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Special issue  
Visual motifs

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## Political Iconography and Emotions in Electoral Campaigns: A Communicative Approach

### Abstract

The authors of this work believe that the fact that political iconography can influence reality and intervene in actual events – sometimes by using reinvented motifs and visual narratives from previous iconographic sources, after Warburg's *Pathosformel* fashion–, is of utmost importance in political campaigns. In modern electoral campaigns, the use of visual themes that represent different emotions constitutes a clear link with the use of pathos in current political communication. From the perspective of political communication, this work analyses the use of iconography in modern electoral campaigns. In doing so, we trace a link between Warburg's concept of the pathos formula and the use of different motifs of pathos developed in modern electoral campaigns. Electoral communication uses images linked to emotions such as enthusiasm, hope, fear and identity, which in this paper are studied from a database of posters and electoral spots from recent Spanish campaigns. The study also makes reference to visual motifs of pathos aimed at activating these emotions in the voters in different comparative campaigns and in electoral propaganda.

### Keywords

Political iconography, emotions, *pathos*, electoral campaigns, political communication, symbolic representation.

### 1. An introduction to political iconography. The *Pathosformel* in Warburg and Ginzburg

The public sphere is currently shaped by mediated images that give meaning to an array of events, news, political programs or cultural tendencies, for the purpose of winning our hearts and minds. Just as a biography might examine the makings of a particular personality and the shaping of her/his inner and outer worlds, iconographic narratives can trace and explore both the evolution and the appropriation of particular

icons to help us mark key moments in the cultural politics of communities, nations and global public spheres (Ganguly & Thomas, 2004, p. 1). The term iconography is derived from the words *eikon* (image) and *graphien* (writing) and is defined as the study of image writing or image describing (van Straten, 1994, p. 151). Developed at the beginning of the 20th century by the German cultural historian Aby Warburg, it was later improved upon by art historian Erwin Panofsky.

Iconography gave rise to an approach of visual imagery and a methodology later adopted under the name of *Bildwissenschaft* (visual studies), where objects such as prints or advertisements (i.e., objects not belonging to the immediate sphere of 'high art') are included in the investigation of a subject matter.

In this sense, Warburg not only lay the foundations for art historical research in iconography, but his work also contributed to opening up and expanding the focus of research in the field of political iconography, a fundamental component of an art and image history that describes social concepts and goals. Hardly noticed by the non-German-speaking scholarly community, this interdisciplinary method was originally developed by art historian Martin Warnke, who followed Warburg's footsteps and fused social science research questions and designs with art history traditions of image analysis (Müller & Özcan, 2007, p. 287). Since most of the publications from that scholarly tradition were only published in German, this method has not had an international impact on political and other social science methodology (Warnke, 1994). In fact, projects on political iconography mainly took place –and still do– at the Warburg Haus in Hamburg (Germany). There are, however, other contexts, such as Reinhart Koselleck's studies on political iconography and the former Collaborative Research Centre on the Political as Communicative Space in History at Bielefeld. Nevertheless, this is changing. A field of research emerged from History of Art, political iconography is now experiencing a gradual and promising development in disciplines such as political science or political communication (Cotarelo, 2003). The question now is: how does it contribute to these disciplines?

Paraphrasing Fleckner, Warnke, and Ziegler's *The Handbook of Political Iconography* (2011), Grave (2019) states that political iconography investigates the concepts, topics, and motives of political visuality, as well as their historical continuities and disruptions. Grave also highlights that the "use of picture production in the political space [...] raises a new attention to what is made and orchestrated in political representation" (2019, p. 444). For this purpose, political iconography deals with the "mechanism of visual political efforts at persuasion" (*ibid.*). This is applicable to art-historical reconstructions, and also has an awareness-raising intention. Therefore, it focuses on "making the persuasive –and sometimes manipulative– exploitation of pictures understandable, so that it can be criticized" (*ibid.*).

As can be inferred, research on political iconography transcended the narrow understanding of iconography that focused primarily on a methodologically safe interpretation of individual pictures. Grave (2019) believes that, more recent research implies that the development of political iconography has reached its own limits, and partially went beyond. It now examines representations of politics –i.e., political statements articulated in pictures, political uses of pictures and, in particular, social practices in visual culture. According to Grave, it has been shown that "pictures do not only offer representations of political problems, positions, and programmes, but that they also influence reality and that they can intervene in actual conditions" (2019, p. 444). The *Jyllands-Posten* Muhammad cartoons controversy in 2005 shows how pictures can have effects that go beyond their producers' intentions. Similarly, the desire to damage the symbols of authority is often an attempt to diminish or disavow the power vested in the given authority itself (Freedberg, 1985, p. 25). Thus, for example, renewed criticism over the legacy of Christopher Columbus led protesters in the United States to behead the explorer's statue in Connecticut, toss another into Baltimore's harbour and set fire to a "pioneer family" sculpture in Portland, Oregon, over the Fourth of July 2020 weekend, as clashes over controversial monuments continued to rage across the US.

There is no doubt that pictures are, to a large degree, influenced by the political contexts in which they are created or viewed, and vice versa. Hence, pictures can influence political discussions, decisions, and developments. They can also be used as a means of political

propaganda and manipulation. As a result, we could state, using a metaphorical chiasmus<sup>1</sup>, that: a) political iconography can lead to action, something crucial in politics, and especially in political campaigns; b) in turn, political images and images included in political campaigns are influenced by certain pathos formulas – or *Pathosformeln*, in Warburg’s terms –, that are coherent with specific contexts. But what are *Pathosformeln*? As Warburg wrote in the essay on Dürer and Italian antiquity, they are: “antique formulas of intensified physical or psychic expressions into the Renaissance style of depicting life in motion” (1999, p. 555). In his essay on Botticelli (1999, p. 141), Warburg also defined them as an “external sign” for “a state of excitement, or even of inner emotion” and “intensified life.” On the other hand, Agamben (2005, p. 125) defines it as “an indissoluble intertwining of an emotional charge and an iconographic formula in which it is impossible to distinguish between form and content.” In general terms, the *Pathosformel* is the recollection and revival of antique forms, particularly during the Renaissance, identifying specific expressions, gestures or emotions that transmit crucial information about the context and underlying psychology of the era in which they are revived.

Warburg was fascinated with the way images and metaphors travelled through time and geography. Hence, his works described the journeys of antique *topoi* (or themes), figurations and myths, revived in later times as manifestations of collective psychological distress. A classic example of *topoi* explored by the German art historian (1999: 553–558) is *Dürer’s The Death of Orpheus* (1494), in Hamburg Kunsthalle, and its resemblance with certain engravings from the School of Mantegna and the pottery of ancient Greece. Didi-Huberman (2013) believes images were conceived by Warburg according to a double regime. Hence, he describes *Pathosformel* as a distinctive trait, a living outline of anthropomorphic images from ancient and modern Western world: this is why image beats, moves, struggles in the polarity of things” (2013, p. 179).

Applying the Warburgian concept, Ginzburg (2001; 2017) refers to the Christian sources of David’s *The Death of Marat* (1793), particularly the Pierre Legros’ sculpture *Stanislas Kostka on his Deathbed* (1702–1703). Similarly, he mentions other works by David with an eminently Christian influence in its iconography, such as *Bara* (1794), another republican martyr, with echoes from Maderno’s *The Martyrdom of Saint Cecilia* (1600), in the Church of Saint Cecilia in Trastevere, and the famous Bernini’s *Sleeping Hermaphroditus* (1620), in the Louvre. The same pathos formula accounts for another political painting trying to represent the resistance of the Spanish people in the face of the Napoleonic invasion: Goya’s *The third of May 1808 in Madrid* (1810–1812), with a certain influence of iconography from Ruben’s *The horrors of war* (1637–1638). Likewise, the same Goya painting can be considered a direct precedent of Manet’s *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian* (1867), over which it exerted a decisive impact. In this case, however, it could express the use of an iconic image, rather than the survival of a gestural form.

The relationship between art, or pictures, and politics has been investigated in a broad basis and long-term studies in projects on political iconography. However, the concept of the politics of images is only rather vaguely defined. This might be a symptom of the fact that current research is strangely undecided concerning the relationship between pictures and politics. In this respect, Grave (2019, p. 443) reminds us that Anglo-American visual culture studies “highlight the links between pictures or visuality and social as well as political issues.”

We believe that the fact that political iconography can influence reality and intervene in actual conditions –sometimes by using reinvented motifs and visual narratives from previous iconographic sources, after Warburg’s *Pathosformel* fashion –, is of utmost importance in political campaigns. For this reason, our contribution will consist in analysing, from a

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<sup>1</sup> Chiasmus: (rhetoric) reversal of the order of words in the second of two parallel phrases (*Collins Dictionary*, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/es/diccionario/ingles/chiasmus>).

communication perspective, how political iconography is used in electoral campaigns. Moreover, we offer an updated definition of this concept in a broad sense, not *stricto sensu* as used by Ginsburg or Didi-Huberman, following a ‘methodological paradigm’, as in Collen Becker (2013). Our intention is to show that political iconography is the discipline that studies the systems of signs, or referential systems, in which the symbolic meanings of the political imaginary and power<sup>2</sup> are condensed, for the purpose of influencing the strategy in political frameworks through emotional appeal.

According to these premises, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. What iconographic devices are present in electoral campaigns to persuade the voters?

RQ2. What use does electoral communication make of iconography in order to transmit messages and appeal to voters’ emotions?

RQ3. What iconographic tools are used by electoral propaganda to mobilize the different emotions of the voters?

## **2. Political iconography and *ethos-pathos* in electoral campaigns**

### **2.1. *The classic leadership iconography: from ethos to Pathosformel***

Because the visual is central in *ethos*-building processes (Krogstad, 2017), it is important to highlight that political iconography in electoral campaigns has usually focused on the visual presentation of leadership, particularly in iconic images of the different party leaders. That is similar to the way the logo is a condensed expression of a party’s politics and thus ensures continuous recognition. By the same token, the *ethos* of a king or a prime minister can be a condensed expression of leadership (Krogstad, 2017). As a result, leaders will –either directly or visually mediated– be able to personalize and highlight political entities, be it groups, parties or nation states, through their bodily display (ibid.). This is a way for them to connect citizens to societal symbols.

In contemporary campaigns, the *ethos* representing leadership has been well shown in the iconography of electoral posters, an area which is suitable to apply, in certain cases, the Warburgian idea of *Pathosformel* (e.g., Donald Trump’s 2020 US presidential campaign). Carlo Ginzburg (2001) interpreted modern political iconography through an analysis of war recruitment posters that showed the influence of Christian iconography, similar to David’s paintings, and created the Republican’s aesthetic *ethos*. Typical examples are: Alfred Leete’s *Lord Kitchener wants you* (1914); Montgomery Flagg’s *I want you for US Army* (1917); or Howard Chandler Christy’s *I want you for the Navy* (1917). According to Ginzburg (2001), the *Pathosformel* of Lord Kitchener’s finger pointing at the viewer is the secularized and foreshorten image of Caravaggio’s Jesus in *The Calling of Saint Mathew* (1600). This has different precedents such as Antonello da Mesinna’s *Christ blessing* (1465); Hans Memling’s *Christ giving his blessing* (1478); some studies of nude by Jacopo de Pontorno (1525); or Michelangelo’s paintings *The Creation of the Sun, Moon and Plants* (1508–12) in the Sistine Chapel. This *Pathosformel* was the basis of the iconic work by American illustrator James Montgomery Flagg, ranging from the Soviet political propaganda posters, such as Dimitri Moor’s *Did you volunteer?* (1920), up to the most recent American presidential elections in Donald Trump’s campaign posters *Make America Great Again*.

Occasionally, the leadership iconography in contemporary campaigns has resulted from the design of artists who are not connected to the campaign teams but collaborate with them. This is referred to as ARTivism, a hybrid form of art and activism. Examples are: the famous *Hope* poster by Shepard Fairey; Andy Warhol’s portrait of Nixon for the McGovern campaign; or the recreation by Kip Overton of Delacroix’s classic *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) in the advertising poster for Walter Mondale’s and Geraldine Ferraro’s 1984 presidential campaign.

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<sup>2</sup> The basis of the political culture and the national identity of collectivities.

The *Pathosformel* concept was also used in recent campaigns through certain images that tried to appeal to in the viewer. These cases (e.g., the aforementioned use of allegory in Delacroix' *Liberty Leading the People* in the US electoral advertising of Mondale and Ferraro), however, have more to do with the use of iconic images than with the iconographic exploitation of certain gestures or movements. For example, the reminiscences of the messianic character of Che Guevara's image in the classic picture *Heroic warrior* (1960) by Alberto Korda, in which Guevara appears wearing his black beret and staring at the distance. This was reinterpreted by Irish artist Jim Fitzpatrick in an iconic image obtained through the well-known stencil effect. Thanks to the stencil effect, the eroded appearance of Che Guevara's image has been used by some political parties, such as in Spanish Podemos' logo for the 2014 European elections. In this case, Podemos' leader, Pablo Iglesias, appeared as an imitation of the same 'messianic' image drawn by Fitzpatrick.

Unlike symbolic or mythic iconography used in the political sphere, emotional iconography in campaigns has a general character. That is, when used in electoral propaganda, *Pathosformel* (i.e., iconic images, gestures, or facial expressions from political leaders) tend to transcend state and national borders. This does not happen in the political exploitation of symbols or myths. For example, the red colour is traditionally associated to certain progressive or revolutionary parties. However, among conservative parties, red is used by the Republican party in the USA. Also, the meaning of the red colour in politics has experienced a deep transformation. In ancient times, it represented the establishment, although it was gradually disassociated from this symbolism with the protestant reform. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century on, it was linked to revolution, and to socialist or communist parties.

The blue colour, on the other hand, is usually linked to conservative parties, such as the British Conservative Party; Spain's 'Partido Popular'; Czechoslovakia's 'Civic Democratic Party'; or Mexico's 'Partido de Acción Nacional.' In other contexts, it is associated with progressive parties such as the US' Democratic party or Taiwan's Pan-Blue coalition.

In the interwar period, this colour also represented various fascist parties and movements, such as the Portuguese national-syndicalist *Azuis* shirts; the Spanish Falange; or the *Romanian lancieri* (Garrido, 2016, p. 755).

Regarding the political sense of myths, this can also be altered through different redefinition processes. A good example is how the Medusa myth was redefined within the framework of the #MeToo movement. The statue of Medusa holding the head of Perseus, by the Italian-Argentine artist Luciano Garbati<sup>3</sup>, was considered an incarnation of women seeking the justice that has traditionally been denied to them. This was a stimulus and an image that helped spread and make viral this movement. It is also an example of how myths can be redefined and acquire a new meaning in different contexts. However, these changes of meaning are more difficult in the case of the conventional interpretation of the iconography of certain emotional formulas of pathos, iconic images, or expressive gestures of political leaders.

## 2.2. Emotional appeals: pathos iconography in contemporary campaigns

Despite the aforementioned examples, the iconography of current political campaigns has shown that the *ethos* ideas -and, to a lesser extent, certain pathos formulas à la Warburg- are not enough to connect with modern voters. According to Hunt (1984), politics always needed and needs a "master fiction" (1984, p. 88), although for a long-time, scholarly research minimized the impact of media and political campaigns on the outcome of the elections (Brader, 2006). However, since the 1990s, a substantial body of political communication studies has provided evidence of the influence of news, political campaigns, and political advertising on citizens' decision-making processes. Most of these studies identified message

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<sup>3</sup> In contrast to the classical model of Perseus with the head of Medusa, by Cellini.

content and policy issues as the primary factors in political decision-making. Nonetheless, an increasing number of studies emphasize the role of emotional appeals contained in political campaigns (Brader, 2006). What role the visual plays in these emotional appeals is part of what we examine in this paper. In this sense, we follow art studies that analyse viewers' response to the presence of aesthetic stimuli from emotional images in the works of art (Freedberg & Gallese, 2007).

No doubt, images are effective tools of political persuasion (Krogstad, 2017, p. 7). This is particularly true during the election period, and, consequently, we could state that political iconography also plays an important role in this "master fiction." The question is: at what level? Do images and political iconography –together with message content and policy issues– contribute to organize campaign strategies by linking the voters' emotions to their behaviour on elections day?

Two key qualities of images that are central to nation-building processes (Krogstad, 2017) are their capacity to both create identification and aid in emotional appeals. If voters experience proximity to a politician, "it can lead to political action ranging from a click on a 'like' button, to putting a ballot in the election urn, to full political participation" (*ibid.*, p. 19). However, what if voters are "touched" by emotional appeals? Previous studies that were investigating emotions on political behaviour (e.g., Marcus *et al.*, 2000; Brader, 2006) were focusing on the comparison between positive and negative effect. As Castells (2009) notes, Marcus *et al.* (2000) research on US presidential elections from 1980 to 1996 showed that two thirds of the vote could be explained by two variables: "feelings toward the party" and "feelings toward the candidate." Hence, policy issues weighed much less in voters' decisions. Moreover, policy issues became important primarily when they arouse emotions among the voters. Ted Brader (2006) built on this body of evidence in order to test empirically the role of emotions in determining the effects of political advertising on voting behaviour – specifically music and images–. Brader focused on two emotions considered to be key motivational sources: enthusiasm and fear.

Just like Castells (2009) remarks, Brader showed that advertising eliciting enthusiasm mobilized voters, even though it also polarized their choices. Hence, advertising reaffirmed their choices and induced a stronger rejection of the opposite candidate. This was true, regardless of which candidate's ad they had watched. On the other hand, exposure to fear advertisements introduced uncertainty in the voter's choice, thereby increasing the likelihood of changing the viewer's political preferences. Fear ads tend to erode the opponent's base of support among voters, while heightening the importance of voting for those viewers made anxious by the ad. But fear advertising may also demobilize voters. Therefore, ads designed to instil fear do have a powerful effect in favour of the advertisement's sponsor in two ways: by mobilizing the concerned supporters of the ad's sponsor and by discouraging the potential voters of the opponent (Castells, 2009, p. 151). According to Westen (2007, p. 125): "the data from political science are crystal clear: people vote for the candidate that elicits the right feelings, not the candidate that presents the best arguments." And when they do not have a clear feeling, or do not trust the connection between their feelings and the mediating instances enough, they drop out from the electoral process or turn to political cynicism (Castells, 2009, p. 154).

Recent analyses question some extended beliefs, especially the view that campaigns based on emotions are either "unethical because they disincentivize reasoning, foster superficiality and manipulate publics" (Brader, 2006b, p. 37), or are more effective to influence misinformed or lower educated voters. Scholars now focus on specific implications of different types of positive and negative responses. As such the theory of affective intelligence is currently the most prevalent theoretical formulation in political psychology (Brader & Marcus, 2013). According to these authors, this theory "evolved [...] from an initial focus on two dimensions, an anxiety dimension [or fear] and an enthusiasm dimension, to adopting the

current three-dimensional view” (2013, p. 169), which includes enthusiasm, anxiety/fear, and anger.

In this paper, the *Pathosformel* concept is used in a broad sense since it includes the gestural representation of both negative and positive emotions. First, because the examples analysed by Warburg (1999, pp. 89-156) do not deal exclusively with pain or suffering, despite his early iconographic interest in the *Death of Orpheus*, in Durer and Mantegna, or in the *Laocoön and His Sons*. This can be seen in his *Atlas Mnemosyne*'s panels, that show his interest in the iconography of nymphs (Burucúa, 2003, p. 131), Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* and other diverse motifs (Warburg, 2010, pp. 55, 67, 69, 79, 83, 85, etc.). Even in *Mnemosyne*, Warburg (2010, p. 3) considers these formulas as “expressive values predefined in the representation of life in motion” or “pre-existing antiquized models that influenced in the representation of life in motion and determined the artistic style during the Renaissance.” Second, different followers of Warburg's iconographic program, like Ginzburg or Didi-Huberman, use a broad concept. Hence, Ginzburg (2017, p. VIII) compares emotional formulas with “models of intensified pathetic gesturality” and with “the expression of elementary impulses,” linked to the expression of intensity against the interest in “tranquil grandeur” and serenity of classic art (Becker, 2013, p. 119). Didi-Huberman (2013, pp. 230-31, 260) also points to intensified gestures in general, and links this concept to the “image in motion” of a “choreographic intensity.” In other authors, such as Pintor Iranzo (2018, pp. 135-139), the wider idea of “gestural formulae” is underlined, such as “intensified corporal and emotional expression” (“gesteigerten Körperlich oder seelischen ausdrucks”), even considering Warburgian panels focused on control, surveillance or gestures of happiness. Therefore, probably not by accident, Gombrich (1986, p. 302) compared these formulae with allusive poetry, with a plethora of literary and historical references, to Eliot and other authors from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, or the application of this analysis methodology to some of Godard's recent films (Cirlot, 2019). Third, because recent empirical studies that try to operationalize the *Pathosformel* concept from vector-movement *clusters*, understand the *pathos* formula in relation to the “body dynamism” and as “life in motion” (Impett & Sússtrunk, 2016; Impett & Moretti, 2017, pp. 4-5).

### 2.3. Iconography of emotions in recent Spanish electoral campaigns: methodological analysis

A sample of 32 electoral spots –to which images, posters and electoral ads are added– appearing in Spain's electoral campaigns in 2011, 2015, 2016 and 2019, constitute one of the empirical corpuses of this study. From all this, we analyse the use and the iconographic representation of these emotions. In particular, these spots correspond to the main political parties as follows:

**Table 1:** Summary sample of spots.

<p><b>Political party and n° of spots</b>                  PSOE: 9 spots. PP: 7 spots. Podemos/Unidas Podemos: 9 spots. Ciudadanos: 7 spots.</p>
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Source: Own elaboration.

As observed in Table 2, Podemos and Partido Popular (hereafter referred to as ‘PP’) are the political parties that stand out more in the use of negative emotions in their ads, while Cs is the party that includes more positive emotions in their campaign ads. In every ad analysed there are classic emotional iconographies. Examples include childhood as a metaphor of the future is present in the ad “My letter to Daniela,” where former Ciudadanos' leader Albert Rivera writes to his daughter, Daniela, about the future. The girl's image condenses a prospective reflection on the country. The smile and the heart are also visual elements

frequently included –either explicitly, or in the form of narrative. Examples include Partido Socialista Obrero Español’s (hereafter referred to as ‘PSOE’) 2019 ad titled “La España que quieres” (“The Spain that you want”), or “#VolverASonreír” (#ToSmileAgain), one of the campaign spots by Podemos for the 2016 elections. All the spots incorporate images of anonymous citizens trying to build identification channels with viewers through a mirror effect. Furthermore, in the Podemos spots, an intensive use of the aesthetics and symbolism of social and outraged movements, as well as, in general, protest actions, are observed. On the other hand, the spots for Ciudadanos and PP lean towards a more executive and liberal iconography, tending to recur myths such as that of self-improvement or management capacity.

In the next section, we will analyse in more detail these different narratives or rhetorical strategies, as well as the main iconographic resources included. In doing so, we make use of spots samples and the database of images of Spain’s electoral campaigns that have been studied. We also make reference to prominent models and examples of campaigns from other countries. In addition to the classic bibliography on electoral campaigns and on emotions in politics, in this analysis we will rely on the application of two methodologies that have shown their usefulness for the iconographic study, especially the analysis of persuasive or argumentative rhetoric discourse (Gómez & Capdevila, 2012), and the analysis of the visual grammar of multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

The discourse analysis is developed at a triple level (Gómez & Capdevila, 2012, pp. 71-73). First, at the level of the argumentative core or deep level of discourse, in which an attempt is made to develop a dichotomy or binomial between the possible worlds offered by the candidate or party and the one proposed by the opponents. Second, at the level of their superficial or sensible manifestation. Here, the images, the iconography or the words are chosen according to a series of figures that reinforce the message (i.e., metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, antithesis, ellipsis, repetition, etc.). Third, in the enunciation, depending on the sender of the message, either leader or candidates, celebrities or anonymous people. Furthermore, we have used multimodal analysis, although in a secondary and residual way.

For our multimodal analysis or multimodal semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), an attempt is made to apply three types of composition systems to the visual and iconographic elements of electoral propaganda, with their own representational meanings, as these are interrelated. First, the information value, which refers to the spatial situation of the iconographic elements in the different areas or zones of the image (i.e., left / right, top / bottom or centre / margin, etc). Second, the salience, referring to their size, the location of these representational phrases in the foreground or in the background, the colour contrast, the tonal value, etc. Third, the framing, created through dividing lines that connect or disconnect these elements from each other. For this methodology, the roles of the author and the viewer of the image are also of importance, according to the involvement of the audience. This is evidenced in the example cited above from *Pathosformel* and its order or exclamation, attention and warning signals, in the posters of *Lord Kitchener* or *Montgomery Flagg*, as well as in the campaign of Donald Trump (Krees & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 123).

**Table 2:** Spots.

	<b>PSOE</b>	<b>PP</b>	<b>UP</b>	<b>Cs</b>
<b>Positive communication:</b> electoral spots based on hope and enthusiasm	<p>“Corre, hija, corre.” November 2011.                      “La rueda de prensa que Rajoy no quiere dar.” November 2011.                      “El 26 de junio te mereces un sí. Un sí por el cambio.” June 2016.                      “#ImagínateloSinRajoy.” June 2016.                      “Haz que pase.” April 2019.                      “110 compromisos para la España que quieres.” April 2019.</p>	<p>“Piensa en ti. Valor seguro.” April 2019.</p>	<p>“Sonreíd, porque sí se puede.” December 2015.                      “#VolverASonreír.” June 2016.                      “Tablas.” June 2016.</p>	<p>“Una nueva etapa.” December 2015.                      “Somos futuro. Con ilusión.” December 2015.                      “Mi carta a Daniela.” June 2016.                      “A partir de ahora.” June 2016.                      “#VamosAGanar” ¡Vamos!” April 2019.                      “Está pasando.” April 2019.</p>
<b>Negative communication:</b> spots based on anger or fear	<p>“#CortaConLaDerecha.” December 2015.                      “El 26 de junio tienes que votar sí.” June 2016.</p>	<p>“Sonrisas” (vídeo irónico). June 2016.                      “Billar.” June 2016.                      “El día 29 de abril ya no habrá marcha atrás.” April 2019.                      “Alfredo, no te creo.” November 2011.</p>	<p>“Ganar el futuro.” December 2015.                      “No me votes.” December 2015.                      “Hablemos de sillones.” June 2016.                      “La historia la escribes tú.” April 2019</p>	<p>“Héroes anónimos.” June 2016.</p>
<b>Identity communication:</b> spots based on identity	<p>“Un futuro para la mayoría.” December 2015.                      “La España que quieres” (vídeo de precampaña). April 2019.</p>	<p>“Hipsters.” December 2015.</p>	<p>“Maldita casta, bendita gente”- Diciembre 2015.                      “Gent Comú Fent Coses Extraordinàries: En Comú Podem.” December 2015.</p>	

Source: Own elaboration.

### **3. Political iconography and *pathos* through emotions: enthusiasm, fear and anger**

Going back to Castells (2009), it is important to highlight that campaigns “try to connect specific images with specific experiences to either activate or deactivate the metaphors that are likely to motivate support for a given political actor.” Iconographic and symbolic mechanisms help electoral strategies foster an emotional framework that provides several connections of meaning. They do this in such a way that “emotions and feelings ultimately decide the way in which politics, and power-making in general, construct meaning, and thus behaviour, to determine action that is rationalized rather than rationally decided” (2009, p. 191).

What matters now is establishing how iconography works to set bonds and to appeal to the emotions of citizens, taking into account that images summarize in the voter’s mind a complex model of identification and cognition that allows him/her to visualize the electoral dilemma as a fundamentally affective decision. Some psychologists, such as Ekman (1972), have identified fear, disgust, surprise, sadness, joy and anger as basic emotions. Different researchers have established their relationship with certain brain zones or areas. However, neurologists, such as Antonio Damasio (2005), suggest that, in addition to these simple or basic emotions, there are more complex emotions of a social nature. These include: disdain, shame, admiration or sympathy. On the other hand, Brader & Marcus (2013) consider that there are seven groups of emotions that can evoke different types of actions and attributes: a) enthusiasm, hope, pride and joy (often called positive emotions); b) sadness and disappointment; c) fear and anxiety (which most political psychologists use interchangeably); d) calmness and serenity; e) anger; f) disgust; and g) shame, embarrassment, guilt and pride.

Within this wide range of emotions, the most important ones for political behaviour and electoral campaigns are: enthusiasm, fear and anger. These three emotions are the foundation of the two emotional systems that regulate individuals’ political behaviour (i.e., the disposition and surveillance systems). While the former focuses on the achievement of objectives and leads to enthusiasm, the latter warns us about the existence of a threat, evaluating an answer and causing fear or anxiety. In addition to fear, anger also emerges in situations when people are threatened or find obstacles blocking their path to reward. Therefore, anger and fear frequently co-occur (Brader & Marcus, 2013, p. 181).

For the purpose of this article, we will develop a systematization of the emotional iconography used in electoral communication from three main categories, as if they could be captured in three panels, following Warburg’s *Atlas Mnemosyne* (2010). Specifically: a) iconography of hope and joy (positive iconography), b) iconography of fear and anger (negative iconography), and c) iconography of identity. This latter is added to the previous two categories from Ekman’s classification of basic emotions.

#### **3.1. Iconography of hope and joy**

People experience the emotional state associated with feelings of enthusiasm, joy, and so on, when the system receives positive feedback about that pursuit. Namely when rewards appear within reach, are getting closer, or have been attained (Brader & Marcus, 2013, p. 176), which is what hope and pride offer. While hope offers the individual the possibility to be able to change something and therefore to improve the future, pride motivates the expression of opinions. Political psychologists have shown that enthusiasm increases interest in political processes, motivates political action, and strengthens reliance on prior convictions in making political choices (Brader, 2006; Marcus *et al.*, 2000; Valentino *et al.*, 2011).

As previously mentioned, the call for participation and mobilization is the crucial element of campaigns focused on enthusiasm. The goal of these campaigns is activating voters. However, they can indirectly cause some sort of affective polarization, since voters tend to consolidate their support to their usual political choice, and to induce a stronger

rejection of the opposite alternatives offered by their electoral opponents. Good examples are PSOE's campaigns "Vota con todas tus fuerzas" ("Vote with all your might"), with former president José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, or "Haz que pase" ("Make it happen"), with Pedro Sánchez. In both of these campaigns, the deep discourse level, in Gómez & Capdevila's (2012) terms, tends to build two alternatives focused on the vote pairing and on participation in the face of abstention and demobilization.

One characteristic in this type of positive campaigns has to do with enunciation, since many of the ads are often starred by either different anonymous people or celebrities who support the candidate or the party. The "Yes, we can" spot, the most famous in Barack Obama's campaign for the 2008 US presidential elections, is an example of this type of enunciation and of an ad based on the characteristic elements of positive advertising (e.g., enthusiasm and hope).

The campaigns of hope expect to generate positive feelings in the voter by making him/her believe in a better future through a significant "change." Similar to the metaphor of dawn, the iconographic representation of hope draws a new horizon at which one stares with excitement. In this type of campaign, the candidate often appears in the poster looking to the right, as if his / her look were able to project tomorrow. Both the classic Obama's "Hope" poster from the 2008 campaign, and former president Felipe González's "Por el cambio" 1982 poster ("For change") got this effect. In addition, Albert Rivera's and Cs' "Con ilusión" ("With eagerness"), and Pablo Iglesias and Podemos' "Un país contigo" ("A country with you"), both created for the 2015 Spanish presidential campaign; and New York politician Alexandria Ocasio Cortez's "Una de nosotros" ("One of us") poster from her 2018 campaign, constitute a common iconographic system. All these candidates stare at the horizon and transmit a creative and exciting feeling about what is about to come in the future: González and Obama in the centre of the image, Iglesias and Ocasio on the left, and Rivera on the right, in a clear message from the multimodal perspective of the information value.

Another very common iconographic element to transmit positive emotions is the smile-heart-sun triad. These are emotional elements that tend to appear to offer a positive tone, especially in a party's logo on the occasion of rebranding actions. Extinct CiU's (Convergència i Unió, a Catalan nationalist party) logo with an orange smile, used from 2010, or the recent inclusion of a heart in PSOE's logo from 2019 National election campaign are two good examples of symbolic actions. Also in Spain, left-wing coalition Unidos Podemos directly included the word "smile" in its campaign motto for the June 2016 national elections, combining the patriotic element with positive iconography through the motto "La sonrisa de un país" ("The smile of a country"). All these images look to generate good feeling with the voters because people rarely vote for a party that causes negative emotions (disgust, anger or discomfort).

Finally, in order to reinforce the emotional storytelling of hope and joy, political parties often use iconographic images related to childhood or youth, since they ease the development of prospective narratives. An example is Cs' ad "¡Vamos!" ("Let's go!"), in the April 2019 Spanish national elections. The presence of a girl as a political metaphor has helped many politicians summarize, by means of rethoric mechanisms, the future of a country as the future of the child. That's because the characteristic emotion in children is joy. In campaigns, joy is the opposite of fear, and it appears associated not only to childhood, but also to salience, with vivid colours, even with the rainbow. This was successfully used by Mauricio Macri and "Cambiamos" ("Let's change") in his first elections in Argentina. To transmit its story in a symbolic way, "Cambiamos" chose a casual and multicoloured aesthetics. However, this had been already used in the graphic design of parties such as Basque nationalists' Herri Batasuna or Chile's Concertación of Parties for Democracy.

In the conjunction of the iconographic elements reviewed in the study of positive campaigns (i.e., smile, gaze to the horizon and symbolic elements like the sun, heart or

rainbow), a semiotic coherence can be observed: the propositional action that intends to contrast with the retreat (the past) and fear (sadness). These symbols are embedded in the collective imaginary, and their activation depends on the needs of the electoral context. A good example of the use of these emotions and feelings is PSOE's campaign "La España que quieres" ("The Spain that you want"), which displaces the party's historic logo with a heart shaped emoji. When the electoral strategists opt for a positive mobilization campaign, one only has to resort to the iconographic catalogue that citizens share worldwide and select those visual metaphors that best serve the interest of the party or candidate.

### 3.2. *Iconography of fear and anger*

Fear is the most studied emotion, not only within political psychology but also in the social sciences writ large (Brader & Marcus, 2013). According to Steimer (2002), its main function is to act if a signal of threat or danger is experienced, and it affects individuals who are more open and cautious. In contrast to those who are anxious, angry citizens cling tightly to their prior convictions and are less receptive to new considerations or opposing points of view (Brader & Marcus, 2013, p. 180). Anger is a particularly powerful mobilizing force that motivates people to take and support risky, confrontational, and punitive actions (*ibid.*).

The iconography of fear appears in campaign through the use of negative communication and plays with images taken from childhood, a time when a person's great fears are consolidated. The symbolic use of fear in a campaign is structured around the metaphorical threat of the wolf. The stalking wolf is sometimes represented in the form of a dangerous dog (e.g., the famous PSOE's 1996 "Doberman spot"), and other times as a risk that looms over the country and that could lower citizens' living standard. This is a theme used extensively against Andrés Manuel López Obrador –AMLO– in Mexico's 2006 and 2012 campaigns.

The point is symbolically positioning *the other* as a threat. Sometimes that *other* is either the "dark, black, grey" past, or an ideology that is described as destructive (e.g., communism or fascism), and from which only the candidate who articulates that message can save the country. Raising the fear of the wolf appears in the poster "Si tú no vas, ellos vuelven" ("If you don't go, they will come back") in the Catalan PSOE (PSC) campaign for the 2009 European elections. Also in Catalonia, the PP candidate in Badalona, Xavier García Albiol, decided to use a similar motto, warning that unless you voted for him, CUP (Popular Unity Candidacy, a pro-Catalan radical left independence party) would return.

Negative campaigns try to make the voter feel that an unpleasant event might happen, and that there is one way to avoid such an outcome. This type of message, which is used to either dissuade voters from supporting the adversary or mobilize the voter himself, plays on two types of fears: permanent fear (i.e., the concern of losing something that is valuable to him or her), and specific fear (i.e., what an elected candidate may cause). Some of the most memorable spots in modern electoral communication have focused their visual narrative on negativity, or fear-based communication. Examples include: "Windsurfing," by George W. Bush against John Kerry in the 2004 US presidential campaign; "Read my lips," by Bill Clinton against President George H. Bush in 1992; "Revolving Door," by Bush against Michael Dukakis in 1988; "McGovern Defense," by President Richard Nixon against the candidate McGovern in 1972; "Laughter," by Hubert Humphrey's campaign in 1968 against Spiro Agnew, and, above all the famous "Daisy spot" created by Tony Schwartz for Lyndon Johnson's 1964 campaign, which linked his Republican adversary, Barry Goldwater, to the fear of nuclear war.

The iconographic development of this type of emotion is linked, first, to a discourse at a deep level (e.g., citizens are evicted and beset by economic ruin). An example is the famous Mexican PAN 2006 spot warning of the economic ruin that would cause a populist government

such as López Obrador's. Another is the similar announcement by PP in relation to Zapatero<sup>4</sup> in the Spanish campaign. Second, it is linked to a rhetoric where superficial level metonymy and metaphor are well present: from representing the adversaries as a Doberman –as in the famous PSOE 1996 spot, warning of the danger of the PP's rise to government– to showing Zapatero as a deceptive and sibylline snake. The use of animal metaphors and “hunting formulas,” to use the expression of Burucúa and Kwiatkowski (2014, pp. 49-94), is frequent to represent the enemy. Metonymy is also often used to show only the toughest leaders of the rival party in advertisements (Gómez & Capdevila, 2012, p. 76).

On the other hand, the presence of anonymous people is also frequent in this type of emotional communication. Good examples of spots based on fear, studied for this research, are PSOE's 2011 announcements regarding public education and the supposed PP's hidden program. The video in defence of public schools “Corre, hija, corre” (“Run, daughter, run”) is an example of PSOE's electoral announcements calling on their voters' defence and “fight” for public services. First, a child asks his caregiver if she has children, and concludes that one day they will be able to take their own children to school like she does now. Second, the ad shows the caregiver taking her own daughter to school. A voiceover at the end of the spot asserts that “only quality public education guarantees equal opportunities” and criticizes that the PP “is applying harsh cutbacks in the communities where it governs, that are favouring private and concerted schools and are detrimental to public education.” A similar statement is presented in the spot “The press conference that Rajoy does not want to give,” with various anonymous citizens asking former president Mariano Rajoy with a megaphone in his hand, about his “hidden program.”

The other big negative emotion, together with fear, is anger. Brader & Marcus (2013) remind us that affective intelligence theory has also evolved to argue that aversion<sup>5</sup> is activated by the same system that produces enthusiasm (i.e., the disposition system). This is particularly true when there is a perception that the situation is unfair, illegitimate, or undeserved, and when familiar disliked or threatening stimuli present themselves.

If there is an area of political participation where symbolic dialogue is present, it is the one defined by demonstrations and protests. Outrage and revolutions have provided campaigns with communication tools to call for mobilization in an opposite way than that fostered by hope. The call for mobilization from the aesthetics of anger, or from the choleric language, originates in a popular contestation of the *statu quo*. What could be called “iconography of protest” (i.e., placards, megaphones, demonstrations, shouts, etc.) has been imported by certain political parties to carry out campaigns of outrage, trying to represent in the voters' mind the epic of rebellion. In fact, many parties have included this concept (i.e., rebellion) in their mottos, like Ciudadanos in their poster for the 2010 elections to the Catalanian Parliament, or Izquierda Unida in 2011 with Cayo Lara as their candidate.

### 3.3. *Iconography of identity*

Identity can be understood as a feeling of belonging to a collectivity, to a group, and, as a result, as an electoral component of emotional nature. Campaigns assiduously include in their iconic and visual designs certain identity appeals. The first and more evident is the articulation of a partisan and/or ideological identity. Second, we can find the classic cleavages of the social structure, especially those related to class. The third most important identity for electoral symbolism is the national or patriotic one. Finally, in the past few years, due to the discredit process of traditional politics, campaigns have recurred to new collective identities such as the feminist, the racial, the ethnic or the ecologist.

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<sup>4</sup> José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero is member of PSOE. He was the Prime Minister of Spain being elected for two terms, in the 2004 and 2008 general elections.

<sup>5</sup> Defined as a cluster of feelings that includes anger, disgust, contempt, and hatred.

Partisan identification, similarly to ideological identification, tends to appear through salience with the use of colours (e.g., in Europe, red represents the left-labour wing; blue is the conservative wing), and especially through isologues or isotypes (e.g., the social democrat rose or the communist sickle and hammer), and even through mythical foundational leaderships (e.g., Evita Perón for Kirchnerism and its youth organization “La Cámpora” in Argentina). On the other hand, the class identification is closely related to ideological identification. Thus, class iconography has been present, above all, in the more working-class left-wing campaigns. The popular or manufacturing working class aesthetics, originated in the mining environments, has given way to new forms of identity with a renovated capability to organize majorities. Namely, patriotic identities and postmodern identities.

In identity iconography, the emotional exploitation of certain symbols is more frequent than *Pathosformeln*, gestures or movements from leaders and supporters. The case of national iconography in campaign is prototypical. Many leaders cover themselves in flags and make the national colours their own, not only to reinforce their position, but also to make the most of the political capital that patriotic identification entails. In Spain, the PP decided to change its historical logo (i.e., the seagull) to some sort of heart-shaped line that combines the national colours of the red-and-yellow Spanish flag. The presence of the flag has also appeared repeatedly in VOX posters. Similarly, patriotic appeals through the use of typical symbols of the nation appeared in Cristina Fernández de Kirchner’s 2011 campaign or in the public meetings of any French party where the tricolour flag wraps the candidate.

Even so, we find the best examples of patriotic identity use in campaigns is the United States. All parties there take for themselves in their graphic designs the range of colours of the national flag, blue and red with stars, a demonstration of the hegemonic and transversal (i.e., non-positional) level of the national question for North Americans. The union of these colours (i.e., the salience, from a multimodal perspective) is very powerful in the American electoral political posters.

Finally, the postmodern identities case allows us to review the in-campaign inclusion of certain typical iconographies of social movements (e.g., the feminist or the ecologist), but also the use of multicultural and ethnic aesthetics. Howard Miller’s *We Can Do It!* poster image has been replicated by many candidates to highlight their commitment to feminism. This was the case with the propaganda used by Madrid’s former mayor Manuela Carmena, representing *Más Madrid*, in 2019 for her sectorial acts on feminism. In addition to this, ecological iconography is usually summed up with the “leader on a bicycle” image. Multicultural and ethnic aesthetics have been central to explain the design of campaigns. Examples include the MAS and Evo Morales in Bolivia, or the discursive appropriation that the Democratic Party made of the “Blacks Lives Matter” movement in the recent US presidential elections.

#### **4. Conclusion: the effects of emotion-oriented political iconography**

As we have seen, the main uses of political iconography in the framework of electoral campaigns are, on the one hand, the representation of leadership (i.e., the *ethos*) and, on the other, the appeal to emotions through the construction of meaningful images (i.e., the *pathos*). Iconography creates an affective relationship between the voter and its symbolic imaginary producing effects on the political conduct.

The study offers some answers to the research questions asked, first by identifying the iconographic devices present in modern electoral campaigns (i.e., RQ1). Based on some examples of Warburg’s *pathosformel* in recent campaigns (e.g., Donald Trump), the analysis has been extended to the study of emotions and their iconography in modern electoral campaigns (i.e., RQ2). The repetition of iconographic patterns in different campaigns allows us to speak of a semiotic system internalized by the voters that acts as a synthesizing element of the complex discourses and messages of the parties and candidates.

This article has reviewed the iconography of *pathos* through an analysis of the images used to activate voters' emotions: the political iconography of enthusiasm and hope, the imagery of fear and identity iconography (i.e., RQ3). This analysis has been carried out from the iconography of the images and the spots of the last electoral campaigns in Spain (i.e., 2019), which have been classified and collected in a database developed expressly for this study, although reference is also made to other examples of campaigns especially notable for their emotional impact.

Iconography of contemporary electoral campaigns, beyond the classical idea of Warburg's formula of *pathos*, and the repeated use of certain gestures and expressions in political advertising, has become -in current campaigns- a true iconography of the emotions. This political iconography of emotions needs new and more detailed case studies and comparative analysis that allow the old Warburg project to be developed in innovative directions. We hope that this study can contribute to arousing this interest.

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