

POLITICAL RITUALS OF THE SPEAKING: BLESSING AND CURSE IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY AND LAW OF THE CASTILIAN NOBILITY OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY (PART I)

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ABSTRACT

The curse, along with its opposite, the blessing, was not a fictional element, a legend more or less original in Castilian political history. Law and historiography made this topic a key element in his discourses to end up legitimizing one or the other in the struggles for the power of the kingdom in a long period that he understood from the end of the thirteenth century to the beginning of the fifteenth.

In this article, we analyze the historiographic and legal texts included in the period from the reign of Alfonso X to that of Alfonso XI in order to understand how these discourses fictionalize this supernatural ritual of the word to build a historical truth functional to your present interests.

KEYWORDS

Curse, Blessing, Ritual, Power, King.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Damnatio, Benedictio, Ritus, Potestas, Rex.

1. The legend in the post-Alfonsi stage: rethinking the fiction-reality link

It is difficult to understand the presence of curses and blessings in historiographic and juridical late medieval Castilian discourses if one does not pay attention to the socio-political framework in which these components were woven into the textuality of the fourteenth century.¹ To think that this was due to a weak critical judgment or to deliberate distortions will be as simple as erroneous, leaving hidden the logic that structured the discourses and practices of a century dotted with the lights and shadows of the Alfonsi political and cultural project.

If ever Martin Heidegger said that Friedrich Nietzsche was someone in whose light and shadow every contemporary philosopher thinks and creates, whether with him or against him, its affirmation would well serve to understand the impact that the texts of the Alfonsi *scriptorium* had on the kingdoms of Castile and Leon of the fourteenth century.² As several specialists have argued, historiography and law since the reign of Sancho IV have been understood only as a reaction to or a continuation of the bases established by Alfonso X, as a collective author.³

1. While the blasphemy of King Alfonso X might fall into this category of word rituals, along with the curse and blessing, we have decided to focus on this article and the next one on the speculative game of curses and blessings that constituted the topic of the cursed lineage, present with a striking effectiveness even in times of the first Trastámaras. For the subject of the blasphemy of the Wise King we refer to the following articles: Funes, Leonardo. "La blasfemia del rey Sabio: itinerario narrativo de una leyenda". *Incipit*, 13 (1993): 51-70; Funes, Leonardo. "La blasfemia del rey Sabio: itinerario narrativo de una leyenda (II)". *Incipit*, 14 (1994): 60-101; Funes, Leonardo. "La leyenda de la blasfemia del Rey Sabio: revisión de su itinerario narrativo". *e-Spania*, 25 (2016). 20 de marzo de 2020, <http://hdl.handle.net/11336/44618>.

2. Heidegger, Martin. *Acerca del nihilismo*. Barcelona: Paidós, 1994.

3. This position is found both in manuals and in specialized articles and publications. Among the first group, we can highlight the Fernando Gómez Redondo's voluminous work, "Historia de la prosa medieval castellana I. La creación del discurso prosístico: el entramado cortesano" (Madrid: Cátedra, 1998, vol. 1), and the first volume of the "Historia de la literatura española: Entre oralidad y escritura: la Edad Media" (Barcelona, Crítica, 2012) composed by M^a Jesús Lacarra and Juan Manuel Cacho Blecua. On the other hand, the works dedicated to the Alfonsi historiography and their reaction are undoubtedly numerous so that any reference can rightly be qualified as biased or incomplete. Among them, we can mention those carried out by Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Diego Catalán, Leonardo Funes, Georges Martin, Inés Fernández-Ordoñez y Aengus Ward. Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. *La leyenda de los infantes de Lara*, Madrid: Hijos de J.M. Ducazal, 1896; Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. *Crónicas generales de España*, Madrid: Suc. De Rivadeneyra, 1898; Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. "Tradicionalidad de las Crónicas Generales de España". *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 136 (1955): 131-197. Catalán, Diego. *De Alfonso X al conde de Barcelos*. Madrid: Gredos, 1962; Catalán, Diego. "El Toledano Romanzado y las Estorias del fecho de los godos del s. XV". *Estudios dedicados a James Homer Herriot*. Madison: Universidad de Wisconsin, 1966: 09-102; Catalán, Diego. "Don Juan Manuel ante el modelo alfonsí: el testimonio de la *Crónica abreviada*". *Juan Manuel Studies*, Ian Macpherson, ed., Londres: Tamesis, 1977: 17-51 Catalán, Diego. *La Estoria de España de Alfonso X. Creación y evolución*. Madrid: SMP-Universidad Complutense- Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1992; Catalán, Diego. "Monarquía aristocrática y manipulación de las fuentes: Rodrigo en la *Crónica de Castilla*. El fin del modelo historiográfico alfonsí". *La historia alfonsí: el modelo y sus destinos (siglos XIII-XV)*, Georges Martin, ed., Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2000: 75-94. Funes, Leonardo. "Dos versiones antagónicas de la historia y de la ley: una visión de la historiografía castellana de Alfonso X al Canciller Ayala", *Teoría y práctica de la historiografía medieval hispánica*, Aengus Ward, ed., Birmingham:



Sometimes it has been wanted to see in the model proposed by the Wise King an attempt of scientificity that would contrast with the halo intentionally mythical and fictional that involved the later historiography. However, as Leonardo Funes has studied, the Alfonsi chronicle discourse —*Estoria de España* and the *Grande e General Estoria*— was not exempted of fictional components, coming from the mythical stories of Antiquity, the case of Hercules in the Iberian Peninsula, and of the epic poems written in prose, and not for that reason, the critics have seen there an intention to fictionalize History. It is known that each text responds to a given logic of veracity and the discourse of the Wise King subjected the legendary matter to a pattern of historicity, to a rationality of its own: all history was contextualized within the framework of the lordship of Spain with a strict logical chain and a chronology that gave the story a “scientific” nature. As it can be seen, legend and fantasy were not excluded in the Alfonsi model, although the latter was criticized⁴, as both marked the limit of possibility of the model and the options for its further development.⁵

On the other hand, the post-Alfonsi period was characterized by a fragmentation of the enunciator of the historical account, acquiring the voice of the nobility a written record, which brought the entry of narrative forms related to its values and interests: the anecdote, the *exemplum*, the *fazaña* and the legend. Thus, the chronicles of the period 1284-1312 reflect the reaction of the nobility, but also of the Sancho IV's court to the political project and the Regalian conception of Alfonso X. In this periodization and identification of the foci of historiographic production we follow the Funes' approach, who distances himself from the theory of Fernando Gómez Redondo, for whom the entire post-Alfonsi stage was conditioned by the Sancho IV's political-cultural project, which he called *Molinismo* after his successor, Queen María de Molina, during the regencies of his son and grandson.⁶

The University of Birmingham Press, 2000: 08-31; Funes, Leonardo. “Las variaciones del relato histórico en la Castilla del siglo XIV. El periodo post-alfonsí”. *Estudios sobre la variación textual. Prosa castellana de los siglos XIII a XVI*, Buenos Aires: SECRIT, 2001: 111-134; Funes, Leonardo. “Una versión nobiliaria de la historia reciente en la Castilla post-alfonsí: la historia hasta 1288 dialogada”. *Revista de Literatura Medieval* XV, 2 (2003): 71-83; Funes, Leonardo. “Historiografía nobiliaria del periodo post-alfonsí: un fenómeno histórico-literario en discusión”. *Hispanismos del mundo, diálogos y debates en (y desde) el Sur*, Leonardo Funes, coord., Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila Editores, 2016: 77-86. Martin, Georges. “Le pouvoir historiographique (L'historien, le roi, le royaume. Le tournant alphonsin)”. *Annexes des Cahiers de linguistique hispanique médiévale*, 11 (1997): 123-136. Fernández-Ordóñez, Inés, ed. *Alfonso X el Sabio y las Crónicas de España*. Valladolid: Fundación Santander Central Hispano, 2000; Fernández-Ordóñez, Inés. “Evolución del pensamiento alfonsí y transformación de las obras jurídicas e históricas del Rey Sabio”. *Cahiers de linguistique hispanique médiévale*, 23 (2000): 263-283. Ward, Aengus. *Teoría y práctica de la historiografía hispánica medieval*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2000.

4. In this article we will use the edition of the *Partidas* of 1555: *Las Siete Partidas [facsimil]*, Gregorio López, ed. Madrid: Boletín Oficial del Estado, 1974: 2, 4, 8.

5. Funes, Leonardo. “Materia legendaria en el discurso historiográfico del siglo XIV. La fantasía y la configuración literaria de la verdad histórica”. *Fantasia y literatura en la Edad Media y los Siglos de Oro*, Nicasio Miguel; Santiago López-Ríos Moreno; Esther Borrego Gutiérrez, coords. Vervuert: Iberoamérica, 2004: 163-178.

6. According to Gómez Redondo, the Molinismo emerged linked to the Toledo Cathedral School, making the court the seat of this new cultural model whose priority task would have been to “... corregir los



All the cultural production of the period would have been under its influence, point in which, we do not agree, as the studies of Diego Catalán, Georges Martin, Inés Fernández Ordoñez and Leonardo Funes speak of a discursive production parallel to the royal project that survived, still fragmented, within the chronicles produced by the royal *scriptorium*, such as the *Historia nobiliaria de Castilla*, contained in the *Crónica de Castilla* and the *Crónica de los veinte reyes*, the *Historia hasta 1288 dialogada*, included in the *Estoria del fecho de los godos*, and the *Historia cabadelante*, final section of the *Crónica Particular de San Fernando* that completes the narrative of the *Toledano* from the conquest of Córdoba until the death of Fernando III.⁷

It should be remembered that nobiliary historiography, until 1275, when it was approximately written, would have been an amorphous set of anecdotes and oral legends about the origins of the first lineages.⁸ After the fall of Alfonso X, the aristocratic texts multiplied as a reaction to his political-cultural model, manifested in its formal rupture, by the adoption of a criterion of episodic accumulation that abandons the order of the whole, as well as in its functional one, acquiring a testimonial role as a juridical antecedent of the way things are, in which the *fazaña* played a central role.⁹

fundamentos científicos y suprimir la tolerancia religiosa en que Alfonso había apoyado la suya [su corte]. Esto no significa la desaparición del entramado literario que el Rey Sabio había propiciado, sino ajustarlo y convertirlo al nuevo marco ideológico en el que don Sancho y doña María quieren identificarse...". Gómez Redondo, Fernando. *Historia de la prosa medieval castellana. I. La creación del discurso prosístico: el entramado cortesano*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1998: 861. Funes replied that to accept such statements would mean accepting a coherence in the post-Alfonsi project equivalent to that of Alfonso X, when in fact the period of this king was something exceptional because, before and later, they were always initiatives of ecclesiastical sectors close to the court or of specific regional enterprises, limited and of more modest aspirations that never reached the level of coherence or the Alfonsi intellectual ambition. But in addition, to conceive of the royal court as the sole center of cultural production would entail a value judgment on the nobility "...según el cual ninguna iniciativa de construcción discursiva del pasado podría salir de una banda de violentos depredadores sólo enfocados en la acumulación de riqueza y poder y en la ciega defensa de sus privilegios estamentales...". Funes, Leonardo. "Historiografía nobiliaria del período post-alfonsí: un fenómeno histórico-literario en discusión", *Hispanismos del mundo, diálogos y debates en (y desde) el Sur*. Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila Editores, 2016: 81.

7. Recently, Funes has pointed out as a contradiction of historiographic studies that, although the king-nobility feud is considered an inescapable contextual factor in any study of the period, "...hay una marcada renuencia de la crítica a aceptar la existencia misma de una instancia enunciativa nobiliaria". Funes, Leonardo. "Historiografía nobiliaria del...": 79.

8. Georges Martin pointed out the existence, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, of a historicity in Castilian heroic narratives that responded to an aristocratic movement of resistance to historiography controlled by the Church and the King. Through their narratives, that were promoters of less conceptualized values, the aristocracy relied on timelessness and prescriptions latent in the myth and folklore distant from the written world of the clerics. For Martin, the Castilian heroic narrative is presented as a mythology of the secular elites, formed in the interstices of a historiographic discourse dominated by the Crown and the Church, which ends up disappearing when, since the fourteenth century, the nobility acceded as such, with don Juan Manuel, writing, historiography. Martin, Georges. "Le récit héroïque castillan (Formes, enjeux sémantiques et fonctions socio-culturelles)". *Annexes des Cahiers de linguistique hispanique médiévale*, 11 (1997): 39-152.

9. Funes points out that the *fazaña* was the essential narrative form of the historiographic and juridical nobility mode, because the historical event was configured from it. Funes, Leonardo. "Dos versiones antagónicas...": 08-31. For his part, Hugo Bizzarri has defined it as a small story of a juridical-historical



However, this process that we are describing for the kingdoms of Castilla y León, apart from its particular triggering factors, shares a frame of thought common to Western Christianity that came to support the veracity regime of history in a paradoxical mixture of truth and fiction, as studied by Pierre Courroux in the French chronicles from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. In fact, the clear division in Latin medieval literature between truth and fiction, linked to the fable and the lie, became blurred in the twelfth century in the literature in *langue d'oïl*.

From there on a *littérature historique* existed, placing the term *estoire* between literature and history, pointing to two non-exclusive truths: the referential of the chronicler who establishes a close link with the world lived (truth referential) and that of the novelist emanating from the work itself (truth of meaning). In this regard, Justine Breton has said that the distinction between history and literature did not take place in the art novels (*réécits*) of the twelfth century, *se situent justement à la jonction de ces deux domaines aujourd'hui séparés par la recherche académique*.¹⁰ Within the Iberian Peninsula, in the same period to which we have referred, Jaume Aurell has identified in Catalonia the use of "historical imagination", a legitimate means for constructing historical narratives that refer to a new model of chronicle «historical-legendary» that replaced the chronicles compiled from the twelfth century, such as the *Gesta Comitum Barchinonensium*, and the testimonials from the middle of the thirteenth century, such as the Jaime I's *Llibre dels feyts*.¹¹

This has led the Catalan historian to conclude, following Hayden White, that myth, fiction and history, as linguistic forms based on the narrative method, operated at different levels of the "reality-imagination" field, so that each must be considered in its rhetorical nature, without ranking its veracity, because myth and fiction also *hacen referencia al mundo real, dicen verdades acerca de él, lo representan y nos proveen de conocimientos prácticos para conocerlo con mayor profundidad*.¹² His statement

character that does not speak about heroic acts but everyday ones, and that, confirms a specific aspect of the forum through its application. Not having a moral teaching set her apart from exemplum. Although they have in common the form of the short story, the *fazaña* has a paradigmatic function, while the exemplum a moralizing one. Bizzarri, Hugo. *La otra mirada: el exemplum histórico*. Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2019. Both Funes and Bizzarri, in their conceptualization of the *fazaña*, follow the path pointed out by José Luís Bermejo, who disagreed with the law historians, for whom the *fazaña* was a judgment because, from a formal point of view, would be simple narratives or stories that at times could serve as a rule under the legal principles it contained but which did not have this aspect as its main function. Bermejo, José Luis. "Fazañas e historiografías". *Hispania: Revista española de historia*, 120 (1972): 61-76.

10. "are located precisely at the junction of these two fields now separated by academic research". Breton, Justine. "Entre histoire et littérature: la translation de l'Histoire Regum Britanniae en Roman de Brut". *Questes. Revue pluridisciplinaire d'études médiévales. Faire l'histoire au Moyen Âge*, 36 (2017): 55.

11. Courroux, Pierre. *L'Écriture de l'histoire dans les chroniques françaises (XII^e-XV^e siècle)*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2016; Aurell, Jaume. *La historiografía medieval entre la historia y la literatura*. Valencia: Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2016.

12. "they refer to the real world, tell truths about it, represent it and provide us with practical knowledge to know it in greater depth". Aurell, Jaume. *La historiografía medieval...*: 83. This warning about the weighting of discourses, more than for the medieval man, is pertinent to contemporary historians, who cast the shadow of nineteenth-century history-science and its veridication conditions into the past, ignoring the very paradox of the historical discourse pointed out by Roland Barthes: *el hecho no tiene nunca una existencia que no sea lingüística (como término de un discurso), y, no obstante, todo sucede como si esa existencia*



coincides with Jean-Claude Schmitt, who pointed out that in the Middle Ages the very notion of truth had vague edges, limited only by the lie, understood as the intention to deceive and by the unquestionable truths of the natural order, which prevented the *factio legis* from violating the divine order of reality.¹³

The link of History with the word and with a truth of divine origin, expressed in various forms, is evident in its own perception as an auxiliary discipline, dependent on grammar, rhetoric and theology, dedicated to a search for the Truth rather than a guaranteed access to it, because full knowledge was in God and only corresponded to him. Likewise, its didactic and moralizing functionality impels it to preserve the memory of facts worthy of remembrance, providing edifying examples and life advice to the reader or, in other words, *su deber era más bien contar lo que debería haber sucedido*.¹⁴

All these obligations involved choices that were never neutral and about which the medieval historian was not innocent. On the contrary,

*L'organisation de son récit procède de choix réfléchis; les modifications qu'il apporte à ses sources ainsi que les inventions auxquelles il se livre dans son œuvre sont conscientes et révélatrices de ses objectifs.*¹⁵

In the kingdoms of Castilla y León, the narrative pattern of the historical event between the Alfonsi narrative and the aristocratic historiographic mode varies. During the development of the Wise King's project, exemplum was used, linked to didacticism because of its explanatory and argumentative nature. Likewise, Funes says, the historical event, converted into exemplum, *establece relaciones con las grandes macrosecuencias articuladoras de la historia total que le aseguran la máxima relevancia*.¹⁶

In contrast, in the post-Alfonsi period, the way adopted by the nobility continued to appeal to exemplarity as a legitimating function of discourse, but it was not done through *exemplum* but through the *fazaña*, which ended up impacting on the internal coherence of the story. The anecdotal structure of the *fazaña* gave narrative

no fuera más que la «copia» pura y simple de otra existencia situada en un campo extraestructural, la «realidad» ("the fact never has an existence that is not linguistic (as the end of a discourse), and nevertheless everything happens as if that existence was nothing more than the pure and simple "copy" of another existence located in an extrastructural field, the "reality"). Barthes, Roland. *El susurro del lenguaje. Más allá de la palabra y de la escritura*. Barcelona: Paidós, 1987: 174.

13. Schmitt, Jean-Claude. *The Conversion of Herman the Jew. Autobiography, History, and Fiction in the Twelfth Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010; Thomas, Yan. "Les artifices de la vérité en droit commun médiéval". *L'Homme* [on line], 2005. <<http://journals.openedition.org/lhomme/29514>>.

14. "his duty was rather to tell what should have happened". Guenée, Bernard. "Historia". *Diccionario razonado del Occidente medieval*, Jacques Le Goff; Jean-Claude Schmitt, eds. Madrid: Akal ediciones, 2003: 345.

15. "The organization of his story is the result of well-considered choices; the modifications he brings to his sources as well as the inventions he indulges in his work are conscious and revealing of his objectives": Bouchard, Pauline; Fougère-Leveque, Mélanie; Wallerich, François. "Introduction". *Questes. Revue pluridisciplinaire d'études médiévales*. "Faire l'histoire au Moyen Âge", 36 (2017): 13.

16. "It establishes relationships with the great articulating macro-sequences of the total history that ensures maximum relevance". Funes, Leonardo. "Las variaciones del...": 125.



autonomy to each part of the story, causing the progression of the plot to occur without ties of solidarity between the parties.

At first, these formal differences were overlooked in the thesis of Menéndez Pidal, which sustained the existence of a single and homogeneous cycle of “general chronicles” between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹⁷ Today, in contrast, it is recognized that, from the genre of the Alfonsi general chronicles, a series of differentiated derivations were detached. Critique has called these new historiographic genres, differentiated by the particularization of the historical object and by the instance that enunciates the text: Castilian particular and royal chronicles.¹⁸

Among the first, the particularization referred to the geographical scope, limiting his story to the Castilian space. While, the particular and royal chronicles were characterized by abandoning the uninterrupted series of kings and focusing on the history of a reign. However, although particular and royal chronicles coincide in this aspect, they differed in their instance of enunciation, because the *curia regia* was the promoter of the royal chronicles of Alfonso X, Sancho IV, Fernando IV and Alfonso

17. Said Ramón Menéndez Pidal: *Los manuscritos que antes se confundían con el título común de «Crónicas Generales del Rey Sabio», son fruto de casi dos siglos de actividad historiográfica, comenzando en la Primera Crónica General mandada a hacer por Alfonso X y siguiendo con la Crónica General de 1344, la de Veinte Reyes, la Tercera y la Cuarta Crónica General, la de 1404 y otras de menor importancia* (“The manuscripts that were previously confused with the common title of “General Chronicles of the Wise King” are the result of almost two centuries of historiographical activity, beginning with the First General Chronicle commissioned by Alfonso X and continuing with the General Chronicle of 1344, that of Twenty Kings, the Third and Fourth General Chronicle, that of 1404 and others of lesser importance”). Menéndez Pidal, Ramón. “Introducción”, *Primera Crónica General*, ed. Ramón Menéndez Pidal. Madrid: Bailly//Bailliére e Hijos, Editores, 1906: IV.

18. The cataloguing proposed in this article is neither the only one, nor is it universally accepted. In his works of the 1950s and 1960s, Diego Catalán proposed, revising the theories of his grandfather, to differentiate between the general chronicles derived from the *Estoria de España* and those that were a *romanamiento* of *De rebus Hispaniae*, pointing out a “post-Alfonsi historiographic revolution” that implied the abandonment of the compositional guidelines of the workshop of Alfonso X. Meanwhile, Gómez Redondo in the decade of 1990 distinguished between Royal Chronicles, born under the patronage of Alfonso XI (*Crónica de los Tres Reyes, Crónica de Alfonso XI*), and Particulars, late genre product of the dynastic change. For Funes, critic of the Gómez Redondo’s proposal, it is not only a mistake to deny the existence of particular chronicles at the beginning of the 14th century, but also the very category of “royal chronicles” would have been built by Gómez Redondo to shore up his vision of the royal courtroom as a monopoly of Castilian chronicle production, in so far as it makes it possible to think of a homogeneous process that restores an articulating thread throughout the fourteenth century between the general chronicles and the *Crónica de Juan II* in the fifteenth century. The Argentine philologist, however, collects both classification categories of the chronicles but articulates them with the assumption of two or more foci of historiographic production. Therefore, for Funes, it is necessary to define the place of enunciation—royal or stately court, religious center—, the chronicle model-produced in the interplay of the three types of chronicles with minor forms such as memories and genealogies-and the concrete modes of narrative configuration of the historical fact. Catalán, Diego. “El Toledano Romanzado...”; Catalán, Diego. *De Alfonso X...*; Catalán Diego. *De la silva textual al taller historiográfico alfonsí*. Madrid: Fundación Ramón Menéndez Pidal -Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1997; Gómez Redondo, Fernando. “La crónica particular como género literario”, *Actas del III Congreso de la AHLM (Salamanca, 1989)*, M^a Isabel Toro Pascua, ed., Salamanca: Biblioteca Española del Siglo XV, I, 1994: 419-427; Funes, Leonardo. “Las variaciones del...”: 111-134.



XI; whereas the particulars were drawn up outside this sphere: take for instance, the *Crónica Particular de San Fernando*, which had to arise from a noble *scriptorium* since during the reign of Fernando IV, possible stage of its composition, there was no historiographic production promoted by the crown.¹⁹

The interest of the nobility in history, as well as in law, lay in its character as defensive instruments and founders of its station privileges. His speech was sustained in a heroic period that would be between the minority of Alfonso VIII and the capture of Seville by Fernando III. Such proximity of Law and History ended up modifying the Alfonsi *exemplum* to develop the model of the *fazaña*, the anecdote and the legend to express a relationship between the king and the aristocracy supported by: (a) a feudal mentality that fostered a balance of powers beneficial to the nobility; (b) in mutual support among the dominant groups; and (c) in the validity of personal ties between a king, *primus inter pares*, and *magnates*.

2. The socio-political function of the rituals in the language

As we have seen, the *fazaña* was the expression most used by these aristocratic groups to externalize their feudal mentality by collecting all the mythology of the heroic narrations transmitted orally, together with a legal framework traversed by religious principles and legends that gave transcendent explanations to historical facts, condensed into small stereotypical and ritualized anecdotal situations.

The king had already made use of a wide range of discourses-foreign formulas, political discourses, treatises on political theory, princes' mirrors, poetic creations and songbooks, historiographic productions and legal texts-to manifest their power through traits such as: the divine origin of royalty, the idea of their divine vicariate, their character as anointed kings, the thaumaturgical dimension, their status as Christian kings, his virtuous exemplarity or the consideration of monarchy as a divine institution. Therefore, the nobility did not only resort to such means to exalt themselves, but also sought to violate the sacred halo with which kings had clothed themselves through the rituals of the word, such as blessings, curses, and blasphemies, that aristocratic historiography circulated through cursed kings, as fictitious as those of the real chronicles, generating an amplified resonance in the complex Castilian political scene of the fourteenth century.

19. Leonardo Funes pointed out that the chronicler compiling the *Crónica Particular de San Fernando* broke with the Isidorian model of historian, who sought to go back to the origins in his story, present in the Alfonsi production, to propose a new one based on the segmentation of *De rebus Hispaniae*. Such a model proposed the ascent to the throne of a king, Fernando III, as a sufficiently relevant event to begin the story. This is the reason why *proclamación y muerte serán desde ahora los hitos liminares del relato cronístico* ("proclamation and death will be from now on the initials milestones of the chronicle"). Funes, Leonardo. "El lugar de la *Crónica Particular de San Fernando* en el sistema de las formas cronísticas castellanas de principios del siglo XIV", *Actas del XII Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas: 21-26 de agosto de 1995. Birmingham. Vol. I*, Aengus Ward, ed. Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 1998: 178.



While the sacred in the strict sense is circumscribed, in its theological-religious dimension, to be the consequence of an act or ritual of consecration performed by the cleric, the only authorized officiant, on the basis of validity criteria established by the Church, it is possible to transfer its character to the political arena. This is the view of José Manuel Nieto Soria, for whom, from an anthropological and historical perspective, the sacred can extend its implications to other areas such as royalty, with fruitful applications to the debate. Thus, in his research he understood that to refer to the sacredness of late-medieval royalty is nothing more than to consciously do *una de las manifestaciones más extraordinarias de todo un proceso de manipulación ideológica*, which led to the consolidation of an ideology of sacred kingship without basis in any liturgical act of consecration and yet with the capacity to justify the character of sacred person.²⁰

His own royal status, his authority, gave him the possibility of obtaining a sacred social recognition of his actions. Every ritual needs the social authority of the official to produce real effects. To create you need authority as recorded in its etymology. The Latin verb *augere*, from which rise, authority, august and author derive, pointed out Émile Benveniste, refers to the idea of an increase and increase from nothing. It was not a mere multiplication of the existing, but an *ex nihilo* creation. For this reason, it was a verb that was clearly linked to a divine capacity which, by its transitive nature, made the *auctoritas* a faculty of the magistrate in dictating the law.²¹ Indeed, in the human orbit, only the word spoken with authority causes a change in the world, gives existence or recognizes a condition.

Consequently, in Bourdian terms, the ritual would consist of a limit that sets the boundary of the situation of imposition or, what is the same, who is authorized to exercise the technical competence of the legitimate announcer, of the one who can execute the social competence, who can speak with authority and make an authorized use of the word. That is, the ritual sets the guidelines by which the word will have a performative, concrete and valid social effect, as it confers the legitimacy of authority. We refer to the consecrating or legitimizing effect that every ritual entails, to the forgetfulness of the arbitrariness of the limit and its recognition as something given, natural. For Bourdieu, this is equal or comparable to *ejecutar solemnemente, de forma lícita y extraordinaria una transgresión a los límites constitutivos del orden social y del orden mental, que trata de salvaguardar al precio que sea*.²²

However, the power acquired by being ritually invested with the royal condition, with its capacity to create reality, implicitly carries with it an oath. That is to say, a form of *sacratio* that, according to Giorgio Agamben, makes *sacer* the man consecrated to the God/s, excluding him from the world of men. In other words, it

20. "One of the most extraordinary manifestations of a whole process of ideological manipulation". Nieto Soria, José Manuel. "Tiempos y lugares de la «realeza sagrada» en la Castilla de los siglos XII al XV". *Annexes des Cahiers de linguistique et de civilisation hispaniques médiévales*, (2003): 264.

21. Benveniste, Émile. *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1969.

22. "Solemnly execute, in a legal and extraordinary way, a transgression of the constitutive limits of the social order and the mental order, which it trying to safeguard at whatever price". Bourdieu, Pierre. *¿Qué significa hablar? Economía de los intercambios lingüísticos*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Akal, 2014: 100.



meant surrendering to the hands of divinity so that it would carry out a punishment on the body of the consecrated person if his oath was not fulfilled. Therefore, the blessing of a dying king over whom he will succeed was conditional upon an oath, as we shall see in the case of Fernando III and his son, Alfonso X. Thus, the curse is a constituent part of the oath in its pronouncement, allowing it to be seen as a conditional curse.²³

However, this does not mean that the two terms are identical. The curse is the final part of an oath that is conceived triply composed of (1) an affirmation, (2) an invocation to the Gods as witnesses and (3) a curse intended for perjury. But, apart from these aspects, it is important to know that swearing —*iurare*—was, as Benveniste put it, to pronounce the *ius*, the law, in the terms in which the official before him indicated it. Thus, *iurare* consisted in the repetition of the consecrated formula, while *sacramentum* designated commitment, the act of consecrating oneself to the Gods, of asking for revenge for transgressing the word engaged.

It is well known that *sacramentum* can be translated in two different ways depending on whether its function takes place within the framework of the Roman Army or the Church. For the troops it was an oath consisting of the deposit left as a guarantee before the Gods for something to be sworn to.²⁴ In the second case, it could be understood in the same terms as the present sacrament, that is, as a sacred and secret thing, an instrument of divine grace.²⁵ While it would seem easy to separate one and the other, Georges Duby has shown how both end up collapsing into a grey zone linked to a commitment to divinity. Thus, for the eleventh century, the oath, as a sacramental act, was interpreted as a challenge to God, with such terrible consequences that it was forbidden for any person imbued with the sacred, be them bishops or kings. To swear, says Duby, was to commit an act of pride, because it was supposed to rely on one's own strength not to be afraid to give up and deserve divine punishment.²⁶

To compromise the word was to compromise entirely. Both the ritual and the oath in its interior are discourses that are projected in choreographed actions, previously signified by language, that show materially the social effect that the authorized words have on the individual. But perhaps the most central acts in which a king could compromise his word were those that conditioned his authority as king-man and King-institution.

23. Agamben, Giorgio. *El sacramento del lenguaje. Arqueología del juramento (Homo sacer II, 3)*. Valencia: Pre-Textos, 2011.

24. Said Isidore of Seville: "Sacramentum, in quo post electionem iurat unusquisque miles se non recedere a militia, nisi post completa stipendia, id est, militiae tempora; et hi sunt qui habent plenam militiam". Sevilla, Isidoro de. *Etimologías*, José Oroz Reta; Manuel Marcos Casquero, eds. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2004: 604 (Etim. IX, 3, 53).

25. "Quae ob id sacramenta dicitur, quia sub tegumento corporalium rerum virtus divina secretius salutem eorundem sacramentorum operatur; unde et a secretis virtutibus vel a sacris sacramenta dicuntur". Sevilla, Isidoro de. *Etimologías...*: VI, 19 and 40.

26. Duby, Georges. *Los tres órdenes o lo imaginario del feudalismo*. Barcelona: Argot, Compañía del Libro, 1983.



All these are rituals of the word with a reflexive effect on the officiant's own authority that compromise the sacred character of the king, for which they were taken both by the aristocratic historiography, during the reigns of Sancho IV, Fernando IV and Alfonso XI, as for the royal chronicles, during the first kings belonging to the Trastámara dynasty to legitimize or delegitimize one or the other line of the ruling royal family. At this point the discursive lines of law and history converge, so close in the post-Alfonsi stage, because both comprise acts of an authoritative saying that established the duty to be, the truth. They are creative words that give entity to what they enunciate.

Consequently, the juridical discourse and the historiographic one turn out to be the limit of any performative statement, being these curses, blessings, orders, desires or insults, while, in emulating the divine word, they do not depend on any pre-existing element to produce effects on reality. Certainly, the curse, linked to the blessing, was collected by historiography but also by law, including it as part of the sanctions that accompany the granting or confirmation of a royal privilege,²⁷ becoming a sacrament of power that defined a sphere of law, a *locus*, on which the criminal law edifice was subsequently built.²⁸

For their part, the blessing and curse present in the oath and perjury are explained by the presence of a third component, blasphemy, defined by Agamben as an oath of outrage in which the name of God is plucked from its assertive context and uttered in the void. The original form of blasphemy is not, then, the insult done to God, but the vain pronunciation of his name, then to be understood as the utterance of insults or falsehoods about God, arriving *a ser así mala 'dicere de deo'*,²⁹ as Augustine of Hippo stated in *Contra mendacium*.³⁰ These rituals of language have a legitimizing or delegitimizing force directly proportional to the degree of authority of the subject of the enunciation, therefore the nobility took the words of the king, as the best discursive weapon against the authority of royalty itself.

3. Blessed Kings, cursing and cursed

3.1. The Alfonsi Damnation

Since the succession conflict opened to the death of Fernando de la Cerda, hereditary *Infante* to the Castilian and Leonese Crowns, the events led to that a dispossessed king, Alfonso X, who returned the fury of the Earth and the Heavens on his son Sancho, to whom he cursed with all the firmness of a legal act. This fact,

27. Borrero Fernández, Mercedes *et al.*, *Sevilla, ciudad de privilegios: escritura y poder a través del privilegio rodado*. Sevilla: Ayuntamiento de Sevilla – Universidad de Sevilla – Fundación El Monte, 1995: 127-128.

28. Agamben, Giorgio. *El sacramento del...*: 60.

29. "To be so bad 'dicere de deo'". Agamben, Giorgio. *El sacramento del...*: 66.

30. Hipona, Agustín de. "Sobre la mentira", trad. Ramiro Flórez Flórez, *Obras completas*. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1946-2002: XII, 18 and 39.



so symbolically political began a series of discourses that during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were woven around the legitimacy or illegitimacy of this or that king. Thus, the figure of the cursed king, seed of the very effective idea of a lineage of the same condition, was a very useful lever in the disputes of legitimacy as well as in the power struggles with the nobility.

Undoubtedly, royal legitimacy in the thirteenth century was an issue and, even more, a political problem expressed in dynastic terms. The dynasty, before any ecclesiastical ritual, functioned as the first legitimizing element of the new king, providentially elected. Within this logic, God himself ultimately expressed his favor through the uninterrupted maintenance of the crown in a given lineage. Consequently, losing dynastic legitimacy in such a manifest act could not have been more than a powerful blow to Sancho IV.

Since the discourse of royal preeminence was fed back into a dynastic continuity in which the new king participated in the merits of his ancestors, understood as manifestations of God's favor, his power was vulnerable to the fragility and unpredictability of biology,³¹ as well as the symbolic acts that excluded him from a lineage, expelling him from the political body of the dynasty in the same way that excommunication expelled him from the mystical body of the Church.

Therefore, the untimely death of Fernando, eldest son of the Wise King, allows the historian to see, in the political accommodations of the kingdom, the unresolved problem of the successions, in which not only the king intervened but all the estates of the kingdom and, especially the royal family. According to the *Crónica de Alfonso X*, before the death of his son and for the requests of Sancho and of the *ricahombría* (lords) of the kingdom, the king decided to summon in the outskirts of Toledo to courts in 1276.³² There, asking for advice from his closest relatives, the *Infante* Don Manuel, the king's younger brother, had the opportunity to pronounce his famous phrase referring to who should inherit the crown when Alfonso died. As the chronicle records, he said to the king: *Señor, el árbol de los reyes non se pierde por postura, nin se desereda por y al que viene por natura, é si el mayor que viene del árbol fallece, debe fincar la rama de so él en somo.*³³

To understand the sequence of facts collected by the chronicler in favor of the legitimacy of Sancho, it is necessary to bear in mind that, in Hispanic royal historiography, between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, the legitimacy

31. Sabaté, Flocel. "Ruptura i legitimació dinàstica a l'Edat Mitjana". *Ruptura i legitimació dinàstica a l'Edat Mitjana*, Flocel Sabaté, ed., Lleida: Pagès editors, 2015: 9-18.

32. Evelyn Procter wondered about the veracity of this event, since such a court was not registered by Jofré de Loaysa. The omission of the chronicler would be explained, according to her, by the concise and selective criterion she applied in her prose, focusing on a limited number of events, so, considering that Alfonso X was in Toledo by January 1276, understood that it was not inherently unlikely that a consultation of the king with his closest advisors would occur. Procter, Evelyn. *Curia and Cortes in León and Castile, 1072-1295*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010: 231.

33. "Lord, the tree of kings is not lost by posture, nor is it disinherited by and to the one that comes by nature, and if the eldest that comes from the tree dies, the branch must be planted there". "Crónica del rey don Alfonso décimo". *Crónica de los reyes de Castilla desde Alfonso el Sabio hasta los Católicos don Fernando y doña Isabel*. T.I, Cayetano Rosell, ed., Madrid: Rivadeneyra editor, 1875: LXVII, 53.



of kings functioned under one or more of these principles: providence, choice, ethics, and lineage. Principles that, as Georges Martin has studied, operated in different registers of political discourse. While the first two served to legitimize the founding of a dynasty, ethics functioned as a criterion for the continuation of the king's legitimacy during his reign, and lineage was the legitimizing principle of the transmission of royal power.³⁴

When Alfonso X arrived in Toledo, although the chronicle records that the nobility asked that Sancho be chosen as successor, evidencing an elective principle, finally ends up supporting the legitimacy of the future king in a lineage principle, his condition as the eldest son of the monarch, to which Don Manuel refers.³⁵ The lineage, a Romance voice collected by Hispanic royal historiography around 1200 in the *Libro de las generaciones y linajes de los reyes*, sought to order kinship, both in synchrony and diachrony. In other words, it sought to determine who should have primacy among all members of a group that had long been the holder of property, rights and powers. Thus, when speaking of lineage and pre-eminence within it, the division of the lordship and territory was being discussed.

When the historiographic discourse adopted the primacy of the lineage component in the debates on the political legitimacy of the king, this was of irreversible form, serving the other principles, still without disappearing completely, to compensate for any of the defects that the candidate may have presented in terms of lineage. For this reason, the moniker "cursed king" was extremely serious, since it referred to a cutting within the bond with the ancestors and with the rights over the lordship implied by the paternal blessing. The damnation was a tool of the father's disciplining of the heir son only allowed to the king, who could not be cursed by anyone. According to the *Fuero Real*, he who harmed the fame of the prince, in breach of what the *Scriptures* command, must be *descumulgado et deve auer la pena de aquél que faze sacrilegio et iaze en culpa a todo el pueblo*.³⁶

Here the legislator is referring elliptically to the curser and then making it explicit in the next paragraph. He says, on the matter, that the "mal dizientes de mal dezir," who refuse to understand the great sorrow that Jesus Christ imposed on Lucifer and the other devils because they *mumuraron contra su poder et contra sus fechos*, plunging them into the depths of hell, they should receive the greatest penalty from him from whom they could obtain the greatest good for they did not know the *el sennorio del rey et naturaleza*³⁷.

34. Martin, Georges. "Linaje y legitimidad en la historiografía regia hispánica de los siglos XI al XIII". *e-Spania*. Junio 2011. Université Paris-Sorbonne. 17 marzo de 2020 <https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.20335>.

35. Benítez Guerrero, Carmen. "«Que se llamaua rey de Castilla». La legitimación del acceso al trono en tiempos del linaje maldito". *El acceso al trono: concepción y ritualización*. Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2017: 319-330.

36. "descumulgated and must be punished as one who commits sacrilege and blames all the people". *Fuero Real*, Azucena Palacios Alcaine, ed., Barcelona: Promociones y Publicaciones Universitarias, 1991: 6 (I-XII-III).

37. "They murmured against his power et against his facts"; "The lordship of the king and nature". *Fuero Real*...: 6 (I, XII, III).



These rituals of the word attacked the person of the king in the same way as the betrayal, equating to a blasphemous speech. The comparison with sacrilege is not accidental in that the whole argument about the power of the curse and blessing rests on an Old Testament tradition. Indeed, the *Old Testament* was a rich quarry of rituals from which the medieval culture speculated to be nurtured to underpin its power structures.

The royal anointings found their model in the one David received from Samuel, ideal models of the King and Priest, of the Kingdom and the Church respectively. Likewise, divine and human blessings and curses damage the *Genesis*. The first human creatures, Adam and Eve were blessed and then cursed by original sin, so was Cain for killing his brother and the earth remained in this condition until Noah's time. After the flood, the divinity said that it would not curse the earth again for man's sake and blessed Noah and his descendants again. Here is recorded the first curse and blessing of a father to his children.³⁸

According to the biblical account, Noah sleeping his drunkenness lay naked when he was discovered by Ham, his son, who, instead of covering him up, called his brothers Shem and Japheth. They were the ones who, turned their backs to their father not to see his nakedness, and covered him with a blanket. In the face of these actions, Noah resolved to curse Cana son of Ham, making him "servant of the servants of your brothers" (Gen. 09:25-27), while blessing Yahweh and placing Shem, Abraham's ancestor, under his protection.

For his part, generations later, Abraham left his father's house not only with the promise of Yahweh to be blessed and beget a people but also with the guarantee of the divinity, who said to him, "I will bless those who bless you. /And I will curse those who curse you. / And the families of the earth will be blessed in you" (Gen. 12:3). After a long journey and promising him abundant offspring, by divine will, the elderly Abraham was the father of Isaac.

So far, we have seen that, in terms of lineage, the blessing is a divine act with which he rewards his chosen ones, not only with fortune but also with lordship. The latter, which was already in sight in the lands promised to Abraham, is confirmed to him after overcoming the divine trial, the holocaust of Isaac. After demonstrating his fidelity to his God over that due to his own son, Yahweh says to the patriarch: "And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice" (Gn. 22: 18).

In all this, God is the only one who blesses and curses his creatures, registering only the curse of Noah, previously blessed by Yahweh, as punishment for the humiliation to which his son Ham subjected him. The message is clear, God blessed his elected ones, one by one: Abraham did not bless Isaac when he died, but the divinity itself did (Gen. 25:11). This is why what happened between Isaac and his twin sons Esau and Jacob was a turning point in the biblical archetype of paternal blessing from which the royal chronicles were nourished.

38. The following Castilian edition of biblical texts shall be used in this Article: *Sagrada Biblia*, Eloíno Nacar; Alberto Colunga, eds. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1947.



It should be remembered that the royal blessing functioned as a tool of intradynastic regulation that ranked the offspring thanks to the designation of a lordship through the paternal blessing of one of their children. In the Biblical case, the blessing of the younger brother over the elder should have been providentially based, since it ran counter to the logic of primogeniture, an aspect that seems to be overlooked by the legislator in the *Partidas*.

In fact, it is said here that the primogeniture —*Mayoría en nascer primero*— was an enormous divine sign of love for those sons of kings among their brothers in the last years, as it implies *que lo adelanta, e lo pone sobre los otros, por que le deuen obedescer, e guardar, assi como a padre, e a Señor*.³⁹ To prove his sayings are cited the words that Isaac said to Jacob when blessing him, *cuidando que era el mayor*⁴⁰.

With this statement the legislator distorts the biblical account, thus erasing the true nature of primogeniture in the Jewish tradition. Jacob was not the eldest by birth, for his twin brother Esau was born before him, but he was the beloved of God as manifested to Rebekah, his mother, when she was pregnant: “the older will serve the younger” (Gen. 25:23). In this way Yahweh seems to be ahead of the mother of Esau’s sale of her birthright a few years later.

As the *Bible* recounts, Isaac’s eldest son sells under oath his primogeniture for a plate of lentils (Gen. 25:29-34), a key passage in understanding that the Jewish primogeniture was not a right naturally attached to the first child born. According to Stéphane Mosès, we must actually understand it as a duty, a burden freely assumed by the one who has been judged worthy of it.⁴¹ What is at stake are not the father’s goods but the divine promise made to Abraham,⁴² bound up with duties and obligations (Gen. 17:1; 22:15; 22:18), as well as a renunciation of existing benefits. Therefore, when Esau preferred the certainty of the immediate satisfaction of his hunger —Esau answered: I’m dying; what do I care about the birthright” (Gen. 25: 32)— was revealing that, even before explicitly formulating it, he had already internally renounced his primogeniture.

The Alfonsi lawmaker omits all these previous steps and even the deception to which Jacob subjects his father, Isaac, to obtain the primogeniture from him.⁴³

39. “Most born first”; “that advances him, and puts him above the others, because they must obey him, and keep him, as well as the father, and the Lord”. In the *Partidas* it is stated that God told Moses that the man who was born first *seria llamado cosa santa de Dios. E que los hermanos, le deuen tener en lugar de padre* (“It would be called a holy thing of God. and that the brothers should have him instead of the father”). *Las Siete Partidas...*: 44 (II, XV, II).

40. “taking care that he was the oldest”. *Las Siete Partidas...*: II, XV,II, 44.

41. Mosès, Stéphane. *El Eros y la Ley: lecturas bíblicas*. Buenos Aires: Katz Editores, 2007.

42. “I will make you a great nation and bless you. I will make your name great; and be you a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you. By you all the lineages of the earth will be blessed” (Gen 12: 2-3).

43. When the old man Isaac believed that it was Esau, his son, who was before him, and not Jacob, he ate and drank, and told him to get near. So, the Bible tells us, “He approached and kissed him; and as soon as he smelled the fragrance of his clothes, he blessed him, saying: ‘Oh, it is the smell of my son/ Like the smell of a field/ The one Yahweh has blessed./ May God give you the dew of heaven and the fatness of the land,/ And abundance of wheat and wine./ Servant peoples,/ And prostrate before you nations;/ Be



But not only that, it also alters the terms of the blessing, for while it respects the lordship over its brothers,⁴⁴ it modifies the terms in which the blessing and the curse were administered. According to this legal corpus, Isaac told his son that, having received the blessing, *aquel que bendixeres sera bendito, e aquel que maldixeres caer le ha maldicion*⁴⁵. That is, he had the power to curse by his own mouth, as well as to bless, which in the biblical text was reserved to God as punishment for whoever cursed Jacob.⁴⁶

In this same law the biblical events are modified to make them work within a logic of majority rather than merit, seeking to base a criterion of succession that brought so many problems when Fernando de la Cerda died, which sought to avoid the fragmentation of the kingdom among the sons of the deceased king. The principle of the «liña derecha» is what articulates the proposal. From eldest son to eldest son, within a ruling lineage, the crown was to succeed each other and, if he died, his rightful children would inherit his rights. Criteria that would be respected under penalty of treason for not knowing the lordship of the king.

A separate debate is whether or not this legal text was in force during the reign of Alfonso X. For some people it lacked full force, being partially promulgated in the *Ordenamiento de Alcalá de Henares* (1348), while for others, was fully in force when Fernando de la Cerda died in 1275, either by a simple promulgation in an act of the royal court,⁴⁷ of which there is no record whatsoever, or by the fact that the *Partidas* would become an expanded revision of the *Especulo*, promulgated in Palencia (1255), whose power of review rested with the king.⁴⁸ But, apart from this, the principles here enunciated were evidently, if not the only one, at least one of the criteria weighed at the time of the debate on the succession of the kingdom. Dispute in which, on the criteria of the Roman law enunciated in the *Partidas*, the customary law of the kingdom was imposed, pronounced by the *Infante* Don Manuel.

However, this decision did not resolve the conflict. On the contrary, the conspiracies continued until the crowded meeting of Valladolid on April 20, 1282,

lord of your brothers,/ And prostrate before you the children of/ your mother./ Cursed be he who curses you,/ And blessed be he who bless you” (Gen 27: 27-29).

44. The *Partidas* says, *tu serás señor de tus hermanos e ante ti se encoruaran los hijos de tu madre* (“you will be lord of your brothers and before you your mother’s landlords will bow down”) (*Las Siete Partidas*...: 44 [II.XV.II]), which is not far from the biblical text, “Be lord over your brothers, and let your mother’s sons bow down to you” (Gen. 27:29).

45. “whoever you bless will be blessed, and whoever you curse to fall has cursed him” *Las Siete Partidas*...: 44 (II. XV. II).

46. Indeed, in the *Vulgate of St. Jerome*, Isaac says to his son: “qui maledixerit tibi sit maledictus et qui benedixerit benedictionibus repleatur” (Gen. 27: 29). It repeats here the promise that Yahweh made to Abraham but does not rest this faculty in Jacob but is the second consequence of a previous act of curse/ blessing. “Genesis”. *Perseus Digital Library*. Saint Jerome Foundation and On-Line Book Initiative – Tufts University. May 18th 2020 <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0527.tlg001.perseus-lat1:27.29>.

47. González Jiménez, Manuel. “La sucesión al trono de Castilla, 1275-1304”. *Anales de la Universidad de Alicante*, 1996-1997: 201-212.

48. O’Callaghan, Joseph. *El rey Sabio. El reinado de Alfonso X de Castilla*. Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 1996.



where they were present, around an absent king, the royal family, most of the episcopate, a large number of abbots of large monasteries in the north of the kingdom, a large number of *ricohombres* and representatives of more than a hundred councils. According to Manuel González Jiménez, the intention of Sancho was to turn the meeting into a plebiscite of his authority, and his uncle, don Manuel, once again contributed to it as a member of the royal family of the highest rank and age.

The verdict enunciated by the youngest son of Fernando III had the agreement of the *ricahombría* and of the councils. According to the *Crónica de Alfonso X*:

*acordaron todos que se llamase rey el infante don Sancho et que le diesen todo el poder de la tierra. Et él nunca lo quiso consentir que en vida de su padre se llamase él rey de los sus regnos. Et sobre esto ovieron su acuerdo et acordaron quel mandasen dar las fortalezas todas et quel diesen la justia et el aver de la tierra*⁴⁹

The reasons for this measure were derived from the breach of the ethical principle of legitimacy that conditioned the continuity of the king. Following the Isidorian reasoning, Alfonso X did not reign (*regere*) properly (*recte*) and therefore had lost his status as king (*rex*), becoming a tyrant. In this case the reasons stated for the dismissal were the unlawful murders of his brother, the *Infante Fadrique*, and of the *señor de Cameros*, Simón Ruiz, in addition to many other *hidalgos*. But the profits obtained in exchange for support for Sancho's regency speak of interests more chrematistic than ethical among the nobles.⁵⁰

However, for the purposes of this article we will set aside such matters to focus on the reaction of the Wise King, which will sustain debates and legends woven into historiography and the law of the next century. We are referring to the curse pronounced by Alfonso X against his son, Sancho.

The act was neither unreflective nor fleeting as the three documentary testimonies that have bequeathed it to posterity demonstrate. In principle, on October 8, 1282 the act of solemn proclamation took place, followed by the Sevillian testament, dated thirteen months later, and by the supplementary testament of January 21,

49. "They all agreed that the infante don Sancho should be called king and that they should give him all the power on earth. And he never wanted to consent that in his father's life he called himself king of his kingdoms. And on this they heard their agreement and they agreed that all the fortresses were given to him, as well as the justice and the power over the land". *Crónica de Alfonso X, según el Ms. II/2777 de la Biblioteca del Palacio Real (Madrid)*. Manuel González Jiménez, ed., Murcia: Real Academia Alfonso el Sabio, 1998: 223.

50. The Infant Sancho paid the loyalty shown on that occasion very well. His uncle, Don Manuel, was awarded Chinchilla and Jorquera, as well as Almazán, Aspe and Beas. But this was not the only beneficiary. So prodigal was the regent that the chronicler came to say: *el infante don Sancho otorgó a todos los de la tierra las peticiones quel demandaron quales se ellos quisieron*. ("the infante don Sancho granted to all those of the earth the petitions that they demanded to him according to what they wanted"). He gave even the goods that were for the maintenance of the king, the rents of the *juderías* and the tithes and *almojarifazgos* of Toledo, Talavera and Murcia, in addition to the rents of the *morerías*. Sancho in exchange for the support of the powerful of the kingdom gave and much, to the point that *non retouo cosa para sí ninguna por cuidar fazerlos pagados* ("he did not retain anything for himself to take care of paying them"). *Crónica de Alfonso X...*: 224.



1284. In an extension of almost a year and a half, the king worried and took care that the curse pronounced towards his son, remained well recorded for posterity. This right to curse, as we have seen, was established by the king himself in the Parthians as an inherent power, supported by a misrepresentation of Isaac's blessing.

The anger of the king at the verdict, pronounced by don Manuel without his presence, was evident in the courts of Valladolid. Sancho, says the act of solemn proclamation, had made sentence to be pronounced *no por algún juez, sino por nuestros enemigos i rebeldes*, ordering that *no pudiesemos administrar justicia, tener fortalezas, ni cobrar dineros u rentas que perteneciessen al Reino; ni se nos diese entrada en ningún castillo, ciudad, ni villa alguna*.⁵¹ It should be mentioned that, although in this it follows the *Crónica de Alfonso X*, there is a point of serious dissent with respect to it in the accusation that the king launched against Sancho, who *hizo todo esfuerzo en que en adelante le llamassen a el Rei de Castilla, de Leon i de Andalucia, desheredandonos en todo, i usurpando en sí el honor i dominio que no le tocava, i que nos quitò i quita no solo violenta, sino tambien engañosamente*.⁵²

The *Crónica de Alfonso X*, written in the time of Alfonso XI, evidently sought to free Sancho IV from an action as serious as that of arrogating the title of king without being king, that in Alfonsi terms acquitted to commit a sin against God, as his lieutenant on Earth was not respected. Seeing these facts, Alfonso X imbued with divine inspiration, before the crimes *contra nos, sin temor de Dios, ni respeto a su padre*, judged it appropriate to curse him *como a merecedor de la maldicion paterna, reprovado de Dios digno de ser aborrecido con justa razon de los hombres: i le sujetamos en adelante a la maldicion divina i humana*.⁵³

Such an event, of great symbolic weight in the political field, deserves the attention of historians, not only for its rarity within the Castilian-Leonese history, because there were other revolts of children against parents and even depositions that did not suffer the paternal curse, but for the political effects it had in later centuries.⁵⁴

As it has already been said, the curse was accompanied by the expulsion of the lineage as *hijo rebelde, inobediente i contumaz, ingrato i aun ingratisimo, i que tanto degenera*. Thus, torn from the line of his ancestors, Alfonso disinherited him and deprived him of any right over the kingdoms, lordships, lands, honors and dignities; extending this

51. "not by some judge, but by our enemies and rebels"; "we could not administer justice, have fortresses, nor collect money or income that belonged to the Kingdom; Nor were we given entrance into any castle, city, or town": *Deshereda el Rei a su hijo D. Sancho, declarandole incapaz por su inobediencia de suceder en la Corona* ("The King disinherits his son D. Sancho, declaring him incapable due to his inobediencia of succeeding in the Crown"). *Memorias históricas del Rei Alonso el Sabio*, Gaspar Ibañez de Segovia, ed., Madrid: Casa de Don Joachin Ibarra, 1777: 412.

52. "He made every effort to call him King of Castile, of Leon and of Andalusia from now on, disinheriting us in everything, and usurping himself the honor and dominion that did not belong to him, and that he took from us and takes away not only violently, but also misleadingly", *Memorias históricas...*: 412.

53. "Against us, without fear of God, nor respect for his father"; "as worthy of the paternal curse, reprovado by God, worthy of being hated with just reason by men: and we subject him henceforth to the divine and human curse", *Memorias históricas...*: 413.

54. Martin, Georges. "Alphonse X maudit son fils". *Atalaya. Revue d'études médiévales romanes*, 1994: 153-178.



dispossession to his descendants so that none of them *pueda jamas succedernos en cosa alguna*.⁵⁵ It was this clause that extended the shadow of the curse to an entire line of kings, who during the first half of the fourteenth century had to fight against a stigma that the nobility did not fail to wield in their struggles for power.

In the post-Alfonsi period the idea of a cursed royal lineage, linked to the deterioration of the kingdom, is present in the don Juan Manuel's *Crónica abreviada*, text fixed by the critique as *ad quem* of this whole historiographic stage (1320-1325). At that time, the regent of the young Alfonso XI chose to begin his chronicle compendious with a prologue in which he states that *por los pecados de Espanna* and because *de-los que entonces eran, e avn agora son, del su linage*, of the lineage of the Wise King, there occurred *tal postrimería que es quebranto de-lo decir e de-lo contar*. To which he followed *tal danno que dura agora e durara quanto fuere voluntad de Dios*, whose judgments are *derechos e maravillosos e escondidos*.⁵⁶

According to the transcendentalist interpretation of the political events that Don Juan Manuel had, sin was the origin of all evil that men could suffer. Consequently, both the sins of Spain and those of itself, not of a single king but of a lineage—*de-los que entonces eran, e avn agora son*⁵⁷—had been the cause, the trigger, of that divine punishment: harm and brokenness that words could not enunciate in their magnitude and the duration of which was known only by God.

One might wonder if, by the way of enunciating in parallel the duration of the divine torment and of the royal lineage, don Juan Manuel was not proposing that lineage and torment would end up together. Here, although neither the damnation nor a cursed lineage is mentioned, its shadow is somehow present because the *Crónica manuelina*, text on which don Juan would have based to compose his compendium,⁵⁸ gathers the *Historia cabadelante*, final part of the *Crónica Particular de San Fernando*, that completes, in turn, the narrative of the *Toledano* about the reign of Fernando III from the conquest of Córdoba until the death of the Holy King.⁵⁹

55. "rebellious son, inobedient and stubborn, ungrateful and even ungrateful, and who degenerates so much". "can never succeed to us in anything". *Memorias históricas...*: 413.

56. "for the sins of Spain"; "of those who were then, and now are, of their lineage"; "such aftermath that it is a breach of what to say and what to tell"; "such damage that it lasts now and will last as long as God wills". "rights and wonderful and hidden", Manuel, Juan. "Crónica abreviada". *Don Juan Manuel. Obras completas. Vol. II*. José Manuel Blecuá, ed., Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1983: 576.

57. "of those who were then, and now are". Manuel, Juan. "Crónica abreviada". *Don Juan Manuel...*: 576.

58. This non-existent chronicle at present was constructed in degree of hypothesis by Diego Catalán to explain the contradiction of Ramón Menéndez Pidal, who in 1896 had seen a continuity between the *Estoria de España* and the *Crónica abreviada*, while in 1955 he pointed out the opposite. For Catalan, the first two parts of this chronicle would correspond to the Alfonsi historiographic work, underpinning the nineteenth position of his grandfather, and the third part, would be the result of the combination of various historiographic texts—of the *Primera Crónica General*, of the *Crónica de Castilla*, the *Crónica ocampiana* and the *Crónica Particular de San Fernando*. Catalán, Diego. "Don Juan Manuel...".

59. Leonardo Funes defined as *Historia cabadelante* to the final part of the *Crónica Particular de San Fernando* by extracting this term from the text itself. The name, in his opinion, eloquently expresses "...su interés por relacionar estrechamente la historia recibida y narrada por otros «hasta aquí» con la que tendría que añadir «en adelante» para cumplimiento del texto". Funes, Leonardo. "La «Estoria cabadelante» en la Crónica Particular de San Fernando: Una visión nobiliaria del reinado de Fernando III". *Antes se agota la*



In this final section he presents an agonist Fernando III who grants a conditional blessing to his son —*si todo esto que el encomendaua e rogaua e mandaua conpliese e lo feziere asi que la su bendiçion conplida ouiese e sy non la su maldiçion e fizol responder amen*⁶⁰— important enough to be preserved in an abbreviation of the manuscript,⁶¹ which, when placed at the end of the work, forwards us to the prologue to cover, with the reader's knowledge, the years of the reign of the Wise King, which were the "occasion", the cause of the divine punishment to fall upon the kingdom in the prolongation of its dynasty, years that came to prove the failure of Alfonso X to swear before his father.

It should be remembered that all this situation related by the *Historia cabadelante* and collected by don Juan Manuel is not recorded before the composition of the *Crónica Particular de San Fernando*,⁶² thus it must have been a historiographical creation of aristocratic discourse to discredit not only the offspring of Sancho IV but the two branches that, proceeding from Alfonso X, a cursed king, disputed the crown.

Undoubtedly, as it has already been said, the curse was an invaluable tool to delegitimize lineage to any king. For this reason, Alfonso X used it in a situation as bad as the one lived with Sancho IV. According to this king, the punishment he had pronounced against his son was the result of the insulting acts of speech he had suffered. The harm and offense were such that disinheritance was not enough, so God himself had established another evil *contra aquel que tales cosas dixiese*. A curse that was to proceed, at the request of his father-King, *de Dios, et de Sancta Maria et de toda la corte celestial, et de nos*.⁶³

This right to curse, explains Alfonso in the complementary Sevillian testament of January 21, 1284, came to him by the natural lordship he had over the lineage and by the nature that he had as king, both linked to the father figure.⁶⁴ Likewise,

mano y la pluma que su historia. Homenaje a Carlos Alvar. Vol. I: Edad Media, Constance Carta, Sarah Finci, Dora Mancheva, eds., San Millán de la Cogolla: Cilengua, 2016: 650.

60. "If all this that he entrusted and prayed and commanded was fulfilled and he did so, may his blessing be fulfilled and if not, may his curse and deeds respond amen". Duxfield, Polly, ed., "Crónica Particular de San Fernando Digital v.1.0". *Estoria de Espanna Digital v. 1.0*, 2018, Aengus Ward, ed., University of Birmingham. 21 de marzo de 2020. <estoria.bham.ac.uk >.

61. "E dixol que sí ansi feziere, quel dava la su bendiçion, e ssy non, quel daua su maldiçion". Manuel, Juan. "Crónica abrev...": 814.

62. This chronicle had to be written between 1289 and 1320-25, probably during the reign of Ferdinand IV, period in which there was no royal historiographic activity, that is the reason why it is thought that it came from noble areas. Funes, Leonardo. "La «Estoria cabadelante»...".

63. "against anyone who said such things"; "of God, and of Saint Mary and of all the heavenly court, and of us". This passage is recorded in two versions of the Sevillian testament: "Testamento del Rey Don Alonso X otorgado en Sevilla á 8 de Noviembre de 1283". *Memorial histórico español. Tomo II*, Real Academia de la Historia, ed., Madrid: Imprenta de la Real Academia de la Historia, 1851: 114; "Testamento de Alfonso X". *Libro de los fueros de Castiella: y otros textos del manuscrito 431 de la Biblioteca Nacional de España*, Maximiliano Soler Bistué, ed., Buenos Aires: Incipit, 2016: 249.

64. It is not by chance that the curse was a right that the king possessed by right of *natura* and nature. Whereas it originated in the father figure, who in the *Bible*, as Noah did, could resort to such punishment against a son who would infringe upon his dignity or power over the family. Georges Martin points out in this regard that the natural lordship of the king, imposed by the *Partidas* on all men born on their land,



Alfonso, concerned about his salvation, entrusted to those who legitimately inherited his kingdoms the payment of their debts under penalty of a suspended curse that would be applied to him if necessary. Dedicated to basing this *post-mortem* clause Alfonso explains the paternal bond that exists in the capacity to curse: *es fuero antiguo et derecho de los Reyes maldezir á los de su linage que erraron contra ellos*, and to order the Church of Rome to excommunicate them. In this way, Alfonso links the paternal character of the king and his mediation between the rest of men and God. That traitor who was worthy of his curse must also suffer excommunication, which he ordered and did not ask the Church to do, condemning him to *vaya siempre á las penas del infierno con Judas el traydor*.⁶⁵

3.2. Cursed and blessed lineages: the Alfonsi provenance of an aristocratic political concept

Sancho is undoubtedly a cursed son, like Judas and Lucifer. But he is not the only one excluded from the succession. In the Sevillian testament, Alfonso X excludes all his living children, who, influenced by Sancho, had acted with cruelty and falsehood against him, his father, *non catando el amor que les nós avíamos verdadero como padre et como amigo et señor*⁶⁶. Consequently, they could not inherit the greater lordship of the kingdom, which would pass to the homonymous eldest son of Fernando de la Cerda.⁶⁷ This decision *goarda será del nuestro linage*, so that the *buenos sin culpa* would inherit what *los malos perdieron por su merçimiento*.⁶⁸

Thus, it is the king himself who marks the first break between two branches of a lineage subjected to good-bad logic, translatable to blessed and cursed, in warning that, *sy alguno de nuestro linage u otro would contradict your decision, sea descumulgado*

was maintained under the same criterion as that of *natura*, that is, in its dependence on “...au père qui les engendre et à Dieu qui les crée”. Martin, Georges. “Alphonse X maudit...”: 156.

65. “It is an ancient law and right of Kings to curse those of their lineage who have erred against them”; “always go to the pains of hell with Judas the traitor”, “Testamento otorgado en Sevilla por el Rey Don Alfonso X á 21 de enero de 1284”. *Memorial histórico español. Tomo II...*: 131.

66. “not tasting the true love that we gave to them as a father and as a friend and lord”. Testamento de Alfonso X”. *Libro de los fueros...*: 255.

67. The factual reasons that led the king to disinherit his entire lineage, except for the sons of Fernando de la Cerda, are evidenced in Alfonso’s own words: *entendemos de que ninguno de nuestros hijos por sí non podría amparar lo nuestro segunt que agora está parado et de cómo las gentes son pobres et de mal ordenamiento, por fuerça conviene que el que lo oviessa a mantener, buscasse de otra parte que gelo ajudasse a mantener* (“We understand that none of our sons by themselves could protect what is ours, according to what is now prepared and given that people are poor and evil, for strength whoever would protect him, must look for help in other places.”). The place from which this aid would come to subdue the kingdom would be France, whose king, Philippe III le Hardi, would see his appetites sated over the kingdoms of Castile and Leon either through his nephew Ferdinand or, if he died without issue, bearing the crown himself, as established in the will of the Wise King. “Testamento de Alfonso X”. *Libro de los fueros...*: 255.

68. “Will keep our lineage”; “the good ones without fault”; “the bad people lost for their merit”, “Testamento de Alfonso X”. *Libro de los fueros...*: 250.



*et maldito de Dios et de la iglesia de Roma et aya maldición de aquellos onde nós viniemos et la nuestra, et sea atal traidor.*⁶⁹

Such an act of curse had possibly unthinkable consequences for that king. He did not prevent his son from coming to the throne, but he did give useful discursive tools to question the authority of the monarch in office. The figure of a cursed king faced the nobility as shown by the incorporation of the testament of Alfonso X, together with the legend of his act of blasphemy, among the texts compiled in manuscript 431 of the *Biblioteca Nacional de España*. This manuscript, a key piece of the nobility movement, preserves the memory of the conflict of the nobility with the Alfonsi project, at the end of thirteenth century, and its reworking as a response to the second moment of monarchical strengthening in the times of Alfonso XI in the middle of the fourteenth century.⁷⁰

The testament and the legend of blasphemy⁷¹ dialogue with each other in the manuscript. What the first solves, cursing Sancho and his descendants, the other confirms while serving as a way to delegitimize Alfonso X himself and his project, against which the nobility reacted. Thus, the legend confirms the cursed character of Sancho IV by means of a supernatural figure, an angel, who tells the Wise King that the curse that he has said and given (*dixisti et disti*) to Sancho

*el Alto Señor lo ha otorgado et a todos los que d'él descendieren, ca serán tachados et abaxados de grado en grado toda vía. Mas eso mismo el su señorío, de guisa que a tiempo verná que los que con él fueren querrián mucho que se abriese la tierra et que los cogiesse en sí, lo qual durará fasta la quarta g[e]nera[c]jón que descenderá de tu fijo don Sancho, ca dende adelante non avrá el árbol derecho de la su lina quien aya beneficio de este señorío.*⁷²

69. If anyone of our lineage or other"; "be excommunicated and cursed by God and the Church of Rome and be cursed on those from we came from and our lineage, and be such a traitor", "Testamento de Alfonso X". *Libro de los fueros...*: 256.

70. Soler Bistué, Maximiliano. "Estudio". *Libro de los fueros...*: LXXXVII-LXXXVIII.

71. John I had claimed that the bastardy of his father and the violent succession of the throne had been corrected by Henry's marriage to Juana Manuel and by being received and accepted by the people of the kingdoms of Castile and Leon, but the illegitimacy of the dynasty had not been overcome. González Jiménez argues that: *Tal vez por ello comenzó a difundirse una supuesta profecía de la que se hicieron eco algunos cronistas y escritores de los siglos XIV y XV* ("Perhaps that is why a supposed prophecy [referred to the Alfonso X's blasphemy] began to spread, echoed by some chroniclers and writers of the 14th and 15th centuries"). However, the author takes the whole prophetic construction to the level of "interesting hoax," and claims that the legal discussion was, in itself, so controversial that it did not need prophecies. For her part, Carmen Benítez Guerrero understands that, apparently, *en el cuestionamiento de la legitimidad de Sancho y su descendencia a lo largo del tiempo tuvo mayor peso la maldición por parte del rey Sabio, amparada en la rebeldía del infante don Sancho hacia su padre* (the curse by the Wise King based on the rebellion of the infante Don Sancho towards his father had the greatest weight questioning the legitimacy of Sancho and his descendants over time"). González Jiménez, Manuel. "La sucesión al...": 208. Benítez Guerrero, Carmen. "«Que se llamaua...".

72. "Almighty God has bestowed it and all who descend from him will be crossed out and lowered from degree to degree forever. But the same happened on his lordship, in a way that in time those who go with him would very much like that the land open up and swallow them, which will last until the fourth generation that will descend from your son Don Sancho, from then on there will not be the right line of the lineage who could benefited from this lordship", "La blasfemia del rey Sabio". *Libro de los fueros...*: 258.



The angelic warning of bitter times to come for the kingdom dialogues, in turn, with the words that don Juan chooses to put in the prologue of the *Crónica abreviada* to describe the situation of the kingdom of Castile. The angel seems to complete the nexus that don Juan did not dare suggest in those years: lineage and misfortune for the kingdom would end together after four generations. The tree of kings, a metaphor shared with Don Manuel's discourse, would see its branch cut short when the punishment against the sin of Sancho and those of his kingdom against Alfonso X was fulfilled. At that moment, God would send *de parte de oriente salvación del noble rey et señor idonio et acabado piadoso en justicia et en otras bondades en noblezas que a rey pertenes[ç]e[n] et será noble asý [...] Et travajará mucho por lo menguado*.⁷³

In this work we will not go into the game of mirrors that is given in the time with the eschatological prophecies, in which a king would save the kingdom, but if we focus on the impact that had the figure of the cursed king in the third historiographic Castilian stage (1330-1350), marked by the figure of Alfonso XI and characterized by a new chronicle form, the royal chronicle. During this stage the Crown took care to dismantle the image of Sancho IV as a cursed king, while a marginal text such as the *Libro de las tres razones o de las Armas* sought to articulate the history of this king, certainly cursed, in a broader discourse that amplified the idea of a blessed lineage from which a providential king would be born.

Evidently, don Juan Manuel was one of those noble writers who fed his prose with the historiographic nobiliary activity of the post-Alfonsi period, its appearance being necessarily explained by the process of anonymous chronicle writing of the previous stage that made visible an alternative vision of Castilian history in the fissures of a system of historiographic genres dominated by royalty, to the point of becoming unavoidable to the royal chroniclers who should have included them in the royal and particular chronicles.⁷⁴

From the writing of the *Crónica Particular de San Fernando*, ascent to the throne and death were milestones important enough to set the beginning and the end of a historiographic narrative,⁷⁵ beginning the concept of royal chronicles, widely exploited during the reign of Alfonso XI. In this context, the *Crónica de Alfonso X* was composed to cover for the first time the reign of this king and inevitably to give a certain interpretation to the events of his reign that made it possible to annul the stain of the curse in the line of Sancho IV, grandfather of the reigning king at that time.

If the Brave King had sought to demonstrate his father's unwillingness and the transcendent reasons that assisted him in his promotion to the crown, his grandson chose to build a *factio historica* [historical fiction], the father's forgiveness of the son as a way to release the sentence. In fact, in the *Castigos*, Sancho IV had affirmed that the king should respect the majority among his sons because it was a divine

73. "The salvation was sended to noble king and suitable lord and right and piadous in justice and in other goodness in nobilities belonging to a king, from the Orient side, and he will be noble [...] and will work a lot for whatever lost", "La blasfemia del rey Sabio". *Libro de los fueros...*: 258.

74. Funes, Leonardo. "Historiografía nobiliaria del ...": 77-86.

75. Funes, Leonardo. "El lugar de la Crónica...".



decision. Precedence in birth was part of the natural order that no decision of the king, no legal fiction (*fictio legis*) could modify. Therefore he advised his son: *El mayor sea mayor sobre todos los otros e aya sennorío sobre ellos, pues Dios gelo quiso dar*. In this way, only God could alter that hierarchy: *sy su ordenamiento fuere que non aya los regnos aquel mayor e los aya alguno de los otros, aýna puede Dios tirar aquel mayor e dejar ý al otro*.⁷⁶

To illustrate this argument, he chose to refer to the figure of Fernando III, archetypal king of the *Reconquista*, to whom God had shown his will to elevate him to the royal condition and unite in him the kingdoms of Castile and Leon despite not being the eldest son, nor the sole heir in the line of succession. In the same way as in his grandfather's time, Sancho would have inherited the kingdom by divine will: *the infante don Ferrnando era mayor que nos, seyendo él casado e autiendo fijos, murió grand tienpo ante que el rey nuestro padre finase*. All this explanation is inserted in a council that deals with the promise. There, Sancho ends up recommending to his son not to commit himself as king in anything that he cannot then fulfill, either because of the limitation of his abilities or because he goes against the divine decision. It is plausible to interpret that, indirectly, Sancho might be alluding to the commitment that Alfonso X made to Philippe III of France so that the children of the *Infante* Fernando de la Cerda would inherit the kingdom. Within the Sanchine argument, a promise of this tenor did not correspond to the king because what God *ordena non puede nin deue pasar ninguno contra ello*.⁷⁷

For his part, Alfonso XI opted for the chronicle discourse as a way to legitimize his lineage and remove it from the Alfonsi curse. In the *Crónica de Alfonso X* he makes collect the topic, enunciated in the *Castigos*, in a discussion that would have taken place between the Alfonso and Sancho on the future of the sons of Fernando de la Cerda. When his father, seeing his son's stubbornness, threatened him that just as he had elevated him to the status of heir *Infante*, *lo desfaría*, Sancho replied:

Sennor: Non me feziste vos, mas fizome Dios et fizo mucho por me fazer, ca mató a vn mi hermano que era mayor que yo e era vuestro heredero destes regnos si él biuiera más que vos. [E] non lo mató por al sy non porque lo heredase yo después de vuestros días. Et esta palabra que me dixieste pudiéradesla muy bien escusar et tienpo verná que non la querríedes aver dicho.⁷⁸

76. "The eld is the eldest over the others and has dominion over them, because God wanted to give it to him";

"If his order was that the eldest did not received the kingdoms and he had given them to other sons, there were no rules for that eldest and for some of the others, God could still throw away the eldest and give it to the others". *Castigos del rey don Sancho IV*. Hugo Bizzarri, ed., Madrid: Editorial Iberoamérica, 2001: 165-166.

77. "Infante Don Ferrnando was older than us, being married and having sons, he died a long time before the king our father died"; "What God orders cannot be disrupted by anyone", *Castigos del rey*...: 166.

78. "he would deflect it"; "Lord: You did not make me, but God made me and did much for me, because he killed my brother who was older than me and he would had been your heir of these kingdoms, if he had lived more than you. [And God] did not kill him in order to be inherited by me after your days. for al s and non because I inherited him after your days. And this word that you said to me could be very well saved and it will come a time when you will regret to have said it", *Crónica de Alfonso X*...: 219.



The lineage principle sustained in an intangible divine will was the first that the chronicle decided to raise, together with another elective one. The Castilian and Leonese councils asked the *Infante* to grieve for them because *bien sabia cuántas muertes e cuántos desafueros e cuántos despechamientos auíe fecho el rey su padre en la tierra por que estauan todos despechados*. For all this, they asked the *Infante por merçet que lo anparase e defendiese et que se touièse con ellos por que non fuesen tan desafortados commo eran*. This request was intended to bolster legitimacy and to explain the actions led by Sancho, which ended with the deposition of Alfonso X and the consequent curse. In addition to explaining the reasons, the chronicle, in the discussion between Sancho and his father, advances a *factio historica* that seeks to have retroactive effects on the hermeneutics of the actions taken by Alfonso against his rebellious son. Sancho tells his father that *esta palabra que me dixieste pudiéradesla muy bien escusar et tiempo verná que non la querriedes aver dicho*⁷⁹ and, with this, foreshadows the last pardon that the chronicle discourse created.

3.4. The pardoned curse

When Sancho became ill, the abbot of Valladolid, don Gómez García, thought, the chronicle says, that the *Infante* and regent *era llegado a muerte e desesperado de los físicos*, so he sent a letter to Álvaro Núñez de Lara, friend of his and close to Alfonso X. There, he asked him to win mercy from the king in his favor because *el infante Sancho era muerto*. Afterwards, Alfonso saw the letter grieving and withdrew, to hide his bitterness, to a camera to cry *diziendo muchas vezes que era muerto el mejor omne que auía en su linaje*. One of his privates, called *Maester* Nicholas approached him, asked him why he was crying over a son who had disinherited him and warned him that if his distress was known he would lose the support of his supporters in the dispute over the Crown, winning their enmity. Then, trying to hide both his tears and the grief he felt, he replied: *non lloro yo por el Infante don Sancho, mas lloro yo por mí mesquino viejo que, pues él muerto es, nunca yo cobraré los míos regnos*.⁸⁰

Some time later, knowing that his son was still alive, he rejoiced, although he *non lo osó dar a entender*, and then fell ill. At that moment, seeing that the king was dying, the *Infante* Juan asked his father for the kingdoms of Seville and Badajoz, which he granted according to the testamentary greed of 1284. However, the chronicler denies these facts by stating that the King *non lo quiso fazer* and, on the contrary, being pressed by the disease,

79. "He well knew how many deaths and how many outrages and how many spites his father the king had made on earth because they were all spiteful"; do them the favour of protecting and defend them, and having them because they weren't as outrageous as they were"; "this word that you said to me could be very well saved and it will come a time when you will regret to have said it". *Crónica de Alfonso X...*: 219.

80. "He was come to death and desperate of the physician"; the infant Sancho was dead"; "saying many times that the best man in his lineage was dead"; "I don't cry for the Infante Don Sancho, but I cry for myself, mean old man who, since he is dead, I will never collect my kingdoms". *Crónica de Alfonso X...*: 240-241.



dixo ante todos que perdonaua al infante don Sancho, su fijo heredero, et que lo fiziera con mancebía, et que perdonaua a todos los sus naturales de los regnos el yerro que fizieron contra él. Et mandó fazer luego carta desto, sellada con sus sellos de oro, porque fuesen çiertos todos los regnos que auía perdido querella dellos et que los perdonaua, Oporque fincasen syn blasmo ninguno.⁸¹

The chronicle does not mention the curse he performed, but the king's forgiveness of his son and his supporters. Likewise, the work of tacitly dismantling the juridical-political instruments that collect the curse was very subtle. Not only is a pardon enunciated, endorsed by the testimony of "all", but also the cession, made in favor of the *Infante* Juan, of the kingdoms of Seville and Badajoz, is left for false, denying, without mentioning, the testamentary greed of January 1284. In addition, while denying this documentary apparatus, the chronicle created a lost document, a letter stamped with a gold seal by which it made known to the kingdom that the infant was forgiven and left *syn blasmo ninguno*⁸².

In this way, the historiographic genre came to bolster the legitimacy of a king, Sancho IV, by creating fictional documents, and also, thanks to an access to the interiority of the king. The chronicler tells us the "true" intentions of Alfonso X, which he hid in his public sayings, facilitates access to the chamber where the king cried in solitude and makes us hear that, for his father, Sancho was not a cursed son, but the *mejor omne que auía en su linaje*, thus, reinserting him into the intimacy of his heart as the holder of the stewardship, as the head of his lineage⁸³.

3.5. The Kings' curse in the time of Alfonso XI

The narrative resource of an agonizing king of tormented and damned soul was not unique to royal historiography. On the contrary, among the most emblematic aristocratic feathers of the period we find the Count of *Barcelos*, Pedro Alfonso, who records the oldest version of the legend about the Alfonso X's blasphemy, and don Juan Manuel. The latter composed a treatise in which, in response to friar Juan Alfonso's request, he wrote down three questions or reasons not to *se vos non oluidassen et las pudiesedes retraer quando cumpliese*.⁸⁴

While the first of them narrates the cause for which Don Manuel was given heraldic weapons and the second one on the reason why the Manuel could arm

81. "He did not dare to understand"; "he did not want to do it"; "he told everyone that he forgave the infante Don Sancho, his heir son, and that he should do it in his youth, and that he forgave all his natives of the kingdoms for the grievance they made against him. He then ordered to write a letter about this, sealed with his gold seals, in order to appear all the kingdoms he had lost because of this grief and that he forgave them, so they could live without any disapproval". *Crónica de Alfonso X...*: 241.

82. "without any disapproval". *Crónica de Alfonso X...*: 241.

83. "that the best man in his lineage". *Crónica de Alfonso X...*: 240.

84. "if you did not forget and you could retract when it was fulfilled". Manuel, Juan. "Libro de las armas". *Don Juan Manuel. Obras completas. Vol. I.* José Manuel Blecuca, ed., Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1983: 121.



knights other than themselves, exclusive power of the king and the heir *Infant*; the third one is the figure of the cursed king who revives and ends up speaking of a blessed and cursed lineage in the royal family, as Alfonso X had already affirmed in his will. This entire treatise, Funes said, is peripheral to the entire system of the historiographic genre of the mid-fourteenth century, being the most perfect example of dissent from official historiography. His version of the facts, held up to that moment in orality, is woven in a mixture between the factual and the fictional, but this does not exclude him from the historiographic record, nor does it make him a miscellany of stories or fables. Simply because of its marginality and dissidence, it was the extreme example of a way of writing the history common to the entire historical discourse of the time of Alfonso XI.⁸⁵ In all the introduction preceding the discourse of Sancho IV on the curse-blessing plot axis, Don Juan Manuel was concerned and busy with the recipient of his message to know that the king paid loyal service to his lineage with favors and rewards,⁸⁶ as well as with the royal house and those of the Manuel not to differ in anything except in wearing the crown. Both were equal branches of the same house.⁸⁷

Remarkably, don Juan did not hesitate to put in the mouth of a king, to whom he considered his great benefactor, the harshest claims.⁸⁸ Every word that King Sancho IV confesses to him dismantles the legitimizing effect of the royal chronicle discourse. Thus, Don Juan Manuel composed something much more complex than a public will with which to humiliate the lineage of Alfonso XI and justify his actions against the king.⁸⁹ Although this text has been seen as biographical,⁹⁰ as part of the author's own memories, there is no agreed position on it. For authors such

85. Funes, Leonardo. "Dos versiones antagónicas...": 24-25.

86. *Et Dios me lo demande al cuerpo et al alma, si [por] los vienes et la criança que el en mi fizo, si lo non serui lo mas leal mente que pude a-el et al rey don Fer[r]ando, su fijo, et a-este rey don Alfonso, su nieto, en quanto este rey me dio lugar para quel siruiese et me non oue a-catar del su mal* ("That God punish my body and my soul, if I do not serve as much loyal as I can to his son the king Ferdinand, his grandson don Alfonso, [because of] the goods and the upbringing that [king Ferdinand] gave me, and because of the king [Alfonso] gave me place to serve him and do not be afraid from him"). Manuel, Juan. "Libro de las...": 135.

87. Don Manuel asserts, *bien creed que el rey don Alfonso et mio padre en-su vida, et el rey don Sancho en-su vida et yo, siempre nuestras casas fueron vnas et nuestros oficiales siempre fueron vnos* ("well believe that King Don Alfonso and my father in his lifetime, and King Don Sancho in his life and I, our houses were always united and our officers were always ours"). Which is then confirmed by the king's own voice in a direct speech: *Don Iohan, como quiere que todos los mios tengo yo por vuestros et todos los vuestros tengo yo por mio*. (Don Iohn, whises that I have all my people as yours, and all your people as mine"). Manuel, Juan. "Libro de las...": 136.

88. *Et çierta mente quien bien viesse las cosas que me el dïzia et quantos bienes me fazia, bien podria entender que si tiempo et hedat oviese para ello, que non fincaria por el de me llegar a-grand onra et a-grand estado* ("Certainly, whoever well saw the things that he said to me and how many good he did to me, could well understand that if he had the time and age for it, I would not fail to reach a great honor and a great state"). Manuel, Juan. "Libro de las...": 135.

89. Orduna, Germán. "El Libro de las Armas: clave de la "justicia" de don Juan Manuel". *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, 67-68 (1982): 230-268.

90. Américo Castro defined this Manueline treatise as a "...prosa emocionada, en gran parte directa y biográfica...". Castro, Américo. *España en su Historia. Cristianos, moros y judíos*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1948: 363.



as Philippe Lejeune, Paul Zumthor and Michel Zink there would not exist in the textuality in Romance language a true autobiography in the Middle Ages, position that gathers Jaume Aurell in a recent book.⁹¹

According to him, there would be no possibility of a medieval autobiography because of the fictional constituent component of the chronicles, which would make impossible the necessary pact of veracity between author and audience. Likewise, this fictionality caused that any text that exposed the life of a certain individual ended up constructing an exemplary representation of his life.

Within the Catalanian-Aragonese historiography it is possible to find another genre that, taking as a temporal term the one of a life and constituting the protagonist in narrator, does not correspond with an autobiography but with a political treatise. This is the case of the *Crònica de Pere el Cerimoniós* (1382 - 1385) dedicated by mandate of Pere IV of Aragon to leave in writing the various graces that God had granted him in his life, *non pas a jactantia nostra ne llaor, mas per tal que els reis, succeïdors nostres, lligent en lo dit llibre* so that they know that in the face of the various dangers that a king faces, they will always have the help of the divine mercy and *prenguem eximpli*. In this way, Peter manifests his intention not to seek to reflect on himself by writing down the *grans fets* of the Aragonese House *dins lo temps de la nostra vita*⁹² but to use the manifestations of the divine will, during his reign as a treaty of political education for his successors, in which examples are shown of the way in which divine providence enabled him to succeed.

For his part, half a century earlier, Don Juan Manuel elaborated a treatise on political history⁹³ that he used as his last support his own life. While the first two reasons that compose it deal with matters on which I could not *dar testimonio que las yo bi*, because they occurred before his birth, the reason that closes the triptych, of which if he was a direct witness, legitimizes the two above in the mouth of a king, Sancho IV.⁹⁴ Likewise, like the Ceremonious' chronicle, don Juan seeks to write down these matters, ignored by others,⁹⁵ *por tal que se vos [fray Juan Alfonso,] non oluidassen et las pudiesedes retraer quando cumpliese*.⁹⁶

91. Aurell, Jaume. *La historiografía medieval...*

92. "Not to our bragging and praise, because the kings, our successors, read in the said book"; "let's take example"; "within the time of our life". Cerimoniós, Pere el. *Les quatre grans Cròniques. IV. Crònica de Pere III el Cerimoniós*, Ferran Soldevilla, ed., Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2014: 34.

93. The political character of the work was pointed out by Germán Orduna, as well as by M^a Cecilia Ruiz, George Martin and Leonardo Funes. Orduna, Germán. "El Libro de las ..."; Ruiz, M^a Cecilia. *Literatura y política: el Libro de los estados y el Libro de las armas de don Juan Manuel*. Maryland: Scripta humanística, 1989; Martin, Georges. "Alphonse X maudit...": 153-178; Funes, Leonardo. "Libro de las tres razones (o Libro de las armas)". *Don Juan Manuel y su producción literaria*. María Jesús Lacarra, coord., Valencia: Proyecto Parnaseo – Universitat de València, 2014: 113-123. 17 de marzo de 2020, <http://parnaseo.uv.es/AulaMedieval/AulaMedieval.php?valor=monografias#monografias>.

94. "Testify that I saw them". Manuel, Juan. "Libro de las...": 121.

95. Don Juan says to the friar: "...vos lo gradesco mucho por que queredes saber çierta mente este fecho, lo que non fizieron otros muchos a-qui yo lo conte asi commo a-vos". Manuel, Juan. "Libro de las...": 121.

96. "for such that you [fray Juan Alfonso,] do not forget and get them back". Manuel, Juan. "Libro de las...": 121.



In his time, Américo Castro saw in the way that don Juan built his book, a scholastic exhibition. The text unfolds from three *quaestiones* that head the three sections of the work, similar to the articles of scholastic sums. The stage of the *disputationes* in each section is omitted, since the different versions or positions on each of these matters referring to the past are not included. However, don Juan mentions that, to compose his text, he has started from a method similar to that used for the discernment of the *Sacred Scriptures*. As well as those who *fablan [de] las Scripturas*, taking this or that *et de todo fazen vna razon*, don Juan says that he gathered *lo que oy a-los vnos et a-los otros, con razon ayunte estos dichos* in order to be able to respond to each of these matters.⁹⁷

Although the book was known for many years as the *Libro de las Armas*, for this is the first reason, it should have been called the *Libro de la maldición* [Book of the Curse]. On this subject, which stains all the last reason, pivot the previous two, there they reach their full political dimension.⁹⁸ As we have seen, the idea of a cursed lineage was already outlined in the prologue of the *Crónica abreviada* and, according to Olivier Biaggini, in the *Libro de la caza* it is also possible to identify the thesis of a blessed and a cursed line within the royal family. Even a supposedly technical discourse on falconry serves don Juan as a framework to link a series of political and family considerations that have the effect of surreptitiously revaluing the Manueline lineage to the detriment of Alfonsi one.⁹⁹

On other hand, the curse serves don Juan to build a dynastic dissident imaginary both of the official historiographic versions and of actions of deep symbolic depth such as the creation of the *Orden de la Banda* and the massive knighthood investiture of the *ricahombría* [lords] of the kingdom that, although they are not mentioned, they constitute the contextual framework of the work. The excellence of his lineage was the theme that, for Rafael Ramos, linked heterogeneous materials and the proof, the recognition, of this condition is revealed in the blessing of some and the curse of other characters of the Manueline story.¹⁰⁰

The scene narrated in the third reason is probably one of the most complete examples of the curse of the Castilian kings. It responds to the royal discourse contained in the *Crónica de lost res reyes* and casts aside the providential character that Sancho had sought to give the death of his brother Fernando for his elevation to the crown. The three matters that Sancho unfolds before don Juan and other witnesses are preparing the ground for his final reflection on the curse and the blessing: in the

97. "speak [of] the Scriptures"; "and of everything they make a reason"; "what I heard from ones and others, I collected these testimonies". Manuel, Juan. "Libro de las..": 122.

98. This was noted by George Martin, who stated that "...sur la base de la malédiction de Sanche, le tracé d'une lignée son bénie puis maudite, qui commence avec Alphonse X, et son opposition avec la lignée des Manuel où, sans rupture, la bénédiction descend à travers Ferdinand III jusqu'à Jean Manuel". Martin, Georges. "Alphonse X maudit...": 167.

99. Biaggini, Olivier. "L'espace de la frontière et la légitimation du pouvoir nobiliaire dans l'oeuvre de Don Juan Manuel". *e-Spania*. October 2018. 17 March 2020 <<https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.28567>>.

100. Ramos, Rafael. "Don Juan Manuel y las leyendas sobre la muerte de Fernando III El Santo". *Medioevo y Literatura. Actas del V Congreso de la Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval*. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1995: 105-111.



first one he recognizes himself as sinner and in shame before God, in the second one he admits the fidelity of the lineage of the Manuel to the Crown, and in the third one he asks don Juan to protect the queen, doña María de Molina, and the heir, the future Fernando IV, with which he evidences the power of this boy in the political and military affairs of the kingdom, enough to protect a young king.

However, the real infernal machine of this treatise is located in a digression that the king makes about his cursed condition and don Juan's blessed one, something that was explained and demonstrated in the recent history of Castile.¹⁰¹ In fact, there was a story that completed what was narrated in the *Historia cabadelante*, a response to the *Castigos* and a denial to the *Crónica de Alfonso X*. All this in brief and forceful statements given by a dying king, a king who could not lie because he would be dying in sin.

By means of two more reasons, surreptitiously introduced into Sancho's discourse, don Juan set out to argue on two questions: *la primera, como yo non he bendicion nin la pueda dar; la segunda, como la avedes vos et non vos faze mengua la mia*.¹⁰² On these two *quaestiones* he structured respective *disputatios* which actually omitted any controversial argument, against which, however, he tacitly argues.

On the first topic, Sancho admits that he is unable to bless, *a-vos nin a-ninguno* because of the sins and ill-deserved things he did against his parents, by which he earned his curse. That is, in these few lines the treatise not only states that there was a king without a father's blessing, unable to give it to his son, but also pointed to the existence of a sinful and cursed king, leaving aside all the actions of Don Manuel in these bad merits that Don Sancho made. Likewise, the treatise deals with evidencing what the *Crónica de Alfonso X* had tried to erase by magnifying the figure of the paternal forgiveness. The Sancho made up by don Juan Manuel assured us that Alfonso X cursed him *en su vida muchas vezes, seyendo bivo et sano, et dio me la quando se moría*.¹⁰³ In other words, there was no paternal forgiveness, a matter on which the Count of Barcelos' *Crónica de 1344* also analyzed.¹⁰⁴ It was clear that Sancho had been cursed by his father, but Don Juan Manuel added that he had also been cursed by

101. For Georges Martin, this treaty left by don Juan Manuel was a "...machine infernale, à la fois imaginaire et factuelle...", *infernale* because it would end up causing the death of Pedro I a few decades later. Martin, Georges. "Alphonse X maudit...": 176.

102. "the first, as I have not blessed nor can I give it; the second, as you have it and mine does not decrease yours". Manuel, Juan. "Libro de las...": 138.

103. "to you nor anyone"; "in his life many times, being alive and healthy, and gave it to me when he died". Manuel, Juan. "Libro de las...": 138.

104. The final section of the chronicle, collected in the manuscript 'G' [ms. l.e. 204 – Bibliothèque de Genève], 'Q2' [ms. 10815-BNE], 'U' [ms. 11-109 – Biblioteca Francisco de Zabálburu y Basabe] y 'S' [ms. M/109 – Biblioteca Menéndez y Pelayo], states that on his deathbed Alfonso X gave a general pardon except for his son Sancho because he did not ask for it. To which, a different hand, adds in manuscript 'S': on this point the *Crónica de Alfonso X* failed to the truth. The used editions of the manuscripts can be found in: *Pedro de Barcelos e a monarquia castelhano-leonesa: edição e estudo da secção final inédita da Crónica de 1344*, M^a do Rosário Ferreira, resp., Seminário Medieval de Literatura, Pensamiento e Sociedade – Instituto de Filosofia – Universidade do Porto. 18 de marzo de 2020, <http://pedrodebarcelos.wixsite.com/cronica1344>.



his mother, Violante de Aragón, who cursed him for the dispossession he had made over the *Infantes de la Cerda*, with whom he fled to Aragon.

However, the explanation of the cursed condition of the king does not stop there, but goes back to an earlier generation, an aspect convenient to the dynastic interests of the Manuel. Sancho clarifies that his parents did not want to bless him, before they cursed him, but that if they wanted to do so they would not have been able to because both were, in turn, cursed father and mother. It is at this point that the Manueline narrative links a whole fragmentary aristocratic historiographic tradition, making it function as an argument in favor of its lineage. He directs the story towards a certain teleology that benefits him, but not for that reason lies, but contributes to base his vision of the past on a plausible fiction for the nobiliary chronological discourse.

If in the *Crónica abreviada*, he merely collected the conditional blessing of Ferdinand III to his son Alfonso and pointed out the existence of some hardships in the kingdom linked to the Alfonsi lineage, in the *Libro de las tres razones* he explained that, about the conditions imposed by the Holy King, Alfonso X "...non guardo ninguna dellas; et por esso non ovo la su bendición". The most claimed of these conditions was the care of his brothers, aspect in which the aristocratic and royal historiography did not cease to blame him for his non-compliance. The execution of *Infante* Don Fadrique was the standard of the king's failure to fulfill his obligations, and therefore the *Crónica de Alfonso X* uses this theme to demonstrate Sancho's improvement over his father.

Thus, don Diego de Haro says that his support for Sancho was due to the:

*muchas muertes e desaguisados que él [Alfonso X] fizo, sennaladamente en que mató al infante don Fadrique, su hermano, e otrosy mató a don Xymón, sennor de los Cameros, nuestro tío de todos, que nos crió e nos fizo mucho bien, e por otras muertes muchas que fizo con desafuero en los fijosdalgos*¹⁰⁵

Whereas, Sancho IV, being already king,

*falló quel infante don Fadrique su tío, que matara el rey don Alfonso su hermano, que yazía enterrado en vn lixoso lugar quel rey don Alfonso lo mandó enterrar. Et tirólo dende e enterrólo en vna sepoltura mucho onrada quel fizo en el monesterio de los monjes de la Trinidad, y en Burgos.*¹⁰⁶

105. "many deaths and mischief that he [Alfonso X] caused, notably in that he killed the infante Don Fadrique, his brother, and also he killed Don Simón, lord de los Cameros, our uncle of all, who raised us and did us a lot of good, and for many other deaths that he made with outrage to the knights". *Crónica de Alfonso X...*: 228.

106. "It ruled that the infante Don Fadrique, his uncle, killed King Alfonso his brother, who lay buried in a luxurious place that King Alfonso ordered him to be buried. He threw it away and buried it in a very honorable grave that he made in the monastery of the monks of the Trinity, and in Burgos". *Crónica de Alfonso X...*: 223.



The royal chronicle had used this contrast between the Alfonsi fratricide and the Sancho's act of reparation as a favorable argument to the succession rights of the providentially elected Sancho IV, who restored justice to the kingdom. For its part, aristocratic historiography engulfed such elements and turned them against all the Alfonsi descendants, who had become cursed by the curse of a king, Fernando III, who was presumed a saint in Iberian lands.¹⁰⁷

Sancho also adds that James I did not bless Violant because *la desamaua mucho por la sospecha que ovo della de-la muerte de la infanta donna Constança, su hermana*,¹⁰⁸ statement that refers to the second reason of the Manueline treatise, in which it is told how Violante by jealousy poisoned his sister Constance, first wife of don Manuel, by means of a basket of poisoned cherries; thus giving legitimacy to the story that until that moment had circulated orally and that don Juan decided to register in writing. The sayings of a king, by the authority vested in him, gave the ability tell the truth, necessary to the story.

In contrast, the figure of Don Juan Manuel, according to Sancho, was the negative of his cursed condition. He had been blessed by blessed parents, thus prefiguring the two lineages in the recognition of a sinful king who was struck by death throes. Don Juan does not devote much space in the story to his mother, Beatrice of Savoy, who was a good mother and a blessed daughter. His real interest is to display, in the image of his father, all the attributes of a founding hero who completed the providential character enunciated in the first reason of the treatise.

The Brave King assures don Juan that his father blessed him “de buen talante” for being a much-desired and beloved son, something he could bear witness to as long as he had been godfather of baptism in payment for the fidelity shown by his father. But the climax of the story comes as an addition to the final moments of Fernando III recorded by *Historia cabadelante*.

Sancho recognizes the young don Juan that his grandfather left with good inheritances to all his children *saluo a-vuestro padre, que era muy moço*, so his guardian, Don Pero López de Ayala, took the boy to the king to ask for him. Fernando III, almost unable to speak, told him that he loved him very much but that he had no more inheritance to give him, except “...la mi espada Lobera, que es cosa de muy grant virtud, et con-que me fizo Dios a-mi mucho [bien], et douos estas armas, que son sennales de alas et de leones”.¹⁰⁹ At that time, don Juan used the opportunity to say that the meaning of his weapons was explained to him by King Sancho, thereby legitimizing what he narrated in the first reason for the treaty.

107. In the *Crónica abreviada*, don Juan Manuel described his grandfather as the *muy bien auenturado e con [razon] que podemos dezir por el, segunt las sus obras, el santo rey don Ferrando* (“very well blessed and with [reason] what can we say for him, according to his works, the holy king don Ferdinand). Manuel, Juan. “Crónica abrev...”: 575.

108. “He did not love her at all by the suspicion he had of the death of the infanta donna Constança, her sister”. Manuel, Juan. “Libro de las...”: 138.

109. “Except your father, who was very young”; “my Lobera sword, which is a thing of great virtue, and with which God made me much [good], and I give these weapons, which are signs of wings and of lions”. Manuel, Juan. “Libro de las...”: 138-139.



Sancho's last words of remembrance of his grandfather were dedicated to the three graces he asked of God, which he presumably granted, given the mediating condition with the divinity by the holy character of the king. Graces which reflect the author's own opinion on the past of his lineage and his own one. First, Fernando III asked for his son that his lineage should always be victorious and undefeated. Then, that they were always increased in honor and status and never diminished. Finally, *que nunca en este linage falleciesse heredero legítimo*. Inheritance with which he considered *quel heredaba mejor que a ninguno de sus hijos*.¹¹⁰

Such graces, instead of reflecting the Manuels' factual past, sought to provide a fictional one that would be operative to differentiate themselves from the reigning family. Although being undefeated and elevated in honor were signs of divine favor, which erased the forced peace with Alfonso XI to which don Juan had been subjected, the best evidence of his blessed mark was the fact that a legitimate heir never died. Let us recall that, in the *Bible*, part of the divine blessing given to Abraham comprised the guarantee of always having offspring, and, since aristocratic families began to organize themselves into patrilineal lineages, it was a sign of divine favor to have a male successor who would prolong the dynasty one more generation.

Likewise, the interruption in the father-son succession within the reigning family implied a breakdown in the social and political continuity of the kingdom. For all this, to have or not to have a male descendant could be read as a sign of divine favor or punishment. The Capetians, for example, had raised as a sign of divine favor, until the beginning of the fourteenth century, having had a male heir in the line of succession since the time of Hugues I.

On the other hand, the Fernandine curse on Alfonso X would find expression in the death of his first-born son and in the dynastic crisis that followed. In contrast the Manuel lineage, by the grace requested by the Holy King, never suffered the death of a legitimate heir, something recognized by Don Juan Manuel himself as false in the second reason, where he remembers how the majority fell on him because of this older brother's death, Alfonso Manuel, without a legitimate son.¹¹¹ All this leads us to think that, rather than concealing the interruptions of his lineage, which would demonstrate that divine grace was not given to Don Manuel, he intended to highlight the cursed character of the Alfonsi lineage, to which the death of Fernando de la Cerda confirmed in his curse.

Finally, before closing his speech, Sancho IV returns to the point of his limitation to bless him to qualify this matter. Although as a man-king, Sancho has lacked

110. "That never in this lineage die legitimate heir"; "who inherited better than any of his sons". Manuel, Juan. "Libro de las...": 139.

111. Speaking of the transfer of the privilege of investing a knight without being a knight, don Juan explains that *por que don Alfonso murio en vida de mi padre ante que casase [et] oviesse hijos, caso mio padre con la condessa mi madre. Et maguer avia por fija, a-donna Violante, mi hermana, que ovo de la infanta donna Constança, non heredo el mayorazgo et heredelo yo, seyendo de otra madre, por que era varon* (because don Alfonso died in my father's lifetime before he married [and] had sons, my father married the countess my mother. And although he had as a daughter lady Violante, my sister, who was born from the infanta lady Constança, and did not inherit the *mayorazgo* and I inherit it, being from another mother, because I was a boy). Manuel, Juan. "Libro de las...": 133.



blessing and received the curse from his parents, as a king there is a sphere of action to which the curse does not reach. Since:

*los reys son fechora de Dios et por esto an auantaia de los otros omnes, porque son fechora apartada de Dios, et si por esto yo vos la puedo dar alguna bendicion, pido por merced a Dios que vos de la su bendicion et vos do la mia, quanto vos yo puedo dar.*¹¹²

Thus, Sancho delimits the orbit of interference of the curse. Starting from the geminate nature of the king, we observe that the curse falls on the king-man, on his corporality because the father, as progenitor and emulator of the divine power, can curse his creation. However, as an Institution-King, the sacred condition that covers him, derived from his likeness to the Christ-King ruler of Creation, places him out of any macula or curse, so, based on his mediating between men and divinity, asks for God's blessing and bestows his as King-institution.

4. Conclusions

The curse, as well as the blessing, is a ritual of speaking of outstanding institutional relevance to the kingdoms of Castile and Leon from the Alfonso X's cursing act. The Historiography as well as the Law, do not fail to revisit this peak moment of the transmission of power within a lineage, swaddling it in all the necessary elements of solemnity.

The last testamentary wills and declarations on the deathbed are the preferred ways to grant veracity and dramatic force to these legitimating and/or delegitimizing rituals of the speaking. While the king's direct discourse chooses to express itself through wills and solemn acts in court by which he curses his son, such is the case with Alfonso X; the historiographic discourse chose to wangle these rituals in moments of agony of the king where the chronicler gathers his words.

At this point there is no difference between the royal and the nobiliary historiography because both resort to such staging, either with a Fernando III who blesses conditionally his heir, in the *Crónica Particular de San Fernando*, with an Alfonso X who forgives his unruly son, in the *Crónica de Alfonso X*, or with a Sancho IV who, afflicted with a disease that his sins have won him, recognizes his cursed condition, in the *Libro de las tres razones*.

Thus, to speak of curses and blessings around a king who is at the end of his days inevitably leads us to the problem of succession, of the transmission of power. It is in this field that the curse is inserted into the Castilian legal and chronological discourse.

112. "the kings are God's workmanship and for this reason they have advantage over the other men, because they are modeled from God, and if for this reason I can give you some blessing, I ask God to give you his blessing and I give you mine, as much as I can give", Manuel, Juan. "Libro de las...": 140.



Especially the nobility took this ritual, first used by Alfonso X, and turned it into a discursive resource to fight on the symbolic plane against a succession of kings of questionable legitimacy: Sancho assuming against his father's will and disinheriting his nephews, Fernando IV acceding to power with the stain of a son born of an illegitimate marriage, years later corrected by a papal bull, Alfonso XI questioned for his love life and for the demeanor given to his legitimate wife.

In this way, the curse was another way by which the nobility sought to weaken royal authority. This was understood by Don Juan Manuel, with whom this resource will become fully effective politically through the delimitation of a blessed and a cursed lineage within the Castilian royal family. A myth of retroactive effect that sought to reset all the events that took place after the death of Fernando III until his present. Thus, the Castilian political crisis was due to this succession of cursed kings that would eventually give way to another line providentially chosen.

But Don Juan Manuel never thought what would happen after his death with this fine argumental construction. When his own lineage was truncated at the death of Fernando Manuel, his banner was raised by the bastard successors of his political enemy, Alfonso XI. The Trastámaras, seeking to contest the inheritance rights of the Pedro I's daughter, took this discursive machinery to sustain a legitimation through the *Infantes de la Cerda* and Don Manuel, thanks to the Enrique II's wife, Doña Juana Manuel.

Consequently, as we will see in the second article organized by this diptych, the curse/blessing, as a legitimizing ritual, was a very effective political resource, from the end of the thirteenth century until the beginning of the fifteenth century, which was cultivated and operated through the fictitious interweaving of factual data, legends and myths in which the veracity of medieval historiographic and juridical discourse was sustained.

