (the war’s misfortunes are not felt but merely glimpsed at from afar), only to state immediately that the enemies are responsible for the French’s sufferings:

*No matter how tenderly the Princes love their Subjects, they often find in their minds nothing but pain, in their hearts nothing but ingratitude, and in their mouths nothing but mutterings, as soon as an unfortunate juncture such as war (a grievous effect of unavoidable fate more often than of their deliberation) forces them to demand from their subjects the assistance that these owe them and that they only request ordinarily for these ingrates’ own defence and interest.*

*The French alone are not capable of so unjust and damnable a feeling. Their love for their Prince, not only keeps them in a submission that produces their pleasure and their joy, but binds their hearts with a tie stronger and tighter still, and even though they may have on occasion glimpsed from afar the woes that war causes, they always found it so just that they only took more heart and felt even more indignation at the Enemies of the State, whom they regarded as the sole authors of what might disturb the serenity of their lives (Mercure, Jun 1692, 9-11).<sup>26</sup>*

“The people” must be reminded of their happiness in circumstances where there is a risk the reality of war might make them forget it... The term “submission” actually introduces a characteristic of the tie between subjects and monarch, which plays a role in iconographic programs of royal entries (for instance in 1628-1629, when Louis XIII crushes the Protestants’ revolts).

## Happiness and the Meaning of Absolutism

The subjects’ happiness is a subject matter essential to the discourse of absolutist monarchy; yet it generates in single textual environments contradictory assertions – again because they spring from topoi that may have been born in different contexts. It is possible at one and the same time to state that provinces only glimpse from afar the woes of war without ever experiencing them, and to comfort the desolated provinces by stressing how solicitous the King is in the steps he takes for



their reconstruction. This explains the emergence of a “desolated provinces” topos (linked to pictorial and sculptural representations, again in Louis XIII’s entries for example) at the heart of a discourse that emphasises France’s tranquillity and happiness and that celebrates a king who anticipates desolation by undertaking military campaigns in the heart of winter and rapidly bringing them to completion.<sup>27</sup> Tallemant’s 1677 *Panegyrique sur la campagne de Flandre* provides a set model for this type of explanation:

*Worship, People, the steps of this August Prince; it is not without cause that on his return you strewed his way with flowers and that he found everywhere acclamations and extraordinary marks of your joy. He marched so early only because he was planning to give you an assured tranquillity, having planned to turn into protective barriers the same cities whence insolent enemies came every day to burn your houses and devastated your fields. He attacks and takes them even before the first verdure has covered the ground, so that as early as this very year you may feel the effect of the good he prepared for you; one month later and your happiness would have been put off for an entire year (Zoberman 1991, 139).*

Reminding the people of their happiness seems particularly necessary when beyond a very general forbearance, the orator is led by his position to ask his audience for some more concrete sacrifice. Such is, for instance, the situation when the incoming mayor of Soissons, Hébert, in his inauguration speech must justify the contributions he requests by the favours the King has granted the town:

*But if despite all these precautions, one had to divest oneself, one had to suffer should we mutter? As in the storm one rids the boat of less valuable goods, to save its most precious cargo, would we not give part of our possessions to save our liberties and our lives? (Hébert 1699, 191-192).*

This presentation is a far cry from the assertion that the people only glimpse war from afar. Lives and livelihoods are at stake here. The orator makes it clear that it is a fair exchange, given the King’s constant care for his subjects’ welfare: “What part of the Kingdom receives more useful support than this Province?” And the same orator states elsewhere that one would give everything, one’s possessions and one’s life, “after seeing him put himself at risk so many times for you” (p. 164). More or less complex explanations can thus be used to justify specific requests or, more generally, political lines of action. The appearance of such justifications, however, always indicates the limit of the ethical credit orators think can be derived from the King’s image.

If universal happiness is a fundamental postulate in the absolutist monarchy that evolved through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in France, such discursive developments are essential to the elaboration of the regime’s ideological representation. The royal text filters out any threat of popular uprising. It is always referred to as a past phenomenon – for instance for the Fronde or when evoking the Protestants’ seditious dealings as a sign of the “woes of the time” in discourse justifying the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (see Zoberman 2001c).<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, *literary* texts which dramatise relations of power within fictional, mimetic societies incorporate the prospect of uprising as a manifestation of popular dissatisfaction. In Racine’s *Iphigénie*, for instance, Ulysse explicitly brings up the

threat of a rebellion in the camp to persuade Agamemnon to keep his word and deliver his daughter to Calchas, which will eventually open the way to Troy for the Greeks: a literary representation of a popular revolt the possibility of which is totally denied by the royal text (see Zoberman 2001a, 385-7).

The very gesture of praising the King in a ceremonial speech is of course directed at the King himself. It confirms that the town or the institution is fulfilling its duty. (The King releases on occasion a town from the obligation of organising a solemn entry so as not to strain its budget with the huge expense such a ceremony entails. But it is also an honour that the towns and their prominent citizens seek. The entry reactivates, so to speak, the King's direct involvement with the town, and therefore, with its inhabitants.) But the King's praise is not developed in order merely to prove to the monarch the inhabitants' fidelity and loyalty. Madame (the wife of Louis XIV's brother), intrigued by the ubiquitous presence of the King's praises in books, remarks that the King never reads them. These praises serve as a reminder to the provincial audiences: their distance from the centre of monarchic power and from the King's person renders this kind of propaganda necessary (Bluche 1986, 236).<sup>29</sup> In the same way, monarchic celebration allows His Majesty's subjects to hear (or see) themselves reminded of their duty and of the sense of their link to the monarch and to gather under the sign of their King's greatness.

If one may talk of public discourse within the context of the elaboration of a cult of the King's person (as a historically determined form of personality cult at a time when the technological tools commonly used by modern regimes were not available), it is as concerted, staged discourse. Its concrete places of emergence may vary, but the regularity of some characteristics and the recurrence of some contents – representation of the infallible monarch, justification of his action and happiness of his subjects – define its unity. It provides an example of the taking over of the public space by the State rather than a frame of public deliberation. Given the very nature of absolutism, the success of a form of government that subjects to its authority the highest nobility as well as the common people depends on the representation of universal social harmony. Public speech, as the element of a royal text that incorporates but exceeds it, may not have as its primary function to enlighten the people with regard to political decisions they might have to make. But it elaborates and/or channels contents liable to offer all the groups it brings together the satisfactions, essentially symbolic, that give meaning to their position within the Ancien Régime.

## Notes:

1. "Eloquence can hold sway everywhere, when it is authentic and has the wherewithal to make itself heard" (Rapin 1671/1725, 3; all translations are mine).
2. The 1670s represent a high point of Louis XIV's regime. Donneau de Visé, the general editor, is subsidised by the royal administration, and strives to be officially named *historiographer royal*, a title that rewarded men of letters like Pellisson in the early 1670s and Boileau and Racine in 1677. It is part of the State-sponsored system of monarchic celebration. The *Mercur* which changed names several times eventually became the *Mercur de France*.
3. The *décor* for some oratorical events was recorded, as were some of the designs for various fireworks and bonfires. The Latin panegyric of the Paris Parliament delivered in 1684 by Père de La Baune was published in the original text and in translation, along with an *explication* of the very elaborate decoration of the room at the Collège Louis-le-Grand (see Zoberman 1993).

4. *Mercuriales* were speeches delivered by the first magistrates and the King's representatives in the Parliament once or twice a year, originally on a Wednesday (hence their name) and meant to correct abuses and to remind the members of the judicial professions of their duty. The *Mercuriale* stresses the evolution of these speeches from ethical censure toward a more "polite" discussion of questions of interest to the robes and, ultimately, mere epideictic texts (see Zoberman 1998a, 363).

5. I am enclosing the speech which you mentioned you would not mind reading and I take this opportunity to assure you that I am, with much esteem and attachment, Monsieur, your humble and obedient servant (Talon 1688, n. p.).

6. *Official* memoirs as opposed to memoirs written by figures who consider themselves major players or privileged witnesses in the life of the monarchy and who want posthumously to assert their status – or stature – in the society of their time and the secrets that can only be divulged after death or to their descendants. They feel, therefore, freed from some constraints of *bienséance*.

7. Speeches in the *Mercuriale* are often presented as having been published without their authors' consent or knowledge – the readers' pleasure and enlightenment warranting such friendly larcenies especially in as noble an undertaking as the Monarch's glorification.

8. I have shown elsewhere, however, that because it is directed at a *mondain* public interested in all events social and ceremonial, the *Mercuriale* exceeds, so to speak, and may be considered marginal to, the royal text (Zoberman 2001b).

9. J. Michael Sproule insists on the institutional nature of propaganda, as opposed to traditional rhetoric: Propaganda is also characterised by an emphasis on image rather than ideas, and on conclusions rather than reasons. Such reflections are useful in characterising propagandistic rhetoric, but the evidence shows that the oppositions must be refined. Within the framework of traditional rhetoric, early modern France saw the development of propaganda. The distinction between propaganda and personality cult is useful here (some of the examples examined by Sproule have nothing to do with personality cult). See Sproule 1989.

10. The term "ideology" is not self-evident here. The notion of collective (symbolic) representations might seem more appropriate, especially with regard to the seventeenth century. But "ideology" does evoke a process, one that we moderns have learned to consider as a process without a subject – a conception foreign to Colbert's contemporary. It would be an illusion to think that Colbert might have effectively controlled in all its details the elaboration of a network of symbolic representations meant to relay the actual exercise of the political power.

11. In Angers – in a region seen as sympathetic to the Protestants – the academy was allowed to form only after the bishop and several official representatives of the King were made academicians *ex officio*.

12. In Habermas's terminology (see *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, chapter 6).

13. In a first stage we may observe that if there exists *one* State (repressive) Apparatus, there exist a *plurality* of State Ideological Apparatuses. Assuming it exists, the unity that constitutes this plurality of SIA into one body is not immediately visible. In a second stage, we may notice that, whereas the State(repressive) Apparatus unified, belongs in its entirety to the *public* domain, State Ideological Apparatuses (in their apparent dispersion) belong for the most part to the *private* domain (Althusser 1970, 13).

14. Church and State are not as in contemporary France separated. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes shows on the contrary to what extent religious practice and conscience are the province of the royal authority (as do the *régale* and the Paris Parliament's *Gallican* reactions). Could family itself be deemed a *private* institution? Not in the case of the major noble houses.

15. Tallemant writes in 1673, just after the Academy has moved to the Louvre, that the company is dearer to Louis XIV than the other academies "since he calls us into his house, since we are closer to his person, and since if we dare say so finally he is a member of our Corps and the first among us" (Zoberman 1991, 123).

16. By "word" here I mean his utterances, weighty and viewed as performative, but also his

enunciation In all its circumstances, always remarkable (as is portentous his silence and the choices he makes whether to speak or to be silent). The King's word is often mentioned in terms of powerful speech acts capable, as all his actions, to produce miracles.

17. On this process, see Zoberman 1998a, 49-51.

18. See examples in Zoberman 1998a.

19. Peter Bayley gives a few specific examples of details, such as the freeing of birds, later taken as canonical, but which he views as a topical detail, thought of to amuse a child-king (see Bayley 2001).

20. The King's subjects are normally referred to as "les peuples."

21. Behaviour that the authorities wish to see enacted in real life.

22. On the distinction between propaganda proper and image-making, see Zoberman 2000.

23. Seventeenth-century sources are very explicit here (see, for instance, Vertron 1685). Charpentier in his 1679 panegyric on the newly signed peace, writes of "the happiness that is ours to have been born under Your Majesty's empire," and explains "that is, under the dominion of a Prince, who after outshining by his valour the highest military deeds of those Warriors who were called the Lions, the Heroes, the Stormers of cities, outdid at the same time by his Justice, by his Clemency, by his Liberality, everything that has been said of those beneficent Kings, to whom were granted the agreeable names of Good, of Saviours, and of Fathers of the Kingdom" (Zoberman 1991, 161).

24. Burke, who clearly sees the constructed nature of the King's representation, tends to view even narrative accounts as narrativised image (Burke 1992, *passim*).

25. The orators and encomiasts' customary strategy at the time consists in applying to the difficult years at the end of the seventeenth century topoi that were adapted to the apex of Louis XIV's reign. In 1673, Tallemant wrote: "Has war disturbed anything in France? Has it not, on the contrary contributed in the utmost to its glory? Upon you alone, unfortunate Republic [Holland] did all the misfortune of war fall" (Zoberman 1991, 117).

26. There is no indication as to the circumstances of the speech. Donneau de Visé merely states that it was a public speech and that the audience must have been numerous and splendid. ("This speech was delivered in a solemn (*célèbre*) occasion by Mr Delmas." "Célèbre" implies that it was well attended as much as solemn.)

27. After mentioning the succour the King provides for the "provinces désolées" (Le Roux 1683, 14), Pière Le Roux details the King's acts of benevolence: "Then he establishes our tranquillity; sometimes he represses domestic injustice, more unbearable than foreign violence; he sprinkles in times of need soft and plentiful dew on desolated regions" (p. 35).

28. The rebellious towns are a feature of some of Louis XIII's triumphant entries. Ephemeral architecture erected for the solemnised context of ceremonial oratory is the result of concerted programs. Visual representations, such as portraits and *devises*, form a repertoire varied but finite, in harmony with general ideological perspectives adapted to the regime's purposes.

29. Bluche quotes a letter written by Madame in 1701 – i.e. a period when the regime relied much more on propaganda proper than in the triumphant 1670s (Bluche 1986, 236).

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